

AUTOMOTIVE

Audi teams with James Beard Foundation to empower female chefs

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Audi and the James Beard Foundation celebrating women culinary leaders like Nina Compton. Image credit: James Beard Foundation

By STAFF REPORTS

German automaker Audi is extending its partnership with the James Beard Foundation as it continues to support female entrepreneurs in the culinary and hospitality industries.

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For a third year Audi of America will be sponsoring the Women's Entrepreneurial Leadership program, which provides business owners with in-depth educational and networking opportunities to build their companies and management skills. The initiative is in line with Audi's commitment to its #DriveProgress effort to champion gender equality.

"We look forward to continuing to provide opportunities to elevate female leaders in the culinary industry, a field where women are largely underrepresented, and to further collaborating with the James Beard Foundation," said Loren Angelo, vice president of marketing at Audi of America, in a statement. "It's been incredibly rewarding to watch each class of WEL fellows take their newly acquired learnings and apply them to their businesses to take them to the next level."

Culinary collaboration

The 2019-2020 WEL program begins this month with its annual five-day business retreat for 20 honorees. Audi sponsored two of this year's fellows: Sarah Gavigan of Nashville, TN's Otaku Ramen and Davidson, NC's Katy Kindred of Kindred and Hello, Sailor.

Throughout 2019 Esther Choi and Sandra Cordero, Audi's 2018 fellows, participated in events including the Audi-sponsored AFI FEST, Forbes Women's Summit and the Harvest Summit.

As part of the WEL partnership, the Audi Culinary Dinner Series PROOF visited Nashville; Pittsburgh, PA; Minneapolis, MN and Seattle, WA.

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/kwylrigqY5c>

Celebrity chef Angie Mar participated in PROOF, the Audi Culinary Dinner Series

Past graduates of the program, as well as celebrity chefs including Angie Mar and Ashley Christensen, participated in the pop-up events. Attendees were also able to test drive an Audi Q3 at the dinners.

The automaker and John Beard Foundation also created the Audi #DriveProgress Scholarship, which will be awarded to an aspiring woman-identifying student from each city participating in the PROOF series.

Another series of dinners will take place during the first quarter of 2020 at the James Beard House in New York, as well as a celebration of Women's History Month in March.

Audi is not the only automaker to team with culinary ambassadors for special events.

Toyota Corp.'s Lexus recently named French chef Ludo Lefebvre to its lineup of Culinary Masters, bringing a new perspective to the ambassador initiative.

In his new role, Mr. Lefebvre will partner with Lexus on food and wine-centered marketing and events. With this appointment, the James Beard finalist chef joins other culinary talents including Daniel Boulud and Michelle Bernstein, allowing Lexus to portray its craft through cuisine ([see story](#)).

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