

# Brewers to try their hand at pizza at Waterfront Vancouver restaurant

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Ruse Brewing co-founders Shaun Kalis, left, and Devin Benware stand in the future bar area of their new pizza venture, Crust Collective, at The Waterfront Vancouver. It will feature their take on Detroit-style pizza. (Amanda Cowan/The Columbian)



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Ruse Brewing co-founders Shaun Kalis and Devin Benware are bringing their new pizza venture, Crust Collective, to The Waterfront Vancouver next to the The Yard Milkshake Bar in spring 2022.

The 1,825-square-foot space at 650 Waterfront Way will seat 30 to 40 people indoors and 40 people outdoors. Crust Collective's pizza is inspired by Kalis' childhood in the Detroit metropolitan area combined with Ruse's own unique Pacific Northwest proclivities.

The owners met as brewers at Culmination Brewing. They started Ruse Brewing by using the equipment at Culmination in their off-hours to create everything from farmhouse ales to India pale ales, or IPAs.

In July 2018, they opened their brewery and taproom in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Portland.

Soon afterwards, they became interested in starting a pizza business to complement their beer. The plan was to offer Ruse's own twist on Detroit pizza by using seasonal ingredients

and chef-y toppings as well as classics like the thicker rounds of pepperoni that curl up into tiny cups when baked.

Kalis and Benware searched throughout Portland for a space sufficient to make pizzas and offer indoor and outdoor dining. Their Vancouver friends encouraged them to explore the Vancouver waterfront. They made a trip across the river and were pleasantly surprised by what they saw.

At The Waterfront Vancouver, they found the right space for their pizza restaurant large enough for a pizza kitchen, indoor and outdoor seating with views of the Columbia River.

“Looking in Portland, we couldn’t find the right spot. Friends in Vancouver kept telling us about the Waterfront. We came over and saw it and we were blown away,” said Kalis.

The space should be available in late December to begin construction. Kalis estimates that it will take 14 weeks to complete the project. He hopes to open by spring. The decor will have some similar design elements as their Portland space, with a brass bar and glass art from Ghost Pig (@ghostpigglass on Instagram). Ruse worked with Vancouver design firm Covalent Architecture to create a sparse industrial space that also feels cozy. In the end, Ruse’s Crust Collective will feel like a restaurant, not a taproom.

For now, Kalis and Benware, along with their general manager, Seth Black, are heading to Detroit for an intensive pizza research trip, visiting old school Motor City institutions like Buddy’s, Louie’s, and Cloverleaf as well as newcomers like Michigan & Trumbull. Michigan & Trumbull’s owners, Kristen Calverley and Nate Peck, have been very helpful answering questions from these pizza newbies.

Kalis and Benware already sampled some of Portland’s own riffs on the Motown classic. “My personal favorite is Pop Pizza,” said Kalis. “Oh man, they have the crust down. Close your eyes and it’s like being a kid again in Detroit.”

To begin the process, the owners are focused on nailing the classic Detroit crust recipe. They’ve also purchased the iconic Detroit pizza steel pans and sourced Wisconsin brick cheese. They’re not sure about following the sauce-on-top tradition. These creative brewers want some room to be free to explore their own interpretations of this Midwestern classic. Kalis and Benware approach pizza making the way they brew beer.

“I see it how beer has been made. People use Deschutes or Widmer as a model and then create their own crazy innovative stuff. We like to improvise and fly by the seat of our pants. Even three years in, we plan our brewing week by week. It keeps it interesting,” said Kalis.

In addition to pizza, the Waterfront space will offer Ruse Brewing’s beer in cans and on tap. New beer releases will happen simultaneously at the Portland and Vancouver sites. Nonalcoholic beverages, hard cider, and natural wine will be available to pair with the pies. They also plan on collaborating with other brewers and pizza makers, like Ex Novo Brewing Co.