

# BAKER MADE

Dave Okapal Shares  
How He Started Baking

When Dave Okapal came to Temple, the student center was not yet open for business and there was only one dining area for students. Okapal first started his career at the Louis J. Esposito dining center, otherwise known as J&H and the only Temple affiliated option available to students.

Now, “Baker Dave” as he has come to be known, runs two bakeries that cover three campus-dining areas with over 30 individual retail locations.

“When you make food cafeteria style, it waters down the options available because of how difficult it is to keep up with that high amount of food,” Okapal said. “I still split time between the bakery at J&H and Morgan Hall, but I see the future of campus dining as heavily retail oriented.”

Despite his success, baking was not Okapal’s initial choice for a career. When attending Johnson & Wales University’s College of Culinary Arts, Okapal said that he had wanted to be a part of the butcher shop upon graduation.

Though, once he saw the process and the creativity that went into baking, he knew that was what he wanted to do.

“I have always been a creative person,” Okapal said. “In high school I was in a band and, when that failed, my creative personality overflowed into cooking. Going to school for baking was an option that came up, so then eventually my passion and creativity turned to baking.”

Dave’s passion for baking has stayed alive not only because of his creativity, but also because of the people he has been around.

When looking to someone who first inspired him to cook, Okapal thinks of his grandmother, who always had cookies, ice cream, and other great food around.

“My parents also motivated me to go for it,” Okapal says. “My parents were very supportive of anything I wanted to do, so when I told them about the option of baking, they supported me completely.”

After witnessing a lot of colleges where some of the students seemed stuck up and unappreciative, Okapal says that there are not many places that he would rather be than Temple. To Okapal, Temple students are so courteous and respectful and he’s very appreciative of that kind of atmosphere here.

“The amount of retail options Temple provides has really improved the quality of campus dining,” Okapal says. “The procedure of commonly providing for every retail location but still having them operate separate from each other has increased quality and the amount of choices here like never before.”

ANDRE DIENNER

