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WKU grad showcases passion for cooking on national TV

HUNTER FRINT 3 min ago



Western Kentucky University alumnus Gerron Hurt is featured in the MasterChef Fox TV show.

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FOX Broadcasting

With over a million people watching, Western Kentucky University alumnus Gerron Hurt has showcased his cooking skills on the current season of Fox Network's "MasterChef."

The 2015 graduate has appeared on the last several episodes of season eight, cooking with some of the best chefs in the world. Hurt, a Louisville native, studied history and social studies at WKU before moving to Nashville, where he teaches 12th-grade English and ESL at Lead Academy High School.

Originally, Hurt was not going to audition for "MasterChef," but his fiancée Brandi Beckham encouraged him to give it a shot.

"We talked on the phone the entire time he prepared for the audition; from the store, back home, while he cooked, even up until the moment he pulled up to the audition," Beckham said. "We prayed together before he went in, and I knew at that very moment, something was going to happen."

And Hurt said he is glad she was so adamant.

"After laughing about it and everything, I finally decided to get up and go because Brandi pushed me to go," Hurt said. "I'm going to say it's one of the best decisions I've made."

Hurt and Beckham met on WKU's campus at a party. They have been together for over four years and plan to be married next June.

"Bowling Green is where this love story began," said Beckham, who studied broadcasting and now works at Cameron College Prep Middle School in Nashville.

Hurt expressed his fondness for Bowling Green, saying he loves the fact that it is simply "just a small, college town."

“I just love the feel,” he said. “Being an alumni and a Hilltopper you just get that feel every time you’re in Bowling Green and I just absolutely love it.”

He said there are plans to move back to Bowling Green in the near future.

Hurt described his experience on "MasterChef" as “as dream come true.”

“The food that you’re able to cook on the show are ingredients that you just can’t get in Nashville or Bowling Green — ingredients that are very specific,” he said. “You get a good opportunity to work with a lot of expensive and delicate ingredients and equipment you just will not have in your everyday kitchen.”

Cooking was a passion passed down to Hurt from his mother, who passed away from cancer in 2013.

“I was in the kitchen at 5 years old, cooking, using everything she taught me,” Hurt said.

Hurt is not the first WKU alum to grace the kitchen with Gordon Ramsay and other world-renowned chefs. Brandi Mudd, a 2013 master’s graduate, starred on season seven of "MasterChef," making it all the way to the final three.





Originally from Breckinridge County, Mudd grew up in Hardinsburg, about an hour southwest of Louisville.

“I was very excited when I heard another teacher (from Kentucky) was given this opportunity,” she said. “Students need to witness more of their role models following their dreams and seeing that nothing is out of reach.”

Mudd is expected to make an appearance at Camp MasterChef, the show’s summer camp for 8- to 16-year-olds where children’s culinary interests are enhanced and fostered by experts and cooking challenges.

“After teaching elementary school for nine years, and then transitioning to full-time catering, it will be amazing to combine the two and share my love of cooking with the campers,” Mudd said.

In regard to what Hurt plans to do post-"MasterChef," it involves a little bit of cooking and his passion for teaching. He said he would think about pursuing the culinary arts if the right opportunity came along, but that one of his dreams is to open a culinary program at Lead Academy.

“It would be an opportunity for kids who don’t want to go to college,” Hurt said. “It would provide another outlet to the culinary world.”

He talked about his students who have been watching the show, texting him about seeing him on "MasterChef," and said he wants to convey to them and everyone that with hard work and dedication, anything is possible.

“Don’t stop dreaming, because watching these cooking shows is something I did when I was growing up,” Hurt said. “And the fact that I’m 25 and I’ve done it and I never stopped dreaming is just something I want to push to inspire people.”

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