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photos by AVA TOWNER, SIMON SHAWVER & ADDIE CLARK

let's get COOKING

Junior Carter Wright grows his cooking hobby through Instagram and support from his friends

story by AVNI BANSAL

JUNIOR CARTER WRIGHT had all of his ingredients – a \$35, 16-ounce steak, extra-virgin olive oil, Montreal steak seasoning, butter, pepper and salt. Latin hip-hop music blasted from his Alexa. He put on his blue sunglasses and infamous white chef's hat.

A two-foot ring light balanced on his kitchen countertop, holding his phone. He pressed record.

Then came his favorite part: yelling.

"Welcome back, ya'll," Wright shouted at his phone. "Today we're gonna be cooking up some steak. Let's get cookin'!"

He gets to work. He seasons and brushes the two steaks with butter and heats the grill pan. Then, after asking his Alexa what temperature the steak should be, he cooks the steaks on each side for two minutes until the inside reaches 135 degrees.

After the steaks are cut up and on his signature red plate, Wright edits the one-hour process into a 40-second Instagram video using CapCut – he even bought the premium version two weeks ago for \$10 a month so he could access the special effects, filters and

templates.

"I just add a bunch of random transitions one after another to make [the video] chaotic," Wright said. "It turns out perfect."

Wright posted his first cooking video on his main TikTok account in mid-July – the same time he began cooking. Wright says it was spur of the moment; he was cooking at his friend's house and thought it'd be fun to film it. Now, he has an Instagram account dedicated solely to cooking, where he uploads videos three to four times a week.

He's not only focused on the food. To Wright, bringing energy and personality to the kitchen is just as important.

Wright doesn't cook alone. There are around 10 others featured on his Instagram – friends, coworkers and classmates who assist with camerawork and try Wright's food.

In his foods class, he met senior Willow Austin, and after small talk and a messy microwave cookie explosion, the two decided to start a cooking club.

"Carter didn't have a lot of ideas on how to kick start [the club]," Austin said. "And I feel like I just kind of did. So he was like, 'Wanna be Vice President and try to turn this into more?' He's the

heart of the club, I just think he wanted the collaboration, and maybe needed it a little bit."

Now the two have 30 members on their GroupMe, AP Government teacher Jacob Penner as their club sponsor and even a treasurer – junior Sheehan Hensley. Hensley will manage future donations and reach out to Hy-Vee and other local grocery stores to determine if they are interested in contributing supplies and ingredients.

"Carter came into my seminar one time, and he was just right there talking about it, so I thought I'd join," Hensley said. "I just hope that we're able to make some nice meals and get some high-quality ingredients from people who'll donate to us."

Along with meeting Austin in foods class, Wright also became friends with sophomore and Spanish exchange student Jaime de Sandoval de la Cruz.

To spice up his two-hour Spotify playlist, "cookinwiticarter bangers", Wright turned to de la Cruz for song recs – one of which was a Spanish hip-hop track called Dembow y Reggaeton.

"[Spanish music] is energetic, and it puts me in a happy mindset," Wright said. "I can't understand the words. It's

just the beats."

Wright began featuring de la Cruz at the start of his videos to add extra energy, with de la Cruz shouting Wright's various catchphrases in Spanish.

His cooking goes beyond collaboration; Wright often prepares meals for others. He made mango habanero chicken with mac and cheese for his mom, prepping it into glass containers for her to take to work for lunch. He also brought fried chicken to the daycare he works at, bringing it to five of his coworkers to taste-test.

"He brought in food that he had cooked for a food review and had [my friends] try it and make a video about it, and they all thought it was really good," junior Mary Marsden, Wright's coworker, said.

Marsden, Austin and Hensley have all noticed the 100 "Join Cooking Club" posters Wright has displayed around the school, smiling about how Wright's club is growing. They all describe Wright the same way: hilarious.

"He doesn't hide anything in his videos," Austin said. "He's outgoing, he's very fun and he's also just passionate about cooking. Carter isn't filming these videos just to film them. He cares."

meet the COOKS

The chefs behind the SM East Cooking Club

SHEEHAN HENSLEY TREASURER:

- manages **donations** and **contacts** local grocery stores for **support**
- plans out **locations** where they can cook

CARTER WRIGHT PRESIDENT:

- runs the **GroupMe** and **social media**
- answers any **club-related** questions

SCAN ME GROUPME

Scan this QR code to join the GroupMe for Carter's Cooking Club.



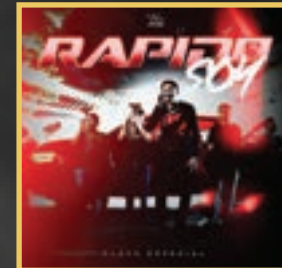
WILLOW AUSTIN VICE PRESIDENT:

- gets more people engaged in the club through **word of mouth**
- brainstorms ideas on how to organize **monthly** meetings



A BANGER PLAYLIST

Carter chooses his top three songs from his spotify playlist "Cookinwitcarter Bangers"



RAPIDO SOY
BY
CLAVE ESPECIAL



DESVELADO
BY
BOBBY PULIDO



EL PROSTIPIRUGOLFO
BY
LOS TITANES DE DURANGO



ABOVE Senior Willow Austin and junior Carter Wright begin filming a review of the pizza they made in their intro to foods class.
photo by ADDIE CLARK



ABOVE Junior Carter Wright records the medium-rare steak he cooked for his Instagram account.
photo by AVA TOWNER



ABOVE Junior Carter Wright assembles his ringlight in order to get the perfect lighting for his Instagram video.
photo by AVA TOWNER



ABOVE Junior Carter Wright's video materials are ready: seasoned steaks and his phone.
photo by AVA TOWNER

SCAN ME INSTAGRAM

Scan this QR code to check out Carter's cooking Instagram account.

