

2024

CWK

IMPACT REPORT



Letter from Leadership

Have you ever seen a 1,600 square foot walk-in fridge stacked floor to ceiling with tomatoes? At another organization, seeing tomatoes everywhere you looked might make for a strange day. At CWK, that's par for the course as we continue to take new approaches to building an equitable food economy.

Those tomatoes—100,000 pounds of them, to be exact—were part of our growing work around farm value-add products. Products that we make here at CWK from rescued produce, creating fresh, healthy, delicious foods that our partner organizations are serving in businesses, schools, and major institutions throughout the region. From our signature field fritters (made with yellow field peas—a cover crop that improves soil health and crop yield), or our squash soup (made with, you guessed it, rescued squash), CWK spent 2024 reducing food waste, supporting farmers, and creating opportunities for our businesses. And keeping our fridge really full.

Of course, our farm value-add work is just one piece of what we accomplished in 2024. Our core work remains focused on recruiting, educating, and advancing the diverse small food businesses that are at the heart of Commonwealth Kitchen. We have seen new entrepreneurs walk through our doors, and long-time members of our community flourish as they sign new contracts and open new brick-and-mortar outposts.

We are proud to be continuing our market access work, our educational programs, and, of course, offering our top-notch shared kitchen and co-manufacturing facilities.

I hope this annual report will give you a sense of the energy, creativity, and dedication that the CWK team brought to 2024. As you read it, please know that you make this work possible with your support for our organization, and that we are so very grateful.

Learn more about our mission and impact from our members, partners and staff by scanning the QR code →



Jen Faigel

Jen Faigel

CWK Executive Director



About Commonwealth Kitchen

CommonWealth Kitchen is Greater Boston's only nonprofit food business incubator. We believe in the power of inclusive entrepreneurship to change the world. In fact, we prove every day what is possible when we remove barriers and level the playing field: talented, passionate individuals from all backgrounds are able to pursue their dreams and together move society to be more equitable, resilient, and just.

Our vertically integrated approach builds networks while addressing the human, social, and financial capital required for business success.

SHARED KITCHENS

Our commercial kitchen is bustling with 40 businesses - from food trucks to caterers, bakers to product companies.



84% BIPOC-owned



98% BIPOC and/or woman-owned.



BUSINESS EDUCATION

Cranking out a delicious product is one thing. Knowing what it takes to grow your business is another. That's why we provide business education and technical support to 250+ diverse entrepreneurs annually (over 95% BIPOC-owned). Since our inception, we've reached over 1,500 entrepreneurs through our educational programs.



MARKET ACCESS

Think of CWK as a food business matchmaker. We forge industry partnerships with retail and wholesale buyers, food service management companies, distributors, event planners, caterers, office managers—making matches in order to drive market access and sales for our businesses.

SMALL-BATCH MANUFACTURING

For companies that are too big for our shared kitchen, but not quite ready for their own massive operation, we have a middle ground. CWK provides outsourced manufacturing to help product companies scale. We also offer product development and processing for farms and institutions.

CWK By the Numbers

2024 in Review

40

Current
Members

20

New Businesses Graduated
from Ready to Launch

\$2M

Revenue for
CWK Businesses



84%

BIPOC owned
businesses

76%

Women owned
businesses

200+

businesses
participated in at
least one CWK
program

98%

BIPOC/or women owned businesses

1,187

Gift Boxes Sold



Business Education

CWK provides a wide range of business education and technical support to 200+ diverse entrepreneurs annually. These programs include:

Start a Food Biz Workshop

A workshop for aspiring entrepreneurs thinking about starting or about to launch their food businesses.

Ready to Start (RTS)

A cohort-based program that prepares food businesses to become members of our community kitchen. Program topics include:

- Business planning
- Opportunity analysis
- Marketing
- Entity formation
- Budgeting

Ready to Launch (RTL)

A cohort-based program that helps businesses in our kitchen with financial management, securing health permits and refining, developing, and pitching a business plan. This program supports peer to peer learning and networking as well as maximizing business opportunities identified by CWK.



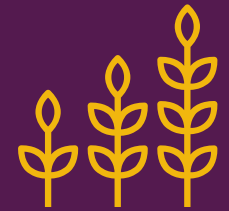
Santander's Cultivate Small Business (CSB)

In collaboration with Santander, Babson College, and ICIC–Initiative For A Competitive Inner City

A tailored “mini MBA” that provides a food-focused curriculum, mentorship, and capital grants.



Ready to Grow (RTG)



This new cohort-based program complements our current offerings with customized 1:1 support and access to industry networks to meet business owners where they are—particularly those who are ready to scale their businesses!

To learn more about these programs, please visit commonwealthkitchen.org/offerings



Helping You Create Your Own Recipe For Success!

Charlie Lumpkin — La Pheegan

2021-Present | Ready to Grow

Pivoting a Business Model—from Wholesale → Catering and Large-Scale Food Service

Charlie originally joined CWK with a vision for her innovative Sassy Jack Chick'n Wings—crispy fried jackfruit wings with a root vegetable “bone” made from yucca, but soon discovered the challenges of wholesale. With support from the CWK Programs Team/RTG pilot program, she pivoted her business model and expanded her product line, including her beloved vegan mac & cheese. She leveraged technical assistance from The Acceleration Project (TAP) to refine her vegan cheese sauce, which is now sold to institutional buyers. Through CWK, she's built strong industry connections, shifting her business model to focus on catering and large-scale food service sales—a testament to the power of adaptability and strategic growth.



Phoebe Zhou – La Pêche

2024-Present | Ready to Launch Santander's Cultivate Small Business



Scaling a Product & Securing Major Retail Accounts

As the youngest member of CWK's ecosystem, La Pêche joined with a strong product and an ambition to scale. With support from Ready to Launch (RTL), and Cultivate Small Business (CSB), we helped her refine her branding, expand sales, and secure major retail accounts. She also received technical assistance from expert consultants at The Acceleration Project (TAP). While at CWK, she navigated the challenges of scaling and is now taking the next big step—graduating to a co-packer! Her journey from a small startup to a growing brand is an inspiration, and she will be serving as a mentor for the next cohort of RTL participants—a testament to the ways that CWK's incubator model cultivates a community of mutual support and a powerful network of peer mentors.

Tarun and Anu Bhalla – Meal Mantra

2020-Present | Ready to Launch Santander's Cultivate Small Business Ready to Grow

Growing Wholesale Product Line → Securing Institutional Sales → Expanding Business Model to Catering

As one of CWK's longest-standing members, Meal Mantra came to us after launching at another commercial kitchen, ready to take the next step in co-packing. With our connections, they secured major contracts, including Associated Buyers, Costa, Farm Fresh RI, Boston College and Boston Public Schools (BPS)—their largest contract to date. Alongside their signature chutneys, they've expanded their product line to include a new cranberry tomato chutney. Most recently, they transitioned to our Shared Kitchen, expanding into food service and catering. Now, they're exploring catering opportunities and working with The Catered Affair to be one of the businesses featured in the Boston Public Library's MAPP Lounge—showcasing their continued evolution and success.



Charlie Lumpkin – La Pheegan

 [@la_pheegan_chef](https://www.instagram.com/la_pheegan_chef)

Q. What do you do?

A. We create products that are handcrafted and made with high quality ingredients to deliver nostalgic comforting flavors that appeal to vegans, those with dietary restrictions, and anyone looking for better, healthier alternatives to traditional comfort foods.

Q. How has CWK helped?

A. Commonwealth Kitchen has provided me the invaluable resource of offering a space I could learn and grow in a safe, encouraging environment... Without the support of Commonwealth Kitchen, the members, and the broader team, I may not have had the courage to keep going.

Q. What inspires you?

A. As a mom with 2 young boys it was not always functional to make separate meals that appealed to their tastes and my dietary needs, so I began to create recipes that achieved both the full flavor and textures of the staple foods we grew up eating, without compromise.

Q. If you could predict the future ...

A. My ultimate goal is to see my products in mainstream grocery available to everyone. My bluesky dream would be to partner with a legacy brand to sell my food or open my own chain of fast food vegan comfort food.

Q. Favorite food

A. Mushrooms!





Phoebe Zhou – La Pêche



Q. What do you do?

A. We craft premium, French-style cookies and baked goods made with gluten-free ingredients. Our mission is to bring moments of joy and indulgence to everyone, regardless of dietary restrictions, while maintaining a commitment to quality, heritage, and creativity. Rooted in the French philosophy of joy de vivre—joy of living—our products celebrate the art of baking with a modern twist, embodying fun, curiosity, and luxury in every bite.

Q. Do you have a humble brag?

A. Our most exciting success so far has been seeing our cookies stocked in local specialty stores, where customers have raved about the quality and taste.

Q. What inspires you?

A. As someone with celiac disease, I often found myself frustrated by the lack of high-quality cookies and baked goods made purely for the joy of eating...This frustration became my inspiration. I set out to craft my own recipes, reimagining my favorite French cookies in gluten-free form—determined to make them just as good, if not better, than the original wheat flour versions.

Q. How has CWK helped?

A. CommonWealth Kitchen provided an invaluable platform for launching and growing my startup. Tasks like recipe scaling, calculating Cost of Goods Sold (COGS), and setting up cash flow statements were simplified by the well-designed resources and tools CWK has developed, making critical aspects of business management far more accessible for a startup like mine.

Tarun and Anu Bhalla – Meal Mantra



Q. What do you do?

A. We make Indian cuisine accessible and enjoyable for everyone, fostering a sense of community through the shared love of food. Meal Mantra offers a range of products, including Tikka Masala, Goan Curry, and Korma sauces, among others.

Q. Fun fact

A. I want to learn to fly!

Q. What inspires you?

A. The inspiration behind starting Meal Mantra stems from a combination of culinary heritage, entrepreneurial spirit, and a passion for sharing the joy of Indian cuisine. Anu Bhalla, the granddaughter of Kundan Lal Gujral, the inventor of Tandoori Cuisine, learned the art of cooking from her grandfather.

I am a medical doctor, and when my wife, Anu, and I moved to the U.S. in 2016, we found it challenging to replicate the authentic Indian flavors we were accustomed to. Our passion for healthy eating and fitness, combined with our desire to make Indian cuisine more accessible drove us to create easy-to-use, all-natural sauces that allow anyone to enjoy authentic Indian flavors at home.

Q. How has CWK helped?

A. CWK has played a significant role in supporting Meal Mantra's entrepreneurial journey by providing essential resources and infrastructure for food-based businesses. Of the many ways in which CWK has gone to bat for us, none has mattered more than helping us to get the ear of bigger corporate customers that truly drive sales.



Graduate Profiles

Michelene Desormeau — Breez Gourmet Catering Community Building Is a Breez

 breezgourmetcatering.com

2022-Present | **Ready to Grow**

CWK member Chef Michelene Desormeau of Breez Gourmet Catering opened her first brick-and-mortar location at 100 Hancock St. in Quincy, a new Haitian cafeteria tucked inside the Harbor South Tower office building! Try the delicious and authentic black bean and Haitian squash soup, goat stew with red kidney beans, plantain cups filled with guacamole, and so much more.

You can also count on Michelene to give back to her community—from her partnership with the state and other CWK businesses to feed refugees displaced in Boston to her work training Haitian immigrants at the New England Culinary Arts Training School.

Teresa Maynard — Sweet Teez Bakery A Sweet New Site on the Block

 sweetteezbakery.com

2016-Present | **Santander's Cultivate Small Business**

Dorchester native Teresa Maynard founded Sweet Teez Bakery back in 2016 and has announced the opening of its first location for the fall of 2025 on the ground floor of Dot Block! These peanut-free sweet treats are "worth every bite," just like her motto reads. While the brick-and-mortar location gets underway, treat yourself to cakes, cupcakes, brownies, pies, and more on the Sweet Teez website.

It's a Food Fight: Tackling the Climate Crisis Through Food

How much good can one tomato do?

At Commonwealth Kitchen, a lot.

Through a sweeping series of partnerships with Massachusetts schools, farms, wholesalers, and other nonprofit organizations, Commonwealth Kitchen is using the humble tomato to feed students, reduce waste, drive revenue, support farmers, and nourish chronically ill patients.

Who knew a rescued tomato could be so powerful?



Partners

- Boston Gleaners/Boston Food Hub
- Sodexo
- Community Servings

Products

- Crushed tomatoes
- Marinara sauce
- Tomato fennel soup

Impact by the Numbers

100,000 pounds

of tomatoes processed at a rate of 1,600 pounds per day

8,000 gallons

of marinara produced for Sodexo and local small businesses

5,000 gallons

of tomatoes processed for Springfield Public Schools

4,000 gallons

of tomatoes processed for Community Servings

1,000 pounds

of fennel and potatoes locally sourced

600 pounds

of basil locally sourced

400 gallons

of tomatoes processed for Community Servings

\$80,000

in guaranteed sales to local farms

3 full time jobs created



Squash Soup for Sodexo

Tomatoes aren't the only veggie we're keeping from the landfill. CWK rescued 5,000 lbs of butternut squash from Wally Czajkowski's family farm in Hadley, MA, saving it from the compost bin. Our talented chef, Kevin Doherty, crafted and tested a recipe for a savory squash soup to meet the nutritional needs of Sodexo's healthcare clients—and then the CWK co-manufacturing team transformed all of that squash into 1,000 gallons of fresh soup.



Soups up at:



It's not waste until it's wasted!

40%

of America's food
supply is thrown out

#3

food waste's rank as
a greenhouse gas
contributor

We're addressing the problem of food waste and the climate crisis head-on by finding new (and, as always, delicious) ways to reduce waste and create new revenue streams for local businesses.

Harnessing the Power of the Yellow Field Pea

CWK has harnessed the power of the mighty yellow field pea, a cover crop that grows throughout New England, to create a sustainable and tasty new protein-filled entrée. Cover crops naturally put nitrogen and nutrients into the soil, without the use of chemical fertilizers. CWK created an incentive for farmers to plant more sustainably by turning this **cover crop** into a **cash crop**. Today, CWK is purchasing yellow field peas from Aurora Mills & Farm in Aroostook County, Maine, and Clover Hill Farm in Gilbertville, Massachusetts turning them into nutritious and tasty products now on the menu of leading local hospitals like Brigham and Women's.



Healthier Food. Healthier Soil.

The yellow field peas in CWK's fritter also benefit the environment by:

- Returning carbon to the soil and capturing nitrogen for use in subsequent crops
- Benefitting subsequent crops through nutrition and weed management
- Producing flowers that can help pollinators meet their food requirements
- Reducing soil erosion, minimizing soil compaction, and increasing soil porosity
- Reducing soil nutrient losses



Scott Soares, USDA State Director for Rural Development in MA, RI, CT



An Open Kitchen

We were proud to host friends from far and wide for visits to our kitchen and comanufacturing space throughout the year.



Check presentation from Global Partners and their "Get a Coke, Share a Coke" campaign



Field Fritter Taste Testing Event with teams from Northeastern, MIT, Brandeis, Babson, BC, and Henry P. Kendall Foundation

The Catered Affair's Tasting Event



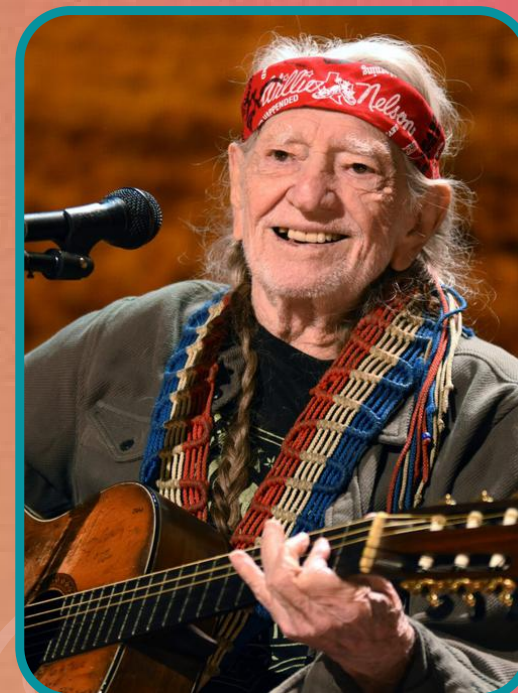
CWK at Farm Aid

What do Willie Nelson, Dave Matthews, and CommonWealth Kitchen have in common? We were all at FarmAid 2024, celebrating the power of local farms and fresh food to transform lives and the economy.

CWK was honored to provide food to VIPs at the event, showcasing our members' products and serving our delicious field fritter.



to: CWK Community



On Saturday, September 21, Commonwealth Kitchen was proud to provide delicious nutritious field pea fritters at Farm Aid 2024. Almost 21,000 people attended the popular event, held at Saratoga Springs, New York for a day of celebration, activism, and song! The day before the concert, Farm Aid organized its "Farmer Forum, A Rural Call to Action" to promote a strong and resilient family farm system of agriculture, while also building connections in the battles against climate change and social injustice.



CWK Serves the Community



Refugees

This year we were honored to be able to continue our work supporting CWK members as they provided culturally appropriate, nutritious meals to newly arrived Haitian refugees.

Since 2023, CWK businesses have been supporting refugees in crisis, providing a nourishing and familiar welcome in a new homeland—and making all of us proud with their continued display of grace and compassion to those in need.

Fueled by:

Breez Gourmet Catering | Lalu's Chicken | La Pheegan | Kush by Saba | Magic Empanadas | Halal Bytes | Gourmet Kreyol | Fresh Food Generation | A Family Affair



Thanksgiving Turkeys

CWK had a blast sponsoring the turkey roast at The Witherspoon Institute's (WIN) "Get Lit" Thanksgiving Cook-Off with 12 birds for their Family, Youth, Elders, and Volunteers!

- 900 turkeys distributed by the City of Boston
- 325 meals to Boston Community Pediatrics
- 50 meals to Codman Square Health Center
- 50 meals to Fenway Health
- 50 turkeys along with grocery boxes to families at the Dorchester Boys and Girls Clubs



Public Schools

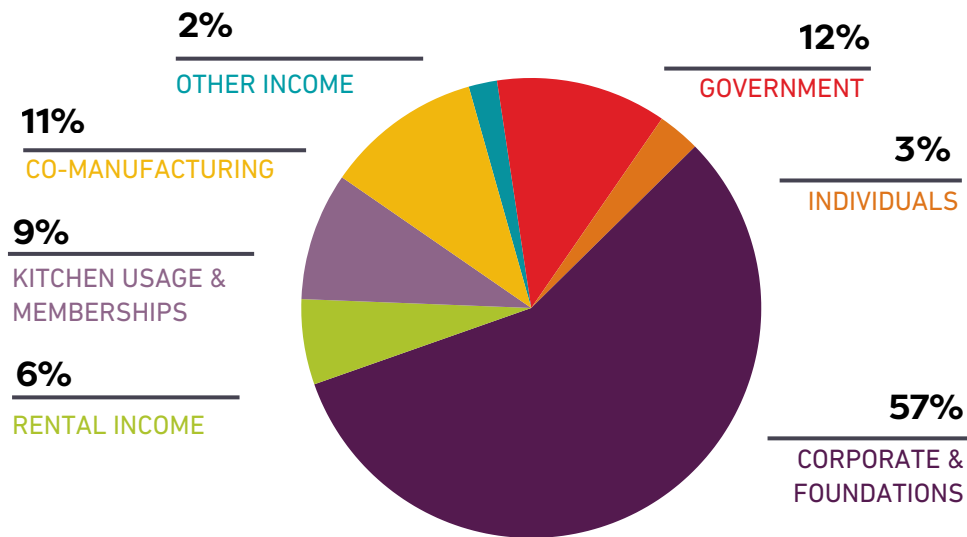
We are so grateful to the Chef Ann Foundation for awarding CWK the PLANTS grant in partnership with Boston Public Schools, Portland Public Schools, and MA Farm to School to improve local, healthy, and diverse food options. Together, we are feeding over 70,000 students healthy falafel-like fritters made from yellow field peas, a New England cover crop that's nutritious for kids and soil alike!



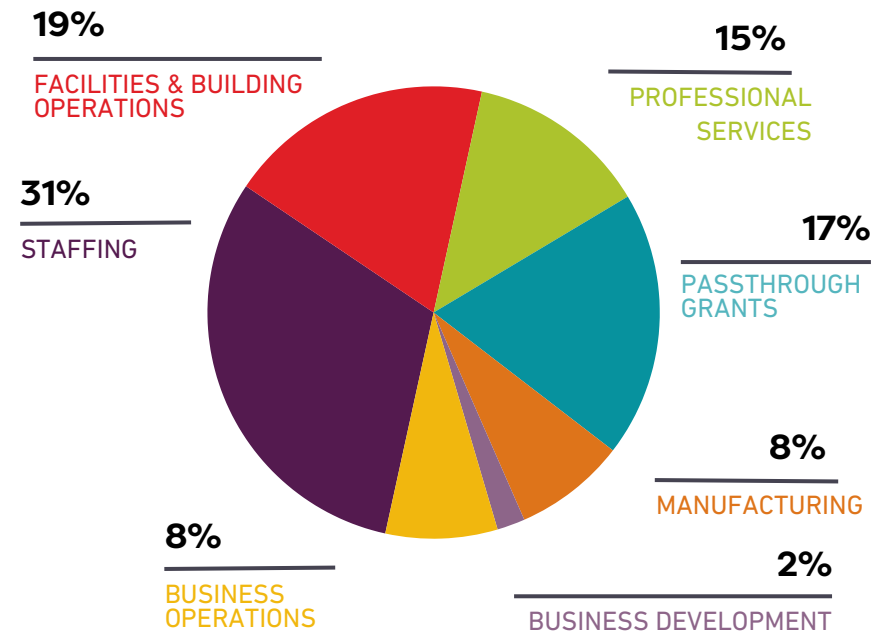


Financials

Revenue \$6,663,586*



Expenses \$6,613,792*



*2024 estimate only, annual revenue and expenses pending completion of final audit, still in process at time of printing.

2024 Team & Board

Team

- Sarah Baptiste, Program Associate
- Rodney Beldo, Maintenance Crew Member
- Alden Cadwell, Director of Business Development
- Yonan Cruz, Lead Contract Manufacturing Crew
- Kevin Doherty, Director of Culinary Operations
- Jennifer Eno, Chief Operating Officer
- James Farrell, Shared Kitchen Manager
- Kay Ford, Finance & Administrative Associate
- Jen Faigel, Executive Director
- Errollyn Gary, QA/QC Food Safety Manager
- Paul Garberson, Director of Facilities
- Nicole Gunn, Purchasing Coordinator
- Malcolm Hall, Shipping & Receiving Operations Team Member
- Jorge Matias, Contract Manufacturing Crew Member
- Cristian Pena, Manufacturing Crew Member
- Edward Pena, Manufacturing Crew Member
- Bonnie Rosenbaum, Director of Communications
- Ericca Sadler, Administrative Associate
- Fabiana Silva, Manufacturing Production Crew Member
- Nick Schonberger, Senior Entrepreneurship Manager
- Lee Ann Song, Director of Institutional Giving
- Daquan Straw, Contract Manufacturing Crew Member
- Sherie Theriault, Director of Member Success



Board

- Lesley Delaney Hawkins, Chair
- Helene Solomon, Treasurer
- Jason Allen
- Magnolia Contreras
- Jen Faigel
- Raul Fernandez
- Sheldon Lloyd

Funders and Supporters

Thank you to our kitchen helpers—we couldn't do what we do without all these cooks supporting our work.

Chef de Cuisine (Executive Chef)

- Ajana Foundation
- Barr Foundation*
- Capital One Bank
- Chef Ann Foundation - Partnerships for Local Agriculture & Nutrition Transformation in Schools (PLANTS) - USDA*
- Cummings Foundation*
- Eastern Bank Foundation*
- Henry P. Kendall Foundation: The New England Food Vision Prize*

- Liberty Mutual*
- MA Executive Office of Housing & Livable Communities: Emergency Assistance Food Service
- MassDevelopment Collaborative Workspace Grant
- MassDevelopment Underutilized Properties Grant
- Rockefeller Foundation
- Santander Bank*

**Multi-year award with cumulative value greater than \$100,000*

Chef de Cuisine (Deputy Chef)

- 1434 Foundation
- Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation
- MassGrowth Capital of MassDevelopment Small Business Technical Assistance Program (SBTA)
- Roy Hunt Foundation
- The Boston Foundation
- USDA MDAR Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)

Sous Chef (Station Chef)

- COMPASS Group Foundation
- Global Partners
- M&T Bank
- PNC Foundation
- TD Bank
- Goodwin **
- Deloitte **

***In-Kind*



Community Partners

- Amplify LatinX
- Black Economic Council of MA (BECMA)
- Boston Area Gleaners/Boston Food Hub
- Boston Community Pediatrics
- Boston Main Streets
- Boys and Girls Club Dorchester
- Center for Good Food Purchasing
- Chef Ann Foundation
- City of Boston
- Codman Health/Codman Academy
- Community Servings
- Deloitte
- Dorchester Food Co-Op
- Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative
- Farm to Institution New England (FINE)
- Food Systems New England
- Friends of the Children Boston
- Goodwin
- Healthcare Without Harm
- Hunger to Health Collaboratory
- La Colaborativa
- Lawyers for Civil Rights (LCR)
- MA Coalition for an Equitable Economy
- MA Farm to School
- Madison Park Development Corporation
- Madison Park Technical Vocational High School
- Massachusetts Food Systems Collaborative
- MCCI + Foundation for Business Equity
- National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT)
- Nectar Community Investments
- New England Center for Arts and Technology (NECAT)
- Project RIGHT
- Roxbury Community College
- The Acceleration Project (TAP)
- YMCA

Industry & Institutional Partners

- Babson University
- Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC)
- Boston Children's Hospital (BCH)
- Boston College
- Boston Medical Center
- Boston Public Schools
- Boston Unity Cup
- Boston University (Aramark)
- Brookline Public Schools
- City Fresh
- Community Servings
- COMPASS (Max Ultimate/Museum of Science, Northeastern University, Babson)
- Costa Fruit and Produce
- Eastern Bank
- Emmanuel College/MIT/Lesley University (Bon Appétit Management Company)
- ENCORE Casino
- Farm Aid
- Farm Fresh Rhode Island (FFRI)
- Global Partners
- Gordon Food Services (GFS)
- Gourmet Caterers
- Leader Bank Pavilion
- Liberty Mutual
- Live Nation
- MeetBoston
- MIT University
- New England Patriots
- Paul W Marks Co.
- Portland Public Schools (ME)
- Restaurant Associates (COMPASS Group- Harvard Medical, Harvard Business School, Google)
- Roxbury Community College (RCC)
- Sodexo Healthcare (Mass General Brigham & affiliate hospitals)
- Sodexo Higher Ed (including UMass Boston, Wentworth, MassArt, Bentley, Stonehill College)
- Springfield Public Schools
- The Catered Affair
- The Works Bakery Cafe
- Tufts Food and Nutrition Innovation Council (FNIC)

Thank you



Thank you to everyone who supported us by making individual donations, purchasing a gift box, or giving business to our member companies!

Your support benefits our community of burgeoning businesses and helps them build an inclusive, vibrant, and sustainable local food economy doing what they love to do.

PASSION FOR PEOPLE.
HUNGER FOR EQUITY.
LOVE OF FOOD.



**COMMONWEALTH
KITCHEN**

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To make a gift in support of our mission, please
scan the QR code to visit [our website](http://commonwealthkitchen.org).



All donations are 100% tax
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Our EIN number is 27-0648497