



2024

State of Small Culinary Businesses

INDUSTRY REPORT

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

DIAGEO

GRUBHUB

Community Fund



Conrad N. Hilton College of Global Hospitality Leadership
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

EDITION 1: ADDRESSING SUPPORT GAPS IN SMALL CULINARY BUSINESSES TO DRIVE ECONOMIC MOBILITY

This first edition of the State of the Small Culinary Business Industry Report highlights the realities of independent culinary businesses and the barriers they navigate daily. From labor shortages and financial strain to safety concerns and limited access to city resources, these findings reveal the urgent need for stronger systems of support. Produced in partnership with Diageo, Grubhub Community Fund, and the University of Houston’s Conrad N. Hilton College of Global Hospitality Leadership, the report combines survey data, owner insights, and case studies to capture the state of the industry today.

KEY REPORT FINDINGS



83%

of culinary businesses agreed that they have raised the standard of living in their communities by increasing local economic activity and creating job opportunities.



60%

of small culinary businesses report that gentrification is driving up lease costs or property taxes, threatening their long-term sustainability.



44%

report safety concerns as a major challenge for their business highlighting a need for greater investment in community infrastructure for small businesses.



40%

of culinary businesses are unaware of available food and beverage contract opportunities that could diversify their revenue.



84%

of understaffed culinary businesses reported not having the funds to hire additional staff.



55%

of respondents create jobs for people facing employment barriers, such as second-chance employees, people with disabilities, senior citizens, and veterans.

EXPLORE THE FULL REPORT

Go beyond the highlights and dive into the full findings of State of the Small Culinary Business Industry Report: Edition 1. Inside, you'll find:

- ✔ **Industry Insights:** Direct voices of business owners, their lived experiences, and their recommendations.
- ✔ **Case Studies:** In-depth accounts of small culinary business owners and initiatives making a difference.
- ✔ **Strategic Solutions:** Review of current government initiatives paired with ideas for future policies.
- ✔ **A Taste of What Works:** Evidence-based programs with proven impact.

View the full report for additional findings:



About Feed the Soul Foundation

As a nonprofit leader in the industry, Feed the Soul Foundation is committed to ensuring small culinary businesses not only survive but thrive. Since 2020, we have invested more than **\$4 million** into the culinary community through direct funding, training, and awareness.



NATIONAL IMPACT TO DATE

\$2.8M

in business development resources



\$85K

in student scholarships



\$40K

in emergency relief



\$1M

in cultural awareness initiatives



A TASTE OF WHAT WORKS

Real Examples, Real Impact

Feed the Soul Foundation is not only uncovering the challenges faced by small culinary businesses, we are delivering real solutions and real impact. Our programs directly address the issues highlighted in this report, from workforce shortages to limited access to capital and training. By combining funding, education, and advocacy, we help culinary entrepreneurs build stronger, more sustainable businesses that fuel local economies.

OUR STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS INCLUDE:

✓ Cultural Awareness Campaigns

The Marginalized Culinary Community Awareness Program shines a spotlight on underrepresented food entrepreneurs. By elevating their stories through thoughtful campaigns, we help preserve culture while driving customers and revenue back to neighborhood businesses.

✓ Culinary Resource Portal

The Culinary Business Network is a one-stop digital hub where food operators can access training modules, connect with peers, explore funding opportunities, and stay up to date on policy changes. It's a 24/7 support system to help entrepreneurs navigate the business side of the industry.

✓ Rapid Response Repair Fund

The National Emergency Relief Fund provides fast, flexible microgrants to help businesses recover from vandalism, natural disasters, or other unforeseen challenges. This safety net ensures that culinary businesses can bounce back quickly.

✓ Grant Readiness and Financial Literacy Program

The 60% Pledge strengthens the financial foundation of small culinary businesses through workshops, bookkeeping support, and personal wealth development. By improving capital readiness, this program reduces closures and creates stability.

✓ Workforce Development Program

Project NXT invests in future culinary leaders by working with high schools, colleges, and universities to provide hands-on training and mentorship. The program builds a dependable talent pipeline while giving students real-world experience to thrive.

PARTNER WITH US TO BUILD COMMUNITIES

The challenges outlined in this report are too great for businesses to face alone. Together, we can transform the future of small culinary businesses.

Partner with Feed the Soul Foundation to expand these programs, invest in entrepreneurs, and strengthen communities across the country.

Partner With Us Today

