

# New biz gives boost to food entrepreneurs

*Commissary kitchen offers space for food trucks and e-commerce food businesses for storage and prep*

**Cayley Dobie**

*cdobie@burnabynow.com*

The idea was to start their own food truck business. Ryan Mackay and Josh McWilliams were chefs. They knew the food industry. It was perfect.

But when the pair set out to find a space to store supplies and do prep, they discovered there weren't many places in Metro Vancouver that offered an affordable and supportive space.

So they ditched the food truck idea and decided to open their own commissary kitchen, kind of like a co-working space for the Lower Mainland's burgeoning food truck industry and other small food entrepreneurs.

With the help of Jason Wong, who runs Beta Collective, a co-working space in Surrey, the trio set out to find a location for their commissary.

"We looked in Port Moody – we looked at a place on Brewers Road – and that didn't work out. They gave it to somebody else, but once we found this place, we kind of fell in love with the front-house, back-house vibe," Mackay told the **NOW**.

"This place" is unit A6 at 5279 Still Creek Ave. and is the new home for YVR Prep, dubbed by its founders "Metro Vancouver's premier commissary kitchen."

"As far as a first location for us, we really wanted to be as central and as accessible to downtown as possible," Wong said, adding the Burnaby location provides easy access to Metro Vancouver as well as places like Surrey, Langley and Maple Ridge.

The 10,000-square-foot



**FOOD CENTRAL:** Josh McWilliams, Ryan Mackay and Jason Wong in the new premises of YVR Prep, a 10,000-square-foot commissary kitchen in the heart of Burnaby. The business will provide space for more than 30 clients from the food truck or e-commerce food industry to store, prepare and package items. PHOTO JENNIFER GAUTHIER

space features 18 prep stations, shared cooking stations equipped with deep fryers, 20 burners and convection ovens, plus freezer space, dry storage and cold storage, and a self-contained space for cold prep and other businesses like juiceries, vegan and vegetarian meals.

"It's a production facility, first and foremost," Mackay said.

Mackay, Wong and McWilliams will act as man-

agers to ensure the clients' needs are met, and that everyone "plays nice in the sandbox."

"So far the potential clients we've spoken with have a wide variety of needs," Wong said. "So it's going to be a bit of a delicate balance."

The plan is to operate with two shifts – a.m. and p.m. – with the intention to one day be accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"The vision is supporting the small food businesses, and just trying to have fun with that," Mackay said.

**It's going to be a bit of a delicate balance**

"And supporting the local food system as a whole.

We see some gaps where a space like ours can really fulfil and support. There's so many people who want to be food entrepreneurs that are aspiring to launch the next Earnest's Ice Cream – or whatever – but they're doing it from the confines of their kitchen table, from their four-burner stove at home," Wong added. "It's a serious bottleneck for them."

Because of the size of the

space, the team is hoping to offer space to clients that want to host pop-up events, seminars or other events. The idea is to provide them with a nurturing space that encourages them to collaborate with one another to improve and grow.

For more information on the business, go to [www.yvrprep.com](http://www.yvrprep.com).