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Lariat file photo

2,500 meals later, accounting professor still learns from students

JOSH SIATKOWSKI
Lead Writer

For the better part of a decade, Don Carpenter has bought breakfast and lunch for his students almost every weekday. And while he's opened his schedule — and his wallet — for many of the thousands who have sat through his financial accounting class, Carpenter makes one thing clear: The meeting is not just a free meal.

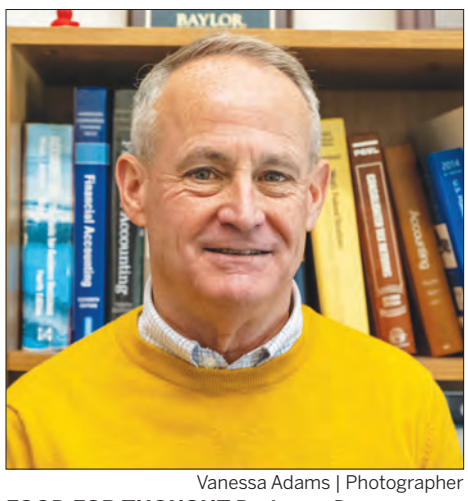
"I tell them, 'You know I buy, but it's going to cost you something,'" he said. "'You have to answer questions … We're going to have a purpose to this. It's not like we're just going to chat about the football game; I want to learn about you.'"

Carpenter, a clinical associate professor in the accounting department, has been at Baylor since 2016. Now in his 11th year, he's become a symbol of the business school's core curriculum. Every one of the roughly 1,000 business students who come in each year spends two mornings a week in Foster's McClinton Auditorium for Accounting 2303, taught only by Carpenter.

And every morning starts the same way. In his East Texas accent that has hung around since his childhood in the town of White Oak, Carpenter addresses the lecture hall with four simple words: "OK, it's accounting time."

But many students, even those who take his class, know Carpenter in a different setting. He's not just the talking head who preaches accounting concepts in the front of a lecture hall. He's the professor who cannot walk the halls of the Paul L. Foster Campus for Business and Innovation without being greeted by dozens of students; whose lunch visits get booked up months in advance; and who manages a Rolodex with thousands of names well enough to remember something about every student he's met.

For Carpenter, a 35-year industry veteran, he got his fair share of the profession while working in Houston as an executive for auto parts manufacturer Tenneco and disposal giant Waste Management. Much of his decision to return to teach at his alma mater stemmed from his desire to stay engaged after retiring from a demanding career.



Vanessa Adams | Photographer

FOOD FOR THOUGHT Professor Don Carpenter is a beloved finance professor who has shown students the benefit of giving back.

The need for engagement became harder to meet, though, after Baylor's business school shifted to more lecture-hall classes over the last decade.

"There was a lot of angst in the business school about moving to these large sections," Carpenter said. "It becomes impersonal in that sense. … One of the things I thought was, 'Well, we need to take steps to avoid this lack of being impersonal.'"

The solution was a program Carpenter coined "You Book, I Buy." Since 2018, Carpenter has maintained a sign-up sheet with 10 slots per week available for students to schedule breakfast or lunch with him. And ever since it began, those slots fill up at a speed that rivals Sing ticket sales. This semester, he has been booked through final exams since October.

Carpenter doesn't know exactly how many students he's met with over the years, but the simple math says 10 meals a week times 32 weeks per school year times eight years makes about 2,500.

Some things about all of those "You Book, I Buy" visits are always the same. The Starbucks in Moody Library has remained a reliable breakfast spot. And until The Mix Cafe's closure early this year, Carpenter was on a years-long streak of chicken Caesar salads for lunch (now mostly swapped for a Chick-fil-A salad from the SUB). The questions he asks — about life stories, aspirations and faith — also start the same way.

But every meeting he's had takes a different direction. Whether it's talking about a student's summer job as a rodeo clown or meeting with Baylor basketball legend and NBA draftee Jared Butler, there's always something to remember. Whatever that something is, it's almost always deeper than accounting, and both he and his students learn from each other.

"It definitely felt like a two-way conversation where we were eager to hear his advice and about his story, but he also was definitely asking us questions, trying to learn about us, to build a connection with us," said Southlake senior Daniel Six, who met with Carpenter alongside a group of friends as a freshman.

For Carpenter, some of the thousands of meetings have made a lasting impact years later.

"There was one where I had a student, and she seemed so disconnected in class, but I was surprised. She reached out and said, 'I want to have breakfast with you,'" Carpenter said.

While they met, the student shared that her mother had committed suicide before the semester started. That meeting made Carpenter realize that "the story is now completely different."

"It's kind of emotional, but it puts everything in context," he said. "I would have never known that. I would just have thought, 'Here's a student that's going through the motions.'"

On the weekdays, it's rare to see Carpenter eating alone. But even as a self-described introvert who loves "a Saturday where I go run in the morning, and I do not leave the house again," he likes it that way. He sees the spiritual power of a shared meal as a tool to share the Gospel and live out his faith.

"Someone said one time, 'We learn about Christ through his Word. We see him through his meal,'" Carpenter said. "Something about a meal makes us just the same."

But it's also a way to combat an epidemic of loneliness and disconnection, brought on, Carpenter thinks, by cultural shifts like noise-canceling headphones and drive-thru restaurants.

"One of my goals is to stamp out drive-in windows because it's the most dehumanizing thing in the world," he said. "If you think about it, we put our convenience above connecting with people."

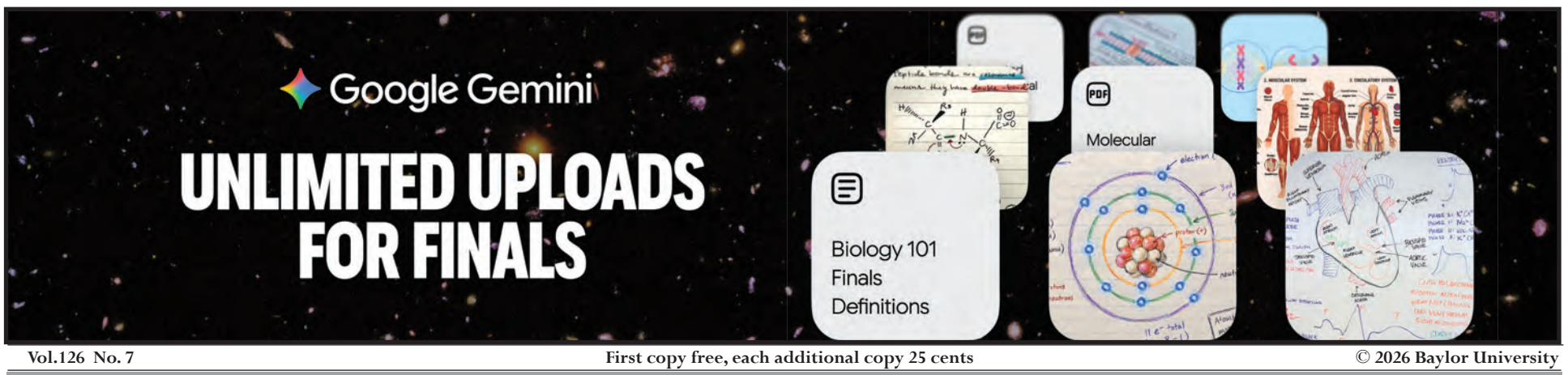
Even at dinnertime, Carpenter finds himself breaking bread with students. Twice a semester, he and his wife host roughly 50 honors accounting students.

Six, who was also in Carpenter's honors section, said that he appreciated not only his generosity, but also his theological perspective on work after reading Tim Keller's "Every Good Endeavor."

"He didn't approach as much of a balance as living out your faith through your work and that the work itself, not just because of its result, or not because of telling your coworker the gospel, but just in doing the actual work you can glorify God and live out your faith," Six said.

Across Carpenter's thousands of gatherings, conversations have extended to all sorts of topics. But central to every connection is the importance of the student and feeling "permission to talk about themselves."

"When you say to someone, 'I am buying your meal,' it says you matter," Carpenter said.



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opinion

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Drop the grease pit grub, try Waco's local eats

BY THE EDITORIAL BOARD



Randy Clute | Cartoonist

For us at The Editorial Board, the true genius loci of Waco is rooted in the delicious dishes and curated coffee brought to the city by its own residents. While it's easy to rely on the familiarity of the grease pit for your daily grub, the town offers much more than a McDonald's $5 meal deal.

Don't get us wrong, Ocean Buffet scares us too, and it's easy to feel like fast food is the cheapest, easiest option. But supporting small businesses doesn't just mean supporting owners. It also translates to supporting the Waco economy, families, entrepreneurs and Baylor alums who helped build the Waco ethos we see today.

While there are multiple reasons to support local business, a major one is the economic boost that it provides. According to a Forbes article on the upsides of shopping locally, "For every $100 spent at one of these businesses, for example, $68 stays in the community."

To help you with your small-business support venture, here are some of our top picks.

BE KIND COFFEE

A popular stop for Baylor students and Wacoans, the shop is co-owned by local entrepreneurs Will Suarez and Alex Sanchez. Both the coffee and matcha are unbeatable and pair perfectly with a great atmosphere for studying or catching up with an old flame.

Located at 1534 Washington Ave., our menu favorites are the Butter Cup Latte, Strawberry Matcha and Avocado Bagel.

DUBL-R OLD FASHIONED HAMBURGERS

A family-owned joint that serves burgers, shakes, tater tots, onion rings and fries — Dubl-R is the go-to for a filling meal for under $13. The restaurant has been part of the Waco community since 1996 and is usually packed wall-to-wall at lunchtime. Located at 1810 Herring Ave., Dubl-R is the perfect spot to grab lunch with friends in between classes or after basketball games.

KITOK RESTAURANT

You might not expect Waco to have delicious Korean barbecue; however, this historical landmark delivers that and more with menu staples like a Bulgogi Burger and Oriental Fries.

Located at 1815 N 18th St., don't let the hole-in-the-wall exterior scare you, as they have been a local gem since 1975. Throughout the restaurant's history, a multitude of Korean American women have owned and operated it.

KOTTAGE

Known for delicious crunchy fried chicken and Korean corn dogs, Kottage is locally owned and run out of the Veterans of Foreign Wars kitchen at 725 Sun Valley Blvd. in Hewitt. They currently offer curbside pickup and catering only, but plan to open their own brick-and-mortar once they can grow.

LONGSHOT COFFEE ROASTERS

A new addition to the local specialty coffee roaster scene, Longshot has especially delicious curated matcha drinks. Located at 2709 Robinson Drive, Longshot celebrated its grand opening on Oct. 31.

The shop has a collection of rotating specialty drinks like a Teddy Graham Latte, Ube Cloud Matcha and Cinnamon Churro Latte. They also sell homemade treats like a gluten-free Pumpkin Scone, Brown Sugar Poptart and Bacon Cheddar Biscuit.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Beachy's Baking Co., Un je ne sais Quoi…, The Apple Gal and Taqueria Zacatas are among the multitude of hidden food gems in Waco worth your money.

So when dinner time comes around and the idea of more dining hall isn't so appealing, go beyond the LED signs beckoning you to the grease pit and try something new. Remember Starbucks isn't the only option for a cup of caffeine, so try a fresh spot. You never know; it could be your new favorite place.

4 restaurants that carry Waco's taco scene

ADDISON GERNENZ
Copy Editor

I believe some conversations can only be had over a meal.

Over my three and a half years at Baylor, these meals have adopted a variety of looks — loud lunches in Memorial Dining, soup nights in my dorm's communal kitchen, Thursday dinners at the Chick-fil-A in the SUB when my friend group decided to protest Memorial's "breakfast for dinner" or home-cooked meals _at the homes of my Waco-native friends.



Or, the option which I will happily return to time and time again: tacos.

Waco houses dozens of taco trucks, Tex-Mex restaurants and local Mexican places. While I admit there are many locations I have yet to visit, here are my top four taco places in Waco.

4. TAQUERIA LA MILPA

My freshman year, my friends and I would end up at a taco truck sometime between ten p.m. and midnight, probably once a week. It was often La Milpa, and I still feel a fond nostalgia for the green block letters, the faded photo of the variety of sodas offered and the small bag of salsa found at the bottom of the brown paper bag.

Out of this list, I enjoy La Milpa's corn tortillas the most. Their salsa, while thin, has an excellent flavor, although I would rank it a 5/10 on the spice level. I would personally recommend the barbacoa tacos, although the prices are cheap enough that you can try several kinds without breaking the bank.

3. TAQUERIA ZACATECAS

When I told my friends I was writing a column on tacos for The Lariat, I was almost instantly asked: "Why would they let you do this? You can't eat anything."

I rebuke this statement, but I do confess that I am allergic to both gluten and dairy and live a very sad flour-tortilla-less life. I think that a good taco can stand alone without cheese, though, so I will not be apologizing for this gap in my taco knowledge.

I have been instructed by my friend group's Resident Taco Z Lover to report that this taco place has the best flour tortillas in Waco. I, however, will remain confined to a prison of corn tacos.

Taco Z used to be a food truck but now has a brick-and-mortar building. It still holds the charm of a taco truck, as well as speedy service.

Taco Z's salsa is by far the best salsa I have had in Waco, Texas. I would put it 7.5 or 8/10 on my spice scale, and it is the ideal thinner consistency for a street taco without spilling out and requiring the consumer to need a dozen napkins.

These tacos also converted me into someone who enjoys cabbage on her tacos, which makes me sound like a pickier eater than I am.

2. LAS TRANCAS TAQUERIA

Las Trancas, while placed second on this list, is number one in my heart. I could not count the number of taco truck runs that have landed me at Las Trancas.

Las Trancas is open until midnight nearly every night of the week and 3 a.m. on the weekend, which makes it the perfect spot for a late-night side quest or taco craving.

My go-to order is two azada tacos on corn and one barbacoa on corn. Out of these street-taco places listed, I would definitely say Las Trancas has the best meat. It is never dry and always seasoned well, and I have always been happy with a purchase.

It is a family-owned taco truck, and the owners know many of my friends by name. The atmosphere of Las Trancas is very special to me, and I am forever thankful for the laughter and conversations I have sitting at the white folding tables outside the truck, listening to the Spanish music or cramming as many people as possible into the back of a car and yelling at the driver not to hit the poorly-placed curb.

1. THE RANCHITO#5

As much as I love Las Trancas, the best tacos in Waco are undoubtedly at Ranchito's.

They have dine-in, take-out, and drive-thru options. They are the most expensive on this list, but you can still get a full meal, and typically leftovers, for around $15.

I am a habitual person, and thus I tend to order the same thing every single time I visit a restaurant. Ranchito's is a rare exception to this, as I tend to alternate between their crispy tacos, mini tacos or soft tacos on corn. I can also speak highly for their carne asada fajita plate and their breakfast tacos (an excellent use of their drive-thru).

La Milpa has the (corn) tortillas, Taco Z has the salsa and Las Trancas has the meat; Ranchito's has all three consistently. It also comes with the classic bonus of chips and salsa, since it is the only traditional sit-down place on this list.

While I love taco trucks and chaotic 11 p.m. food runs after a long day of work, there is something so special about a sit-down meal with friends where you can talk about anything.



Addison Gernenz | Copy Editor

TACO TIME Three tacos with onion and cilantro from Las Trancas Taqueria.

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What the tough get cooking when cooking gets tough

ARDEN BERRY
Arts & Life Editor

College is famously expensive and time is limited. Often, students may struggle to find the time and resources to eat decent meals.

Enter: "college struggle meals," the resourceful students' solution when money is tight or the fridge is almost empty.

In 2025, Today offered a "definitive ranking" of the most popular struggle meals, with items like spaghetti and nachos. However, some Baylor students have out-of-the-box innovations that keep them fed.

TUNA RAMEN

Frisco freshman Aiden Briley first developed an appreciation for tuna with his mother's tuna casserole. Now Briley recommends anything tuna.

"Tuna is a really good, not only fat, but it also has a lot of protein for a very small price, and it also works well with other things," Briley said. "You can put a lot of sauces on it if you don't like the flavor to overcoat. It's natural flavor, but I mean, if you do like fishy flavor, it's even better."

Briley said tuna works well with Ritz Crackers and ramen.

"If you want to have ramen, but you don't know what to add protein-wise, tuna works well with that," Briley said. "You can add your soy sauce or whatever sauce you want and toppings."

Briley said he likes the fishy flavor of tuna.

"It works well as a quick snack," Briley said. "You can also have multiple cans. I mean, it's really cheap, so you can have multiple cans to get your protein in for a dinner or something. They come cheap, especially at Costco or Sam's Club, which we have around here."



Caleb Garcia | Photo Editor

MEAL PREP "College struggle meals" can help students stay fed without breaking the bank or spending too much time cooking. These meals can be made up of an assortment of foods, from ramen tuna to protein oatmeal.

POTLUCK OATMEAL

Facing a different kind of struggle, Belleville, Illinois, sophomore Thomas Miller found himself beset with food poisoning.

"I was scared of eating," Miller said. "But I had to eat something, because, when you're sick, you need something in your stomach."

And so he called his friends to bring him some oatmeal to satiate his smarting stomach. But once he had it, he did not stop at oatmeal.

"Another friend gave me some syrup, and so that was going to flavor my oatmeal a bit," Miller said. "And so I cooked it. And then I thought, 'Well, I should make this more substantive, because it's like my whole meal, and it's just two little packs.' And so I dumped like a good scoop and a half of protein powder on it. And so I figured that this would dissolve, and I could just mix it up. But it layered it like snow, like there is a thick layer of protein powder completely obscuring my oatmeal."

He then poured oat milk and mixed it with the protein powder.

"It turned it into this gray, liquidy, slightly grainy sludge," Miller said.

Despite the sludge and his food poisoning, Miller was undeterred.

"A lot of friends had contributed to that, so I can't just throw that away, right?" Miller said. "And I feel like oatmeal is pretty much already a sludge."

He said the result was not bad, as none of the flavors were too strong, and it mainly "tasted like texture."

"I definitely got my protein in," Miller said. "Alongside carbs. I feel like I got everything I needed out of this meal. So if you really do be struggling, and you only have those ingredients, then, yeah, I would recommend it."

DINING HALL TIRAMISU

For dessert, Fort Worth sophomore Luc Nguyen found a trending dessert called "Dining Hall Tiramisu" and decided to try it at Memorial Dining Hall.

"Dining Hall Tiramisu is basically just a dining hack, if you will, and it's basically waffles, coffee, and whipped cream layered until you get something akin to tiramisu," Nguyen said.

Nguyen take a waffle, cuts it into fourths, jams it in a bowl or cup, pours coffee on top and then adds whipped cream in between.

"Each dining hall has different capabilities," Nguyen said. "So, from what I've seen online, other dining halls with hot water dispensers, and clear cups, they're able to melt chocolate and whatnot. Since we don't really have hot water on tap at Baylor's, all I do is just coffee, waffles, whipped cream, whereas other people will go the extra step and make a mascarpone, if you will, with melted chocolate, whipped cream, whip it together."

Nguyen said he would recommend Dining Hall Tiramisu as a lunchtime treat.

"This would not be advisable for a late-night snack, especially due to the caffeine content," Nguyen said. "But I would recommend it if you don't have any other desserts on hand, and you want something that reminds you of eating out at Olive Garden."

Hot Dog Summer influencer cooks up her perfect hot dog



Caleb Garcia | Photo Editor

HOT DIGGITY DOG Gatesville resident and hot dog influencer Carrie Burt shows off "The Cali Dog," which features mayonnaise, grilled onion, peppers and crushed Flamin' Hot Cheetos.

REIGHA WEAVER
Arts & Life Writer

Many think the season of hot dogs ends after summer. However, Gatesville resident and hot dog influencer Carrie Burt thinks that they are a year-round staple.

After years of tasting and making hot dogs, Burt has developed a recipe for her perfect hot dog.

Burt serves as Waco's self-appointed hot dog ambassador and makes videos on TikTok and Instagram under the username @hot.dog.summer.

"I was going to apply to be the southwest region ambassador," Burt said. "

However, the year that I was going to do it, they stopped doing the contest. And so I just kind of named myself Waco's hot dog ambassador. The contest wasn't happening. So I was like, I'm just gonna do this for fun now."

After trying various hot dogs and documenting her journey online, Burt has many opinions on what makes a good hot dog.

"I think toppings should complement the meat," Burt said. "I mean, it's all about the wiener. I love veggies for toppings because hot dogs are kind of known as being unhealthy, and so you got to get a little bit of veg in there to make it better for you,"

More importantly, making and reviewing hot dogs connects Burt to her whimsy.

"It's so much fun," Burt said. "I love making hot dogs for other people too, because then you can spread that joy around. Hot Dog Summer is really more a state of mind, it's not a time of year. Hot Dog Summer is whimsy."

Burt's perfect hot dog is inspired by "The Cali Dog" from Waco food truck The Lifestyle, which sells a variety of hamburgers and gourmet hot dogs.

"The Cali Dog from The Lifestyle is definitely one of my favorites," Burt said. "The Lifestyle is always good."

Burt's recipe for her perfect hot dog begins with the perfect base.

"I usually use the H-E-B beef sausages, because they're great for the price and value, but sometimes I use sausages with more casing for the perfect pop when you bite into it," Burt said.

Burt coats the sides of a split-top bun with mayonnaise. She then places down the sausage, followed by grilled onion and peppers. Once the hot dog is assembled and the savory aroma of the peppers fills the room, Burt then sprinkles crushed Flamin' Hot Cheetos on the hot dog.

"Make a mess because life is messy," Burt said. "And that is my perfect hot dog."



THE FOODIE


Lariat File Photo

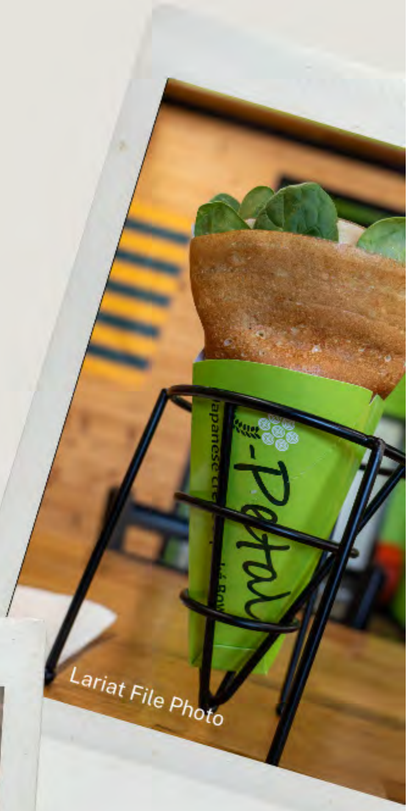

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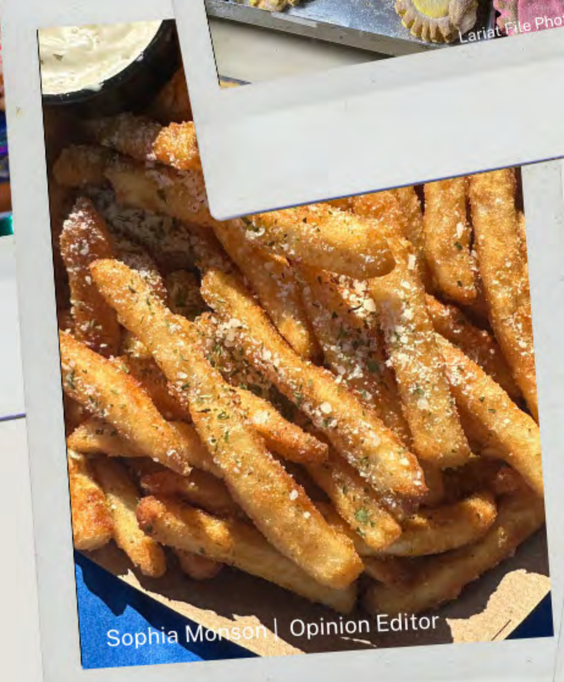
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TAKE A SWEET TRIP 'AROUND THE WORLD'



Caleb Garcia | Photo Editor

KAMRYN ANTHIS
Staff Writer

Since opening in 2019, Around The World Bakery has brought flavors from across the globe to downtown Waco. From cheesecakes and pastries to coffee and matcha, the shop offers customers a variety of treats inspired by different cultures.

Owner Adilene Camarena said the bakery grew out of her combined "passion for traveling and baking put together." Through the business, she hopes to encourage customers to explore foods and flavors they may not have experienced before.

"When creating Around The World, I wanted it to be different, to stand out, to look different," Camarena said. "That's what I'm trying to showcase: bringing different things from different countries to build bridges and have people want to experience trying different pastries."

The bakery's international theme extends beyond its menu to its interior, which features a chic, French-inspired design. Camarena said building the business from the ground up has also given her opportunities to develop her skills as a baker and business owner.

"From 2019 to now, I've definitely grown ... I could say I'm more experienced in so many areas, just from practice and continuously learning about different pastries and how to do them," Camarena said.

Behind the bakery's daily operations is a team of 10 baristas and bakers. Camarena said the employees' different backgrounds and experiences contribute to the workplace and help shape the environment she wants to create.

> That's what I'm trying to showcase: bringing different things from different countries to build bridges and have people want to experience trying different pastries.
>
> **ADILENE CAMARENA**
> **AROUND THE WORLD OWNER**

"Everybody's very different, very different backgrounds, and I love it," Camarena said. "They all bring something you need to the team."

Flower Mound junior Kira Hurley works as a barista at Around The World. She said that being a part of the staff is special to her because the "people are very sweet' and they "have each other's backs"

"I think, as a bakery, and as a place where people get together to meet with friends and family ... it's a good place for a community and an extra little home for me," Hurley said.

That community also extends to the bakery's Christian foundation. Hurley said employees have opportunities to express their faith through everyday interactions with customers, whether by offering a blessing or letting someone know they will be praying for them.

"It's something that our owner and the workers have definitely instilled ... the people who gravitate towards working here just tend to be very God-centered, and we try to give that out to people," Hurley said.

Along with serving customers who visit the bakery, Camarena said she enjoys finding opportunities to collaborate with Baylor organizations. Through catering and pop-up events, Around The World welcomes partnerships with student groups and campus organizations.

Camarena said the bakery is "very open to working with Baylor students, sororities or any group organization."

Located at 119 N. 12th St. in downtown Waco, Around The World serves as a gathering place for customers looking for somewhere to study, spend time with friends or stop for a treat.



Caleb Garcia | Photo Editor

Baylor student turns family recipe into small business

BECKETT RAKES
Staff Writer

As Waco continues to grow, local businesses have found ways to make their mark on the city's expanding community. Among them is Pie's Cookies, a homemade cookie business started by Cedar Park graduate student Charis Nelson.

Nelson launched Pie's Cookies in 2019, when she was an undergraduate at Baylor. With encouragement and help from her father, Nelson used her Girl Scout experience and entrepreneurial mindset to launch the business.

Nelson said the "insurmountable amount of support received from the Baylor community" has been integral to her journey. As a solo entrepreneur, she manages the entire business herself, doing everything from managing her social media to keeping track of her four separate calendars.

Dallas sophomore Carolina Cook said Nelson's business reflects the collaborative spirit she sees throughout the Baylor community.

"The Baylor community is founded on working together," Cook said, whether that be in the classroom or in a cookie shop.

Balancing the demands of graduate school and running a business has required Nelson to manage competing responsibilities. She said the process has not always been easy, but she continues to navigate both commitments.

"It is really a balancing act," Nelson said. "There are some days I'm good at it, and some days I'm not good at it. That's just being a human."

Teague graduate student Marcus Williams said Pie's Cookies has become a staple among the graduate cohort, with more students ordering from Nelson.

While Nelson manages Pie's Cookies' daily operations independently, her family has played an important role in helping the business grow. Her mother's baking skills, her father's encouragement and her siblings' support have all contributed to the business.

Even the business's name has a personal connection to her family. Nelson said Pie's Cookies takes its name from a nickname her father gave her when she was younger.

"Pie is actually my dad's nickname for me," Nelson said. "When I was about 10, developing [my] chocolate chip cookie recipe ... he took a bite, and he was like, 'Wow, these are Pie's cookies.'"

In addition to her family's support, Nelson spoke on the importance of giving "everything to God, whether that's your academic life, personal life and your professional life."

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>
> **CHARIS NELSON**
> **CEDAR PARK**
> **GRADUATE STUDENT**

In particular, Nelson said focusing on God's sovereignty and maintaining an active prayer life have helped her navigate difficult periods.

She also hopes to reflect her Christian values in how she runs Pie's Cookies. For Nelson, that can mean something as simple as including extra cookies in an order to brighten someone's day. She said this spirit of generosity also shows up in the Baylor community.

For Nelson, the most rewarding part of Pie's Cookies has been connecting with other people.

"When people found out I had a cookie business, they genuinely poured into me," Nelson said. "I think the level of connection has been the most rewarding thing."

Nelson integrates her cookie business with her graduate work at Baylor, sharing kindness and baked goods with her cohort.

"She provides free cookies whenever we have communal events," Williams said. "One of our professors just hosted a Thanksgiving with 60 people in attendance, and she provided cookies for that."

Nelson hopes others can experience that same sense of connection through her baking. She invited members of the Baylor and Waco communities to learn more about the business and experience the hospitality she hopes to share.

"Baking is a gift," Nelson said, "Hospitality is a gift, and hospitality can be felt, not just in someone's home, but by sharing with each other and developing that kind of community. So if you would like to feel and experience that, I would love to meet you."



Caleb Garcia | Photo Editor

SWEET TREATS Cedar Park graduate student Charis Nelson, owner of Pie's Cookies, poses with two of her cookies.

How Be Kind crafts its iconic Churro Latte

ABBY RATHBURN
Staff Writer

In a shop built around precision, local pride and homemade espresso and syrups, Be Kind Coffee has quickly become a Waco staple.

Located at 1534 Washington Ave., Be Kind Coffee has made the Churro Latte its top-selling drink. The drink includes all the makeup of a standard latte, with Be Kind's signature cinnamon syrup and a carefully measured dose of their Kindness espresso blend.

According to their website, Be Kind's goal is to make the Waco community a kinder place than they found it, one drink at a time. What started in a meat market with two guys and a dream has evolved into a two-location business that continues to expand.

"We're a Hispanic-owned business, and so we want to give back to the Hispanic community and be champions for the Waco community," Meredith Sikora, a barista at Be Kind, said. "You'll see small businesses sold in here, like Gracefully Jewelry … just anything to show Waco pride."

For Sikora, the precision and careful measurements used to craft the latte are central to making the drink live up to the mission behind the business. She said that the coffee relies on "predictability and structure."

"We're measuring all the syrups, and there's no big margin for error because we want to give someone a good product each time they come in," Sikora said.

That welcoming atmosphere isn't just felt by the customers. For barista Isabelle Martin, the steady flow of drink orders and conversation makes the shift a positive experience for those behind the counter, too.

"The time goes by so fast," Martin said. "Talking to all the people and there's so much to do, so there's always something for me to do to keep busy."

Ever wondered what goes into the best-selling Churro Latte? Sikora said it comes down to a few exact steps.

How to Make the Be Kind Churro Latte:

Prep the base: Measure syrup to the one-ounce line and pour it into the bottom of your cup, followed by a light shake of cinnamon sugar.

Pull the espresso: Dose 18 grams of the Kindness espresso blend and pull the shot until it yields roughly 34-36 grams of liquid espresso. Pour the espresso directly over the syrup and cinnamon sugar.

Steam the milk: Measure out your milk and steam until smooth.

Combine and finish: Pour the steamed milk into the espresso base, finishing with a latte art design on top.



CHURRO LATTE The Churro Latte is one of Be Kind's most popular fall drinks, mixing freshly mixed syrups and the shop's unique espresso blend.

Mady Mijares | Photographer

sports
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Performance Nutrition aims to fuel FB on field, in relationships

JEFFREY COHEN
Sports Editor

Whether it's the beginning of spring or summer, there is a sense of excitement around the football program. A new group of players comes to Waco in search of a fresh start.

Baylor Performance Nutrition welcomes growing incoming classes that come from all over the country as college football faces increases in transfers each year.

"When anybody new is coming in from any of our sport programs, we're being able to assess where they are in that moment and where they have come from," Becky Sauceda, director of football performance nutrition, said. "Somebody that's coming in from a high school or from a JUCO, it may look a little bit different than somebody that's coming in from ... a different program that they've had a dietitian that they've worked with in the past."

The rising number of players transferring also places the need for the nutrition staff to connect with the athletes more quickly than they did when most stayed at the same school

"I don't have four years anymore with them," Sauceda said. "I have one, potentially. ... It's really being able to first build the relationship with them, assess where they're at and then continue to help them achieve their performance goals."

The performance nutrition department sees an advantage it possesses compared to other parts of Baylor Athletics: the food.

Food has been a consistent drawing factor for the players and allows the nutrition staff to get to know them and bond rather than only sharing an occasional greeting. Baylor's staff can create meaningful connections with the team despite interacting with over 100 individuals

"Food is where you build community," Sauceda said. "We have a leg up in that sense. The guys are always hanging around our fuel zone. ... [We're] able to have real conversations with them about how their day is."

That goal to foster relationships comes from Baylor's focus on the person beyond their sport. While the ultimate aim is to support the athletes while they are competing, Baylor wants to set them up for success beyond their time in college.

"It shows them that we care about them as humans," Sauceda said. "It's 'How can I help you live a long, healthy life, outside of when you're finished playing ball?'"

Seeing that progress is one of the most fulfilling aspects of the job for Kristin Fant, Assistant Athletic Director of Performance Nutrition.

"That's really rewarding to be able to see those athletes with how they grow and develop in their athletic endeavors and as people in their relationship with food," Fant said.

While players come and go each year, the group that remains with the Bears, like fifth-years safety Michael Allen and defensive end Kyler Jordan, have more time to engage with the nutrition staff.

"Some of those guys that have been with me longer, like a Mike Allen, a Kyler Jordan, those are people that you've established those relationships because they've been here for a very long time," Sauceda said.

The newcomers present another sense of delight in their interactions with the staff. The program brings in an array of characters with 33 transfers and 15 freshmen joining before the 2026 season. Their energy serves as a new boost for Baylor in everyday conversations.

"Those new faces like Travion Barnes or Lawson Petty, Garrick Ponder or Kamren Washington, you get those people that have great personalities, that bring joy to your day," Sauceda said.

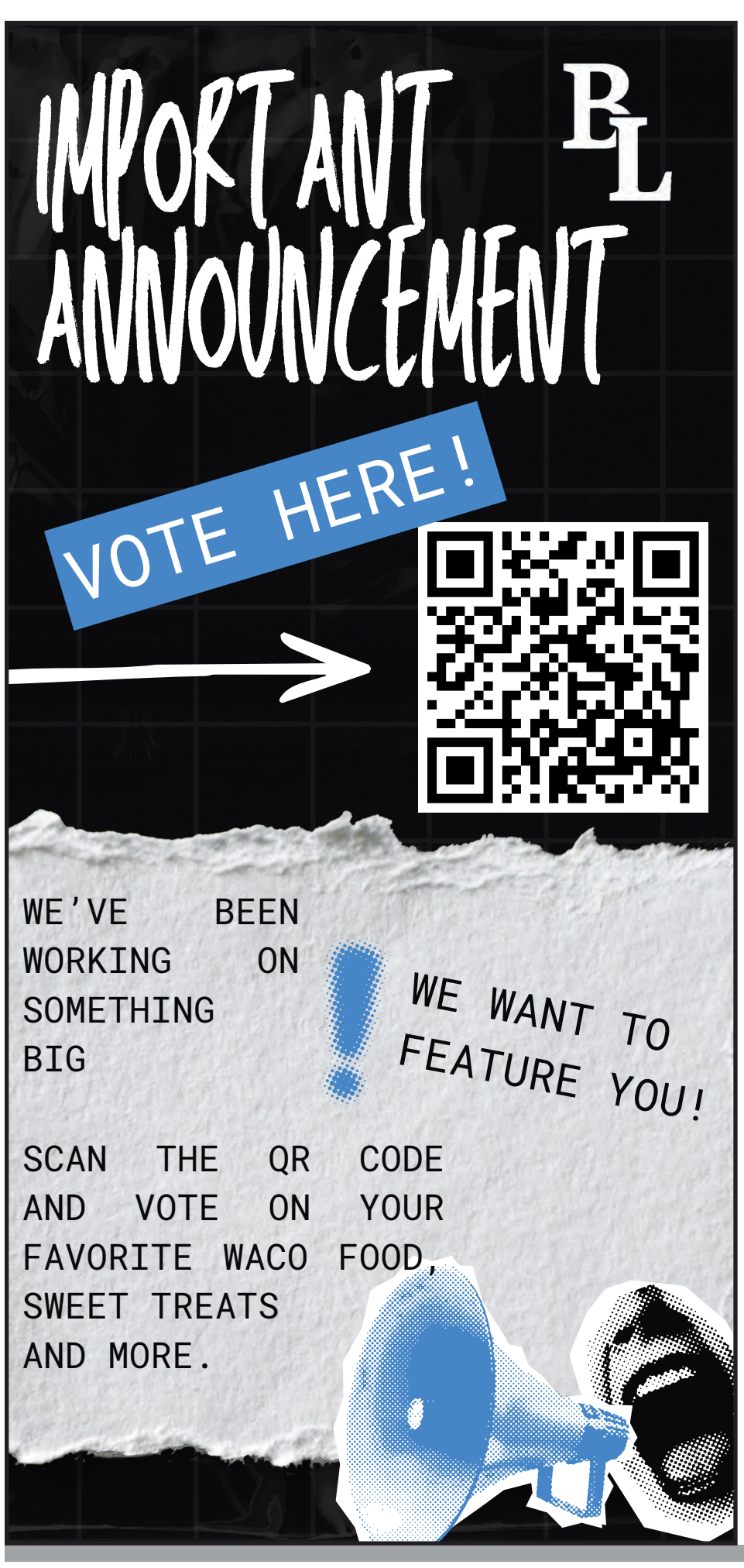
Performance nutrition is always geared toward the athletes. The staff works with each athlete to curate their diets and what they need to perform at their best. Baylor seeks to know each player physically as well as relationally.

"At the end of the day, it's their nutrition, it's their body, it's their performance, it's their plan," Fant said. "The athlete has to buy in, and they're always going to be the most important person in any conversation."



Caleb Garcia | Photo Editor

FUELING UP The Beauchamp Athletic Nutrition Center (BANC) serves Baylor's athletes' dietary and nutrition needs.





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