



By: **Anne Fullem**

Photos: **Amy Jones**

[www.amyphoto.com](http://www.amyphoto.com)

Set Design: **Elle Ellinghouse**

[www.elleeventdesigns.com](http://www.elleeventdesigns.com)

Flowers: **Stephen Formwalt**

[www.simplygrandeevents.vpweb.com](http://www.simplygrandeevents.vpweb.com)

Location: **Laurrapin Grille**

plot at Mt. Felix Vineyard

# LAURRAPIN GRILLE

**Bruce & Sherifa Clarke**

Celebrating the Simple  
Goodness of Nature's Bounty





Pictured (l-r) Christopher Gengenbach, *Bar Manager* • Dennis Theriault, *Service Manager*  
 Bruce Clarke, *Executive Chef* • Sherifa Clarke, *General Manager* • Kristina Sciarra, *Sous Chef*  
 Gary Newberry, *Laurrapin Garden Manager* • Janice Rogers, *Catering Manager*

## Leading by Example When it Comes to "Living Local"

It was food that brought Bruce & Sherifa together back in 2002. Sherifa needed a caterer for a corporate event, and Bruce just happened to be the chef/owner of one of her favorite restaurants, Timber Creek in Kingsville. The couple have much more than food in common though, it was their shared love of kayaking and their search for a community that they could get involved in, which led them to Havre de Grace.

Executive Chef Bruce Clarke started cooking at a very young age. Fascinated by the tastes and aromas of combining different ingredients, he was preparing gourmet meals for his family by the time he was a teenager. Bruce trained at the prestigious Harbor Court Hotel and has worked in some of Baltimore's finest restaurants and country clubs. But it was his experiences traveling in the Western United States that inspired his passion for cooking with his love of community and family farming. He brought the concept home with him and in 2003 with his wife Sherifa, they opened Laurrapin Grille.

Bruce and Sherifa are shining examples of how this philosophy or lifestyle is supposed to work. They locally source whenever they can and a significant portion of their food is local. It took a lot of effort to build the necessary relationships with the local farmers, but it was worth it. Some of the local farms and businesses they work with are Level Farm, Deer Meadow



Farm, Flying Plow Farm, Keyes Creamery, Harman's Farm Market, Gunpowder Bison, Colora Orchards, Bomboy's Ice Cream and more. They have a special relationship with Mt. Felix Vineyard. Not only do they offer Mt. Felix wines, but Peter and Mary Ianello raise their ducks for them, of which they go through about 50 a month. Despite the fact that not everything is available on a local level, Bruce and Sherifa still manage to spend 50 cents out of every dollar with local businesses.

For the very first time, this year, the Clarke's have their very own garden. On a large plot of land on the Mt. Felix property, Bruce and Sherifa are raising a good portion of their own vegetables.

"We love everything about the garden," said Sherifa. "We love spending time in the garden, we love weeding the garden, we love waiting everyday to see what fresh ingredients the garden will give us to work with. It's like Christmas." she added.

"Our menu is seasonal, so it allows us to work with the freshest ingredients available. Some clients seem concerned when a favorite dish disappears from the menu. I always tell them not to worry, it will be back next season," said Bruce with a smile.

All the plants for their garden were started by seed in a greenhouse behind the restaurant. The Clarke's have also introduced other environmentally friendly practices into their business such as composting, solar panels, and reclaiming water.

Bruce and Sherifa have put years of time and effort into incorporating these community friendly practices into their restaurant and catering business. To reflect that, Sherifa wanted to do some new marketing that would reflect their green personality. The photos in this article are just a few that Laurrapin Grill will be using to update their website and promote their business. Her concept was simple, like the food she wanted to showcase. Real people, in the here and now, embracing traditions from the distant past, to improve our lives now and in the future.

Bruce and Sherifa are committed to local community projects and devoted to raising awareness and funds for charities and non-profits from local arts programs to Moveable Feast which provides nutritional counseling and groceries for home bound patients living with HIV/AIDS. Bruce works with the Boys and Girls Club of Harford County raising thousands of dollars each year for children's programs. He is on the planning committee for Hospice Regatta, and created a dinner on-site for over 800 people using only donated product and volunteer staff. Last year alone the regatta raised over \$100,000 for Harford Hospice, a non-profit organization providing physical, psychological and spiritual care for terminally ill patients and their families. For the past four years, Bruce has supported the Red Pump Ball raising funds to benefit Upper Chesapeake Health's Cardiovascular Programs. He was recognized as an Unsung Hero by the Association of Fundraising Professionals October 2009. In May 2010 he was Awarded the Governor's Citation in recognition of his commitment to buying local and the support he has demonstrated for the "Farm to Restaurant, Buy Local Program". Harford County Executive David Craig recognized Laurrapin as Outstanding Harford County Business in September 2010. Bruce is currently serving on Harford County Obesity Task Force to educate and promote healthy eating practices.

If you are looking for a model of civic responsibility and all around good neighbors... I would direct you to Bruce and Sherifa. If you are looking for a tasty meal, I would direct you to their restaurant, Laurrapin Grille. My personal favorites are the shrimp and grits appetizer, the pear gorgonzola salad, and the lemon cucumber salmon or absolutely anything off the dessert menu! But I urge you to visit and develop your own favorites!

