



Commune and Rutter Family Art Foundation to Combine Forces at Work Release

March 10, 2017 By Jesse Scaccia

It is a mouth watering combination of great art and great food, a marriage between one of the strongest brands in [the NEON](#) with one of the strongest brands in the [ViBe Creative District](#).

[Commune](#), a Virginia Beach-based restaurant that features scrumptious food made with in-season local ingredients, is taking over the kitchen at Work Release in Norfolk.



image | Commune

“The combination of Commune and Work Release will further solidify the NEON arts district as the neighborhood to visit in downtown Norfolk,” said Brother Rutter, who, along with his wife, Meredith, founded the [Rutter Family Art Foundation](#), which supports art endeavors at Work Release.

I reached Commune owner Kevin Jamison as he pushed a wheel hoe at the farm he also owns, [New Earth Farm](#).

“When I first met Brother and Meredith, we kind of clicked instantly,” said Jamison, who is one of the more humble successful people you’ll meet. “Their focus and their energy and outreach to the community is huge.”

The plan as it stands right now is to open in May, serving lunch and dinner during the week (except for Mondays), and then brunch and dinner during the weekends.

“We wanted to find a business to work with to make the Work Release gallery space accessible every day of the week,” said Rutter. “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.”

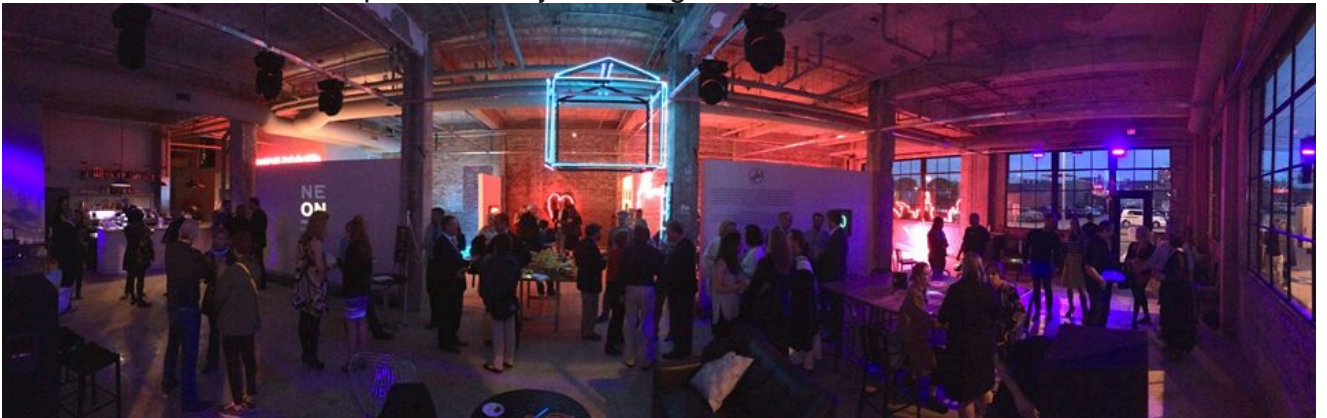


image | Work Release

Commune at Work Release will be using the same ingredients as at the Virginia Beach location, with **the same earth-friendly principles guiding the menu.** Jamison hopes to grow the garnishes and herbs on site, possibly on the roof.

There will also be opportunity, he said, for collaboration between the restaurant side and the gallery side, potentially with art that addresses sustainable agriculture and environmental protection. Jamison has an art background as well, having been an art broker who worked with Sotheby’s, and with galleries in Rome and New York City.

“We are all committed to the art side,” said Rutter. “Kevin is really looking forward to participating in that. The weekend music programming is going to change but that is a work in progress. For art openings and closings it will still have the volume up but regular weekends will be a bit more chill than previously.” Leading the kitchen at Commune in Work Release will be Kevin Dubel, who is currently the chef de cuisine at Terrapin.



image | Commune

While Commune is my favorite restaurant in Hampton Roads, and I am excited to have them so close by in a neighborhood where they belong, a new beginning often does mean the end of something else. For what it's worth, I have had many great meals under the current kitchen team at Work Release, led by the lovely Chrissy Covington and her staff. Wherever Chrissy is making food, I hope to have a seat at the table there, too.

In terms of what is to come in the NEON, this is a serious shot to the arm for the neighborhood, and could very well be what makes the east and west sides of Brambleton feel connected. There are major intersection improvements slated for that Brambleton and Granby intersection in coming months as well; add in Bearded Bird Brewing and other possible businesses opening up on the first blocks of the NEON, and we're very close to feeling like it's a continuous strip from the opera house to Waterside. That's a downtown made for strolling.

But first, the restaurant concept has to launch, and all those tasty, healthy ingredients have to get cooking. If Work Release can maintain the artistic energy and integrity fostered by the Rutters, Charles Rasputin, and WR's founding queen bee, Careyann Weinberg, and add to that the superlative food and experience of Commune.... wow. Just... wow.