

Dining in Tandem

THE ONLY THING resembling a sign at 26 Main Street in Bristol is the turquoise tandem bicycle hanging above the door. This is purposeful, explains Jess Messer, one of two partners behind the discreet new food project known as Tandem. Messer owns Savouré Soda, Jam and Pickle, and Lauren Gammon is chef-owner of Nomadic Chef Catering. Both needed more production capacity so they collaborated to take over the roomy commercial kitchen. Neither needed the downtown location or the 25-seat restaurant license, but since those came with the kitchen, the friends jumped at the chance to build good food buzz and contribute to downtown vitality. “It was an opportunity to do what we needed for our own businesses,” says Messer,

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Jess Messer (left) and Lauren Gammon prepare food for a pop-up dinner at Tandem, a new food project in Bristol.

“and do some fun stuff together too.”

Last summer, the duo started a monthly night market that is a hybrid farmers market and street market with about a dozen vendors who set up in Tandem and in the neighboring alley showcasing locally grown and crafted food and drink. But most activity takes place in the winter and spring, slower seasons for each of their businesses. In addition to holiday markets, seasonal events, classes, tastings and guest chef appearances, Gammon cooks pop-up dinners monthly from November through May. Messer helps and also offers her signature, sophisticated sodas on tap in flavors like lemon-tarragon, persimmon-vanilla and blackcurrant-rosemary.

The dinner series is an engaging way to sample Gammon’s well-crafted, eclectic style, informed by her extensive world travels. Two evenings a month by reservation only, guests gather around long communal tables for a set menu with a global theme. It is warm and informal; groups of friends come together, new friendships are kindled. An Indian menu might include pillowy lentil fritters with mint chutney and coconut green beans, curried cauliflower dumplings topped



with yogurt and pickled cucumber, and tender chicken tikka in a fragrant sauce crowned with a grilled shishito pepper. Travel to Latin America via a braised goat taco with carrot cream and pickled fennel, smoked cod and potato croquettes with chorizo and saffron, and dulce de leche mousse.

From January to May, the duo is planning “Charcuterie Thursdays” with platters of pickles, cheeses, cured meats and drinks. These will take place as their schedules allow or, as they put it, “when the spirit moves us.” Note: Tandem does not have a website or Facebook page. To be added to the mailing list for pop-up dinners and other events, email lauren@nomadicchef.com. 🍀