



R&D KITCHEN OF THE YEAR

KITCHEN SPY COLETTE ROSSANT REPORTS ON A LANDMARK FARMER-CHEF COLLABORATION. PHOTOS COURTESY THE CHEF'S GARDEN.

On June 29 of this year, after much communal striving, the Culinary Vegetable Institute was dedicated by its founders, the Jones family, operators of The Chef's Garden on Lake Erie in Huron, Ohio, where more than 1,100 varieties of vegetables, fruits, herbs, and edible flowers are tended each year. Dressed for the occasion in blue overalls and red bow ties, the family presided over the ceremonies before a large crowd of chefs from all over the United States, a group of local foodies, and a spattering of journalists. The Culinary Vegetable Institute is, as stated by Lee Jones, a retreat and a learning center "dedicated to the sharing of knowledge between the chef and the farmer." Within the overall institute, Veggie U has official nonprofit status, as it is dedicated to education, which permits, for example, the Jones family to build a program to reach 93,000 schools, with both curriculum and products, "so kids can see what a real carrot tastes like." As the parent institute has the option to make a profit, it is also available for R&D or corporate team building.

A short drive from The Chef's Garden, the 11,000-square-foot building, designed by Wilderness Log Homes and