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Alumnus Credits UM Experiences for Role in James Beard Nomination

Hospitality management graduate Carlyle Watt lauded for artisan breads, local sourcing

 OCTOBER 18, 2017 BY [SARAH SAPP](#)

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Carlyle Watt cuts into a focaccia at the Fire Island Rustic Bakeshop. Photo by Brian Adams

OXFORD, Miss. – Carlyle Watt, a 2005 graduate of the University of Mississippi's **hospitality management program** and a 2017 James Beard Award nominee in the Outstanding Baker category, returned to campus recently to participate in the 20th Southern Foodways Symposium.

In his first experience with the symposium, Watt attended lectures and tastings designed to reframe ideas about ethnicity and identity in the Latin American culture, the theme for this year's

event, held Oct. 5-7. He networked with hundreds of chefs and mentors involved with the Southern Foodways Alliance, a member-supported organization based at the university's **Center for the Study of Southern Culture**.

"We're so proud of Carlyle for his Beard Award nomination," said Dru Jones, chef and food specialist for Lenoir Dining, the campus restaurant run by students in the Department of Nutrition and Hospitality Management. "It is a huge honor to be nominated, since these awards are often referred to as the 'Oscars of food' in the culinary world."

Established in 1990, the James Beard Awards recognize culinary professionals for excellence and achievement in their fields. Only 20 semifinalists were named in this year's national competition.

Watt has been head baker at Fire Island Rustic Bake Shop in Anchorage, Alaska, for five years, creating a selection of 15 or more artisan breads daily. Watt works closely with the area's farmers and designs his menus accordingly, sourcing as much local, organic and sustainable product as possible.

A native of South Carolina's Lowcountry, Watt learned to cook the traditional cuisines of the Carolinas from his parents and grandmothers. While attending Ole Miss, he cooked at Proud Larry's, Oxford Steak Company and Bouré.



With his first James Beard Award nomination for Outstanding Baker in tow, Carlyle Watt visits Lenoir Hall while in Oxford for the 20th Southern Foodways Symposium. Submitted photo

The hospitality management program curriculum at UM offers a foundation in liberal arts, business and operations management. The program's curriculum is designed to enhance and strengthen students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills, so that they can address, meet and adapt to the various needs of the hospitality industry in managerial positions.

Since the hospitality management degree program at **Ole Miss** exposes students to all facets of the industry, the chef himself mentors and advises students who find a passion for

cooking while they consider which culinary school to attend after graduation.

After graduation and several cooking gigs across the Southeast, Watt attended the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone in Saint Helena, California.

"It was awesome, because I got to go to the accelerated program because of my degree," Watt said. "If you have a bachelor's degree in hospitality, dietetics or nutrition, you skip all the classroom stuff and go straight to eight months of intense kitchen training, and I was done."

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Campus Briefs

Donations Sought for 25th Annual Books and Bears Program

OXFORD, Miss. – The University of Mississippi is asking the community to help spread a little joy this holiday season by donating to the 25th annual Books and Bears program. Donations such as toys, books, dolls, bicycles and other children's play items are being accepted through Dec. 14. All donations will be collected and sorted

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Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship Aims to Build Leaders

OXFORD, Miss. – Twenty-five inaugural recipients of the Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship – a program hosted by the University of Mississippi School of Education in partnership with the Mississippi Association of Coaches and the Mississippi High School Activities Association – are expected to increase their impact on student-athletes and their communities. The coaching fellowship

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Ole Miss In the News

Clarion-Ledger: New Essay Collection Tells the Story of Meredith's Enrollment

Essays celebrate 60th anniversary of James Meredith's enrollment at University of Mississippi By Lauren Rhoades Oct. 1 marks the 60th anniversary of James Meredith's 1962 enrollment at the University of Mississippi as the school's first African-American student.

After culinary school, Watt moved to Alaska to pursue a career as a personal chef, but after a few years on the job decided to return to what he loved the most from culinary school: baking.

"I got a job as a night baker in culinary school for the school's restaurant," he said. "I would go to school until like 9 p.m. and go straight over to the bakery. Everyone, students and instructors, were gone, and I'd have the place to myself. I'd bake bread all night."

As founding members of the Super Saturated Sugar Strings, Watt and his wife, Theresa, appreciate that Watt's early baking hours afford them time to spend practicing and playing the alt-folk music they love, with Watt on vocals, guitar and percussion and Theresa on cello. Their six-member band can be seen at venues and festivals across Alaska, Colorado and Oregon.

Watt is one of three brothers who attended **Ole Miss**. Kenton Watt, a journalism graduate, is a development officer for Texas Christian University, and Bill Watt runs Carolina Lumber Sourcing in Charleston, South Carolina.

For more information about the UM Department of Nutrition and Hospitality Management, visit <http://nhm.olemiss.edu/>.



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"James Meredith: Breaking the Barrier," a collection of essays edited by UM professor of journalism Kathleen Wickham, honors this historic milestone with

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