

# check

Boston University School of Hospitality Administration  
Winter 2018



## A SEAT AT THE TABLE

**Women make up 70% of the hospitality industry—  
but hold less than 40% of its top positions.  
We're closing that gender gap.**

BOSTON  
UNIVERSITY

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# From the Dean



**Dear SHA Family,**

As I write this note, politicians, athletes, news anchors, and Hollywood big shots are making front-page news for sexual harassment; the government is rolling back women's access to birth control and proposing dramatic cuts to programs critical to women's well-being, like the National Domestic Violence Hotline. It reminds us how far we still have to go to achieve equality. And our own industry is part of the problem.

A few years ago, I attended a hospitality investment conference in Boston. When I entered the main hall, I was struck by the fact that over 90 percent of attendees were male. How could this be, when there are so many strong female leaders in our industry, and so many exceptional female students entering the workforce every spring?

While the majority of SHA students are female, the senior leadership of major hospitality firms is still primarily male, and the percentage of women in leadership roles decreases the higher you get to the top. Some believe that women leave the ladder to have children, while others think they're not aggressive enough, or lack the skills they need, to reach the top. I do not accept these explanations. Yes, it is true that some women leave the industry to have families and return many years later, but that is not true for all women. Many stay in the workforce and are equally or more accomplished than their male colleagues, who tend to hold higher positions.

It is imperative for our industry to be a meritocracy and reward performance. Either our companies will change voluntarily, or we must pressure them to change. This undertaking will require industry-wide support and will not happen overnight. So, in the meantime, we are focusing on what we can do to ensure that our female students have the skills they need to break through the glass ceiling. SHA communication classes focus on teaching students to express themselves with confidence, our networking workshops help them connect with other strong industry professionals, and our 2017 5th Gear Shift symposium offered female students three days of training with some of our industry's top female leaders.

We must do more to level the playing field. I promise to do my part to push forward, to help create a society in which everyone has an equal chance to succeed.

Best wishes,

Arun Upneja

## Stay Connected

Join the SHA online community. Post, tag, tweet, ask questions, and reconnect with alumni and faculty.



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## MASTERING HOSPITALITY

When offered a promotion to assistant general manager at a company she loved, Kealoha Pomerantz made a bold call. She didn't ask for more money or a fancier title; she quit. In the summer of 2017, the former bar manager at a Napa Valley, California, restaurant headed east to join SHA's first Master of Management in Hospitality class as a full-time student.

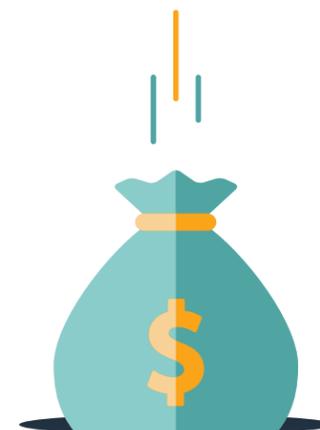
The master's, which can also be completed part time, is designed for those looking to switch to or accelerate their hospitality leadership careers. It includes courses on ownership strategies, organizational leadership, and financial management, as well as a 400-hour internship. Pomerantz ('18) is one of 33 in the inaugural class, which has students hailing from eight countries.

"I wanted to reflect on where I'd been in the industry, and reassess my place in it and where I wanted to go," says Pomerantz, who's already taken courses in operations, marketing, and accounting. Although that promotion is still on the table, Pomerantz's goal is to start a restaurant group. Access to the expertise of SHA's professors, alumni network, and career counselors is one of the reasons she chose BU. Getting a master's degree, she adds, "is on my bucket list."—ANDREW THURSTON



Kealoha Pomerantz ('18) is one of 33 students in SHA's first Master of Management in Hospitality class.

## FORECAST CALLS FOR FALLING RATES



CONOR DOHERTY  
DAVE GREEN; GETTY IMAGES

One hotel is offering a master suite for \$200, so a neighboring hotel slashes its rate to \$150. Meanwhile, five nearby Airbnbs drop to \$100. What's the best way to stay competitive amid a flurry of changing rates? Often, the answer is to look at what competitors are doing and adjust prices accordingly. That's a losing proposition, says Apostolos Ampountolas, who brings 20 years of experience in international travel and hospitality to SHA.

The School's new assistant professor of hospitality finance and revenue management says that in reacting to constantly changing prices, we tend to act too fast and forgo key financial strategies. Before marketing that master suite for a song, for example, Ampountolas recommends trying a forecasting exercise.

By combining external information like competitors' pricing and regional demand for rooms with internal data, such as how far in advance guests tend to book and the number of guests who arrive without a reservation, hoteliers can predict a property's future performance. A forecast may show that although an Airbnb might only cost \$100, its millennial guests tend to book last minute, while the hotel's master suite caters to families who book three months in advance and will spend twice as much for comfort and peace of mind. With these findings in hand, managers can adjust pricing structure and strategy to stay competitive—while also staying afloat.

"Always be ahead, forecasting for the next 1, 3, 7, 14, 21, 90 days," and don't be reactive, waiting for competitors to give you a reason to strategize, Ampountolas says. "Take forecasting into consideration during not just your budgeting, but your day-to-day operation."—LARA EHRLICH

## DOES AIRBNB STEAL GUESTS FROM HOTELS?

**Airbnb's three million listings surpass the number of rooms offered by the world's three largest hotel chains combined.** In just five years, they've hosted 50 million people, which begs the question: Is Airbnb stealing guests from traditional hotels?

In Boston, the answer seems to be yes, according to research by SHA assistant professors Tarik Dogru and Makarand Mody, along with former assistant professor Courtney Suess-Raeisinafchi. Based on data from Airdna and Smith Travel Research, they measured the impact of Airbnb on the Boston hotel market between July 2008 and June 2017, and reported the results in an article for the School's *Boston Hospitality Review*.

Since 2008, Airbnb listings in Boston have increased by more than 100 percent each year, according to the researchers. By analyzing room revenues, average daily rates, and occupancy rates for Boston-area hotels, they were able to tie this dramatic uptick in Airbnb listings to a 2.5 percent annual fall in overall hotel room revenues—a loss of \$5.8 million in 2016 alone.

Dogru, Mody, and Suess-Raeisinafchi recommend more research to fully comprehend the implications for Boston hotels, and to determine how to compete with Airbnb. Preliminary suggestions for fighting back include featuring more photos of rooms online and making traditional hotels family friendly.—LARA EHRLICH

## PATIENTS PREFER HOTEL-LIKE HOSPITALS



**The last things you might expect** to see in a hospital room are the offerings of an expensive hotel: a marble bathtub, for instance, or a maid on call. Yet these and other luxuries are now available at some hospitals, abroad and in the United States. Deluxe private hospital rooms can cost thousands of dollars out of pocket for just one night, but the appeal can't be denied, according to recent research from assistant profes-

sor Makarand Mody and former assistant professor Courtney Suess-Raeisinafchi. They surveyed about 400 people online, who looked at 40 custom-designed renderings of hospital rooms containing various combinations of hotel amenities. Participants rated how likely they were to choose each hospital room, and the researchers analyzed the results to see which amenities had the most impact. At the top of the list:

interior design. Second was hospitality-trained staff, and third was technology, like a high-quality flat-screen TV. On average, the participants were willing to pay 38 percent more out of pocket for these amenities.

Suess-Raeisinafchi notes that this study builds on a body of research showing that hotel-like rooms and hospitality-trained

staff in hospitals can improve patient outcomes. Patients who had sunnier rooms, for example, reported less pain and took about 20 percent less pain medication than those in darker rooms.—CAITLIN BIRD

This and the Airbnb study above were featured in *Boston Hospitality Review*, a journal published by SHA. In fall 2017, the School also hosted the Boston University Invitational Consumer Behavior and Empirical Accounting in Hospitality Conference.

## MAJOR CHANGES

### SHA ADDS NEW DEGREE AND THREE NEW CONCENTRATIONS

Now more than ever, the hospitality industry demands professionals who can effectively market restaurants and hotels to customers and clients, says Dean Arun Upneja. To meet that need, SHA has developed a BS in hospitality & communication, in partnership with BU College of Communication. The degree program, offered for the first time in fall 2017, is open to all BU students and prepares them to take on positions in social media management, digital marketing, and B2B content creation.

In 2016, SHA also began offering three new concentrations: in marketing, which embraces social media and electronic marketing; in real estate, which fulfills a long-standing demand from students who intend to develop hotels and restaurants; and in event management, which has proven popular with students from SHA and beyond.

Learn more about the BS in hospitality & communication at [bu.edu/hospitality/courses](http://bu.edu/hospitality/courses)



VERNON DOUCETTE; COURTNEY SUESS-RAEISINAFCHI

MICHAEL GOLDBERG; JARED GOLDBERG



**JARED GOLDBERG** goes out with friends on most weekend nights, but he'll leave by midnight to get some sleep. By 4 a.m., he's up and out the door, just as his friends are coming home. It's a concession he makes to bake.

When he was 17, Goldberg ('20) made it to the final round on the teen version of Food Network's *Chopped*. He has cooked at restaurants in Connecticut, New York, and Boston, and in summer 2017, he interned at a top bakery in New York City. Goldberg thrives on challenge, working "in a field you truly can't master," he says. "There are so many types of cuisines and ingredients that you constantly learn new things."

Goldberg found the kitchen after a high school basketball injury sidelined him from the game. Looking for an alternative to sports, he attended a cooking class at UMass Amherst. "I knew I liked to eat, so I figured the class was worth a try," he says. "I loved it. The teacher gave us creative freedom in the final exam to make a dish of our choice, and I made a stuffed tomato with wild rice, ground lamb, and a red pepper coulis. It was the first thing I ever made that was my own."

At 16, he walked into Crabtree's Kettle House, the finest restaurant near his hometown of Scarsdale, New York, seeking experience. The farm-to-table restaurant and wine cellar gave him a job as a prep cook, and he started by spending hours cutting

strawberries into quarters. He learned new cooking techniques each week, from knife skills to how to create basic sauces.

During the summer before his senior year of high school, he auditioned for a role on *Chopped Teen Tournament*, where four contestants are given baskets of secret ingredients and face off in appetizer, main course, and dessert rounds. He made it onto the show's third season, but was eliminated during his episode's final round



Goldberg's chocolate peanut crinkle cookies

after attempting a dessert using banana split brownies, ribbon candy, avocados, and wasabi peanuts. He did his best to transform those funky ingredients into a berry banana crumble with avocado whipped cream in 20 minutes. But he accidentally shattered the bowl mixer and got glass in his avocado, losing one of his key ingredients.

While Goldberg admits desserts weren't his strength at the time, *Chopped* judge Alex Guarnaschelli cited Goldberg's "enormous

creativity as truly something to watch. You missed it by a nose, but you did some beautiful things." And judge Geoffrey Zakarian was so impressed with Goldberg's work ethic that he offered him a job at his Greenwich, Connecticut, restaurant, the National. Goldberg spent five months at the National as a chef garde manger (preparing cold items like salads), and then moved on to the nose-to-tail butcher shop, Fleishers, where he worked until starting SHA.

Goldberg promised his parents he wouldn't get a job during school so he could focus on his grades and on making friends, but soon he was itching to get back into the kitchen. He knew desserts were a weakness—after *Chopped*, he was "too frustrated to look sweets in the eye"—so he sought out internships that would teach him the principles of baking. During his freshman year, he joined the award-winning Sofra Bakery & Cafe, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which specializes in Middle Eastern desserts, and was eventually transferred to Sofra's sister restaurant, Oleana. In the summer of 2017, he continued baking at Barbalu in New York City.

Right now, he's all about cookies, since he made seven types per shift at Sofra. "I make a really awesome cookie with a kick," he says. "It's a typical shortbread cookie, with flour, sugar, and butter, but then you replace some of the butter with tahini. It's great with a little vanilla ice cream." 🍪

# A SEAT AT THE TABLE

Women comprise 70% of the hospitality industry—but hold less than 40% of its executive positions. We're closing that gender gap.

BY LARA EHRLICH

ILLUSTRATION BY GWEN KERAVAL



**A**s a 26-year-old market sales executive with Marriott International, Nancy Medoff was determined to join the company's coveted Global Sales Organization. She cold-called the vice president and said, "I'd like to learn more about your team and what I can do to grow my skills so that when you have an opening, I'll be considered."

Medoff (CGS'89, SHA'92) asked thoughtful questions, attended the vice president's team conference calls, and networked to learn more about the job she wanted. When a position opened, she was first in line.

Throughout her 24-year career with Marriott, she never waited for someone to offer her a job. "You can't, because they won't," says Medoff, who held various director positions at the company. Now

the vice president of global sales at BCD Meetings & Events, Medoff is among just a handful of female leaders in her industry. Women make up 70 percent of the international hospitality workforce, but they hold less than 40 percent of its managerial and supervisory positions. The picture is far more bleak on corporate boards, which are composed of 5 to 8 percent women. SHA Dean Arun Upneja wants to improve those numbers. >>

**Upneja is working on ways the School can empower its students—approximately 80 percent of whom are female—to achieve executive positions.** In spring 2017, he invited Medoff, an adjunct professor of strategic marketing & sales management, along with fellow industry leaders Andrea Foster and Fern Kanter, to chair 5th Gear Shift: Women Navigating & Powering Your Career. At the two-day symposium in March 2017, hospitality experts shared career advice and strategies to improve students' communication skills, build their confidence, and achieve work-life balance. "We want our students to learn from the experiences of these women and say, 'Look, they did it; I can do it, too'—and, in the process, change the workforce," Upneja says. The advice shared at the symposium could also benefit those already in the business.

**CLIMBING OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE**  
An often-quoted 2008 Hewlett-Packard report found that women will only pursue a position for which they consider themselves 100 percent qualified, while men tend to apply for jobs for which they believe they're 60 percent qualified. "Women want to be certain about the next step, whereas men will take more risks" that in turn lead to advancement,



**ANDREA FOSTER, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF MARCUS HOTELS & RESORTS**

### WISDOM FOR WOMEN

“Get comfortable being uncomfortable. Whether pursuing a position that is a stretch from your existing experience, taking on a new project, or asking for a deserved salary/raise or promotion, do not allow fear or discomfort to limit you.”

says Foster, senior vice president of Marcus Hotels & Resorts, and recently named one of the 30 influential women in hospitality by *Hotel Management* magazine.

At the 5th Gear Shift symposium, Foster encouraged SHA students to see themselves as qualified for—and then apply for—these roles. She suggests students and alums alike should regard job descriptions as wish lists; determine which criteria you meet, and then present examples of how you'll achieve the skills and experience you lack. "Great things don't come from comfort zones," Foster says.

"The biggest thing I took away from the conference was to not shy away from hard, big jobs. You don't have to know everything," says Sara Szymanski ('17), who has already put this lesson into action at her manager-in-



**NANCY MEDOFF (CGS'89, SHA'92), VICE PRESIDENT OF GLOBAL SALES AT BCD MEETINGS & EVENTS**

### WISDOM FOR WOMEN

“Trust your instincts—you know what is best for you—and take calculated risks. You are better than you think you are.”

training position at the Palace Hotel, a Luxury Collection property in San Francisco. "My boss will ask me to do something; before the conference, I would've probably said, 'No, I'm a little uneasy. Can I watch you do it?' Now, I'll jump in and say, 'Yes, I can do it. And I'll probably have a few questions.'"

A boss like Szymanski's, who encourages her to learn on the go, can be an invaluable mentor, says Medoff. She recommends women develop a "personal board of directors" who are familiar with your work and can coach you through major career decisions. To cultivate industry connections, Foster suggests taking advantage of the SHA and BU alumni networks, participating in

industry events, and reaching out to alumni who have offered to serve as mentors. Follow up with handwritten notes, and check in occasionally to nurture those relationships. Foster says that when it comes to getting that job or promotion, "It's not about who you know; it's about who knows you."



**SUZANNE MARKHAM BAGNERA, CLINICAL ASSISTANT PROFESSOR AT SHA**

### WISDOM FOR WOMEN

“Obtain as much industry-related experience as possible from the ground up, so you can speak and lead from experience: you shouldn't ask an employee to do something that you yourself have never done before.”

### SKIP THE INTRO

Medoff sees something else women must overcome in order to make connections and advance their careers: their unease talking about themselves. "Women are naturally inclusive and taught at a young age to play nice," she says. "This wonderful trait can become a liability when advocating for ourselves." For example, in meetings women tend to wait to speak until they can make an irrefutable point, while men contribute opinions without overthinking them, says Kanter, executive vice president of CHMWarnick. "Perfectionism holds us back. Women need to have a voice at the table." And they must stop prefacing their statements with "Excuse me," or "I'm sorry to interrupt," as many women tend to do. "Skip the intro," Kanter says. "Why are you apologizing for existing?"

Positive thinking also played into a 5th Gear Shift session devoted to confidence, in which Medoff led the participants in

developing an elevator pitch that reframes liabilities as advantages. For example, she says, a woman who has trouble completing short-term assignments should focus instead on her ability to manage long-term projects, and present herself as "a thinker who is able to see an end goal and keep all team members focused, and to identify obstacles and think through the best way to overcome them."



**FERN KANTER, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF CHMWARNICK**

### WISDOM FOR WOMEN

“Know your strengths; embrace them and build upon them. I always worked on my weaknesses, but to go from good to great, use your energy to develop and market your strengths.”

These lessons resonated with Szymanski, who has since changed the way she talks about her accomplishments. At a meeting for front office managers at the Palace Hotel, she shared a successful adjustment she'd made to the reservation process during a previous internship at the St. Regis New York. Instead of saying, "This is how we did it," she told her colleagues, "This is how I brought the idea to the St. Regis."

### WORKING TOWARD WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Strategies like these help women manage how they are perceived—and their chances of getting ahead—but the symposium chairs are careful not to blame women for their lack of representation in leadership roles. The industry is still male-dominated, and the way to the top often conflicts with society's expectations for women, Upneja says.

"Balancing work and family becomes a major challenge for women in particular, because of the perpetuation of traditional gender roles. Women still often serve as the primary caregivers for families, despite their expanded activities outside the home," former Assistant Professor Zoe Ho wrote in a 2013 study published in SHA's *Boston Hospitality Review*. "Many of those interviewed [for the study] indicated that their careers reached a point where they were forced to decide between a family and career advancement."

Suzanne Markham Bagnera didn't have to make that choice when she was raising three stepchildren and working as a general manager at Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites, Staybridge Suites, and Holiday Inn Express. She was on the front line of organizations that never closed; if there was an incident at 3 a.m., it was her responsibility to resolve it. With careful planning, organization, and communication, she was able to juggle both work and family.



**SARA SZYMANSKI ('17), MANAGER-IN-TRAINING AT THE PALACE HOTEL**

### WISDOM FOR WOMEN

“Support your staff however you can, and make yourself versatile—even storing bags in the bell closet. The bell staff are typically men; it's powerful to see a woman in heels doing that job just as well as they do. This is one way to build rapport with the associates.”

Bagnera, now a clinical assistant professor at SHA, and her husband have a daycare they trust, and they share housework and chores. They make special plans for when Bagnera attends conferences and other professional

opportunities. She learned the importance of empowering her team to deal with emergencies, especially in the middle of the night.

"Hiring a qualified night auditor was key," says Bagnera. "I knew when they were working I didn't have to worry. I also always gave the manager or team the time frame when I was busy with the kids."

### RAISE WOMEN UP

Upneja acknowledges that the onus shouldn't just be on women to close the gender gap; the entire industry needs to change. Companies must be held accountable for the merit-based hiring of a diverse workforce and for helping women advance into leadership roles.

Upneja points to Marriott International, Hilton Hotels & Resorts, and Hyatt Hotels Corporation as examples of organizations that are leading this effort, starting with scouting from the majority-female SHA. When recruiting, Foster advises hiring managers to consider women who "may not have the classic skill set or career path, and see if their experience and skills could be leveraged."

Foster adds that companies should initiate mentorship and advocacy programs for women. For example, Hilton developed the Executive Committee Diversity Networking Program, in which 75 percent of the mentees are women, as well as established global programming like the 2017 Africa and Indian Ocean Women in Leadership Conference to empower women and appoint the company's first female general manager in South Africa.

Industry leaders should also be proactive in reaching out to female employees, Foster says. "Have lunch with them, talk with them, and engage with them to help them move forward in our industry." Women in leadership positions are particularly well poised to help other women advance.

"The higher you get in an organization, the fewer women you will see in the boardroom," Medoff says. Once you get there, "if there are 8 seats at the table and 10 seats on the perimeter of the room, women will wait for those 8 seats at the table to be taken. I won't. I'm going to sit at the table with everyone else, and if there's a woman with me, I will have her sit right next to me." ❏



## From Menus to Deal Memos

VINCENT STIPO ('08) USES HIS RESTAURANT SAVVY IN THE REAL ESTATE BIZ

BY JOEL BROWN

**GROWING UP IN A BIG ITALIAN FAMILY IN MEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS, VINCENT STIPO WAS ALWAYS AROUND FOOD, FROM HIS MOTHER'S HOME COOKING TO HIS UNCLE'S RESTAURANTS.** At 14, he started tagging along with his father to a weekend job as a restaurant cook. "He plugged me in as the under-the-table, cash-paid dishwasher," Stipo ('08) says. "I was spraying dishes and secretly watching the food line. And one day I got my opportunity when the salad-and-dessert guy broke down crying in the middle of a busy service one Saturday night, and they threw me into it."

Stipo has worked in all types of restaurants since his teen years—he was a server at Eastern Standard in Kenmore Square during his studies at SHA—and never quit watching. "I was always the guy hanging around, leaning in, asking, watching. I might forget about the table that needed their next course fired because I was watching the butcher breaking down a whole pig."

After Eastern Standard, he was assistant manager and beverage director for the high-end Deuxave at 371 Comm Ave, then beverage manager at Vernick Food & Drink in Philadelphia, where he soon earned acclaim as lead barman—even striking a promotional deal with a brand of Moscow Mule mix that put his face on the label.

Now, he uses his restaurant experience as a real estate and hospitality consultant for MSC Retail, a Philadelphia-based commercial real estate firm, helping eatery owners find the right space in the right location to succeed.

"Restaurateurs are experts in hospitality and have a passion for their product, and my job is to ensure that they simultaneously make expert business decisions," he says.

Restaurateurs want to work with him, he says, because he speaks their language and can often see a problem before they do. He helps them scout locations, negotiate landlord relationships, and evaluate build-out plans so essentials like foot traffic, front- and back-of-house space, and per-square-foot real estate costs match the concept. "Margins for a fine-dining restaurant are different from a casual neighborhood restaurant and very different from a quick-service concept like Chipotle," he says. "They might have a great concept but it's really important to match the economics of a concept to a site."

For example, he says, "If a restaurateur opens a fine-dining, dinner-only restaurant, but the site sits in a central business district with pedestrian traffic peaking from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., they may perceive it to be an A+ location, but it's not necessarily a fit for their model, given margins, peak-service periods, and occupancy-cost strategies. The food can taste good, and you can market to the millennials in the city, but if the numbers don't work, it's an uphill battle."

Despite the move to real estate, Stipo is still food-focused—and now has more time to cook at home, including a roster of his mom's classics. "Yes," he says, "I have a lasagna recipe." ■

RYAN SMITH



## WHAT STRATEGIES DO YOU USE TO DIFFERENTIATE YOUR COMPANY'S BRANDS FROM ONE ANOTHER—OR FROM THOSE OF YOUR COMPETITORS?

We asked three SHA industry experts, who work with brands ranging from Sam Adams beer to Jane Dough cookie dough, to answer this question for *Check In* readers. BY JULIE BUTTERS

### Fern Kanter

Executive Vice President, CHMWarnick and Co-chair of SHA's 5th Gear Shift Symposium



A hotel real estate expert, Kanter advises Fortune 500 companies and other investors as they acquire, manage, and sell hotels. "Strategic positioning is key to a hotel's success," she says, and to make sure brands stand out in a saturated market, she advises her clients to go beyond reviewing financial reports. For example, she recommends they spend time in their (and their competitors') hotels, asking staff and guests what makes each property unique. ("It can be something big, like the introduction of a high-end bed, or something small, like craft cocktails at the bar.") This feedback, combined with surveys and social media, can reveal how to spotlight a hotel's strengths. "One of our hotels used to include food and beverage space in its square footage when marketing, to appear larger for accommodating meetings," Kanter says. "Now, they embrace their boutique space." This allows their sales managers to be more effective, by focusing on potential clients whose needs actually match the hotel space.

FERN KANTER; ROBERT VAIL; ALISON BIRDWELL

### Robert Vail ('85)

Head of Innovation & Commercialization, The Boston Beer Company



"After a home-brewed batch of Samuel Adams Boston Lager helped jump-start the craft beer revolution in the United States, we knew we needed to focus on craftsmanship, ingredients, and telling the story of quality" to stand out from mainstream, mass-produced beers, Vail says. The Boston Beer Company researched "every part of the processes and packaging that could make for the best beer people have ever tasted," like hand-selecting hops in Europe and using spoilage-resistant bottles, and emphasized their product's quality in ads with lines like, "Crafted from the finest everything" and "Declare your independence from common beer." Today, Sam Adams stays on the cutting edge with a microloan and coaching program for small craft breweries to help drive the industry's continued expansion. In August 2017, it released the Brewing the American Dream Variety Pack, featuring its own Boston Lager alongside beers from five independent brewers.

### Alison Birdwell ('88)

Regional Vice President, West Region, Aramark Sports & Entertainment



Aramark's lines of business are as varied as uniform laundering, school lunch services, and sports fan research. While many of the company's competitors define their diverse lines through different brands, "Aramark generally takes the opposite approach and focuses on the strengths and benefits of a singular brand," Birdwell says. "However, this does not mean that we approach our business with a one-size-fits-all mentality." Birdwell recently partnered with a client to create a custom product to drive dessert sales in stadiums and arenas—Jane Dough, an edible cookie dough that's served ice cream-style. Aramark's tapping into a hot trend: Eater.com predicts 2017 will be the "breakout year" for edible cookie dough. Specialty brands, says Birdwell, "help us evolve our overall brand by creating incubators of innovation," and they "showcase our expertise in technical knowledge in specialized areas of our business." Attention-getting branding helps. "When you see 'Eat dough because your mama told you no,'" Birdwell says, "you can't resist!" ■

SHA welcomes news of your professional and personal achievements and milestones. Please write to us at [busha@bu.edu](mailto:busha@bu.edu).

Connect with SHA online at [linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com). (Under *Groups*, search “BU School of Hospitality Administration.”)



Amy Greene ('99) launched a personal finance business.

**AMY (THOMAS) GREENE ('99)** of Red Bank, N.J., writes that she has a three-year-old daughter. In 2009, Amy earned her MBA in finance and entrepreneurship at Baruch College in New York City, and, in 2017, launched a business in personal finance. She is also a Ramsey Solutions Master Financial Coach, guiding individuals, couples, and families through budgeting, eliminating debt, saving, and retirement planning. Connect with Amy at [facebook.com/AmyGreeneFC](https://www.facebook.com/AmyGreeneFC) or [AmyGreeneFC@gmail.com](mailto:AmyGreeneFC@gmail.com).

**CHRIS McADAM ('07)** of Chicago, Ill., is a corporate counsel in the Hyatt Hotels Corporation legal group. Based at Hyatt's global headquarters, Chris supports the corporation's real estate and development by negotiating hotel management agreements, franchise agreements, and purchase and sale agreements

for hotels in the Americas. Connect with Chris at [christopher.mcadam@hyatt.com](mailto:christopher.mcadam@hyatt.com).

**BRIAN ARNOFF ('09)** of Beacon, N.Y., is owner and chef of Kitchen Sink Food and Drink and recently opened a second restaurant, Meyer's Olde Dutch, also in Beacon. Learn more at [meyersoldedutch.com](http://meyersoldedutch.com).

**LIZ (THOMFORDE) THOMAS ('09)** of New York, N.Y., is the director of catering & convention services at the Omni Berkshire Place in Manhattan. In June 2017, she married Joel Thomas in Harwich Port, Mass.

**JORDAN CALLAIS (CGS'09, SHA'11)** of New York, N.Y., is pursuing an MBA in finance from the Fordham Gabelli School of Business. Prior to that, Jordan was a member of the first North American sales team for Ctrip China, China's largest online travel

Liz ('09) and Joel Thomas married in June 2017 in Harwich Port, Mass.



## #TRAVELINGPINEAPPLE

Brian Arnoff ('09), owner and chef of Kitchen Sink Food and Drink and Meyer's Olde Dutch



Melissa Gallo ('14), manager for STARR Restaurants in Miami



Thanks for participating in our first round of #TravelingPineapple on Instagram. You sent us your address, we sent you a pineapple—and you snapped a photo. If we sent you a pineapple, don't forget to tag SHA; to participate in the next round of #TravelingPineapple, keep an eye out on Instagram: [Instagram.com/buschoolofhospitality](https://www.instagram.com/buschoolofhospitality).

agency. Upon graduation, he plans to work in new hotel development and brand management.

**MELISSA GALLO ('14)** of Miami Beach, Fla., is a manager for STARR Restaurants in Miami Beach and is also earning an MBA in healthcare.

**JENNIFER MEYER ('14)** of Brooklyn, N.Y., launched 48 & Sea,

a woman-focused, curated lifestyle shop offering a selection of inspiring, one-of-a-kind gifts made by independent designers. Learn more at [48andSea.com](http://48andSea.com).

**THERESA NEUMANN ('14)** of Boston, Mass., left her job at the Langham Hotel in Boston for a corporate human resources role at General Electric's smart lighting and renewable energy sub-business, Current. She writes, "On graduation day, if you told me I'd be in a non-hotel company, I'd think you were crazy—but I couldn't be more excited, especially with the [GE] headquarters moving to Boston! It's amazing the places a SHA degree will take you."

**ELIZA CLARY ('17)** of Atlanta, Ga., is an associate manager of strategic market planning & feasibility for the Americas regional headquarters of the InterContinental Hotels Group.

AMY GREENE; LIZ THOMAS; BRIAN ARNOFF; MELISSA GALLO

KELLY DAVIDSON

# ALUMNI OF THE YEAR

Winners are innovative and entrepreneurship-minded | BY ANDREW THURSTON

One works for a top craft brewer, the other founded a restaurant. The winners of the 2017 SHA Alumni of the Year awards share a strong entrepreneurial streak.

"In my mind, entrepreneurship does not just revolve around having your own business," Dean Arun Upneja says. "You can be part of another organization and you can be very entrepreneurial in your approach and attitude and the way you're working."

Alumni of the Year **Robert Vail ('85)** has helped Boston Beer Company expand beyond its signature Samuel Adams line of beers, with brands like Twisted Tea and Angry Orchard. (His favorite product is Angry Orchard Stone Dry Cider, though it "depends on the weather, location, time of day, and who I am with.") Vail joined the company 26 years ago as a brewery representative and has worked his way up through district and division manager roles. "I have been trusted to test and start many aspects of our company," says Vail, who is director of innovation & commercializing.

The young alumni winner has focused her entrepreneurial talent on a new business. **Shivika Kothari (CGS'13, SHA'15)** is the cofounder of the 30,000-square-foot Meraaki Kitchen in Jaipur, India, which she says is one of the largest stand-alone restaurants in the country. Kothari credits her SHA education with allowing her to pursue her dream of starting a company.

"Interactions with alumni and other successful restaurateurs encouraged me to believe in myself and to work for what I wanted," she says. "It opened my eyes to the endless possibilities that are out there and gave me so much clarity that within one month of graduation, I was sure about what I wanted to do."

Upneja says the lesson for students hoping to emulate this year's alumni winners is, "Whatever you are doing in your life, you've got to be innovative and entrepreneurship-minded."

In addition to their entrepreneurial expertise, the alums share a strong connection to SHA, Upneja says. Vail continues to visit and give to the School, and Kothari's family has funded a student scholarship for an annual summer internship in India.



Dean Arun Upneja honors Young Alumni of the Year Shivika Kothari (CGS'13, SHA'15) (top) and Alumni of the Year Robert Vail ('85) (center) at an Alumni Weekend ceremony attended by students and alums (bottom).

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