



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CALLING ALL SOUTHERN FOOD & BEVERAGE INDUSTRY INSIDERS THIRD ANNUAL ENTREPRENEURS PROGRAM KICKS OFF THURSDAY, JUNE 1

ATLANTA – Atlanta Food & Wine Festival will once again join forces with Craft Catalyst, LLC, an Atlanta-based brand accelerator that works with emerging food and beverage companies, to host the third annual Entrepreneurs Program focused on **innovation, brand-building, scalability** and **value creation**. Noticing the attention and exposure the Festival brings to small businesses, Craft Catalyst’s founders, Chris Olivier and Steef Schelke, were inspired to create programming that would help business owners and Festival participants navigate sudden exposure and attention.

This annual event kicks off the Festival on Thursday, June 1 and offers participants the opportunity to learn from industry leaders and entrepreneurs who understand the resiliency, persistence, focus and passion required to grow a business. “We’ve all heard the stories many times; small business owners aggressively seek to expand before being properly prepared - unknowingly, of course. We developed the Entrepreneurs Program to showcase the value of shared experiences among the best in the food and beverage community in the South. With the Atlanta Food & Wine Festival as the venue, it’s a rewarding afternoon of humor, humility and countless lessons learned among our panelists and attendees,” said Olivier.

Olivier and Schelke’s half-day program will provide small businesses participating in the Festival as well as other food and beverage industry professionals interested in attending, the chance to take a break from their busy schedules and soak in an afternoon of learning. Programming will begin with lunch by Nashville’s Porter Road Butchers and keynote remarks by Stephen Corradini, Regional Vice President, Whole Foods Market South Region. The afternoon learning sessions will delve into topics that will range from brand-building to e-commerce featuring leading entrepreneurs from across the South.

2017 Entrepreneur Program Panelists Include:

Justin Anthony, *10 Degrees South*
Stephen Corradini, *Whole Food Market*
Jim Domanic, *Blackberry Farm*
LaShawn Douglas, *Delta Air Lines*
Laura Fryer, *Blue Hominy Public Relations*
Greg Lantz, *Cobble Hill Digital*
John Lynch, *WTRMLN WTR*
Carrie Morey, *Callie’s Charleston Biscuits*
Chris Olivier, *Craft Catalyst*

Steve Palmer, *The Indigo Road Restaurant Group*
Elaine Read, *Xocolatl Small Batch Chocolate*
Arthur Reynolds, *Whole Foods Market*
Melany Robinson, *Polished Pig Media*
Steef Schelke, *Craft Catalyst*
Keith Schroeder, *High Road Craft Ice Cream*
Jim Wagner, *Roland Foods*
Judith Winfrey, *PeachDish*
Kevin Wray, *Sysco and ChefEx*

In addition to an afternoon of learning and networking, *Southern Living* will partner with Craft Catalyst and the Festival to present the **Southern Food & Drink Entrepreneurs Awards** designed to celebrate and honor outstanding and emerging entrepreneurs in the food and beverage space with businesses less than five years old. Five finalists have been invited to Atlanta Food & Wine Festival to present their products to an esteemed panel of judges (Melissa Baker, *Fenwick Brands*; Jenny Bonchak, *Slingshot Coffee Co.*; Sid Evans, *Southern Living*; Dominique Love, *IWSC Group North America*; Matthew Mitchell, *VEB – The Coca-Cola Company*; Brooks Reitz, *Jack Rudy Cocktail Co.*) and to consumers in the Festival’s Tasting Tents. One finalist will be awarded and featured in *Southern Living*’s magazine as well as editorial features on the publication website.

2017 Award Finalists Include: *CatSpring Yaupon* (Catspring, TX) – Pedemales Green Yaupon; *Crude Bitters* (Raleigh, NC) – “Razzo” Bitters; *Harvest Roots Ferments* (Mentone, AL) – Kimchi; *Malvi Marshmallow Confections* (Cumming, GA) – Raspberry Hibiscus S’mores; *Pure Southern* (Chattanooga, TN) – Tennessee Cucumber Cooler.

“The Atlanta Food & Wine Festival is dedicated to shining an international spotlight on the rich epicurean culture of the South and we have a duty to support and celebrate small businesses within the South’s food and beverage industry. By joining forces with Craft Catalyst and *Southern Living*, we become more than a brand showcase; we become a platform for entrepreneurs to thrive,” said Dominique Love, AF&WF Co-Founder.

The Entrepreneurs Program will take place Thursday, June 1, 2017 from 11:30pm – 6pm at the Loews Atlanta Hotel, the Official Host Hotel of the Festival. Tickets are \$100 and available at www.atlfoodandwinefestival.com/tickets/. Tickets are free to AF&WF exhibitors and sponsors.

About Craft Catalyst: Founded by entrepreneurs with proven operating track records, Craft Catalyst, LLC is an Atlanta-based boutique food & beverage brand accelerator working with emerging brands to help manage growth, avoid pitfalls and enhance shareholder value. The company provides a comprehensive platform of resources, mentors, capabilities and community to early-stage food & beverage businesses seeking to scale. Go to www.craftcatalystllc.com for more information.

About Atlanta Food & Wine Festival: Launched in 2010, by Atlanta entrepreneurs Dominique Love and Elizabeth Feichter, the Atlanta Food & Wine Festival is a four-day culinary experience dedicated to shining an international spotlight on the rich food and beverage traditions of the South from Texas to the District of Columbia. With an Advisory Council of 91 award-winning talent from 13 Southern states and the District of Columbia, the Atlanta Food & Wine Festival is one part conference and one part party, offering carefully-crafted programs and events to entertain and educate consumers about Southern food and drink. The Festival also celebrates the flavors of other Southern regions around the globe including Southern Europe, South Africa, South America, Southern Hemisphere (Australia and New Zealand) and South-of-the-Border for Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Caribbean. The Atlanta Food & Wine Festival is a member of the IWSC Group North America's portfolio of events. Atlanta Food & Wine Festival returns to Midtown Atlanta Thursday, June 1 – Sunday, June 4, 2017. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.atlfoodandwinefestival.com. Follow Atlanta Food & Wine Festival on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#). #KnowTheSouth #AFWF17

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