

Leading with Action:

The James Beard Foundation 2018 Women's Leadership Programs

~ Applications open for more than 40 opportunities in two leadership programs advancing the careers of women in the culinary industry ~

New York, NY (February 22, 2018) – For more than six years, the James Beard Foundation has successfully administered programs to improve the status of women and address the gender imbalance in leadership throughout the restaurant industry. Apart from providing scholarships and fostering discussions through industry events and roundtables, the JBF Women's Leadership Programs directly invest in building the skill sets of women, backed by a committed group of restaurateur/chef mentors and advisors from across the country.

“Well before the Women's March and the #MeToo movement that are shedding much needed light for women across all industries, we have been appalled by the structural limitations in the culinary industry for women and the abysmal paucity of women leaders in our field,” said JBF Women in Culinary Leadership program co-founder Rohini Dey, Ph.D., who is also a JBF trustee, and owner of Vermilion in Chicago. “It is our conviction that only ownership and leadership will truly change the narrative, enabling women to shatter the gastro-ceiling and break out of their pink cages; this is the rationale for the creation of our women's programs.”

The **James Beard Foundation (JBF)** announced today that it is accepting applications for its two **Women's Leadership Programs (WLP): JBF Women's Entrepreneurial Leadership (WEL)**, a fellowship program for restaurant owners and food-industry entrepreneurs looking to grow their careers and scale their businesses, and **JBF Women in Culinary Leadership (WCL)**, a mentorship program to provide more junior women committed to their culinary careers with accelerated front- or back-of-house training and access to business training.

“The James Beard Foundation's Women's Leadership Programs seek to empower the next generation of culinary talent—from line cook to restaurant owner—to excel in their chosen field by offering the participants the skills and know-how necessary to achieve success,” said Clare Reichenbach, chief executive officer of the James Beard Foundation. “We are especially grateful to

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all of our mentors as well as to our [Women's Leadership Program Advisory Board](#) for their continued support to address the gender imbalance in the food world.”

Women in Culinary Leadership Program

Established in 2012, the WCL program is a learning-by-doing, paid mentorship program that places women looking to further their culinary and/or hospitality careers with industry leaders, who take them into their own restaurants for an intensive nine-month training in either the front or the back of the house, and who financially sponsor their program. In addition to on-the-job training from their respective mentors, mentees also benefit from monthly check-ins and oversight of their training program by the James Beard Foundation. A highlight of the mentee experience is a one-week stage at the James Beard House where they either cook with multiple renowned chefs or work closely with the JBF staff.

“It has been beyond gratifying to foster the sustained growth of WCL from one mentee in 2012, to 23 mentees this year,” said JBF Award-winning chef and trustee, Mary Sue Milliken, who is also a mentor in the WCL program. “We know this in-depth training and support not only changes their skill sets, career trajectories, access, and networks, but reinforces their confidence and increases their aspirations as well.”

Through the 2017 cycle, the WCL program has provided mentorship opportunities across the country for more than 40 women, with 25 top industry leaders participating as mentors. The James Beard Foundation is proud to offer an additional 23 positions with the following mentors this year. This year's candidates may apply for the following Chef/Back-of-House (BoH) or Hospitality/Front-of-House (FoH) programs:

1. **José Andrés*** – Think Food Group, Washington, D.C. and Las Vegas (BoH and FoH)
thinkfoodgroup.com
2. **Kim Bartmann** – Bartmann Restaurant Group, Minneapolis (BoH and FoH)
bartmanngroup.rocks
3. **Elizabeth Blau** – Blau & Associates, Las Vegas (BoH and FoH)
elizabethblau.com
4. **Kevin Boehm** – BOKA Restaurant Group, Chicago (BoH and FoH)
bokachicago.com
5. **Kevin Brown** – Lettuce Entertain You® Restaurants*, Chicago (FoH)
leye.com

6. **Lauren DeSteno** – Altamarea Group, New York City (BoH)
altamareagroup.com
7. **Rohini Dey, Ph.D.** – Vermilion, WCL Co-Founder, Chicago (BoH and FoH)
thevermillionrestaurant.com
8. **Tom Douglas*** – Tom Douglas Restaurants, Seattle (BoH)
tomdouglas.com
9. **Paul Fehribach** – Big Jones, Chicago (BoH)
bigjoneschicago.com
10. **Susan Feniger and Mary Sue Milliken*** – Border Grill, Las Vegas (BoH)
bordergrill.com
11. **Paul Kahan*** and **Donnie Madia*** – One Off Hospitality, Chicago (BoH)
oneoffhospitality.com
12. **Angie Mar** – The Beatrice Inn, NYC (BoH)
thebeatriceinn.com
13. **Ti Adelaide Martin** – Commander’s Palace, New Orleans (FoH)
commanderspalace.com
14. **Sarah Robbins** – 21c Museum Hotels, Louisville, KY (BoH)
21cmuseumhotels.com
15. **Stephen Starr*** – STARR Restaurants, NYC or Philadelphia (BoH)
starr-restaurant.com

“I encountered situations through this program that forced me to do things differently, interrupt patterns of behavior, and recognize new strengths in myself,” said Jasmine Sheth, 2017 WCL mentee (Vermilion). “In addition to the core skills I learned about running a restaurant, this mentorship has helped prepare me for a career that is about leadership, creativity, flexibility, and inventiveness.”

The WCL mentorships must be taken at times mutually agreed upon by the applicant and mentor, and completed within one year after they are awarded. For more information on the WCL program and to download the application, please visit: jamesbeard.org/women-leadership-programs. The deadline for submissions is March 31 at 11:59pm ET.

Women’s Entrepreneurial Leadership Program

“Running a restaurant or growing a business is hard for everyone, men and women,” said Mitchell Davis, executive vice president of the James Beard Foundation. “But research shows that women restaurateurs have a harder time finding investment capital, being heard during negotiations, and

gaining the media attention they deserve. We want to fix that with the Women’s Entrepreneurial Leadership program.”

Launched in September 2017, the Women’s Entrepreneurial Leadership program comprises an annual fellowship for a class of up to 20 women to attend a five-day entrepreneurship/leadership training program developed with and hosted at Babson College. The WEL program is targeted to women chefs/owners of at least one restaurant or food business, and addresses advanced business and finance concerns related to entrepreneurship, growth, and expansion.

The program was spearheaded by Jodie McLean, chief executive officer of the retail real estate development firm EDENS, and launched with foundational support from Women Chefs and Restaurateurs (WCR). “It’s imperative to have more women leaders owning and operating thriving scalable businesses,” said McLean. “The benefits to an entire organization and industry are significant when women are in executive leadership roles and can impact policy, guide growth, and set practices. This isn’t about fairness; it’s about good business.”

“To be forced to be thousands of miles away from my restaurant for a solid week only to consider its growth—it was an extraordinary gift,” said Lien Ta, 2017 WEL fellow and co-owner of Here’s Looking at You restaurant in Los Angeles.

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***James Beard Award winner**

About the James Beard Foundation

Founded in 1986, the James Beard Foundation celebrates, nurtures, and honors chefs and other leaders making America’s food culture more delicious, diverse, and sustainable for everyone. A cookbook author and teacher with an encyclopedic knowledge about food, the late James Beard was a champion of American cuisine. He helped educate and mentor generations of professional chefs and food enthusiasts, instilling in them the value of wholesome, healthful, and delicious food. Today JBF continues in the same spirit by administering a number of diverse programs that include educational initiatives, food industry awards, scholarships for culinary students, publications, chef advocacy training, and thought-leader convening. The Foundation also maintains the historic James Beard House in New York City’s Greenwich Village as a “performance space” for visiting chefs. For more information, please visit jamesbeard.org. Get food news, recipes, and more at the James Beard Foundation’s [blog](#), or subscribe to the free digital newsletter [Beard Bites](#). Follow [@beardfoundation](#)

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