

ACE IN THE HOLE

By Mackensy Lunsford

There's been a hole in Asheville's food scene, say food entrepreneurs. And two gourmet doughnut makers, Vortex Doughnuts and Hole, are currently pushing through red tape and piles of permits to get open and fill it.

One of those restaurants is named, appropriately, Hole. Opened by Caroline Whatley and Kim Dryden, Hole will occupy a small parcel of land at 168 Haywood Road, on the corner of Wamboldt Avenue in West Asheville.

The concept for Hole is a simple one, Whatley said. Just a few types of old-fashioned doughnuts and great coffee, said Whatley. "All served hot."

The doughnut duo are building their restaurant from the ground up and received their permits in mid-April. They started pouring footings for the foundation shortly thereafter.

"The contractor has estimated that we'll be ready to go in three months," said Whatley. "That would be awesome if that's the case, but my guess is that it's going to be longer."

The building will only be 800 square feet, but Whatley is used to small spaces — her last food venue was a food truck called Tin Can Pizzeria.

People are clamoring for doughnuts, according to Ron Patton. Patton is one half of a husband-and-wife team who will open Vortex Doughnuts on the South Slope at 32 Banks Ave. sometime this summer.

Why are people so hot for doughnuts?

"Because it's everywhere else but Asheville it seems," said Patton. "And that's why we thought it was a great idea."

Patton thought the gourmet doughnut, the type more likely to be adorned with bacon than sprinkles,

Two doughnut companies prepare to launch

was the next undiscovered local food business. The Pattons entered — and won — the Big Tasty, a contest designed specifically to find the next big thing in local food.

That was more than a year ago, before the Pattons had a storefront. Vortex Doughnuts was slated to open a brick-and-mortar store in early June, but the couple hit several permitting snags.

If it seems like an awfully long time has passed between Vortex's announcement and its opening, Patton said the food hype machine lends fuel to that perception.

"A lot of people who open a restaurant, you don't hear their whole back story," Patton said. "They've got everything all figured out, and then they find their place and it's open in a few months."

Patton said that restaurants are like sausages — it's best not to see them getting made.



Valerie Patton of Vortex Doughnuts. ERIN BRETHAUER/SCENE

"Everyone got to see our sausage being made, because we won the Big Tasty, and the year-long process has been exposed, for everyone to anxiously await (our place)."

And South Slope, said Patton, necessitated a wait.

"We could have been on Haywood, Tunnel, but that just wasn't where we wanted to be, so we were willing to wait for the right spot," he said. "Now we feel like we know what we are doing."

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