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Commune restaurant planning for May opening in NEON district

By Rashod Ollison
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Judy Cowling | For The Virginian-Pilot
Commune's roasted pumpkin sandwich on fresh baked and toasted sourdough.



Patrick Evans-Hylton | For The Virginian-Pilot
Commune is at 501 Virginia Beach Blvd. Call 963-8985 or visit www.CommuneVB.com.



Judy Cowling | For The Virginian-Pilot
Commune's beet tart with goat's cheese and roasted chestnuts in a rye tart crust.

NORFOLK

Work | Release, a multipurpose art space in the NEON district, has partnered with Commune, a Virginia Beach restaurant that uses only in-season ingredients for its menu. Starting in May, the restaurant will open inside Work | Release, serving food, drinks and catering events.

The restaurant will have a regular schedule Tuesday through Sunday, offering lunch and dinner during the week and brunch on the weekends. Its original location will remain open on Virginia Beach Boulevard.

The partnership is overseen by the Rutter Family Art Foundation, whose owners, attorney Brother Rutter and his wife, Meredith, also co-own and support Work | Release. The arrangement expands their commitment to bringing engaging and important art projects to the community, Brother Rutter said.

“The combination of Commune and Work | Release will further solidify the NEON arts district as the neighborhood to visit in downtown Norfolk,” he said.

Commune owner Kevin Jamison, who also has a background in contemporary art, will design a menu with the restaurant’s executive chef Kevin Dubel, sourcing

only local and seasonal ingredients.

“Everything we do – how we source our ingredients, how we pay and treat our employees, how we deal with our waste by composting all vegetable scraps and feeding them to our chickens on our farm, etc. – is based on what's good for the community as a whole, not just our business,” Jamison said. “Our goal is to advocate for, promote and support sustainable local food systems, and we hope that we can expand those activities through operating in such an amazing space and working with the Rutters to use art as another way to do that.”

The partnership is also another way to keep patrons streaming in and out between exhibitions and events, which include edgy art shows and disparate DJ sets and dance parties.

“We wanted to find a business to work with to make the Work I Release gallery space accessible every day of the week,” Rutter said. “But we also wanted to find a restaurant that embraces a mission that fits the creative, local and authentic community in the NEON. Commune's mission to support local farms and sustainable methods is a perfect fit at just the right time.”

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