



For Immediate Release

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Local Food Manufacturer Creates Accelerator Program for Early-Stage Food Businesses

Providing emerging consumer packaged goods food businesses with a much needed production solution to help optimize and scale their operations

Minneapolis, MINN. (March 10, 2020) – Longtime Minneapolis food production facility **At Last! Gourmet Foods** and small food business management consultant **FoodOps, LLC** have partnered to create the **At Last + FoodOps Accelerator**, or **ALFA**. **ALFA** is a food manufacturing accelerator that supports early-stage liquid and spreadable food product companies. The goal of this accelerator program is to transition food businesses from self-production into contract manufacturing/ co-packing.

The accelerator is seeking food businesses that want to make sizable change in the scale of their operations in the next year. **Startups that are grossing at least \$60,000 in revenue per year or producing approximately 8,000 units of finished product in a twelve-month period will be considered for cohort 1.**

Up to five startups will receive customized manufacturing support, dedicated production time, and monthly business consulting for the first 12 months in the program. Program acceptance is contingent upon a \$7,500 program fee, 36-month production agreement, and a commitment to pursuing significant annual sales growth. **The application for cohort 1 will open on March 15, 2020.** Business owners seeking more information or wishing to apply can email alfa@atlastgourmetfoods.com.

ALFA will not require equity in exchange for program admission -- the accelerator is meant to optimize and scale production for cohort businesses, not create investment opportunities for program partners. By supporting business operations, offering contract manufacturing services, connecting the supply chain, and providing mentorship and production best practices, ALFA

hopes to create the space and place for these growing businesses to thrive. As standard with co-packers, tolling rates (production fees) will be charged per unit but through a depreciating schedule, businesses are incentivized to secure more sales in exchange for lower costs of production. At Last! director of business development, **Aaron Chamberlain**, said, *“Businesses take stock in knowing we can grow with them -- the more sales they can generate across all SKUs and product lines, the lower their cost per unit will be to produce. And they can be confident that we can service their production demands as they double, triple, or even quadruple their current business.”*

ALFA’s volunteer **entrepreneur in residence** will be **Mike Rakes, founder of Philia feta cheese spreads**. When building his business, Mike worked with At Last! to scale his operations and streamline process flow. He will engage with ALFA cohort businesses during their 12-month acceleration and throughout the duration of their production time. *“This is an incredible opportunity for the food start-up scene in Minneapolis and the broader Midwest region,”* said Rakes, entrepreneur in residence at ALFA. *“One of the most challenging tasks for early stage food entrepreneurs is finding a production solution that gets them out of the kitchen and focused on sharing their stories and selling their products. By partnering early and aligning goals, there is early stage production flexibility for the entrepreneur, and long-term volume potential for At Last! as a co-manufacturer with expertise in scaled production.”* He continued, *“I was fortunate to work closely with At Last! as my brand began its growth journey beyond the Minneapolis market. Their expertise combined with the guidance participants will receive from FoodOps, will greatly benefit the business owners as they take their food companies to the next level. If this program was around when I was building my brand, it would've benefited me greatly. I'm excited to be involved, and hope to share the experience and knowledge I've gained over the last seven years with other driven and passionate entrepreneurs.”*

“We see this partnership with At Last! as one of the most forward-thinking and strategic partnerships here in the Twin Cities food ecosystem,” said FoodOps Founder, **Jim Costello**. *“FoodOps’ structural operations support services, combined with At Last! co-manufacturing, will now be able to support the complete manufacturing process. The cohort members will have operations assistance all the way to having the right product produced and ready to ship to their customers.”*

Chamberlain went on to say, *“We are looking for brands that have unique attributes. Maybe they are purpose-driven, maybe they are rooted in high-quality, local ingredients, maybe they are innovative in their category, or perhaps they are like nothing else you’ve ever tasted. The business itself must make sense and the owner must be looking for solutions to scale, and have a pipeline of potential sales opportunities waiting to be realized with the support of a co-packer.”*

For more information on selection criteria, program fees, and to apply, visit:
www.atlastgourmetfoods.com/alfa

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About At Last Gourmet Foods

At Last! Gourmet Foods Inc. is a Minneapolis-based food production facility, focused on liquid and spreadable products and custom production formulations, for food service and retail customers. The company co-innovates and delivers product solutions to precision quality specifications for use in mainstream food service and grocery markets. At Last! is a leading provider of soups, sauces, dips, and spreads in the Midwest and is focused on developing products that incorporate regenerative and sustainable sourcing solutions. The company's clean label products have transformed the grocery and restaurant markets, bringing increased levels of flavor, protein, nutrition, and product functionality to foodservice and retail markets. At Last! Gourmet Foods is a USDA inspected, USDA Certified Organic, and SQF level II production facility. Its team of product innovators and quality assurance technicians excel in delivering consistency to the production of co-manufactured and branded products.

At Last! was founded in 1990 by husband and wife team Ray Chamberlain and Janet Barnes. Over the past 30 years, At Last! has expanded its footprint in the Seward neighborhood of Minneapolis from a 6,000 sq ft production facility to its current 28,000 sq ft of production and warehouse space, with an additional 20,000 sq ft of production floor and storage slotted to open in the next 12 months. Current production capacity is 30,000 lbs of finished product per day, and the new facility expansion will allow for a 300% increase in production capacity and is expected to add approximately 15 jobs in the next 12-18 months.

About FoodOps

FoodOps LLC is a unique, innovative, and flexible management and consulting firm helping small food producers take their businesses to the next level and translate an entrepreneur's passion and purpose into a growing food business. Collectively, the FoodOps team offers more than 75 years of diverse food industry and operations experience in the following areas: Co-Manufacturing Solutions; Food Safety Program Development; Fractional Management; Ingredient Sourcing; Production Planning and Scaling; Quality Assurance Systems Design and Implementation; and Research and Development. Founded in 2008 as Costello Business Solutions, FoodOps has evolved to include a robust team of technical advisors currently supporting more than 60 food businesses that range from \$100,000 to \$10 million per year in revenue. For further information on FoodOps services and partner programs, contact Jim Costello, Founder & President, 651-308-4073 or jim.foodops@gmail.com.