



Located in the Old Fourth Ward—an area known for industrial chic but little warmth—Chef Jay Swift has managed to create a warm and modern restaurant with 4th & Swift in the old Southern Dairies building. A veteran of the Atlanta restaurant scene, with stints at Rainwater and South City Kitchen, Chef Swift has witnessed culinary trends come and go. But one trend that's here to stay is an emphasis on a cooking style that highlights locally grown and seasonal ingredients. Recently, I had to chance to talk to Chef Swift about modern American comfort food and owning his own restaurant.

All chefs dream of owning their own restaurant. How did you make it happen?

I've been planning this forever in my mind, and I started in earnest planning it on paper about two and half years

ago. Finding the right location was a big part of it. Once I found the right location for the right price, and got some investors together, I did it.

It seems like "locally grown" has become a big buzzword with Atlanta chefs. Did you always cook locally and seasonally?

I've always cooked seasonally—different things become available in different seasons. The quality of some things will fade out, the quality of other things will fade in. I also strive to cook the best ingredients in season.

You didn't grow up in the South. How did you manage to capture the warmth and "soul" of Southern cooking?

I grew up in Maryland, which is not the South, but not necessarily the North either. I just have reverence for the local ingredients. I went to places and you know

just learned how to do it. I took to it naturally I guess. It's good food. What we do here isn't all Southern, it's regional as well. 4th and Swift isn't just a Southern restaurant, it's a modern American restaurant.

What's your most popular dish?

We're seasonal, so this season we have a Brussels sprouts salad that seems to be the talk of the town. Fresh Brussels sprouts that we just flash fry real quick tossed with a little sherry vinegar served with a little crème fraîche, an apple cider reduction, some apple slices and some pistachios on top. It's a big hit—that's the big hit this fall. You know, we also do fresh pork three different ways called Three Little Pigs that's a dish people talk about. It changes from season to season. We'll see what happens in the spring.

What's the biggest difference between working at a restaurant and owning one?

Biggest difference? For me personally, I think the biggest difference is that it all comes down to me—never having to worry about someone else making the decisions. I like to take accountability that the buck stops here. The independence is great. I really like providing jobs to people. I love being an employer.

As a veteran of the Atlanta restaurant scene, how has Atlanta changed over the years?

Well, obviously, it's not the boom town it was 10 years ago. In the late 90s, you know, it was the dot.com bubble; it was pre-911. I think it's a lot harder to make it now; it's a lot more competitive now. It's still a great town; it's still the place to be.

I think the economy has changed, America has changed, the world has changed, but in the restaurant business, there's been a lot of chef-owned businesses especially in the last five years. A lot more chefs going at it, doing their own thing. Chefs are the ones driving the industry. That wasn't how it was 10 years ago.

And last, what's your advice for upcoming chefs?

Don't do it for the money. Just stick with what you're passionate about. That's it. Follow your passions.

Chef Jay Swift is owner and executive chef of 4th & Swift located at 621 North Ave. in Atlanta's historic Southern Dairies building. For more information, call 678-904-0160 or visit www.4thandswift.com