

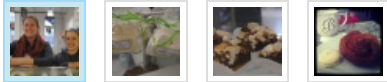
Sweet and Savory Creates Zest Fresh Pastry

Pastry Chefs Erin Morris and Gabriella Withrow opened an artisan bakery in the Velvet Mill this past December.

By [Bree Shirvell](#), February 4, 2013 at 04:16 am

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As a kid I loved weekends, not for the break from school or the chance to watch movies, although those were nice perks, but rather for the food.

Some weekends we went out to brunch, other times I went with my mom to pick up muffins or bagels, and sometimes I would wake up to find a tray of fresh croissants or scones waiting. So, naturally I was excited to learn there's a new artisan bakery in Stonington's Velvet Mill.

[Zest Fresh Pastry](#) doesn't disappoint.

There's something about biting into big warm sticky bun on a Sunday morning that just screams relax, it's going to be a good day.

"The big giant sticky buns are a special weekend treat," Zest Fresh Pastry co-founder and owner Gabriella Withrow said.

"We're going to make them with sweet potato bread too," added co-founder and owner Erin Morris said. "You can't really find that around here."

The two pastry chefs opened Zest Fresh Pastry in the Velvet Mill this past December, but if you're a fan of local farmers markets you might remember them for last summer's markets in Old Lyme and Ledyard.

"We started at the farmers markets focusing on using as many local ingredients as possible and experimenting with sweet and savory," Withrow said.

The two women started with five different pastries including scones and flavored marshmallows, changing up the flavors, and then as their products grew in popularity at the farmers markets they were able to find a kitchen and opened in the Velvet Mill just before Christmas 2012. Most of the items you'll find in the shop blend sweet and savory flavors such as blue cheese and pear scones.

"We want to open people's eyes to what pastry can be, and have fun," Withrow said.

It seems like the two are definitely having fun. They're all smiles and the bakery exudes the type of warmth you'd expect from a small neighborhood place even if the bakery is in a big old mill.

Both Withrow or Morris are not originally from the area, but luckily for pastry lovers their husbands are, and they both ended up here and met while working. They hit it off right away and began talking hypothetically about what type of place they would open if they could. After realizing how similar their dream place was they decided to go into business.

Since the early farm market days of Zest Fresh, they've expanded to quiches, muffins, and breads. And they serve Ashland coffee. The two plan to be back at the farmers markets this year while running the bakery in the Velvet Mill. They also want to offer classes.

"Not just pastry classes but wine and beer parings, too," Morris said.

And they have plans for the Velvet Mill saying they'd love to work more with the other tenants, selling the artists' works in their shop, and partnering up for more open houses.

"We've met so many amazing people," Morris said. "We want to keep expanding."

And while you can only get those amazing sticky buns on the weekends there are plenty of delicious concoctions waiting for you on the weekdays. Like sweet and savory scones.

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Carol February 4, 2013 at 11:38 am

We are so thrilled for these amazing baker women! And they are brewing a terrific Java Estate coffee that pairs well with so many of their goodies.

Carol Adams Dahlke Ashlawn Farm Coffee

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janis albamonti February 4, 2013 at 09:42 pm

Same here. How wonderful to have small business' like ZEST & BEARD Brewery in the Velvet Mill. Hopefully the Velvet Mill can be used as an incubator for small start up companies. It so nice to see so many people walking around the mill.

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