

Off the Menu by House of Form Launches 5th Annual Culinary Mentorship Program

Written by Mallory Gleich

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The acclaimed nonprofit mentorship initiative [Off the Menu](#) by [House of Form](#) returns for its fifth consecutive year, opening a national call for emerging culinary changemakers. Applications are being accepted for an opportunity that pairs visionary food and beverage innovators with 10 top-tier industry professionals - plus a \$5,000 grant to fuel their growth.

The program, created by the Phoenix-based hospitality design firm House of Form, offers a rare combination of mentorship, funding, and industry access. One applicant will receive mentorship sessions with a board of culinary, hospitality, and business leaders, each offering years of experience and insight into what it takes to succeed in today's food landscape.



For the first time, the 2025 edition expands its reach nationwide and introduces a financial award, adding new momentum to the already transformative program.

"After a decade of designing in the hospitality space, we identified a critical gap: so many promising food and beverage entrepreneurs lacked access to funding and design support," said Dala Al-Fuwaires, Founder and CEO of House of Form. "We launched Off the Menu in 2017 to bridge that gap and champion creative, often underestimated voices in the industry."

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The deadlien to apply is September 15, 2025 and the winner will be announced on November 5.

This year's board brings together a powerhouse lineup of culinary and hospitality professionals:

- **Veronica Arroyo** – Michelin-starred pastry chef and global director of pastry for Mina Group
- **Angela N. Bankhead** – Award-winning multimedia producer and marketing strategist at Marcus Samuelsson Group
- **Calli Cholodenko** – Founder of Something Social, pioneering digital branding for food and beverage brands
- **Matt Erickson** – SVP of hospitality development, MGM Resorts International
- **Sam Foley** – Chief of staff, Major Food Group
- **Jason Ganga** – Veteran food and beverage consultant with two decades of operational strategy experience
- **Shawn Hamada** – Culinary executive at Groot Hospitality, with leadership experience at Gordon Ramsay concepts
- **Brian McHugh** – Senior leader at Ritz-Carlton, known for branded experience and performance optimization
- **Kevin PJ Okuszka** – Restaurant executive at Cooper's Hawk Winery, expert in operations and supply chain
- **Dala Al-Fuwares** – Hospitality designer and House of Form CEO, with clients including Marriott, Hilton, and MGM



Together, this panel will review submissions and select the candidate with the most promising culinary concept, vision, and potential impact. Off the Menu by House of Form is a 501(c)(3) organization rooted in empowering emerging culinary voices. What started as a local initiative in Arizona has grown into a national platform supporting bold, creative entrepreneurs in food and beverage.



"We're here to be a resource, to offer not just mentorship, but meaningful access to the knowledge and funding that so often remains out of reach," Al-Fuwares said. "This program is about more than launching a concept - it's about launching a career."

To apply or learn more, visit offthemenu.org.