



**Welcome to
The Culinary Catapult Program
Overview & Calendar**

Program Goals:

- To encourage innovation and sustainability for culinary entrepreneurs through training and investment.
- To assist culinary entrepreneurs in developing and accessing growth opportunities to take their business to the next level of success.
- To provide information and skillsets to survive and thrive in the evolving marketing and economic environment.

Program Components:

- Dynamic and interactive **training sessions** – consisting of expert interviews and presentations, group mastermind problem-solving, and accountability support on progress toward goals.
- Each session will include **actionable steps** to improve business performance. “**Homework**”, opportunities for the scholars to practice the application of newly learned tips/resources/strategies and to go deeper with those that are particularly relevant, will be provided and participants will be encouraged to share their experiences working through the supplemental activities and material.
- The group’s communication/resource-sharing/meeting recording archival portal will be a **private Facebook Group**. This “clubhouse” serves as an invaluable focal point where all participants can contribute, learn, and share at their convenience. And can be a critical source of reference for all previously covered course materials and valuable supplemental information.
- Each participant will be offered a highly experienced **business advisor/mentor**. The mentor will provide additional guidance, assistance, and encouragement during and beyond the program at no charge.
- Participants will create a short (3-5 page) **Growth Plan** for their business and prepare a **Funding Pitch** that they will deliver to a panel of business/financing guests.

Program Delivery:

- The weekly sessions will be held **virtually, via Zoom, on Thursday from 1:00 pm to 3:30 pm**.
- All participants will be expected to be **ON CAMERA**.
- Myra Corrello, Program Coordinator, will oversee all registration, invitations, hosting, and food expertise.

Program Topics:

1/8/26: Kickoff Celebration and Orientation: New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation Center, 1205 N Rampart St, New Orleans, LA 70116.

1/15/26: Understanding Today to Build Your Tomorrow. Complete your own business self-assessment to start building a strong strategic growth plan. Explore what “growth” and “success” mean to you – and how that affects your growth planning. Learn practical tips for goal setting to succeed in implementing your plan.

1/22/26: Marketing and Selling Essentials for Your Food Business. Identify your most attractive and profitable customers and business opportunities. Identify how to set yourself apart from the competition – and communicate that distinction effectively. And explore the best ways to attract those targeted buyers to you through compelling and engaging branding.

1/29/26: Maximizing Your Online Presence. Get found, build excitement, and increase sales. Understand website attraction and conversion best practices, basic SEO, and building powerful and essential social media customer engagement. You’ll have the opportunity to gain helpful feedback on your overall online presence.

2/5/26: Building and Leading Your Winning Team. Learn best practices for hiring, training, and managing a high-performing team. Create an action plan for staffing that will allow you to scale your operations.

2/12/26: Managing for Efficiency and Profitability. Learn how to use financial statements and the numbers to manage cash flow and maximize your performance and profitability. Learn the best practices for pricing and cost analysis. Learn the best practices and tools for managing inventory, operations, POS and training. Learn how to keep your data and technology safe.

2/26/26: Funding for Growth: Learn how to access capital to grow your business – and what financial institutions look for in determining fundability. Identify local resources that can help you package your information to be most attractive to lenders. Learn tips on how to effectively pitch your funding requests to lenders.

3/5/26: Obtaining and Keeping Repeat Customers. Explore customer service strategies and loyalty programs that will keep your customers coming back for more.

3/12/26: Building a Strong, Resilient Organization. This session will cover best practices for resiliency, sustainability, and scalability. It will focus on building a strong foundation through effective risk management, systems, automation, and redundancies to ensure it will be poised to endure the inevitable challenges that the future holds.

3/19/26: Lagniappe Special Topics TBD! Based on the group’s requests, we’ll use this special session to go deeper on any previously covered topics and/or to explore a few special new ones.

3/26/26: Polishing the Pitch and Refining Your Growth Plan. Bring all your work together and polish off your exciting new growth plan. Get valuable feedback from your peers and your instructor as you prepare to pitch for the judges.

4/2/26: Pitch Contest and Graduation Ceremony. New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation Center, 1205 N Rampart St, New Orleans, LA 70116.

Note: The program will feature a **host of successful culinary entrepreneurs as guest speakers – all sharing their most valuable lessons and best practices. Actual session topics, dates, and descriptions may be modified in order to accommodate the schedules of these guest presenters.

Program Coordination:

Myra Corrello, Ph.D., in collaboration **Carmen Sunda, Business Consultant**.

Myra has led many successful CEO masterminds and business accelerators through her own company as well as through Louisiana Economic Development, Goldman Sachs *10,000 Small Businesses*, Shell Oil, Hancock Whitney Bank, and others. In the *Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses* Program, she taught over 800 business owners how to grow and scale their companies – including some of the top chef-owners and food producers in Louisiana and Mississippi. She is a certified Perspectives CEO Mastermind Facilitator. For more information, connect with her here: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/myracorrello/> or visit her website here: <https://myracorrello.com/>.

Carmen has over thirty-eight years of experience assisting businesses in achieving growth, profitability, and sustainability, including 22 years as the Louisiana Small Business Development Center Director for the Greater New Orleans Region and sixteen years of business ownership. Her areas of specialty include financial management, loan packaging, strategic marketing, managing growth and risk management, along with 22 years of experience in disaster response and recovery. She has been recognized nationally for her expertise and innovation.

