

Dwyane Wade's chef makes dream come true for sick teen

HIGHLIGHTS

Seth Munday has battled Crohn's disease for nine years

Chef Ingraham is Dwyane Wade's personal chef

The meeting was a surprise



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When they called his name, Seth Munday dove under his seat.

He thought he'd flown all the way from Smithfield, N.C., to shadow a chef and witness Miami Culinary Institute's chef coat ceremony, where MCI's newest students are awarded white chefs' coats emblazoned with their names.

Instead, Munday was called on stage to receive his own coat and meet his culinary idol, Chef Richard Ingraham.

Munday, 18, has battled Crohn's disease, a chronic inflammation of the digestive tract, half his life. Five weeks ago, he had intensive surgery to remove the last of his colon, said his mother, Cynthia.

He spent two months in the hospital a year and a half ago, where he did nothing but watch the Food Network. His avid TV watching exposed him to Chef Ingraham, who appeared on the show *Chopped* when not serving as personal chef for Miami Heat star Dwyane Wade.

As the audience cheered, Munday was gently nudged on stage by the woman who made it all happen — Lizette Linares, a student at the cooking school.

The projector screens flanking the stage showed a picture of Munday wearing a robe and holding a wand, superimposed over a movie poster from *Harry Potter*. Munday's name was written in the signature lightning bolt font.

Ingraham, a member of MCI's culinary advisory board, grinned as he buttoned a crisp new chef's coat over Munday's blue button-down.

“I told my wife, maybe they needed someone else and they called me instead,” Ingraham told the audience. “I still really can’t believe he wanted to meet me.”

Munday’s meeting with his hero was the work of Linares and the Kids Wish Network, which grants the wishes of sick children.

Linares told the audience that she worked for months to pull off the surprise as a way to give back to the community. She was diagnosed with a learning disorder at an early age, and said she was constantly told she would never complete school or succeed. Now, she’s a student at MCI.

“I was beaten down by those words, but I rose above it,” she said. “I wanted to pay it forward and prove everyone wrong.”

Seeing her hard work come to fruition left Linares overwhelmed with happiness, she said.

On stage, Chef Ingraham told Linares he was honored to meet her.

“There are grown people that don’t have the chutzpah she has,” he said.

Dr. Jose Vicente, president of Miami Dade College’s Wolfson campus, presented Linares with a bouquet to express the school’s gratitude for her hard work.

“Here we have a set of flowers for a true flower,” he said.

Kendra Kenney, marketing manager for Kids Wish Network, said this surprise was exactly what Seth needed.

“He’ll remember it for the rest of his life,” she said.

Cynthia Munday said her son’s culinary aspirations stretch back a decade. When he was 6, he would critique his Mom’s cooking, except his favorite food, hamburger steak.

Munday said culinary school may be in his future, perhaps even at MCI. But for now, he’s just happy he met his idol.

“It felt really good — except going on stage. I would not do that again,” Munday said.

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