

HAMPTONS

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OPEN KITCHEN | TASTEMAKERS



Home Cookin'

Robbin Haas molds Gulf Coast Kitchen into a local-only eatery.

BY JO PIAZZA

WHEN AWARD-WINNING CHEF Robbin Haas took over the kitchen at Montauk Yacht Club this season, he didn't want to re-shape the menu. Instead, he let the Hamptons shape it for him. Haas' goal with the Gulf Coast Kitchen has been to use what is locally grown and raised to create a menu of unpretentious meals, where the ingredients are king and the chef's ego comes a distant second.

HAMPTONS: You've said that the region has been your inspiration for this menu. Can you elaborate?

ROBBIN HAAS: Long Island has this great backyard—great seafood, produce, fruits and vegetables—and that's what we wanted to incorporate into this menu. It's about using local products and ingredients and having less of a carbon footprint. Instead of flying in a duck from France, I would rather use duck from the Hudson Valley. Instead of salmon, I would rather use fluke or black sea bass. What we're trying to do is be more conscious of our surroundings and offer the products that are right here in our backyard.

H: You were one of the forefathers of the South Florida culinary movement. What have you brought



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Tuna sliders; the exterior of the Montauk Yacht Club; the dining room

from that to the Hamptons?

RH: My style of cooking then and now has always been about a sense of simplicity. Less is more; that's what I'm bringing here. I want to let the main ingredients on the platter shine without a whole lot of hoopla. Do I use the same recipes here? No. I use versions of them. I brought my sensibility from South Florida.

H: What's your personal favorite meal?

RH: It's dependent on what I'm doing and where I am. If it's the middle of winter and I'm in New York City, I might want to dig into some short ribs with mashed potatoes in a reduced white wine sauce. If I'm in Montauk and it's noon on a Sunday, I might

want a lobster roll. I love foie gras, but I know you can't eat it all the time or it loses its uniqueness.

H: You've opened two restaurants in Guatemala and live there most of the year. How has the country influenced Gulf Coast Kitchen?

RH: I brought three Guatemalans up here with me, [including] a chef out of my restaurant and a bartender. What has most influenced me in Guatemala is the lifestyle. It's quiet and laid-back. Living in a developing country has made me even more cognizant of how much we have to take care of the world. I'm trying to be greener as a person and make the establishment greener. It's hard to do, but it's well worth it in the end.