

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT, FOOD

# Mace & Crown Zeke's Beans & Bowls Norfolk Location Turns One

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“O.G. Poke” bowl with brown rice, cucumber and marinated tofu. Photo by Megan Snyder.

This month, Zeke's Beans & Bowls in Norfolk celebrates its first year in the NEON arts district of Downtown Norfolk. Though this funky café's namesake passed away in 2006, owners Nick Vitale and Mike Schirmer keep the memory of their friend alive by serving up fresh and authentic Hawaiian-style cuisine to East Coast city dwellers.

The beans — coffee beans, that is — are organic, direct trade and locally roasted. Ground to order, those beans are prepared pour-over style in a single-serve device similar to a French press. Full-bodied and piping hot, the resulting custom brew is well

worth the wait. Zeke's was the first to carry Three Ships Coffee, a roaster based in Virginia Beach. Ask for an Americano for the full effect.

The bowls are what Zeke's is known for though. For a taste of the Pacific, choose the poke bowl. Served raw, tender cubes of sushi-grade tuna are dressed in salty shoyu, toasty sesame oil and green onion nested atop a bed of alien green seaweed salad. Choose from a variety of combinations including the "Sweet & Spicy," which adds chunks of juicy pineapple and crushed red pepper flakes. Add rice to make a bowl a meal and sub tuna for tofu, free of charge.

If you prefer fruit with your coffee, try one of the many variations of Zeke's acai bowl. The standard "Breakfast Bowl" tops velvety smooth, deep purple acai purée with crunchy granola and fresh banana, strawberry and blueberry. For an additional 50 cents, opt for a pitaya, or dragon fruit, bowl, the cousin of the acai bowl.



"Poke Nachos" with chili chipotle seasoned tuna, cilantro, tomato, pineapple, green onions, and jalapeño. Photo by Megan Snyder.

Zeke's also serves stuffed pitas, poke nachos, salads, juices and smoothies to satisfy the post-surf session munchies. For little diners, a kids menu is available as well. Dine-in customers have the added luxury of sipping their latte from any number of heavy, mix-matched mugs that feel like they came straight out of your cupboard. Heaping portions of all meals are served in plastic to-go bowls with lids for ease of travel.

Recycling is strongly encouraged.

A hodgepodge of found furniture adds personality to the intimate space and provides several interesting seating options. Curl up in a cozy armchair to enjoy your beans and bowls solo, sit elbow to elbow at the bar with a friend or share a meal family style at a cafeteria table. On gusty urban mornings, warm up by the electric fireplace or soak up the spring time sunshine on the newly built outdoor patio.

As you wait for your meal, pour yourself a glass of cucumber water and browse the ever-changing display of local artwork. Monthly exhibitions are advertised on the restaurant's [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). In March, Virginia-based artist [Markus Fussell](#)'s acrylic spray paint space-scapes adorned Zeke's walls.

Zeke's Beans & Bowls is located at 800 Granby Street in Downtown Norfolk and is open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. Hours are subject to change. Zeke's also has a Virginia Beach location at 616 Norfolk Avenue near the Oceanfront.