

CHEF SPOTLIGHT: EXECUTIVE CHEF GEOFFREY BLOUNT

July 14, 2023|Chef SpotLight, Culinary, Resident Experience
Senior Dining Association



*Geoffrey Blount, Executive Chef, Watercrest
Myrtle Beach*

As we continue to celebrate National Culinary Arts Month, one of the chefs helping to change the narrative around senior living dining is certainly Geoffrey Blount, Executive Chef at Watercrest Myrtle Beach, in Myrtle Beach, SC.

Call it kismet, fate, or just pure happenstance that brought him to his new position at the assisted living community in July 2022. After seeing an ad and some brief research, he thought, “It looked really nice like a country club or hotel but a place where people don’t go home, they just go upstairs; and the menu didn’t look like healthcare.”

With no interview scheduled, he saw the Watercrest sign while driving an alternate route due to traffic and thought he’d just drop a resume. He bumped into Executive Director Hunter Weaver who invited him to her office. He recalls her saying she wasn’t looking for healthcare experience but “someone who cares about my residents and wants to make memorable experiences.” And that’s what Geoffrey and his small dining team do every day for 56 residents in assisted living and 25 in memory care.

He hired Pastry Chef Stephanie Decker, who had been his nighttime instructor and an adjunct at the International Culinary Institute of Myrtle Beach where he later taught Baking and Pastry at its Horry Georgetown Technical College; she is also Morning Sous Chef. There’s also an AM and PM chef, three or four culinary-trained servers who can also cook, and two dishwashers.

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The dining room supervisor is one of his graduates from when he was teaching at the culinary school. His son is a server but reports to Hunter, whose “young vibrant energy” he praises for helping him succeed in his new position.



Fresh everything at Watercrest Myrtle Beach includes these maple bacon sticky cruffins for the Father's Day Brunch —croissant dough rolled and baked in a muffin tin with a maple sorghum sticky glaze and smoked bacon bits.

With every employee he has hired, he takes them into the dining room and asks them to make a square using their fingers and look at a resident's face through the square. Then he says, “Now picture that is your mother or your aunt or your grandmother in that square. Now think about what you're about to do, and would you feed it to your grandmother or your mother?” That hits home for a lot of them.

A life like no other

Geoffrey says the folks who will be entering senior living communities 10 years from now are literally going to have lived a life not like any other. “They all know the Food Network; they all know Bobby Flay. They all know food isn’t just nourishment at the table but entertainment and trends. They’re going to be living longer, healthier lives coming to communities like Watercrest, and they come with big expectations. I serve at least 10 filet mignons every night, at least two or three shrimp scampis, and we run out of desserts.”

Watercrest Myrtle Beach bakes their own fresh bread, dinner rolls, and English muffins, as well as hoagie, ham-burger and hotdog buns, only buying white, wheat and rye bread for toast in the morning.

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“It’s little niche things that you know apply to our residents. There are three solid things they can look forward to every day—breakfast, lunch, dinner—and when you miss the mark on an event that may go awry that day or a program just wasn’t as fun as it normally is, at least if lunch is hitting on all cylinders, the day is still saved.”

What residents are loving

When asked what’s trending with residents there, he says, “The big trending thing is ‘fresh,’ and obviously I play to it a little bit with fresh baked goods. Stephanie will make a batch of croissant dough, and I’ll do a demo laminating it. Residents love watching me roll it out at the chef’s bar, and I use a small sheeter. And then just a variety of soups; they love soup. The big word is fresh, whether it’s fresh fruit or fresh vegetables.”



Part of the young and very talented culinary crew at Watercrest Myrtle Beach from left, Harrison Clinton, Pastry/Sous Chef Stephanie Decker, Executive Chef Geoffrey Blount, and Chef Samantha Spencer

Raw whole chickens are cleaned, and everything is used. Fresh fish are filleted. His team patties their own hamburgers, make Salisbury steak and their own meatballs, pasta Pappardelle, and a shepherd’s pie.

“Same thing with the tenderloins. We have beef tips on the menu once every five weeks, so throughout the month while I’m cleaning my filets for my dinner menu I’m saving the tips and putting them away. And then of course on that one night we bring them out and do beef tips bourguignon with the red wine and mushrooms.”

There are 28 items on his menu, not including the menu that sets the dietary guidelines and is offered every day. The dining room is open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. with cook-to-order breakfast, lunch, dinner and appetizer menus.

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The breakfast menu features Watercrest Signature items including Buttermilk Pancakes with blueberries, Belgian Waffles, and a Raisin Bran Muffin designed in Myrtle Beach, made with Raisin Bran cereal, more raisins, and skim buttermilk—everything from scratch, no mixes.

“Lots of choices, and you just have to be able to manage it all and quite a few SKUs when you look at your inventory. But the inventory turns quickly.”

The exception is Memory Care, where they do batch cooking, but he says, “It might be the best southern fried buttermilk chicken, homemade mac and cheese, and snap peas. The container comes back empty every time. And then for dessert maybe a banana pudding cup in little demitasse coffee cups with sprinkles.”



Chef Garland and his Smoked Texas Brisket. The residents were engaged from the fabrication and “RubDown” to watching the smoking process to enjoying the final tender product arriving at their place setting the following day.

World Certified Master Pastry Chef

Geoffrey was a theater major at Douglas Anderson School of the Arts and then at Catawba College in Salisbury, NC, before deciding he liked theater more as a hobby. He got his culinary feet wet as a line cook off-season at Darryl’s, “the consummate American-style dining venue with 100 tables, 400 seats,” where the executive chef urged him to go to culinary school. At the time, he thought, “They have a school for this? This is ridiculous. You need a school to learn how to cook? I seem to be doing just fine, chef.”

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But he took his chef's advice and earned his AAS degree in Culinary Arts from Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte, NC, in 1995, returning a couple decades later as lead instructor for Pastry Arts. He also earned a bachelor's degree in International Hospitality Management from Strayer University and an MBA in Business Entrepreneurship from Western Carolina University. Today a World Certified Master Pastry Chef, a Certified Executive Pastry Chef for the American Culinary Federation, and member of the American Academy of Chefs, he says there was no pastry "niche" program when he went to culinary school. Students graduated, then found their niche.

He cooked in just about every facet of the food industry including manufacturing, retail baking, and worked with hotels up and down the East Coast, including the Renaissance and Ritz Carlton Corporation in Chicago, and Marriott while attending the French Pastry School in Chicago.



Loaded baked potato quiche filled with bacon, cheese, and love!

Geoffrey says part of his pastry background is what brings all the organization to play and enables him to pull everything else together as an executive chef.

Between 1992 and 2012, he won over 39 ACF medals for the Hot Food, Bread, Chocolate, Pastry and Cold-Food categories in competitions throughout the U.S.

He appeared on multiple Food Network competitions including Season 6 of the Holiday Baking Championship in 2019 with 10 other bakers and pastry chefs. He made it to the final four, winning the challenge for his panettone mousse cake, an artistic mélange of panettone in five different ways: panettone sponge, panettone-infused mousse, panettone mille-feuille in the middle, panettone truffle, and a panettone tuile on top filled with isomalt. Episode 7's Hanukkah-themed challenge bumped him out of the competition.