

FOOD

Pastry chef rolls out 901 Bakes

By [Destiniee Jaram](#), Special to the Daily Memphian

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Courtney Sanderson began cooking and baking as a child with members of their family. On one side of the family was Betty Crocker cookbooks and traditional Southern classics. On the other side was traditional Filipino meals such as Chicken Adobo.

That mix of culture and flavors now informs their business, 901 Bakes.

Sanderson, who identifies as non-binary and uses they/them pronouns, runs 901 Bakes with the help of their partner of three years, Gary Kao. Sanderson handles all things food-related; Kao crunches the numbers.



Courtney Sanderson has been a pastry chef for 14 years and began at Tart in Cooper-Young as an assistant pastry chef. (Courtesy Courtney Sanderson)

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“I’ve been a pastry chef a really long time,” Sanderson said with a laugh. “I just decided to go rogue.”

Sanderson grew up learning traditional Southern classics while helping one of their grandmothers bake during the winter holidays. Christmases were spent in the kitchen with handwritten recipe cards and Betty Crocker cookbooks.

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Sanderson would mix sugar, eggs and milk and bake tempting treats for the family.

“We would make lemon icebox pie every year and pecan pie — divinity, too,” Sanderson recalled.

Sanderson also cooked with their grandfather’s side of the family, who are Filipino-American.

“Cooking with them was a thing, too; it just wasn’t desserts,” Sanderson said.

On Thanksgiving, the family gathered around to feast on traditional Filipino meals.



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“I’ve had a lot of influences,” Sanderson said. “Growing up in Memphis, I knew so many different types of people from different cultural backgrounds. All of these different influences just converged for me.”

They also worked at Restaurant Iris as a pastry assistant and were the head pastry chef at Bishop for around two years.

Recently, 901 Bakes has included strawberry and cream croissants, flourless pineapple cake and mushroom ricotta danishes. Sanderson has also been playing around with ube, a purple yam originally from the Philippines, and black sesame in the kitchen recently.

“Usually, I stick with the format of French baking, but then I put a flavor profile spin on things,” they said.

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“It’s a way to express myself and also challenge myself. I feel constantly inspired by other people and so curious about other flavors that I want to try and flavor combinations and cooking techniques.”

Sanderson also said they enjoy the creative freedom of working alone.

“I like the freedom of just being able to change what I’m making without consulting a lot of people or making some big menu change,” Sanderson said.

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Destinie Jaram

Mushroom Ricotta Danish is described on Sanderson’s Instagram as “herby red wine sauteed mushrooms, covered with black pepper ricotta and shredded cheese, garnished with a little parsley.” (Courtesy of Cortely Sanderson) misrepresented and ignored communities. She grew up in a suburb of Cleveland with her two sisters, mother and many beloved pit bulls. She is an avid lover of salt-water taffy and high-quality journalism.

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