

EXPERT PICKS

BEACH BOUNTY

The new Virginia Beach

By Alison Miller

This city's perch, fronting the Atlantic at the southern tip of the Chesapeake Bay, has long lent it a well-deserved reputation for seafood. But beyond the waterfront, wide swaths of fertile farmland burst with blueberries, blackberries, strawberries, and sweet corn. It's fine fuel for chefs in the city's urban core, where a local food revolution is gaining momentum, swiftly turning this oft-overlooked Virginia city into a bonafide culinary hot spot.

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THREE SHIPS ROASTERY

Owners **Brad and Amy Ewing** specialize in **Nordic-style** (read: lighter) coffee roasts, which reveal more fruit nuances than their more toasted contemporaries. Find them at their new arts district digs, where you can try a **pomegranate-lime-espresso-tonic**, or around town wielding cold brew-filled growlers from their 70s-era camper. coles735main.com



THREE SHIPS ROASTERY

COMMONWEALTH BREWING COMPANY

Inspired by European bierhalls, **Jeremy and Natalie Biggie** transformed a Chic's Beach fire station into a destination brewery. The beers, ranging from a coriander and peppering Belgian lager called **Deliquesce** to a West Coast IPA named **Supernaculum**, are guaranteed to boost both your vocabulary and your palate. commonwealthbrewingcompany.com

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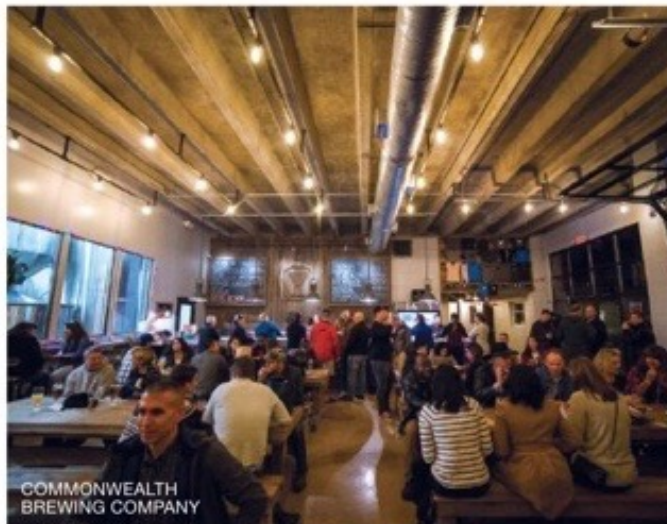
OLD BEACH FARMERS MARKET

Pick up Virginia cheese from the Creative Wedge, chia berry jam from It Started with a Fig, and a loaf of rustic sourdough leavened with wild yeast at this **robust market**, held Saturdays from 8 am to noon in the parking lot of Croc's 19th Street Bistro. It's six blocks from the beach, where you should promptly tear into your picnic. oldbeachfarmersmarket.com

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NEW EARTH FARM

Guests of this **sustainable working farm** attend classes that span fermenting to foraging. Summer is prime time for the **Farm Table** program: You'll spend the early evening harvesting ingredients and, under the tutelage of a top area chef, transform the cornucopia into a multi-course dinner. newearthfarm.org



COMMONWEALTH BREWING COMPANY

HEARTH

Sit at the bar for a view of the kitchen, where chefs **Brad Bonham** and **Clint Compton** deftly turn out **Neapolitan-style pizza** from a wood-fired oven. Whet your appetite with the wood-fired double egg yolk: two eggs with oozy orange yolks on a pat of chipotle-tomato jam, hiding under a smattering of arugula and gruyere. hearthvb.com

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TERRAPIN

When **Chef Rodney Einhorn** opened this fine-dining spot ten years ago he went straight to the farms and boats, forging relationships with **local purveyors** at a time when doing so was unheard of. Terrapin remains the primo place to experience seasonal seafood in a low-lit, white-tablecloth environment. In season, try **soft-shell blue crabs** straight from the bay, flour-dusted and gently pan-fried in clarified butter. terrpinvb.com



NEW EARTH FARM

PHOTOS CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: CHRIS CONWAY; COURTESY NEW EARTH FARM; COURTESY OF THREE SHIPS ROASTERY
OPPOSITE TOP TO BOTTOM: ZOE GRANT; COURTESY OF AUTUMN OLIVE FARMS



ESOTERIC

Many ingredients on the **locally minded menu** come from an on site garden shared with Commune (below). With thirty taps pouring **rare beers from all over the world**, it's also one of Virginia Beach's best spots for craft beer. Local takes on pub grub like wings and poutine pair with Mediterranean mezes, a nod to co-owner Kristina Chastain's Cypriot roots. (Those dolmades? Her ya-ya's recipe.)

esotericvb.com

COMMUNE

In October last year, chef and farmer Kevin Jamison, director of education at New Earth Farm, opened this **buzz-worthy breakfast and lunch café**, where all ingredients are sourced from within a 100-mile radius. Commune got its start peddling crepes from a food truck, and they're not to be missed. Opt for a buckwheat version topped with roasted veggies, crispy ham, fried egg salad, and kale pesto. It's aptly named: **The WDF (Whole Damn Farm).**

communevb.com

MEET CHRIS LUDFORD FOUNDER, PLEASURE HOUSE OYSTERS

Between 24-hour shifts as a fire-boat captain, this seventh-generation waterman builds reefs with recycled shells and harvests and delivers Lynnhaven oysters to restaurants around town. In the late nineteenth century, these brawny bivalves were slurped down by aristocrats in Paris and New York, but pollution and overfishing all but took them out by the 1960s. Now, they're flourishing once again thanks in large part to the efforts of local conservation group, Lynnhaven River. For the ultimate ostreophile excursion, join Ludford for a tasting tour: You'll cruise the river at low tide, scoping out newly thriving reefs and taking in tales from the iconic oyster's history. The experience culminates with a fresh oyster feast on the shore.

What's your favorite way to eat oysters? Naked, straight out of the shell, on ice. It makes them a little more crisp. I like to sit down with four or five kinds from different regions and experience the true essence of the oyster, the merroir.

Can you describe the flavor of Lynnhaven oysters? They're briny up front and then as you chew through them there's a sweetness, almost like a seagrass or seaweed note. They're not minerally, like a Prince Edward Island or a European Flat. Instead, you taste the marsh. The best thing about a Lynnhaven is that it's well-rounded, very sweet, and light on the palate.

Where in Virginia Beach are your oysters served? We do same-day harvest and delivery to Terrapin, Commune, Zoës Steak and Seafood, and the Cellars at Church Point Manor.

If you could take anyone out on your boat, who would you take? Chef Mike Lata, of FIG in Charleston. I see what's going on with the sustainability movement around the country and a lot of that comes from things that he's done in Charleston—he's made a big commitment to buying local and supporting the environment. I'd also take John Smith and George Percy. Smith was one of the first settlers of Jamestown in 1607, and Percy was a naturalist who gave the New World's first flavor review of Lynnhaven oysters. I'd love to hear what they have to say about where we are now.

