

New pub owners promise traditional food - and tapas

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Julie and Steve Penney with the keys to their new pub, The Swan in Monks Eleigh Picture: Julie Penney

[The Swan in Monks Eleigh has new owners after being closed since February.](#)

Nobody likes to see their local pub shut down. It's villages that are hit hardest by these losses, and many can claim to have lost their 'hub' in recent years.

So it's great news that, following closure in February 2018, new owners Julie and Stephen Penney have flung open the doors to The Swan in Monks Eleigh again.

Julie worked in many pubs in the Sudbury area in her 20s, going on to work for Delphi before taking redundancy in April. "I'd always wanted to run a pub for myself," she says, "but I had three young children and it wouldn't have been fair for me to pursue it. Now the children have grown up and have children of their own, and I'm 50 this year so it's now or never! We saw The Swan and fell in love with it!"

The Swan has long been known for its food, and Julie says the couple want to take it back to being a real country pub, selling good, honest, home-cooked dishes without any airs and graces.

“We’d been coming into the village for a few months prior to getting the keys,” adds Julie, “and we spent a lot of time speaking to the locals. They really didn’t want fine dining. They wanted a traditional pub so that’s what we’re giving them and it’s working really well. We’re already being very well supported and people are coming in and saying lovely things about us. Customers are really happy it’s back to a proper pub so they can come in more often rather than visiting as a once a month treat.”

Everything on the menu is made from scratch, using meat from Alan Leeder in Boxford 10 minutes up the road, and vegetables from the same supplier that stocks the community shop, which shares a car park with the pub.

New chef Matt Perry’s dad is Spanish, so as well as the regular menu of pub favourites, Julies says to look out for the tapas menu, to be served once a week (“probably on Tuesdays”).

Typical dishes on tapas night will include chicken in a creamy white wine and rosemary sauce, sautéed white cabbage with bacon and peppers in a paprika marinade, spicy beans and chorizo in a rich tomato sauce, and panko pork with homemade garlic aioli dip.

Lunch times offer fish and chips, BLT sandwiches, homemade quiches and a hearty ploughmans with cheddar, Stilton and local ham, salad, homemade red onion chutney, pickles and a crusty roll.

And diners in the evening can expect to tuck into chunky slow-cooked chilli, homemade pies and other hearty, warming plates.

Families are more than welcome, says Julie, with board games and activities for them to get stuck into, and dogs are welcome at the bar, making the pub perfect for passing walkers.

Something they’ve already become renowned for in the month they’ve been in charge is Sunday roasts.

“It’s growing week on week,” says Julie. “We’re having to turn people away at the door because we’re fully booked which is both good and bad. We don’t want to send people off, but we also don’t want to over-promise and under-deliver so people really have to book for Sundays! We’re starting off slowly and we don’t want to run before we can walk. It’s just going so well at the moment.”