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With the Passion To Drive Change
Molly Hawks
Owner/Chef, Hawks and Hawks Provisions + Public House

After frequent visits to Granite Bay to visit her parents, who had retired there in 2005, Molly Hawks and her husband, Michael Fagnoni, felt there was a lack of family-owned, individualized restaurant concepts in the area. “Granite Bay is a meat-and-potatoes kind of community, and it seemed like the only options were big chain restaurants,” she notes. After attending culinary school as a reprieve from medical school, and working her way up in the kitchen in San Francisco’s Village Pub, Hawks decided it was time to shake up the local fine dining scene. She opened Hawks restaurant in 2007 with her husband. The restaurant was immediately successful, and the couple expanded the concept to Hawks Provisions + Public House in East Sacramento in 2015.

You opened Hawks before people were using the term “farm to fork” in Sacramento. How has the local F2F movement shaped the dining scene since then?
There’s a lot of curiosity among our customers about fun items we bring in for our menu. The farm-to-fork movement has brought so much awareness to where food comes from and how that impacts quality and flavor, which allows us to bring in produce from small farms and actually see it sell. We do a dish with roasted peppers and jalapeno cream, for example, that’s such a simple dish. But the peppers are just perfect, and people get it because they understand what we’re doing.

There’s been a lot of growth in the city as a whole and especially in the local restaurant scene since you opened your doors. How have you adapted over the years?
The recession hit not long after we opened, and that’s really when we learned how to run a restaurant. Rent was expensive and we had a hard time for a while, but we stayed true to ourselves and our product. We learned how to tune in to what’s needed and not be afraid to make changes. That’s when we started offering a Sunday Supper, which was a three-course prix-fixe menu for $35. People loved it.

Any creative ideas that didn’t do as well?
I had this idea to do picnic baskets once, and I was convinced it would be awesome. I think we sold about five! We’re constantly fine-tuning.

You’ve had three kids while you’ve been running Hawks. What’s it like to grow your family while simultaneously growing your business?
It’s been crazy. My kids have grown up in the restaurant. I was constantly carrying my oldest around on my hip when we first opened, and I was kind of embarrassed about it at first, like, “Oh my God, we have this fine-dining restaurant and here I am with a baby in the dining room.” But our guests were really receptive to the fact that we were a family-owned restaurant. I don’t think it would have gone over as well in San Francisco or Los Angeles, but it’s a more friendly scene here. It brought some personality.

Where do you go to eat when you’re not at Hawks?
We eat at our restaurant a lot because we know our kids won’t get kicked out! But we also love sushi at Kru, and even though it’s not a full restaurant, I love what Ginger Elizabeth is doing. [1]