

alfresco affair

SPRINGHOUSE RESTAURANT AT LAKE MARTIN PROVES THE PERFECT SETTING FOR AN AUTUMN WEDDING SHOOT INSPIRED BY THE ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE

BY MELISSA BROWN
PHOTOS BY HEATHER DURHAM



A PLACE CAN SWEEP YOU OFF YOUR FEET MUCH LIKE SOMEONE SPECIAL CAN. Wide-open spaces and stunning vistas capture the imagination and inspire awe. For a fall, European-influenced wedding shoot, floral and event designer Lisa Smith-Thorne of Thorne and Thistle took her cues from the rustic yet refined setting of the SpringHouse Restaurant at Russell Lands in Alexander City, Ala.

"I wanted it to look like it was not in Alabama," says Thorne, who remembered SpringHouse's Executive Chef Rob McDaniel once describing his menu as a southern twist on Italian food. "I wanted it to look anywhere in the world." For Thorne, the look of the SpringHouse speaks of Tuscany. The sloping, rocky terrain also fit perfectly with her Italian countryside vision. The moody palette of rich tones was drawn from the colors of a rug and a painting in her collection of European art, as well as the Richard

Ginori china. The model bride and groom wore high-fashion looks chosen by wardrobe stylist Tracy Richey: a velvet Hugo Boss tuxedo jacket for him and a Monique Lhuillier three-piece gown with a removable capelet appliquéd with Chantilly lace for her. A hand-drawn wedding invitation mimicked the style of antique Italian invitations Thorne researched. The deep blue, cut velvet damask LaTavola table linen contrasted with the stone exterior of the SpringHouse itself.

OPPOSITE: Loose, lush florals and velvety damask table linens surrounding the bride and groom contrasted with the stone exterior of SpringHouse. **THIS PAGE:** The invitation suite was inspired by simple, elegant antique Italian stationery floral designer Lisa Thorne-Smith researched. Nestled in a dove gray ring box, a stunning diamond ring from Brombergs catches the light. The groom's deep-blue velvet jacket offsets the soft tones of peach Finesse roses and blushing peonies in the bride's bouquet. Richard Ginori china featuring a pastoral scene in dark brown reinforced the romantic Italian theme along with the gold-edged Arte Italica stemware, gold candlesticks and flatware. The evening light set the bride and groom aglow. Creeping ficus, foraged abelia pods, and ranunculus crowned the classic white two-tiered wedding cake.



The stone exterior of SpringHouse's wellhouse offered a picture-perfect spot. Silk cranberry-colored ribbon held feathery ranunculus blooms for the groom's boutonniere. Table centerpieces showcasing roses, cranberry celosia, red pepperberry, and blue thistles nestled in foraged greenery overflowed the rust-hued Italian urns. **OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT:** The bride's Monique Lhuillier gown adorned with Chantilly lace shone against the muted colors of the fall landscape.



For a place that evoked thoughts of Italy for Thorne, the SpringHouse is firmly rooted in its Alabama soil, from its timbers cut from pine trees that covered the land where the restaurant now stands to the rocks used in its facade. Developments owned by Russell Lands, named for current Chairman and CEO Ben Russell's family, comprise much of Lake Martin's land acreage.

"Lake Martin's in the shape of a J, like a fishhook," describes Roger Holliday, Russell Lands Vice President. "And Russell Lands owns between the point and the stem of that fishhook." Its centerpiece, Russell Crossroads, is one of the newest developments envisioned as a town center with SpringHouse as its gathering place. The town center was made to look like it fit the time period the lake itself was constructed, Holliday says, and SpringHouse was designed to have the feel of a house that has been added on to over the years from when it was first built. Architect Jeffrey Dungan and Ben Russell worked closely together to design and situate SpringHouse just-so on the land. Holliday describes the restaurant as having the best of the properties' "gee wow" views, which clearly captivated Thorne and her team on their dreamy shoot.

The colors of the landscape from the back of the restaurant, shades of mulberry and orange, inspired Thorne's stylistic choices. "When the sun hits it, it makes it almost look like it's on fire," she says. Those hues made their way into the golden garden roses, wheat stems, and peonies she used for the floral arrangements and bride's bouquet. Her go-to, ranunculus, was included in the boutonniere, for a sense of movement. "I wanted a rich

blend of color and texture and lush, wild, loose florals," she describes. She achieved that with peach Finesse roses, red pepper berry and celosia, foraged greenery, and deep blue thistles to complement the velvet table linen.

There would have been food on that richly appointed table had rain not made the team change their original shoot day to a day when the restaurant wasn't open. "Something's always going to happen," says Thorne, "and you just have to adjust."

But for brides and grooms wanting the meal to be a memorable signature of their wedding celebration, choosing a restaurant like SpringHouse for the venue is becoming more and more popular. "Food has become more important," says Emily Spink, Manager of Special Events and Catering Services, and couples are looking beyond just the weekend for their destination wedding location. They want their guests to come for the wedding and stay awhile. More couples are choosing SpringHouse since it opened in 2009 for close, intimate weddings and to experience the cuisine of 4-time James Beard Foundation Award semifinalist Chef Rob. Below the restaurant, there's a well house that is "great for pictures or rehearsal dinners, and brides can use it for a ready room," says Spink.

For this styled shoot, photographer Heather Durham took the models inside for a few shots in the wood-framed wine cellar and wine-tasting turret, showcasing more of the restaurant's impressive architecture. SpringHouse and the surrounding Russell Lands' properties available for weddings are sought-after, with the months of May through October seeing the most events—roughly 60 in 2015, says Spink. With views like these, it's no wonder. ■



ABOVE: SpringHouse Restaurant's classic, weathered architecture framed the bride and groom for a keepsake portrait. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** A blush-colored Alice & Olivia fur coat added luxurious softness to the bride's ensemble. Traditional wood X-back chairs brought a rustic touch to the sumptuous table setting. A bright-white, drapery jumpsuit made a unique, unconventional choice for the bride as the couple departed. The details, down to the fine gold engraving on the stemware and wax seals on the calligraphed place cards, help set the dreamy mood.



Resources

Styling and Design:

Thorne and Thistle Designs, Lisa Smith Thorne, thorneandthistle.com

Photographer: Heather Durham Photography, heatherdurhamphotography.com

Hair and Makeup: Brittany Massey

Location: Springhouse Restaurant, Lake Martin AL, springhouseatcrossroads.com

Models: Red Models Birmingham

Wedding Dress: Kasey Skirt, CRT, Capel & Headpiece & Earrings, Monique Lhuillier from Ivory & White Bridal Boutique

ivorywhiteboutique.com

Fur Coat: Alice & Olivia from Gus Mayer, gusmayer.com

White Jumpsuit for Sendoff:

Ceremony Scarlett Jumpsuit

Joanna August from Bella Bridesmaid, bellabridesmaids.com

Groom's Attire: Velvet Tuxedo Jacket, Hugo Boss from Saks Fifth Avenue

White Dress Shirt: Eton from Saks Fifth Avenue

saksfifthavenue.com

Diamond Ring, Tableware & Stemware:

Bromberg's brombergs.com

Flatware: Williams Sonoma, williamssonoma.com

Linens: LaTavola, latavola.com

Chairs: Special Arrangements, specialarrangements.com

Paper Suite & Calligraphy: Reddartisty

Wardrobe Stylist: Tracy Richey, Fashion by Tracy