

2ND ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!

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STEVE AND ALI RIVERA August 14, 2010

It Happened in North Beach

A man about town and his leading lady

| By Mackenzie Wagoner |
| Photographs by Jamie Grenough |

When public relations guru Steve Rivera headed to North Beach's Iluna Basque in 2006, he was going for the bottomless Peronis, the North Beach Festival, and the raging Italy versus U.S. World Cup party. Donning the ensemble of a 1970s Italian soccer player (complete with fake mustache and mullet, up-to-here shorts, and a team of friends in tow), he was certainly not looking for love. But love is what swept through the door of the Washington Square haunt when Steve spotted Ali Sandler—a knockout with balsamic vinegar eyes. "I said in my head

I'm going to marry that girl," he remembers. "But then another guy walked in behind her." Steve glanced down at his shorts, mustache, and empty Peroni and decided that it was not the day to be daring.

But as fate would have it, Steve's dream girl continued to haunt him: She showed up in the background of a photo from the World Cup celebration, at a friend's party the following week, and finally, in the seat behind him at a Giants versus A's game the very next morning. Steve decided enough was enough, convinced her friend to swap

seats, and spent the remainder of the game winning over her heart.

Over the next few months the YouTube music partner manager (Ali) and the PR impresario could be seen tied at the hip at a myriad of concerts, events, and parties. But it was a trip to Italy that sealed the North Beach romance. "I went to Portofino when I was 17 and decided that it was where I would propose to my future wife," says Steve. So after the "best day ever" and the "best dinner ever" in Portofino, Steve popped the question on the "best balcony ever." Ali happily accepted.

To kick off the best wedding ever, the lovebirds swooped in via helicopter to meet close friends and family for a rehearsal dinner by chef Joseph Manzare of Zuppa at Rivera Vineyards—the family vineyard where Steve spent countless al-fresco meals with his brother and parents. Ali, a domestic goddess in the kitchen, presented her bridesmaids with her favorite recipes, handwritten and tucked into aprons along with cooking utensils. Steve outfitted bottles of Rivera Vineyards wine with custom labels. Each bottle sported a photograph of his groomsmen. The "vintage" was year they had met, the "appellation" was the location of their first meeting, and the wine description mirrored the personality of the friend in question. The party rolled into the evening with photographer Jamie Grenough catching every moment.



Venue: Solage Calistoga
Event Planner: Katherine Noller-Fernandez, Custom Celebrations
Flowers: Asiel Design
Catering: Solage Calistoga
Cake: Sweetie Pies
Photography: Jamie Grenough
Cigar Rolling and Music: Oye Productions
DJ: DJ Solomon
Dress: Anna Maier/Ulla-Maija (Marina Morrison)
Hair and Makeup: Armando Sarabia
Invitations: Emma Rose Papery
Rings: Martin Katz
Suite: Canali, Daskalos Fashions
Helicopter: Wine Country Helicopters

The hip, unassuming allure of Solage Calistoga won the couple over for the ceremony and reception. In line with tradition, Ali was escorted by her mother down the aisle to Richard Wagner's "Here Comes the Bride." Their yellow lab, Daisy, was the ring bearer. "We wanted a relaxed wedding that included traditional elements, because we're both very professional but mellow," says Ali.

The aesthetic of Solage inspired the palette of green, beige, and grey accented with warm purple. The couple marked the celebration with personal touches: vintage cigar boxes and labels made for charming escort cards, and guests took home personalized bottles of hot sauce for favors.

The focus of the wedding was friends and family. "My brother Jared gave a 40-minute speech, and it was just beautiful," remembers Steve. During the ceremony, Ali's mother read a message from Ali's recently deceased grandfather, written months before. Ali's 98-year-old grandmother was among the attendees. And every member of the family took a ride during the chair dance.

"It was an eclectic wedding in a beautiful venue with a lot of love," smiles Ali. "I remember taking a moment to look around and seeing every single person there having a great time."

Clockwise from left: A four-tiered cake by Sweetie Pies defied gravity; sparse branches were hung with bouquets; cigar boxes and labels were used for escort cards; the couple wrote their own vows for the relaxed ceremony; the groom's brother gave a lively 40-minute speech at dinner.

At left, clockwise from top: The couple arrived at the rehearsal dinner via helicopter; costumed accordionist, the Great Morgani performed at the rehearsal dinner; the focus of the dinner was on friends and family; guests enjoyed wine from Rivera Vineyards.