



Enjoy mimosas for brunch on Saturdays and Sundays served outside on the rooftop patio or new pergola.

THE PECULIAR RABBIT

Ever changing with the times in Plaza Midwood

TEXT BY **KATHY BUCKLEY** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **GERIN CHOINIÈRE**

There is a lively vibe in Plaza Midwood, the eclectic old neighborhood just 10 minutes east of Uptown Charlotte. Its once quiet streets are busy now, and “there’s a block party every night,” according to Rob Nixon, co-owner of The Peculiar Rabbit. The area seems to have exploded overnight, and The Peculiar Rabbit has been in the center of the transformation.

In 2007 Rob Nixon and his partner Andy Wilson purchased The Steeple, a church built in the 1940s which later became the original PTL call center and a bookstore, among other things. The partners had needed a new location for their popular sports bar and restaurant, Jackalope Jacks, after a successful six

year run in nearby Elizabeth neighborhood on 7th Street. Their landlord had decided to tear down the restaurant to build condominiums, and first right of refusal in their lease was no help in holding onto the property. However when the recession hit in 2008, the condo project was halted, and Jackalope Jacks still resides at its Elizabeth location.

Nixon and Wilson purchased The Steeple at the peak of the recession when there were just a few restaurants in Plaza Midwood, such as The Diamond, The Penguin, Sammy’s and John’s Country Kitchen. Nixon then added a patio on the rooftop for guests to enjoy the venue’s spectacular, unobstructed view of

the Charlotte city skyline. After many renovations and delays, The Peculiar Rabbit opened in 2012 as a high end gastropub but later changed to a simpler menu with lower price points to make it more affordable for the neighborhood. “Our goal is to serve good quality, fresh food and to provide a great overall experience,” says Nixon.

There’s something different around every corner at The Peculiar Rabbit, with its three floors, three bars and four patios, including the rooftop and pergola Rob Nixon recently built in front of the building. Around the back side of the restaurant is The Rabbit Hole, formerly Camera World, which now offers live



music by local as well as nationally touring bands. There are five rooms and event space with 600-800 capacity in the 11,000 sq. ft. venue.

In the past few years since The Peculiar Rabbit opened its doors, Plaza Midwood has seen about fifty new restaurants and breweries spring up in the area; yet the busy establishment is still thriving in the center of it all.

Rob Nixon says that owning their own property is a huge benefit, and that many great restaurants have failed because of their leases. Yet Nixon gives most of the credit for their success to the staff of The Peculiar Rabbit. "The main reason we've succeeded is our core group of employees," says Nixon, includ-

ing Chef Shelton Blackwell who has been with the company for 16 years, from Jackalope Jacks to The Peculiar Rabbit. Chef Blackwell, along with Chef Mark Levantino, serve up a menu of fresh, delicious food to compliment the vast variety of craft beers and cocktails available.

Rob Nixon and Andy Wilson continue to reinvent The Peculiar Rabbit as needed to provide jobs and a future for their staff of more than 70 local people. Their goal is to exceed customer expectations and offer good food at a fair price in the ever changing Plaza Midwood neighborhood.

The Peculiar Rabbit is located at 1212 Pecan Ave., 704.333.9197. Visit www.therabbitspot.com for more.



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