



Let Them *Cook!*

Houston's monthly culinary challenge & Texas Food Handlers Certification program for foster youth ages 16–21 — building real skills, real credentials, real career pathways.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

From foster care to the professional kitchen.

Houston has over 4,000 youth in foster care — many age out at 18 with no job skills, certification, or support network. Let Them Cook! is an Iron Chef-style cook-off that provides hands-on culinary training, a nationally recognized food safety credential, and direct connections to professional opportunity. Launched by VK Capital Ventures with 501(c)(3) partner Harlem River Farms.

WHAT EVERY PARTICIPANT WALKS AWAY WITH

Food Handlers Cert.

Texas-recognized credential most hospitality employers require.

Real Kitchen Skills

Knife work, heat control, plating, mise en place, food safety.

Chef Mentor

One-on-one coaching with a Houston TVK co-op chef all day.

Career Pathway

Warm intro to the TVK employer network & partner catering.

PROGRAM DAY — A DAY IN THE KITCHEN

8:30 – 10:30 AM	Arrival, breakfast & Food Handlers walk-through. TSU campus garden demo — sourcing from the earth, not just the store.
10:30 – 11:00 AM	The Iron Chef Reveal. Teams assigned, kitchen rules laid down, secret ingredient unveiled.
11:00 AM – 1:30 PM	Market & mise en place. Teams build lists, do a group grocery run, set up stations.
1:30 – 3:15 PM	The Iron Chef cook-off. Burners on. Teams execute menus while judges circulate.
3:15 – 4:15 PM	Plates, awards & celebration. Judging, certificates, swag bags & photos.

“Cook beside them, not for them. Hand the tool over, and let them lead.”

CHEF AUBREY McCOY · CEO, VK CAPITAL VENTURES · FOUNDER, VILLA KITCHEN & SIX ROWS CAFÉ

PROGRAM PARTNERS

VK CAPITAL VENTURES

HARLEM RIVER FARMS

TVK CHEF CO-OP

HOUSTON FOSTER CARE NETWORK

TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY (HSC\$)

DFPS

VILLA KITCHEN

SIX ROWS CAFÉ

OFFICIAL SPONSORS & AGENCY SUPPORT

Bride Ministries · River Oaks Cars · Stroll Tanglewood Houston
Aligned with the Texas Dept. of Family & Protective Services (DFPS).

THE IMPACT — NUMBERS THAT MATTER

4,000+

Houston foster youth in the system

Free

Cost to every participant

1 Day

To earn Food Handlers cert.

100%

Completers get employment referrals

CAMPAIGN — 2026

FREQUENCY	Monthly
COST / EVENT	\$13,000
PROGRAM GOAL	\$150,000
WE'VE INVESTED	\$7,409
NEXT SESSION	July 28, 2026

2026 Program Goal 10% Funded

\$7,409 self-funded by VK Capital · ~90% still needed

WHO IS THIS FOR?

- Foster youth ages 16–21 referred by caseworkers & group homes
- Youth aging out of care seeking employable credentials
- Young people interested in culinary arts or food-service careers
- Those who've never been trusted in a kitchen — until now

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP TIERS

Friend	\$500
Supporting	\$1,000
Community Table	\$2,500
Program (Most Popular)	\$5,000
Presenting	\$10,000

DONATE OR SPONSOR AT

givebutter.com/c/let-them-cook-2026-clmegv

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General: contactus@vkculinary.tech

Web: vkculinary.tech · harlemriverfarms.org



Building Houston's Culinary *Workforce Pipeline*

From a monthly youth cook-off to a full farm-to-career ecosystem — in partnership with Texas Southern University.

Let Them Cook! is growing beyond a single cook-off. In partnership with Texas Southern University, we are launching a co-branded, semester-based culinary workforce program that turns Houston youth and college students into certified, employable, farm-to-table professionals — targeting a Fall 2026 collegiate launch.

THE PATHWAY — FROM FIRST KITCHEN TO FIRST CAREER



THE COLLEGIATE PROGRAM — WITH TSU

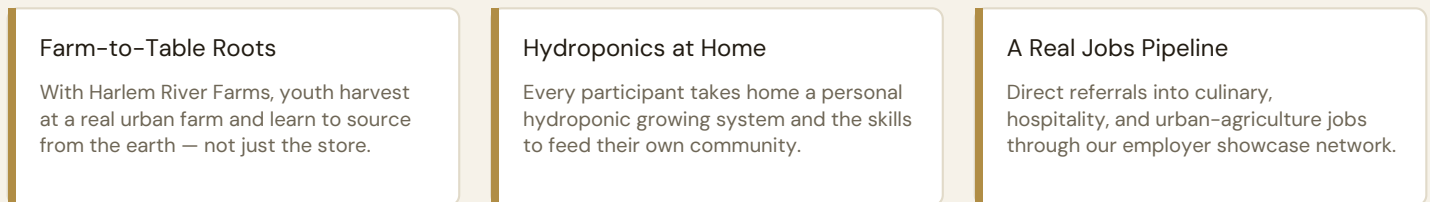
Format	10 weeks · 200 contact hours
Launch	Fall Semester 2026
Home	TSU C.S. Lane Building
Who	Youth 16–21 + enrolled TSU students
Cohorts	Fall & Spring · optional Summer

Two cohorts learn side by side — combining classroom instruction, kitchen labs, farm site visits, hydroponic labs, and direct employer engagement into one integrated experience.

WHAT EVERY GRADUATE EARNS

- ServSafe Food Handler Certification
- Farm-to-Chef Sourcing Certification
- Foundations of Hydroponic Farming Certificate
- TSU + VK co-issued Certificate of Completion
- A take-home hydroponic growing box
- Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for TSU students

WHAT MAKES IT DIFFERENT



THE LONG GAME

A decentralized, farm-to-table Houston — one neighborhood and one kitchen at a time.

Corporate sponsors and community partners power every step. Partner with us to expand this citywide.

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