

## [Brandywine Kitchen to open in old Tivoli space](#)



Azizi Tookas, left, and Chris Sunde stand in their new restaurant at 1317 Commercial St. The two plan to open Brandywine Kitchen in July. Ryan Wynne | BBJ

by [Ryan Wynne](#)

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The Brandywine tomato, along with other heirloom plants, is the folk tale of the vegetable world. Like the tales, seeds from heirloom plants traditionally survived by being passed down from one generation to the next.

In 2005, life-long friends Chris Sunde and Azizi Tookas began passing down their Brandywine tomatoes to Bellinghamsters — that's when they started growing and selling the fruits to local restaurants and at the Bellingham Farmers Market under the name Brandywine Gardens. At that time, they were one of only two farmers selling heirloom tomatoes at the market. That's no longer the case.

The popularity of heirlooms has taken off over the years, and so has Tookas and Sunde's business. In 2008, they started serving prepared food at the market under the name

Brandywine Kitchen, and this summer they will move their business ahead another step: they will open a restaurant in Tivoli's old space at 1317 Commercial St., next to Uisce Irish Pub.

“The restaurant was always the end goal,” Tookas said, explaining that he likes being the host and inviting people into his space to share his creations. “I think the heart is definitely in having a permanent space — people are coming to you.”

That said, Tookas never expected their first space to be quite so large — the restaurant is about 4,000 square feet. It's also a nicer space than he expected for their first, he said.

Still, while Tookas is nervous about taking such a giant leap forward, he is also fairly confident he and Sunde will do well in their Cornwall abode. The two have created a name for themselves and their business — they have developed relationships with other restaurant owners, local organizations and their catering and farmers market customers.

That customer base is really important, especially in Bellingham, which is a unique place to open a restaurant, Tookas said.

“We have people with high food standards and small wallets,” Tookas said. “There's not a lot of room for fine dining here, but I think there is a lot room for affordable, high-quality food.”

And that's just what Brandywine is known for serving up. Sunde and Tookas use fresh local produce, which they are able to get at slightly lower rates by trading free advertising. They also grow their own tomatoes and basil and bake their own bread for their gourmet baguette sandwiches, such as their ancho chili-brased pork and their salmon and quinoa cakes sandwiches.

In addition to sandwiches, their menu will include vegan and vegetarian fare, soups, salads, organic hand-cut fries, gluten-free fish and chips and mac and cheese. They will also offer wine, pints and pitchers of beer, and hard cider, of which they also hope to have a pitcher option.

Tookas said he and Sunde want to create an environment where customers feel welcome to stay awhile, even when they are done eating and drinking. To keep costs and prices down, they will offer counter service only and they will offer Wi-Fi and stay open late to encourage loitering.

Brandywine Kitchen will open in July, although Tookas doesn't have an exact date nailed down, and will be open everyday until 11 p.m.; they will open weekdays for lunch at 11 a.m., but will not serve lunch on weekends.

Tookas and Sunde will operate their catering business out of their new space; they will also continue their presence at the farmers market.

For more information, visit [brandywinekitchen.com](http://brandywinekitchen.com).