

# DINING HALL OF FAME

This year, *Orlando* magazine honors restaurant owners and chefs, a wine educator and a bartender as Dining Hall of Fame inductees. Our Hall of Fame recognizes individuals and establishments with lasting ties to the local dining scene.

#### CRITERIA FOR INDUCTION

- Minimum of five years in the local restaurant industry
- Reputation for quality food and/or service

#### CRITERIA FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

- Contributions to local industry

#### INDUCTEES

##### **ARMANDO MARTORELLI**

He's been a fixture on the Orlando restaurant scene for 16 years.

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##### **FRANK JUGE, Ph.D.**

An expert on all things vino, the Rosen College professor is our Lifetime Achievement honoree.

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##### **JAMES AND JULIE PETRAKIS**

The owners of The Ravenous Pig have made it easier for other chefs to be adventurous.

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##### **IVY**

At the Bösendorfer Lounge, she pours over the details of tending bar.

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##### **EDDIE NICKELL AND NICHOLAS OLIVIERI**

They're having fun with funky restaurant concepts that succeed.

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ARTICLES BY JOSEPH HAYES  
PHOTOS BY NORMA LOPEZ MOLINA



## ARMANDO MARTORELLI

Living and loving the business that brought him to Orlando.

**TIME IS FLEXIBLE AT ARMANDO'S, A NEW restaurant in Winter Park's Hannibal Square district. At night, tables fill and empty at a dizzying rate, the crowd is varied and noisy, and orders and waiters fly. During the day, lunch-goers linger, the waiters are older, and Italian pop music plays in the background. It becomes a restaurant that could be found on almost any corner of Naples or Rome. Owner/chef Armando Martorelli would be satisfied with a typically Italian, leisurely *ristorante*—in fact, he has one, Trattoria Toscana, just down the road on Park Avenue. But he wouldn't be happy.**

Martorelli, 46, started running restaurants in Italy when he was 19. His father had worked at the strategically important U.S. naval base in Naples, exposing the young Armando to an idealized America. Given the chance to move to Orlando in 1996, Martorelli jumped. "I couldn't speak a word of English," he says. "It was a disaster."

And yet he pressed on, opening five local restaurants since then. The namesake Armando's is the one closest to his soul. "It suits me," he says. "This place indicates who I am." Martorelli inhabits this restaurant; he wears it like a coat. "I chose the colors, I chose the bar, I picked the lighting. I feel like it's a prize from God. This is what 16 years of struggle brings you."

He has always strived to present the honest food of central and southern Italy, of his homeland. He believes there should be a separation between something you can have at his restaurants and what you can have everywhere else.

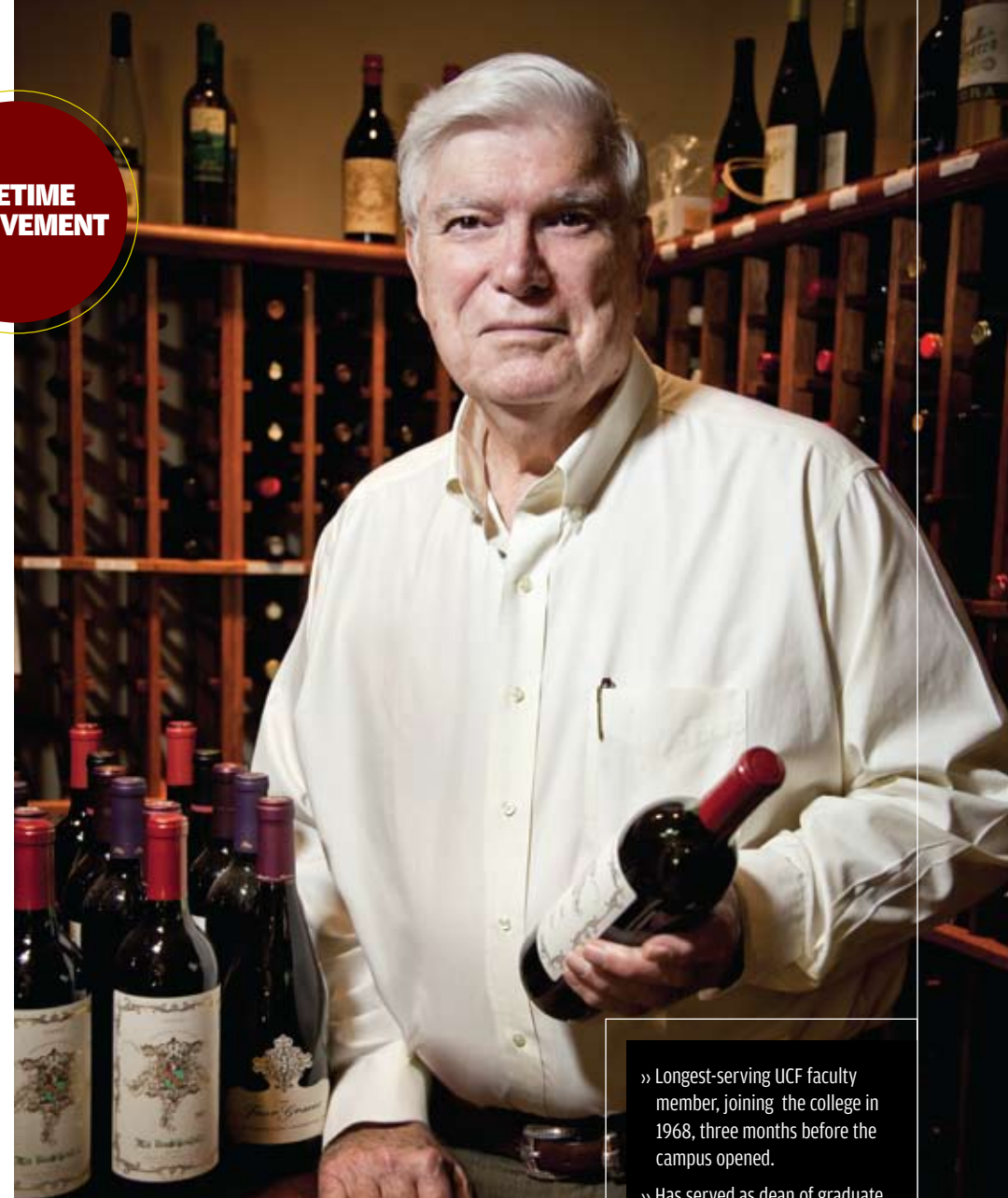
"I came here not to be cute," he says. "I know exactly what I'm doing."

» Restaurants: Bravissimo (1998), Babbo (2002), Aroma (2007), Trattoria Toscana (2009) and Armando's (2011). The last two remain open; Aroma now operates under a different owner.

» Armando's custom-designed wood-fired oven can reach 1,000 degrees and cook a pizza in two minutes.



"There are truly miraculous wines that are priced out of reach of most humans, but I also enjoy an \$8 bottle of Mouton Cadet."



» Longest-serving UCF faculty member, joining the college in 1968, three months before the campus opened.

» Has served as dean of graduate studies, associate vice president, acting vice president for research, vice provost and acting provost.

» At Rosen College since 2003

## FRANK JUGE, Ph.D.

He's only too happy to educate UCF students about wine.

**ON THE RATE MY PROFESSORS WEBSITE (RATEMYPROFESSORS.COM),** where students give honest and sometimes scathing reviews of their teachers, one Rosen College of Hospitality Management student offered this succinct observation of Frank Juge: "Dr. Juge is a very smart man and knows a lot about everything."

Juge, 71, does indeed know a lot about everything. He is more versed in wine than most so-called experts, and talks about digital cameras and computers with equal fervor ("When the new iPad is available," he says with excitement, "I'm buying it.>").

He has a doctorate in organic chemistry and is an emeritus professor of chemistry and professor of hospitality management at the Rosen College. In 1974, Juge developed the first science of wine course at UCF. When *Orlando Sentinel* headlines proclaimed, "Professor Luring Kids into Science With Wine," Juge knew he'd hit the right note. "I get to teach about, and taste, five Rieslings before lunch," he says, "and I'm being paid for it." Juge figures he's taught more than 2,500 students the ins and outs of wine.

At the Rosen College, the largest hospitality school in the world, Juge teaches students about service, wine selection and pairing knowledge, and how to pass that on to restaurant staff. "A good story sells wine," he says, "and I have a story for every wine."

In his quest to educate, he invests students with practical information, but also makes them question common wisdom. Are tastings even valid, he asks them, and does describing wine as having notes of saddle leather and horse manure really help anyone?

This native of New Orleans is a certified sommelier, but not a wine snob. "There are truly miraculous wines that are priced out of reach of most humans, but I also enjoy an \$8 bottle of Mouton Cadet."

Juge is a remarkably happy person—one might even use the vintage word "chipper." Maybe it's the constant exposure to good wine. Or maybe he just loves what he's doing.



» Both were nominated twice, James Beard Foundation "Best Chef, South"  
 » James nominated twice, *Food & Wine Magazine* "People's Best New Chef"

## JAMES & JULIE PETRAKIS

They make a great couple—of excellent chefs.

**JAMES AND JULIE PETRAKIS ARE PARTNERS IN ALL THINGS. TWICE** nominated as "Best Chefs, South" by the James Beard Foundation, the Oscars of food, it's telling that they've been the only chefs nominated as a couple.

They have an interesting split in The Ravenous Pig kitchen: Julie is in charge of pastry and tweaking the ever-changing seasonal dishes on the menu; James does everything else—"except make any comments about the pastry," Julie says.

"Where else would we want to work?" James asks. "Yes, they're 15-hour days, but if one of us was a banker, we'd never see each other."

Opened in 2007 in Winter Park, "The Pig" has garnered acclaim and prestige for the two chefs, and the Orlando food scene as a whole, making it easier for other adventurous chefs to experiment on local taste buds. Their new Southern eclectic restaurant, Cask & Larder, will open in August in the former Harper's Tavern location on West Fairbanks Avenue.

Restaurants are a family affair for the Petrakis clan. James' Greek grandfather opened several diners in Gainesville; his father, John, owns several McDonald's in Central Florida; and his brother, Brian, owns the Greens & Grille chain.

"Our parents live nearby," Julie says. "We both grew up in Winter Park. This is our neighborhood; it pushes us."

The chefs, both 34, went to the University of Florida at the same time but didn't know each other. They met at the prestigious Culinary Institute of America in New York. James has cooked at Atelier in New York City, Seasons 52 and Luma on Park; Julie was in the kitchens at the Bacchanalia restaurant in Atlanta, New York's Waldorf Astoria hotel, Capriccio Grill at The Peabody Orlando, and opened the acclaimed Primo Orlando in the JW Marriott Orlando, Grande Lakes.

"Take pride in being a cook," James says.

He and Julie have every reason to be proud.

"Our parents live nearby. We both grew up in Winter Park. This is our neighborhood; it pushes us."

—Julie Petrakis

## IVY

The bartender is on a first-name basis with everyone.

**IN THE BÖSENDORFER LOUNGE AT THE GRAND** Bohemian Hotel, guests wearing jackets and ties, women in little black dresses, obscure lawyers, working musicians and famous NBA players all stand around the bar and wait for Ivy.

"I am a bartender," Ivy says. "It's hard. It's not all glamour. But if I had to work in an office with just two or three people, I'd go nuts. I'm at my best with the rhythm and flow of a busy bar."

Ivy's been at the Grand Bohemian for eight years, and in that time has served the famous, rich and powerful as well as the ordinary who either live here or are just passing through. "I try to figure the customer out, what I can get them that they'd really like. *Really* like." How does she do that? "I don't want to give away all my secrets," she laughs.

Blonde, perky and outgoing, and constantly aware of her surroundings, she is a very private person in a very public profession, and doesn't share her last name or personal details. "Cher is Cher, Madonna is Madonna, I'm just Ivy."

Now in her 40s, she has sold shoes and cleaned out horse stables, but it was a bartending job while in college that started her career. "I was waiting for the skies to part and someone to tell me what to declare as my major, and the day that happens I'll go right back to school and finish."

Behind the bar, she is an efficient explosion of constant motion. She has a good smile and a great laugh, her eyes always scanning the bar, even when she's muddling mint for a mojito or pulling a draft beer. She recognizes drinks by the dregs in a glass, and she serves a generous pour.

"Can I get you a drink?" she asks, leaning across the bar, and her eyes light up.

There's no pressure—she'll figure out what you *really* want. Just call her Ivy.



» Bartender, 23 years  
 » At Hard Rock Café, 6 years  
 » At Grand Bohemian, 8 years

» Funky Monkey opened on Mills Avenue in 2008, with a second location on International Drive in 2009; Bananas Diner, 2010; Prickly Pear and Nick's Italian Kitchen, 2011

## EDDIE NICKELL AND NICHOLAS OLIVIERI

Their funky business model is a recipe for unconventional success.

**TAKE TWO AMERICAN CUISINE RESTAURANTS SERVING SUSHI** with a side order of cross-dressing waitresses, a diner with a Drag Gospel brunch, a Southwestern steak house and a downtown Italian bistro, and add two bold restaurateurs who have literally built their business by hand, and you have a recipe for unorthodox success.

Eddie Nickell (left) and his partner of 23 years, Nicholas Olivieri, both 45, took \$40,000 of their own money and cast-off bar furniture from Morton's Steakhouse, and opened Funky Monkey Wine Company on Mills Avenue in 2008, hammering shelves and rewiring ovens in their off-hours. The second FM location in Pointe Orlando soon followed, with Bananas Diner, Prickly Pear and Nick's Italian Kitchen the latest additions to the lineup.


"I consider myself the last of a dying breed of tuxedoed fine dining," Nickell says. Given the tone of Funky Monkey and Bananas, that might seem like an odd statement, but Nickell has standards. "We still have real linens, and crystal on the tables." Nickell gives the impression of being the dryly humorous, no-nonsense partner, while Olivieri laughs and leans into a conversation to fill in details.

"Eddie started designing Funky Monkey, from menu to design," Olivieri says, "seven years before it opened."

Nickell has been in the restaurant business since he was 15, working at a Howard Johnson's in Middletown, Ohio. Olivieri sold air filtration systems before moving into hotel management in Dayton, Ohio. Relocating to Orlando, Olivieri was opening manager at the JW Marriott Orlando, Grande Lakes, where Nickell opened Primo in 2003 and later became hotel sommelier and general manager of Dux at The Peabody Orlando.

The pair doesn't take success for granted. "Every day I wake up in awe," Nickell says. "I look at what we've done and it's pretty amazing, going from a \$40,000 investment to \$6 million in sales. And it's still just the two of us—no partners, no loans and no debt."

The FMI restaurants reflect Nickell's and Olivieri's long-standing dreams. Bananas is a re-creation of the old HoJo days; Nickell's quest for a Southwestern-concept restaurant is answered by Prickly Pear; Nick's satisfies Olivieri's yearning for a place to serve prized Italian family recipes.

"We're at every Friday night drag show at [the Funky Monkey at I-Drive's] Pointe Orlando, every brunch at Bananas, and at every wine dinner at the restaurants," Nickell says. "Every night is a dinner party; we just invite everyone to sit at the table." 



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