

# THE UNDRAFTED CHEF

**Boyd Brown III serves up viral cuisine from his Ashburn kitchen**

BY TRACY OWENS

**W**hen chef Boyd Brown III posted his secret recipe for lemon pepper wings to Instagram, pairing them with his homemade blue cheese dip, a minor viral riot broke out among his more than 300,000 followers over the merits of blue cheese versus ranch.

The Ashburn-based chef and digital creator followed up the post with a video recipe for the blue cheese dip and the provocative statement, “Ranch is for kids, and I stand on that.” Viral chaos again ensued.

Someone who has always cooked for his family and friends, Brown, 46, has become a popular food content creator, with a lively community of half a million followers

across Instagram and TikTok. Known for his elevated sandwiches and smart takes on New American cuisine, he signs off each video with the tagline: “Picasso, follow me for more.”

“I think of my food and the way I put together my videos as art,” Brown said.

He is also building a YouTube channel to share longer videos and cooking lessons. He released “The Undrafted Chef,” an e-book of some of his most viral recipes, in late 2022 and has sold more than 5,000 copies through his website, [chefboydbrowniii.com](http://chefboydbrowniii.com).

A Seattle native, Brown lived in Atlanta for several years, where he met his wife, Ashburn native Natasha Jeter. They moved to Ashburn in 2018 to be near her family



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and live in the Belmont Country Club neighborhood. A graduate of Broad Run High School, Jeter is a math teacher at Park View High School in Sterling. Brown — whose full-time job is in telecommunication sales — says it was easy to relocate here.

"I love Ashburn. It has a real family feel," said Brown, who, along with Jeter, is raising three teenagers here.

He had been putting food content on his Instagram feed, along with pictures of his family and his hobbies, but during the first days of the pandemic in 2020, "when everyone was at home," he joined TikTok and found the world of food creators there.

"I see so much creativity on this app," he said.

Inspired by such mega-creators as Owen Han and Salt Hank, whose sandwiches and other creations garner millions of views, Brown studied the site's most viral food videos. He froze them second by second, figured out how they were filmed and noted how much time the food stayed on screen.

In the past year and a half, he has steadily worked at upping his video production values, and many of his TikTok and Instagram videos now go viral. ↻



Another popular TikTok creator, Jennifer Abernathy (jenniabs3), said, “There are so many food creators that focus on pumping out quantity instead of quality. Boyd really focuses on the flavor of his food – and it shows.”

Brambleton resident Mark Ettrich, a passionate home cook, began following Brown when he showed up in his recom-



mended follows on Instagram. Ettrich said Brown’s recipe for beef short ribs helped him win a summer family cooking contest at Dewey Beach.

“He has a real flair and some great ideas,” Ettrich said.

Seafood is Brown’s favorite go-to protein, and one of his first TikTok videos was of honey-glazed salmon and Maryland crab cakes. His mother, who lives in Mississippi, and his late father, NFL player Boyd Brown Jr., filled the family home with good food when Brown was growing up. He said they incorporated the ingredients of the Pacific Northwest into their Southern cooking.

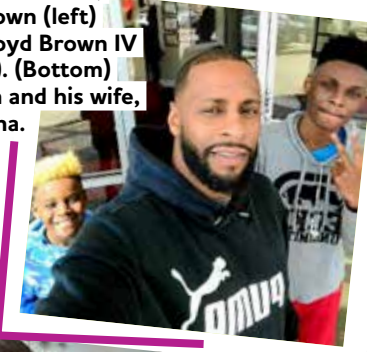
Brown planned to be an NFL football player like his father. He went to college on a basketball scholarship and then played professional arena football for several teams in Georgia.

The name “The Undrafted Chef” came to him when he was watching a sports program and heard a player referred to as “undrafted.”

“That was it,” Brown said. “That’s me. I wasn’t drafted!”



(Top) Boyd Brown III with his sons, Ira Brown (left) and Boyd Brown IV (right). (Bottom) Brown and his wife, Natasha.



## "Picasso, follow me for more."

Although his move to Atlanta in his 20s didn't result in a lasting sports career, it was where he found some of the most delicious food he'd ever eaten. He discovered oxtail, something he'd never eaten growing up, at Jamaican restaurants there.

"I quickly learned that it is delicious," he said. "It's one of my favorite proteins."

Knowing that many followers are intimidated by an ingredient they've never cooked, he posted a video showing how to clean and prepare it for use in such popular recipes as his oxtail-and-gruyere sandwich.

Ironically, his first viral video was not for one of his favorite proteins but for a vegan spicy kale salad, complete with nutritional yeast instead of cheese. It was his attempt to recreate one of his favorite items in Atlanta, the spicy kale salad and kale salad wrap at Tassali's Raw Reality.

"It's one of the best vegan spots in the country," Brown said. Although the owner won't divulge her recipe, he said she did comment on his video to say, "This is close."

He hasn't found a comparable vegan

sandwich in Ashburn, but he does enjoy discovering local restaurants. Melt in Leesburg is his pick for best burger, and he also enjoys Sense of Thai at One Loudoun. He said the seafood he can source for his cooking here, especially crab, is superior even to that he grew up with in Seattle.

He hopes to release a second e-book this fall, with the ultimate goal of having multiple income-producing products on his website.

"The next level is coming up with a short cooking show," Brown said. "My passion is food. I want to do what I love for a living. Sooner rather than later, I'm going to leave the 9-to-5 behind."

Is there anything he can't cook?

"Omelets," said Brown, laughing. "Mine turn out like bricks. My wife makes the omelets in our house." ■

*Tracy Owens is a former magazine editor who writes about arts, businesses and people in the Southeast. Her work has appeared in Salon, Gulfshore Life, Islandia Journal and many other publications.*