


Alexia and Rhys Gawlak are the day-to-day managers of Swine & Sons. Their parnters are James and Julie Petrakis, the culinary power couple behind the region's first gastropub, The Ravenous Pig.



## IT'S PORCINE, BUT PRECIOUS.

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This brand-new eatery elevates take-out food to a new level. But that's no surprise, considering the team behind Swine & Sons Provisions.

— BY RONA GINDIN —  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY RAFAEL TONGOL

This is how Swine & Sons began. (Hint: It's run by People Who Get Things Done.) Rhys Gawlak, pointing toward a former mobile-phone repair shop: "James, what do you think? Maybe we can do a storefront." James Petrakis, nodding agreement: "Yeah. Let's do a storefront."

A quick six months later, that humble Fairbanks Avenue retail space has been transformed into a countrified-yet-chic grocery called Swine & Sons Provisions. The purveyor sells "honest food," packaged to go, for those seeking more than a chain-made sub and less than a full-service restaurant meal.

"Honest food" is the be-all of Alexia Gawlack, who, with her husband, Rhys, runs the operation. Behind them and beside them (and fronting them) are the establishment's owners, James and Julie Petrakis, the culinary power couple behind the Orlando area's first gastropub, the Ravenous Pig.

The Petrakis are also the wunderkinds who turned a ridiculously difficult-to-reach building into the bustling Cask & Larder, which now shares a parking lot with Swine & Sons. The site was once occupied by the venerable Le Cordon Bleu and Harper's Tavern before becoming an O'Boys Bar-B-Q for a time.

Swine & Sons sells sandwiches, charcuteries, ready-to-grill meats, desserts and condiments. Well, mostly. Some regulars stop in just for a pint of house-churned chocolate ice cream, or a growler of IPA brewed across the way at Cask & Larder.

Each evening between 5 and 7 p.m., yet more fans stop by to pick up the night's single grab-and-go, full-dinner option. Tuesday's meal might be barbecue brisket meatloaf with brown-butter-whipped potatoes, charred broccoli and a dinner roll, while Wednesday's may include fried chicken with macaroni and cheese, marinated tomatoes, hot honey and cornbread. The price is always \$15.

From the slightly spicy caramel corn to the chocolate-peanut butter whoopee pies, from the ribeye hot dogs to the crab cake lunch special, that honest food *raison d'être* prevails. Swine & Sons is meant to be a place to buy the types of scratch-made, Southern-influenced foods served in the Ravenous Pig and Cask & Larder dining rooms — but without the full-blown table-service element.

Swine & Sons does have casual seating areas for those who'd like to gobble down their goodies before returning to the car.

"We make our foods out of real ingredients," says Alexia. "There's so much junky-junk out there that I think providing people access to real food is a community service."

Take the signature cheese biscuits, which are sold both ready-to-eat and frozen in six-packs. An ambitious home-



The pastrami sandwich on marble rye with smoked sauerkraut takes 12 days to make, if you count preparation of the components. The country pork terrine (right) includes pork liver and is highlighted by pistachios, dried cherries and an assortment of spices.



maker might forgo the poppin' fresh dough and even the Bisquick, choosing to sift, mix and bake with all-natural ingredients. At Swine & Sons, the biscuits are so much more involved that they make a statement.

"They're a good representation of how we're trying to show the mash-up of styles of Ravenous and Cask," Rhys says. "Cask's biscuits are traditional, made with White Lily flour and shortening. At Ravenous, they're buttery and layered with rich gruyere. The Swine & Sons version has the White Lily flour, both butter and shortening, plus white cheddar and shaved Parmesan as well as chives and a dash of cayenne pepper."

And remember, these are just humble biscuits. So you can only imagine the complexities involved in making a Swine-style pastrami sandwich. "The sandwich you're eating started 12

days before you got it," Rhys says.

Here's an abbreviated version of the process: "We trim the brisket, then brine it for 10 days in salt, sugar, black pepper, coriander, thyme, bay leaf, garlics and a touch of orange zest to give it that little Florida twist. We let it sit for 12 hours to dry under refrigeration with a fan on it. Then we rub on more spices and another touch of orange zest. We smoke it for four to five hours over hickory, then let it cool for 12 hours."

And they're not done yet. "Within those 12 days, we've started our mustard, which takes four days to make. We hydrate mustard seeds for three days, then purée them with vinegar, salt, sugar and coriander, then let that sit overnight to mellow."

So, how about the sauerkraut? If you've read this far, you know it doesn't come packaged in

plastic. "That takes three or four days, too. We shred the cabbage, salt it and leave it out to ferment for three days. We give it a light smoke as well, which adds a twist."

Only then will the staff spread mustard on both sides of the marble rye bread (which comes from Groveland's Pane D'Or bakery), add Swiss cheese, pastrami and sauerkraut and cut the lunch staple in half.

"That's why our sandwiches are a little higher priced," Rhys explains, noting that a typical sandwich shop would charge less than \$12 for a more run-of-the-mill version. Trust us; this deceptively simple masterpiece is worth the extra few bucks.

Since so many Winter Park homes have outdoor kitchens, Swine & Sons stocks meats ready to sear on your grill. On a recent afternoon, the



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The interior of Swine & Sons has a rustic, homey feel, and there's limited seating inside. Mostly, though, patrons pick up carry-out meals to enjoy at home.

display case featured marinated chickens and smoked lamb ribs among its options.

Over the years, Rhys has made his name as an artisan sausage-maker. His products have typically been served only in restaurants on charcuterie platters. But now they're available retail, as is his country pork terrine. Visitors can see his salumi — such as sopressata and duck hams, plus others from small producers — curing through a window in a small walk-in cooler.

Next up is an expanded retail line. Alexia talks about a frozen cookie-dough roll, which would be Swine's take on those Nestlé slice-and-bake products sold at Publix. Rhys gets animated thinking up compound butters; maybe he'll start toying with wild mushroom or truffle spreads.

"Piggybacking" off the restaurants, Rhys explains, will make these products affordable for customers and profitable for Swine & Sons. "For just the store, it would be too expensive to order a pound of morels," he adds. "But if I'm ordering nine pounds, which I'll use here and at Cask, I'll pay half the price. I have buying power."

Having the Gawlaks as operating partners seems logical for the Petrakis. Three of the four chefs grew up in Winter Park (Rhys is from Fort Pierce), all four studied at the Culinary Institute

of America, and the quartet's local careers have overlapped for more than a decade.

Alexia worked for Julie at Primo in 2004, then with James at Luma on Park and, later, at The Ravenous Pig. Rhys — who hired Alexia in 1999, when he ran the kitchen of Dexter's Thornton Park — then worked at Norman's before reuniting with his former kitchen compadre when Ravenous debuted. Rhys was most recently chef de cuisine at Cask, where he still has a management position. (Alexia also spent five years at the Winter Park Whole Foods and nine months at the Orlando World Marriott's Siro.)

So much of a family are these four that the name Swine & Sons is in part a nod to their tot-size offspring. Since their early days cooking together, both couples have had children — two apiece — and three of those youngsters are, indeed, sons. The daughter, apparently, will have to wait until the next venture.

Keeping with the piggish theme of the original Ravenous, and offering gastropub-quality food to enjoy at home, Swine & Sons invites Winter Parkers to enjoy its farm-to-table provisions at home. No junky-junk allowed. 🐷

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