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weddings

Fall/Winter 2005

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Under the Oaks

Rael Thomas to Randall Welsh

November 6, 2004, Mackay Point Plantation

New Jersey native Randall Welsh "is completely in his element at Mackay Point," says his bride Rael Thomas Welsh. "We visit 10 to 12 times a year because as soon as we arrive, our blood pressure just drops." Naturally, the couple found it to be the perfect locale for their November wedding. Randall's family purchased the plantation a decade ago, and it has become a regular retreat from their fast-paced life in New York. "We wanted our wedding to combine the charm of the South with the spirit of the North," notes Rael. Event designers Ellen Cohn and Katie Huebel at WED (Weddings Elegantly Designed) helped Rael add a "mod, Manhattan lounge feel" to their magical Lowcountry surroundings. "Initially, we wanted something simple, but as things evolved, it just kept growing," says Rael. "Nothing was over-the-top, though, because the beauty of the location speaks for itself."



(Clockwise from top right) **PARTY HEARTY** With 10 bridesmaids and 10 groomsmen, the attendants were a party in themselves. "They were with us all week. It was hectic, but a total blast!" says Rael. **PICTURE PERFECT** As photography is a shared hobby, the couple chose Randall's sunrise shot of Mackay Point to adorn the save-the-date card. **FLOWER POWER** "Randall loves the scent of gardenias," says Rael. Beverly Van Gysel of HB Stems Florist used them alongside calla lilies for her bouquet and his boutonniere. **FAMILY TIME** The bride with Randall, his parents Patrick and Carol, and sister Jenny. (Opposite) **PUPPY LOVE** The couple with "flower dog" Lola Eve.





"The entire week was amazing; it was a fairy tale." —Rael Thomas Welsh



(Clockwise from above) PRINCESS BRIDE "The entire week was amazing; it was a fairy tale. My friends like to say that we were like princesses set in another world," says Rael, being photographed before the ceremony at Cherokee Plantation, where the couple held their rehearsal dinner. DADDY'S GIRL "As I'm an only child, my father was pretty emotional," explains Rael. "We both lost it during the ceremony." DRESS SUCCESS "Shopping in glitzy New York boutiques, I found nothing that was 'me.' Then, I wandered into this small boutique in New Jersey that creates vintage-looking clothing and found it," says Rael of her gown. LIGHT FANTASTIC Lanterns hanging from branches beckoned guests to a cocktail hour under the oaks.

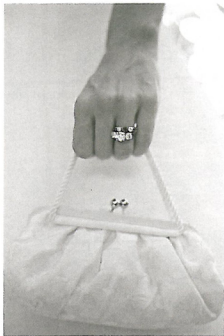
(Clockwise from right)

TREE OF LIFE WED's Ellen Cohn incorporated the same oak tree motif from the save-the-date card onto everything from the invitations to the engraved mint julep cup favors.

RING-OF-BLING

"Randall chose my engagement ring on his own; the fact that it was a total surprise was really special," says Rael.

PURPLE REIGNS "I loved using deep purple throughout the décor and in the Vera Wang bridesmaids' dresses. It contrasted beautifully with our green surroundings," notes the bride.



"Having a buffet-style dinner was the best decision we made. It gave everyone a chance to mingle"

—Rael Thomas Welsh



(Clockwise from above) BALLROOM WITH A VIEW WED's Ellen Cohn chose a clear tent for the dining area to showcase the natural beauty of the environment while still protecting guests. She replicated the golden swirls of Rael's gown for the tablecloths. "I showed Ellen my dress, and she pulled out a bolt of fabric that matched it exactly!" exclaims Rael. FOOD LOVERS Events by Stephen Duvall made Rael and Randall's wish to combine Lowcountry flavor with the big city glamour of New York come true. The seven food stations ranged from shrimp and grits, to sushi, to mini desserts, including chocolate cups with orange mascarpone mousse and macadamia nut tortes. CLUB WED A luxe lounge area in purple, gold, and red hues offered guests a chic seat near the band.

(Clockwise from top right) **PLAYING CATCH** After the requisite bouquet toss, the guests crowded the dance floor to groove to the tunes of Liquid Pleasure. **CAROLINA CROON** Dancing to James Taylor's *Carolina on my Mind*, the couple celebrated not only their love for each other, but also their affinity for their Southern getaway. **SWEET TOOTH** A candy station, replete with oak-embossed bags, was set up to satisfy any cravings for sweets. **CHOCOLATE HEAVEN** "Nobody understood why I didn't have a white wedding cake—I just wanted it covered in chocolate!" Rael says of the four-tiered beauty created by Jim Smeal. "It was delicious, and each layer was a different flavor."

