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From making music to baking bread, Youngstown native Zack Joseph returns to his roots

BY JAN CZECH

For local entrepreneur and Youngstown native Zack Joseph, baking his signature sourdough bread is a labor of love that began with an unusual Christmas gift from his husband and business partner, Matthew Mancuso.

“Two Christmases ago, I asked my husband for a sourdough starter. So, he got it for me,” Joseph said in a recent interview.

After a lot of practice and trial and error, Joseph found he had a talent for bread making.

“It just really clicked and I really enjoyed it,” he said.

Soon, Joseph acquired all the necessary permits to bake bread in his home kitchen, which led to the creation of the Youngstown Baking Company and Wholly Toast, a successful YBC spinoff.

But breadmaking is just one of Joseph’s talents. After graduating

from Lew-Port, he attended SUNY Fredonia for cello performance and music business. That led him to Nashville, where he worked various service jobs while building a music career.

“I recorded a couple of albums. I was able to tour around the country,” Joseph said.

But after 10 years in Music City, he decided it was time for a change. That decision came at the perfect time when, in 2023, Joseph had the chance to buy his childhood home in Youngstown. Built by his great grandfather, the house has stayed in his family for generations.

“I had always dreamed of owning this house,” Joseph said.

The opportunity arose when his parents decided to downsize. The timing was right. Joseph and Mancuso went for it and the Youngstown Baking Company was born.

Joseph’s first bread-related busi-



Zack Joseph images courtesy of the multi-hyphenate himself.



ness venture was his honor system bread booth on Main Street in Youngstown. When asked how that was going, he replied, “Great. It’s going great. It was just fun to watch it grow.”

Joseph describes himself as a do-it-yourselfer and mini-homesteader. “I like to know where my food comes from,” Joseph said.

That philosophy is evident in his impressive raised-bed vegetable garden and the many DIY projects he has completed in his home. A self-professed thrifter and collector, he often recycles his finds into those projects rather than buying new materials.

When asked what his typical day looks like, Joseph replied, “I tend to wake up early to get the bread going. It depends. I’ll make a hundred loaves a week sometimes. Essentially, every day from Tuesday through Saturday is about making bread.”

One can enjoy the final results at the Wholly Toast booth at the Lewiston Artisan Farmers Market every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Lewiston Artisan Farmers Market shifting to winter site this weekend

To accommodate this weekend’s Italian Festival at Academy Park, the Lewiston Artisan Farmers Market will shift to its winter home, at First Presbyterian Church, 505 Cayuga St. Vendors will be located inside

and outside of the back building. The site offers ample parking for shoppers. For more information, visit <https://www.facebook.com/lewistonartisanmarket>.

at Academy Park in Lewiston – but get there early to avoid the line.

Market manager Rachel Jolbert met Joseph in the fifth grade and they graduated high school together.

“After about a decade living in Nashville, he moved back home to Youngstown and we connected online over the love of baking bread, backyard poultry, and an upcoming trip I had been planning to Nashville,” Jolbert said. “Zack gave me

tips and suggestions about where to stay and eat in Nashville, and I gave him some tips on baking sourdough bread.

“I met with Zack over coffee last May and learned about his interest of expanding his small business centered around fresh-baked sourdough, and gourmet toasts. I loved his ideas and his enthusiasm – as a professionally trained baker of over 18 years, I love talking ‘shop.’

“I gave Zack some direction on proper permits and licensing, and told him I hoped he would someday consider joining us at the Lewiston Artisan Farmers Market.

“After about a year of Zack learning the ropes of sourdough baking, opening his roadside bread booth, and dipping his toes into the toast pop-up concept, he finally jumped in and joined us full-time at the market this summer!

“Zack’s delicious sourdough breads and unique toast flavor combinations have been highly regarded by market customers so far this season. I look forward to watching Zack’s businesses grow within the Lewiston Artisan Farmers Market, and at his roadside stand!”

The bread booth on Main Street in Youngstown is open from Wednesday through Sunday, and there are various popups around the area. Stay up to date by following the Youngstown Bread Company on Instagram @youngstownbreadco and @whollytoast and @zackjoseph makes, as well as on Facebook.



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