

## Sustainable Table

Taryn Walker  
June 18, 2011

A few weeks ago, I was checking out the scene at the Living Plaza event outside of City Hall when three women with large hats rolled up in a little red truck that had god knows what growing out the back of it. A conversation sparked between me and one of the hatted ladies, her name was Donelle Simmons and she was excited to tell me about what they do.

The conversation ended with her inviting me to her and her mother Marilyn's 3rd annual sustainable table dinner at their home in Waxahachie.

If your idea of fun on a Friday night is taking shots of wheat grass, hearing veggie-tales and eating delicious organic food, then you missed out. Around 50 guests showed up to enjoy an evening of green mingling, chit chat over chickens, tasty not-so-ordinary food and to watch a witty film about Truck Farming.



Truck farming is exactly what it sounds like. The process began 2009 in the back of Ian Cheney's grandfather's 1986 Dodge pickup in Brooklyn, NY after he planted a garden. From the bottom up, the bed is layered with a mat, erosion blanket, light-weight soil, dirt and lastly your favorite seeds. With help from Curt Ellis, Cheney turned truck farming into a way to educate others how to grow their own vegetables and eat healthy by exhibiting their mobile garden at 40 different schools.

The project has now grown nationally and spread seeds to 25 communities, including the DFW.

The Simmons were contacted in April through their membership with Com-

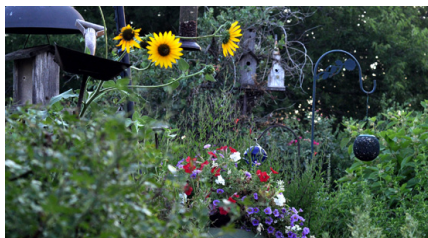
munity Supported Agriculture on the online website Local Harvest to represent the DFW Truck Farmers. They were first recognized for their family owned company, Garden Inspirations. The family also dabbles in teaching gardening classes, making compost tea, landscaping, are vendors at the Waxahachie Farmer's Market and have teamed up with Susie Marshall and The Gleaning Network of Texas non-profit organization.



The garden education doesn't stop with kids or schools only. "It has no age limit, we gear it for children, but we want to educate the public as a whole," Donelle said.

In the fall, the two have plans to schedule once a week garden education trips to areas all over the DFW. "We want everyone to see that you don't have to have a lot of space to grow your own vegetables and fruits," said Marilyn Simmons, matriarch of the mother-daughter truck farming team.

Their outdoor garden couldn't be a better spot for a local, organic themed dinner. The guest list was comprised of the most sustainable people you'll ever meet. Nine vendors, including a nature and wildlife photographer, local farmers who specialize in dairy, honey, wheatgrass and heirloom vegetables and individuals from Recycle Revolution and Luri and Wilma's new green lifestyle Magazine.



The long Alice and Wonderland style table was adorned with flowers, nameplates, napkins and heavenly peaches donated from Larken Farms Orchard, but no plate setting or silverware. Guests were told to bring their own eating utensils and plates to save on trash and make for a sustainable, easy clean up.

Appetizers included freshly chopped cucumber and tomato salad, deviled eggs, goat kabobs and mint tea refreshments served in a mason jar. Dinner wasn't your typical meat n' potatoes dish, instead, French-style chicken fricassee, roasted potatoes with garlic and herbs and green beans with tomatoes. The dessert, you guessed it, nice and fruity, angel food cake topped with lemon curd, drizzled with blackberry and honey sauce and topped with chocolate mint.

Following the dinner, a 50-minute film titled Truck Farm was shown in the Simmons front yard on a projector to show the process and inform others about urban agriculture.



The dinner, opened invitation, cost \$30 a ticket, with some of the proceeds going to the DFW Truck Farm program. Another dinner will be held in the fall and the Simmons' encourage anyone interested to come out.

Taryn Walker is a photographer for the Dallas Observer