

Cornell Faculty, Students Team With Entrepreneurs To Brew Up A Hot New Brand

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Faculty and students at the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration are working with a team of entrepreneurs to launch a new venture that will enable more people to enjoy a brand of coffee unlike any other in the world.

Professors Alex Susskind and Rob Kwortnik and five students are working alongside the founding team of Chef's Coffee Company, led by Chef Craig Shelton of the world-renowned Ryland Inn restaurant in Whitehouse, N.J. Students are earning independent study credits for their work, which aims to help the Chef's Coffee team to better understand and penetrate potential markets for its line of super premium coffees and chocolates.

'This is an extraordinary opportunity for students to gain first-hand experience in helping to create and launch a business,' says Susskind, a professor in the School's Food and Beverage Management group. 'Our students are working closely with Chef's Coffee principals to provide support in brand development, marketing research and marketing services. This reflects our School's commitment to give students experiential learning opportunities, and in this case, help them develop the knowledge and experience to think and act like entrepreneurs.'

The venture aims to bring to the public the unique blends of coffee Shelton has served at the Ryland. Shelton was one of the first chefs to devote to coffee the same precision and care that goes into the production of fine wine. For nearly two decades he has studied roasting technology, searched for the best sources of beans, and made sure that each type of bean in the blend was roasted to its optimum level. Devoting equal attention to water purity, temperature and brewing method, Shelton has produced coffee that has drawn unanimous praise ever since and led many customers to ask if they could purchase the blend for use at home.

Shelton brings to the venture an unmatched blend of culinary and biochemical knowledge. Holding degrees in molecular biophysics and biochemistry from Yale University, he has developed a refined expertise in the physiology of the senses. In addition to his signature Ryland Blend, Shelton is applying his discerning palate and the world's finest Arabica beans to handcraft an entire line of remarkable new taste experiences. Each blend is designed to suit the places where they will be consumed.

'Our palate provides a combination of taste and smell that measures all things relative to the immediate environment,' Shelton says. 'We recognized that the environment can dramatically change the taste of any product, including coffee. The same cup of coffee will taste completely different on a beach, a mountain top, at a horse race, or at home. So we take that into account as we formulate proprietary blends and roasting techniques to create blends for specific situations. Each blend is designed to shine in a particular surrounding. This is an outgrowth of my twenty-five year passion for pairing food and wine.'

Shelton's start up team - comprised of Cornell Hotel School graduate Warren Leeds, Cornell Engineering School graduate Brian Blauvelt and Michael Loeb - have spent time on the Cornell campus to build a partnership with the School.

'The Chef's Coffee team is thrilled to be working with the Cornell Hotel School as we embark on this exciting venture,' Shelton says. 'The faculty and students bring a fresh perspective and new ideas about how we can reach more people and help them enjoy a product that we believe is unrivalled in the market today.'

For students C.J. Slicklen, Allison Wroble, Maria Schnaith, Joe Delli Santi and Antonia Ciccolo, the project offers an exciting way to put theory into practice.

'In the classroom, students learn the theories and analytical approaches that managers can use to make better business decisions,' says Professor Kwortnik. 'With the Chef's Coffee project, they are applying their new knowledge to an emergent business. Their analysis will have an impact on strategy and could potentially deliver much value for the firm.'

The Chef's Coffee team is also offering a line of the finest premium chocolates and biscotti designed by Shelton, as well as other coffee accoutrements. The coffee and chocolates are available now on www.chefscoffee.com. Current customers include several specialty gourmet retail outlets and fine restaurants in metropolitan New York.

In addition to website sales, Chef's Coffee is targeting the following market segments:

- Retail - specialty gourmet retail outlets, big box specialty, premium grocery
- Premium restaurants
- Luxury hotels and resorts
- Luxury cruise lines
- High end yacht clubs & yacht charters
- Private jet aviation

- Complimentary luxury product retailers/marketers
- Specialty coffee shops
- Private branding

For more information about Chef's Coffee and its products, please visit www.chefscoffee.com, email chef@chefscoffee.com, or call 908.691.4909.

About The Cornell University School of Hotel Administration

The Cornell University School of Hotel Administration is shaping the global knowledge base for hospitality management through leadership in education, research and industry advancement. The school provides management instruction in the full range of hospitality disciplines, educating the next generation of leaders in the world's largest industry. Founded in 1922 as the nation's first collegiate course of study in hospitality management, the Cornell School of Hotel Administration is recognized as the world leader in its field. For more information, [visit www.hotelschool.cornell.edu](http://www.hotelschool.cornell.edu).

About Chef's Coffee Company

Located in Whippany, NJ, Chef's Coffee Company was founded in 2007 by Chef Craig Shelton of the world-famous Ryland Inn restaurant and his partners. The firm supplies a number of the finest gourmet coffee blends, espressos, biscotti, and artisan chocolates specifically designed to pair with the various coffees for truly unique tasting experiences. Chef's Coffee Company products are available at finer specialty gourmet retailers, premium restaurants, and luxury hotels. For more information about Chef's Coffee and its products, please visit www.chefscoffee.com, email chef@chefscoffee.com, or call 908.691.4909.

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