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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Mill Valley Kitchen opening June 7

**MINNEAPOLIS (May 24, 2011) – Mill Valley Kitchen**, a new restaurant concept from former Excel Bank CEO, Craig Bentsdahl, is opening on Tuesday, June 7, in the Ellipse on Excelsior development at the corner of Excelsior Boulevard and France Avenue in St. Louis Park. The inspiration for Mill Valley Kitchen comes from the great farm-to-table restaurants of the San Francisco bay area and the wine country of Napa and Sonoma. Mill Valley Kitchen will serve cuisine with fresh, local and sustainably sourced ingredients in a refined, comfortable space designed by David Shea.

Bentsdahl has retained Anoush Ansari of Hemisphere Restaurant Partners to oversee the launch of the restaurant, and hired executive chef Mike Rakun to develop the menu and manage daily operations. Rakun has held executive kitchen positions with the St. Paul Hotel, Mission American Kitchen, and Truluck's Restaurant Group in Florida.

"Mill Valley Kitchen is a comfortable place to enjoy unique dishes that are straightforward, delicious and good for you," says Rakun. "More than ever, consumers are paying attention to where their food comes from and how it is prepared, and they are looking for more honesty and transparency from the sources that provide it. Mill Valley Kitchen connects with local resources to find the best, freshest seasonal ingredients."

For many of his dishes, Rakun will be using herbs that will be grown on the outdoor patio of the restaurant. He notes, "We are also including nutritional information for each dish right on the menu so that our diners can make informed choices." Mill Valley Kitchen is the first restaurant in the Twin Cities to post calories, fat, carbohydrate and protein information directly on the menu.

"As I developed the menu, I wasn't necessarily caught up in creating dishes that were low in calories, it was more about creating nutrient-dense food that tastes great, with a focus on vegetables, whole grains, fish and lean meats." Vegan and gluten-free items are also noted on the menu so diners with these requirements can be assured that they get exactly what they are looking for.

Mill Valley Kitchen will be serving breakfast, lunch and dinner seven days a week. Dinner entrees include Duroc pork tenderloin with coconut sweet potato and apple jam or Chilean seabass with gingered-shitake quinoa and a sweet and sour cucumber salad. Lunch and dinner items include a long list of interesting salads, unique flatbreads and burgers (Minnesota bison, grass-fed beef or gluten-free vegan.) The breakfast menu includes a free range egg sandwich with scallion, tomato, arugula and harissa on sourdough, and a dish with walnut bread, bananas, sweet potato butter and local honey. House-made muffins, granola and protein bars are also available.

Mill Valley Kitchen will feature a wide selection of wines by the glass and bottle with an emphasis on the vineyards of Northern California. There will be a full bar featuring specialty cocktails and

several local beers on draft. An expansive list of non-alcoholic beverage choices include ginger beer, fruit smoothies, house made blended tea drinks and kombucha on tap.

The design of the 5,000 square foot ground-level space was handled by Minneapolis based design firm, Shea, Inc. Amanda Nelson, an interior designer with Shea, describes the design direction as "casual, yet refined, with a welcoming, almost residential feel. We really wanted to create a sophisticated, comfortable space with 'come-as-you-are' comfort."

The contemporary design is light and airy with fresh blue and green accents. The restaurant features a bar/lounge area and large dining room that seats about 165, and a wine room available for private dining parties of up to 12 people. Operable doors on the restaurant's perimeter open to an outdoor patio, which will likely draw large crowds as soon as the restaurant debuts on June 7.

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