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Dank Burrito brings chef-driven burritos + tacos with bold street vibe to Raleigh

[Morehead City, NC, April 17, 2019] – Chef Clarke Merrell announces the grand opening of his third Dank Burrito location on Friday, April 19th at 10:30am at the new Transfer Co. Food Hall in downtown Raleigh, NC (500 East Davie Street; www.dankburrito.com; @DankburritoNC). His mission is to serve bold, “craveable” flavors with the craftsmanship of fine dining and the convenience of street food.

“We’re not your typical burrito joint,” explains Merrell. “I come from the fine-dining world where you don’t cut any corners, and you can spend days just enhancing the flavor of a single ingredient in a dish. We want to take that fine-dining flavor experience, which few get to enjoy, and bring it to the street. We take inspiration from the most craveable street food flavors everyone loves, then we source the freshest possible ingredients and enhance them through fine-dining techniques. We wrap it all up in a humble tortilla and serve it in a causal space so that anyone, regardless of where you come from, can enjoy it.”

Dank Burrito offers chef-designed tacos, burritos, bowls and salads with an ethnic-fusion style that is anything but Southwestern. The use of “dank” (slang for “fresh” or “high quality”) in the name hints both at Clarke’s passion for serving what he calls “fresh-to-death” ingredients, as well as the brand’s urban street vibe echoed in the graffiti art-covered walls and food truck which bear the name. The heartbeat of Dank Burrito is a commitment to hand-crafting ingredients from scratch, including proteins like slow-roasted soy ginger pork shoulder and chili-marinated carne asada; toppings like kimchi, banh-mi, slaws and salsa; and the tortilla chips with signature house-blended seasoning and choice of salsa that come with every order. “The beauty of burritos and tacos is that you can pack a ton of flavor in one bite,” says Merrell. “That’s why we call them Flavor Bombs”. The burritos, bowls and salads are enough to feed a large appetite, while the tacos are sized for 2 per person, allowing guests to mix and try multiple flavors.

The flavor options are as diverse as Merrell’s cooking style, tying together tastes and techniques from different ethnic cuisines and reimagining nostalgic American dishes. Some of the most popular choices include the Asian spice-rubbed **Pork Belly** with *kimchi* or *banh mi*-style *pickled veggies* and *sweet Thai-chili sauce*; the **Cajun Fried Catch of the Day** with fresh, local seafood topped with *pico de gallo* and *chipotle mayo*; the iconic **Prime Rib Cheesesteak** with *peppers*, *onions*, *mushrooms*, and *garlic aioli*; and the crowd-favorite **Jerk Chicken** rubbed with a prized, secret spice blend and topped with sour cream and *pineapple-mango salsa*. Each order comes with Dank Burrito’s signature chips and choice of house-made salsas, with creamy roasted-garlic queso or fresh guacamole as add-on options. Diners can finish their meals with house-made vanilla or Nutella crème brûlée. (That’s right, made by hand with fresh shell eggs!)

Clarke Merrell is the creator behind a variety of food concepts throughout the Crystal Coast region, including Circa 81 Tapas & Cocktails in Morehead City, and Beaufort Olive Oil Company with locations

in Morehead City, Beaufort, Emerald Isle and Swansboro. He also owns Merrell Estate & Gardens, a destination wedding and event venue in Indian Beach. Dank Burrito began in 2014 as a food truck, Merrell's new passion project born out of Circa 81. Over the following year, the concept was received so successfully throughout its routes from Beaufort to Raleigh that in 2015 Merrell established the first brick-and-mortar flagship location in Morehead City. In 2017, Dank Burrito added a second location on the historic Beaufort, NC waterfront.

After years of participating in Raleigh Food Truck Rodeos and serving Triangle vacationers in Morehead City each summer, Clarke and his wife, Liza, are thrilled to expand Dank Burrito and join the Triangle community as they debut their Transfer Co. Food Hall location. "Liza attended high school in Raleigh, and we spent the early years of our relationship living and working in Raleigh after I graduated from Culinary School, so we are excited and honored to return and serve this city alongside the esteemed group of chefs and brands at Transfer Co. Food Hall."

Dank Burrito's menu offers each flavor as a Taco (\$6.99-\$9.99 for two), Burrito (\$7.99-\$10.99), Bowl or Salad (same price as Burritos) with chips and choice of salsa included, plus Extras (\$0.49-\$2.99) and Desserts (\$3.99) available.

Dank Burrito will open for lunch and dinner from 10:30am-10:00pm Wednesday through Sunday until the food hall opens for a full 7 days a week (then, Monday-Sunday). Delivery and catering/event services to Downtown Raleigh are planned to roll out later in 2019. Please contact 81 Hospitality's business office at 252.773.0592 for inquiries.

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Clarke Merrell is the Executive Chef and Owner of Circa 81 Tapas & Cocktails, Dank Burrito, Beaufort Olive Oil Company, and Merrell Estate & Gardens. Merrell has creatively influenced everything you see at the restaurants. From the custom-built copper top bar at Circa 81 to the iconic graffiti design at Dank Burrito, his hands have reached beyond the menu to touch every aspect of his brands. Clarke grew up working in the restaurant industry, as his parents took over operations at Atlantic Beach's DJ Shooters in 1988. He graduated with a degree in Culinary Arts from the Florida Culinary Institute in West Palm Beach, Florida and has worked the kitchens of highly talented, award-winning chefs around the country. Accolades for his brands include Dank Burrito being named 2014 National Food Truck Rookie of the Year and 2016 Graphic Design of the Year by mobile-cuisine.com. Circa 81 was a finalist for the 2011 Best Dish NC contest, and Merrell was named Favorite Chef in 2015 by *Coaster Magazine* Reader's Choice Awards. Clarke was named 2015 Arnold Murray Small Business Person of the Year by the Carteret County Chamber of Commerce. Circa 81 was named "Best Eats on the Crystal Coast" by *Cooking with Paula Deen* magazine in 2015, as well as Open Table Diner's Choice 2013-2019. Circa 81 is also a Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence Winner and in the Certificate of Excellence Hall of Fame for earning a Certificate of Excellence every year for the past five years. Follow on Facebook and Instagram: @dankburritonc; @circa81nc; @beaufortoliveoilco; @merrellestatedgardens