

# Hope springs edible

For those of us Durhamites who live downtown, who sometimes consider anything south of, oh, say, the Q Shack to be foodie limbo, an oasis of eateries has opened in what used to

## MORSEL



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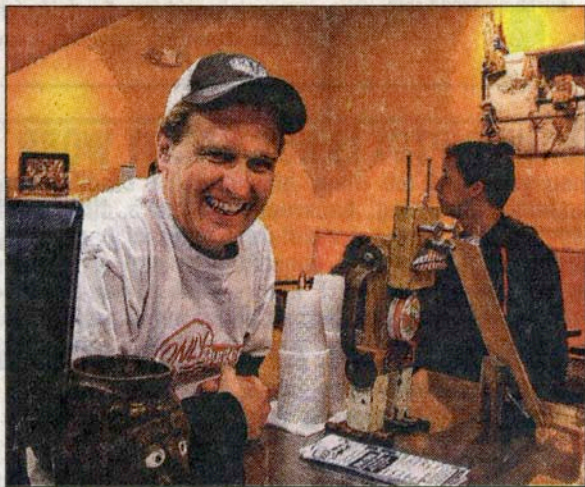
be the least fortunate plaza I had ever seen.

In what many still consider the Shannon Road shopping center, now renamed Hope Valley Square

Shopping Center, a number of locally owned, niche restaurants have moved in to what may now be the most aesthetically pleasing strip mall on the East Coast.

The post office that anchors the plaza makes we want an excuse to mail something so I can try out one of the dining establishments, which range from burgers and pizza to a gourmet market and yogurt joint.

This stretch of businesses is



constructed from a brilliant, light brick and stone façade, with wooden pergolas, arched alcoves under which bistro tables abound, and trellises with ornate greenery coiling up the walls from patches of garden filled with rose bushes.

I believe you eat with your eyes first. At Hope Valley Square, the feasting begins when you pull into the parking lot.

Only Burger owner and operator Brian Bottger, left, opened his new restaurant last October in Hope Valley Square. Only Burger is one of several new eateries in the revitalized shopping center, formerly Shannon Road plaza.

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Here's a look at what's already open, and what we can look forward to in 2011:

■ **Bull Street Gourmet & Market:** With this name, you'd think this was a Durham original, but it is in fact a collaboration between Justin Croxall, owner/chef of the original found at 60 Bull St. in Charleston, S.C., and local resident Anne Neimann, whose husband, Tom Neimann, co-owns West Village. She hopes this restaurant/grocery store will open in April, with soups, salads, unique wines, fresh breads, and other market items available to dine-in or "good to go."

Neimann has lived in Hope Valley for over 10 years and longed for a local market like the one she adored in Charleston while visiting her daughters in college. Since her background is in the food and beverage side of hotel management, she decided to do it herself when the shopping center was renovated. Visit [www.bullstreet-durham.com](http://www.bullstreet-durham.com) for details.

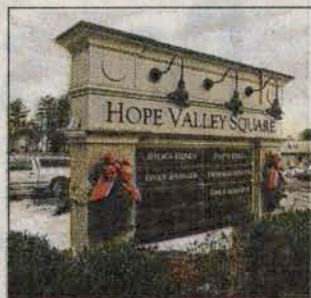
■ **Tutti Frutti Frozen Yogurt:** Also coming later this year, this is slated to be the first North Carolina location of five set to open sometime this year throughout the state. Based out of California, customers create their yogurt by mixing flavors and toppings themselves. [www.TFYogurt.com](http://www.TFYogurt.com)

■ **Only Burger:** Yes – there is a non-moving location for Durham's beloved burger truck. Open since the fall, the menu is a bit more expansive thanks to, well, more space and fewer speed bumps. Onion rings, beer and daily specials join the menu, said Brian Bottger, who co-owns Only Burger with Tom Ferguson, who also uses part of the space for his personal catering business. Bottger said things are going well, so well that addi-



Rick's Diner is one of the new upscale eateries in the newly revitalized Hope Valley Square.

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tional locations aren't out of the question. [www.durhamcatering.com/onlyburger](http://www.durhamcatering.com/onlyburger)

■ **Pop's Back Door South:** First there was Pop's at Peabody Place, and when Pop's moved a few blocks away down Main Street, Pop's Back Door opened in the original location serving fresh calzones and pizzas made to order. That casual iteration of Pop's Restaurant has been duplicated south, and things are going well said Chris Stinnett, co-owner of the Pop's empire. He and his partner, John Vandergrift, hope for a northern location in the near future, so Pop's pizza can be delivered to Durham as a whole. Aren't we lucky? [www.popsbackdoor-south.com](http://www.popsbackdoor-south.com)

■ **Rick's Diner:** Open in some form or another since 1998, Rick's Diner recently moved from University Drive to Shannon Road but has kept

the same menu, complete with diner classics like breakfast all day and rotating lunch and dinner specials. [www.ricks-diner.com](http://www.ricks-diner.com)

## Tidbits

■ **GOOD FOOD:** Two local coffee roasters have been named finalists in the Good Food Awards coffee category. There were only 21 chosen nationwide, and only two in all of North Carolina. What this means is that the Carrboro Coffee Co. (for its El Aguacate beans) and Counter Culture Coffee (for its Finca Kilimanjaro beans) show "exemplary flavor," and "emphasize fairness and transparency from seed to cup." But we knew that already. Winners will be honored Jan. 14 in a special ceremony in San Francisco. Visit [www.goodfoodawards.org/coffee/](http://www.goodfoodawards.org/coffee/) for details.

■ **ANIMAL BENEFIT:** If you like food and animals, then plan to do a lot of shopping at Whole Foods this Wednesday, when 5 percent of all purchases will be donated to Independent Animal Rescue. And who doesn't like food and animals?

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