**Create Cooking Challenge Grand Prize Winner Bio**

**Buki Elegbede: Buki’s Bakeshop**

**New Yorker by day, resident of Newark, NJ – Watches public television on WNET and WLIW Create**

The Create Cooking Challenge's 2017 Grand Prize Winner, 28-year-old Buki Elegbede, is one step closer to his dream! A fan of public television’s cooking shows, Buki has long been interested in bringing his passion for food to television. It all started when he was very young, in a home with parents who believed the entire familyparticipated in food preparation and learned how to do it well. Though he was born in Manhattan, Buki’s parents came from Nigeria, where, when hungry, everyone goes to the kitchen and gets cooking! The recipe he prepared in his entry –the “Whoopie Pie,” an all-American favorite – is a good example of figuring out how to create something fun and great tasting. Primarily a self-taught cook, Buki wowed the Create Cooking Challenge Final Judges with his energy, enthusiasm, presentation skills and baking knowledge. He can’t wait to share more! Buki won $4,000, plus production equipment worth $1,000to finance the completion of a web series. This series will consist of 10 or more episodes, two minutes or less in length, which will be shared on CreateTV.com, where visitors will also find last year’s Create Cooking Challenge winner’s series, *Isobe Food,* and other top winners’ videos.

Buki and his older sister were raised in New Jersey. Both have a great appreciation for good food, though it was Buki who took that interest to heart. Buki started his college studies with abusiness focus thenquickly shifted his studies at Rutgers University to journalism, with a keen interest ingetting in front of the camera. His resume includes commercial television production, so Buki has a good sense of what goes on behind the scenes. This experiencehelped Bukiprepare his small kitchen for his debut on CreateTV.com as he showed that even a small space could be adapted for camera angles and a cooking presentation.

The judges were enchanted with Buki‘s presentation. Bridget Lancaster and Julia Collin Davison, *America’s Test Kitchen* co-hosts and Create Cooking Challengejudges, praised Buki’s entry: “His love for food comes through the camera,” said Lancaster and Collin Davison said, “…he is an absolute joy to watch!” She added that “his recipe was well-prepared and it’s obvious he knows how to bake.”

Lidia Bastianich praised Buki’s energy, saying “he cooks with confidence and passion;” and, Steven Raichlen was impressed that Buki used his two minutes well, saying “he delivered on the promise – great looking end product and baking tips.” Sara Moulton agreed. She said: “What a terrific teacher! Buki is very confident, good with the camera, provided a great recipe and wonderful tips.” Kevin Belton advised Buki to “keep that warm feeling because you are engaging!

”The Create Cooking Challenge caught Buki’s eye when he was watching *Martha Bakes* (hosted by Martha Stewart) on Create TV. Though he normally would turnthe channel off when the show ended, he watched for a couple of extra minutes. That’s when he learned of the Create Cooking Challenge 2017. “I immediately starting running through my repertoire of recipes and the Whoopie Pies were perfect for the two-minute video window,” he said. Bukithen carefully determined what he would wear, how to set up his kitchen “set” and moved forward with his entry, focusing on good lighting and audio – as a producer, he understands just how important those basics are.

Buki has been a fan of cooking shows since he was a teenager recovering from back surgery. For six weeks he was confined to his bed, but says he didn’t mind. Instead, he watched them all, settling on many public television favorites featured on Create TV like Sara Moulton, Lidia Bastianich, Jacques Pépin, *America’s Test Kitchen* and Martha Stewart. Since the start of Create TV, he’s been hooked!

Although his “daytime” position is in commercial television production, Buki loves spending his spare time filling special baking requests for his small business, Baked by Buki. He only responds to requests by referral, and though he does cook entrees, he enjoys baking the most. He says he draws upon his parents’ Nigerian influence in some of his cooking – especially when it comes to adding spices. He enjoys approaching more traditional recipes with an eye towards making slight changes to ingredients: exchanging a shallot for an onion, or red and yellow peppers instead of just green.

With a strong basic food ethic, Buki won’t waste food, so he approaches his recipe edits thoughtfully and carefully. That Nigerian influence is a key part of his ethic. With great grandparents who lived to more than100 years of age, he has good role models to follow. He believes that when you prepare your own meals, you will always have healthier, cheaper and better made food than when you purchase something ready-made. True to that philosophy, Buki prepares and brings his lunch to work every day. He also often cooks for friends and family – from breakfast to dinner and baking desserts, he loves to share his interest with others.

In contemplating his web series for CreateTV.com, Buki is considering sharing both sides of his baking expertise. With a recent interest in vegan foods, he may even address the healthy side of baking and cooking, as well as some of the more sumptuous treats!

When he’s not baking, Buki can be found with friends, at the gym – a devotion he continues after a major weight loss of 90 pounds – or reading. “I love to read everything,” he said. “It helps broaden your thinking and gives you more perspective.” That’s a good nod to where he hopes he will go next: “I’d love to have a food/talk show where I’m interviewing guests and talking with them as we make a quinoa salad,” he said. Somehow, we think Buki’s on a solid trajectory!