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Country Bling

ERIKA ROMANO — RUSS MARSALA

Breezy Ranch, Branchville

HOW THEY MET: It was an “instant connection,” says Russ Marsala, 45, of Brentwood, New York, when he first met Erika Romano, 42, of Brooklyn. After meeting online, the couple set a date to grab drinks. Immediately, the feelings were undeniable.

WILL YOU MARRY ME?: On May 9, 2014, Russ, armed with a dozen red roses, got down on one knee in the kitchen of the couple’s home, taking Erika by surprise. He had been holding the ring in his pocket the entire day before, searching for the right time to pop the question. The “spur-of-the-moment” proposal was effortless, simple and completely perfect.

THE PLANNING: “I didn’t want the traditional wedding reception,” says Erika, who grew up riding horses at Breezy Ranch, her family-owned property in Branchville. The couple knew instantly that they would be married at the ranch. So with only a little time, and a

great deal of help from their trusty wedding team, the rustic barn that Erika’s father had built was entirely repurposed: A floor was put down, air-conditioning brought in, up-lighting installed and a caterer hired. A warm, blissful country wedding venue was created in less than five months.

I DO: On September 20, 2014, vintage horse-drawn carriages overflowing with mums welcomed 264 friends and family members to Breezy Ranch. Outside under a tent, Erika walked down an aisle of rose petals, carrying a mixture of garden roses, hypericum berries, fiddle ferns and seeded eucalyptus hand-tied with lace.

THE COCKTAIL HOUR: Guests snacked on king crab legs, shrimp cocktail and clams on the half shell while they drank cold brews from the beer garden set upon bales of hay.

THE RECEPTION: Awed guests then moved

into the stunning reception room that was once a stark riding arena. Walls were draped in cream organza, while lanterns and chandeliers hung from the ceiling. A mix of rectangular and square tables gave the room a modern look, while burlap table runners enhanced the country atmosphere. Centerpieces set in crystal containers added just the right amount of bling, turning the rustic barn into a chic, intimate space. Erika then removed the elaborate train from her two-in-one custom gown and showcased her bridal cowboy boots.

THE MENU: The couple’s only regret? That they didn’t have a chance to eat. Guests raved about dinner selections like lobster tails, veal chops, American lamb and risotto. “I heard that the food was great,” laughs Russ.

HONEYMOON: After 13 days in Italy, the couple is at home in Merrick, New York.

—Denise K. Potter



THE details

PHOTOGRAPHER 4 Eyes Photography, NYC

WEDDING PLANNER JoAnn Gregoli, Elegant Occasions

CATERER Jacques Exclusive Caterers, Hazlet **FLORAL DESIGN** Still Life Event Design, Morristown **BRIDE'S GOWN** Lilla at Monica's Bridal, Brooklyn

HAIR De La Mer Salon, Bellmore, NY **MAKEUP** Victoria Elizabeth Makeup, Mineola, NY **COWBOY BOOTS** DSW **BRIDESMAID GOWNS** Monica's Bridal, Brooklyn

GROOM'S TUXEDO Esquire Tuxedos, Merrick, NY

CEREMONY MUSIC 3 West Productions, Leola, PA

DEEJAY Posh Entertainment, Cranford **BAND** Southbound Islandia, NY

VIDEOGRAPHER Treasured Memories, Massapequa, NY

DRONE SkyCamUsa **TENTS** Main Attractions, Edison

LIGHTING Sound Defying Entertainment, Denville

















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