

## IN THE KNOW

from 1D

"I live here now," Wagner said. "I moved down here when we brought the truck down here."

He's especially interested to see how his budding food truck business can perform in another foodie market. If winning last weekend's People's Choice Award at the first Food Truck Wars in Fort Myers is any indication, Wagner may be onto something. His business model is working.

"It's been reassuring knowing that the five years we spent building this works in different places," he said.

In a field of about 40 trucks on Saturday, The Butcher's Son served about 300 people. The overcapacity crowd was impressive when compared to similar events in bigger cities his food trucks have participated in, Wagner said.

"We ran out of slider bread with 40 minutes left," he said.

In Dallas, unique sliders are the truck's top-selling items hands down, accounting for about 30 percent of total sales.

But, in Southwest Florida, the truck usually sells more quesadillas and sandwiches, rather than sliders.

Because so many trucks were at Top Rocker Field at Six Bends Harley-Davidson, more patrons wanted sliders so that they could sample more items, Wagner said.

"Sliders provide variety without a full sandwich," he said.

The Butcher's Son truck offers six sliders for \$4 each or \$11.74 for a triple combo, five sandwiches from \$8.10 to \$8.75, two quesadillas for \$8.15, and other items such as Voo Doo Tots — pieces of deep-fried, grated potato topped



TIM ATEN/STAFF

The Butcher's Son food truck, co-owned by Jon Wagner of Naples, serves hot dogs, brats and veggie sandwiches Monday to golfers during Caddy Appreciation Day at The Old Collier Golf Club in North Naples. The truck won the People's Choice Award Saturday at Food Truck Wars in Fort Myers.

with braised beef, sautéed onions, currywurst sauce and curry powder.

Of the half dozen creative sliders on brioche rolls offered by The Butcher's Son, two are especially popular: Southern Hospitality, which features a buttermilk fried chicken tenderloin, garlic potato spread and white country gravy; and The Mac-N-Beefy, made with braised beef, a baked macaroni-and-cheese square, barbecue sauce and cheddar.

The third most popular slider — The Dead Elvis — is a dessert slider featuring Nutella, peanut butter and bacon.

"You either love it or you hate it," Wagner said. "We've had that item on our truck for a while. People either say that sounds terrible, or that sounds amazing. It all depends on your preference."

Four items on the truck's

menu feature Johnsonville sausages. Johnsonville's Famous Double Brat sandwich includes two beer-simmered bratwurst, sauerkraut, fresh onion and spicy mustard on a brioche bun. Another sandwich, as well as a slider and a quesadilla, build upon the company's chipotle Monterey Jack chicken sausage.

Wagner co-founded Two Trucks in 2011 with Dain Pool, whose father owns Pool's Restaurant Group, which operates Gandolfo's New York Delicatessen. While getting his master's degree in business from DePaul University in Chicago, Wagner was introduced to the Pools through mutual friends of his parents.

"We sat down and discussed our thoughts and goals and what we wanted to accomplish. They were pretty similar and we got along pretty well, so we de-

cid to partner and start food trucks," he said.

They launched the business in Dallas because there weren't many food trucks there already, the weather is nice most of the year, and the Pools were originally from there and still had family and ties, Wagner said.

"We have a total of six trucks with four different concepts," he said. "Our goal is to continue to grow and add trucks and potentially add brands, as well."

Their food truck brands now include What's the Scoop ice cream, Texas Burrito Co.'s high-end burritos, and Gandolfo's Deli, which sells traditional Reuben and pastrami sandwiches on rye with unique twists.

"What's great about our trucks, no matter what the menu we have or what we do, there's some sort of item for everyone," Wag-

ner said. "We do offer something for everyone, even kids for that matter."

The Butcher's Son truck in Naples started in December catering private events, such as Monday's Caddy Appreciation Day at Old Collier Golf Club in North Naples. The truck, stocked with food prepped by its five full-time employees at Your Pro Kitchen off Old 41 Road in North Naples, started showing up at public events in January, and more is yet to come, Wagner said.

"Basically, I could see adding another concept here," he said. "We have to take it one step at a time and get Butcher's Son to where it has to be before bringing the next brand down here. The goal is to get there as soon as possible. I'd love to see another truck here this year yet. The demand is going to dictate when we are going to bring another truck here."

For now, The Butcher's Son will roll to a lot of private events at corporate offices, with public appearances such as festivals and concerts announced on its Facebook page or a weekly schedule on its website, thebutchersson.com.

Businesses seeking to hire the local catering vehicle also can contact them through information online.

"We are trying to find places to go. It may be a one-time thing," Wagner said, noting they'll visit just a few buildings weekly and perhaps breweries and other places on the weekend.

In my opinion, you can't be going to the same place very, very often because you almost become a restaurant then and take away from the uniqueness of a food truck."

### MORE LOCAL RESTAURANT NEWS

■ **Thai Basil** perma-

nently closed in early April after operating for more than 15 years at 2616 U.S. 41 N. in Naples.

The local restaurant opened in July 1999 as Thai Basil & Sushi in the Courtyards Plaza, now anchored by Good Deals Appliance and LensCrafters. A second restaurant, Thai Basil Too, opened in 2004 in Bonita Springs, but it closed earlier.

The owners of the Naples restaurant were not available for comment, but this note to customers posted in the window of the former restaurant hints at its possible relocation:

"We would like to thank all of Thai Basil's valuable customers. It has been a great 17 years serving the Naples area. Unfortunately, we will be closed permanently at this location, but we hope to see you soon. Please keep in touch with us via social media for our new opening."

The restaurant owners have "thaibasilnaples" Facebook and Instagram accounts.

■ **Zaxby's**, a fast-casual fried chicken restaurant franchise, hatched its second area location Monday in a Gulf Coast Town Center outparcel lot near McDonald's and PDQ off Ben Hill Griffin Parkway. It launched its first regional location in 2014 on U.S. 41 in Fort Myers.

Zaxby's, 17500 Ben Hill Griffin Parkway, is open 10:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. Sundays through Wednesdays, and 10:30 a.m. to midnight Thursdays through Saturdays. For information, call (239) 415-1688 or go to zaxbys.com.

For the latest in local restaurants coming and going, see Tim Aten's "In the Know" columns archived at [naplesnews.com/intheknow](http://naplesnews.com/intheknow), and on Facebook at [facebook.com/timatena](http://facebook.com/timatena). [intheknow](http://intheknow).