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## Alumnus Named 2021 ‘Seafood King’ in Competition

Austin Sumrall lives out dream of owning his own restaurant

SEPTEMBER 24, 2021 BY LAUREN LUCAS

FaTvLiErCoSMPrSt



UM alumnus Austin Sumrall won out over chefs from 14 other states at the 2021 Great American Seafood Cook-Off in New Orleans. The McComb native owns White Pillars restaurant in Biloxi with his wife, Tresse. Submitted photo

OXFORD, Miss. – **University of Mississippi** alumnus Austin Sumrall recently won the 2021 **Great American Seafood Cook-Off** in New Orleans, representing the state of Mississippi in competition against respected chefs from 14 other states.

The field included Sumrall's culinary hero, Tory McPhail, longtime head chef at Commander's Palace.

Sumrall, a 2020 James Beard Award nominee, completed his first culinary competition while enrolled in the UM hospitality management program. The program hosted a culinary "throw down," which Sumrall won. He credits this competition for growing his confidence, also thanking his professors for always believing in him, especially Jim Taylor, an associate professor of nutrition and hospitality management.

"Austin was a work-hard, play-hard student who always seemed to impress his professors and peers with his passion for the industry and life in general," Taylor said.

A native of McComb, Sumrall started his professional career in Oxford, working at Boure restaurant while attending college. He graduated in 2010 with a Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management, with the dream of opening his own restaurant.

"Immersing myself in the industry both from a school and work standpoint made me feel like I was working toward my goal each and every day," Sumrall said.

He said he was speechless when he won the Great American Seafood Cook-Off, noting that having his family there made winning more special. His parents and son were in the audience and his wife, Tresse, was his sous chef for the day.

For the competition, Sumrall prepared his signature progressive snapper dinner, which highlights the fish's versatility by using it in a variety of ways.

After graduating from Ole Miss, Sumrall studied at the Culinary Institute of America, earning his Associate of Culinary Arts. He also gained valuable experience working at restaurants such as Cochon in New Orleans and the Hot and Hot Fish Club in Birmingham, Alabama.

In 2015, the Sumrall family moved back to Mississippi to pursue



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OXFORD, Miss. – Peer recognition is a rewarding experience for anyone, but University of Mississippi researcher Amir Mehrara Molan was elated when an article he co-authored recently received the Most Cited Paper Award at the 102nd Transportation Research Board meeting in the nation's capital. The International Journal of Transportation Science and Technology presented the civil engineering

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OXFORD, Miss. – Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy's new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying "thank you." "It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

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U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to

dreams of opening their own restaurant. In December 2017, they opened White Pillars in Biloxi. Owning his own restaurant has helped give Sumrall an important creative outlet, he said.

**Chef Austin Sumrall (left) and his wife and sous chef, Tresse, prep dishes at the 2021 Great American Seafood Cook-Off in New Orleans. Submitted photo**

“Every dish and concept we put out there is like putting a little piece of myself on a plate,” he explained. “Being able to pack out the dining rooms with people that are here to eat my food is a feeling unlike any other.”

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

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