

**Stacy's Brand Extends Commitment To Helping Female Founders Rise**  
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**Additional \$200,000 in Funding Available as Padma Lakshmi Joins Stacy's Rise Project Judging Panel to Award Five Female Founders with Funding and Mentorship Prizes**

PLANO, Texas, May 9, 2019 /PRNewswire/ -- Stacy's Pita Chips is dedicated to helping female entrepreneurs grow their food and beverage businesses. After all, the brand's success story starts with being founded by a strong female entrepreneur – Stacy Madison. The funding gap Stacy Madison faced when working to grow her pita chip business remains as staggering today as it was 20 years ago. In 2018, female founders in America received only two percent of all venture capital funding in North America – with women of color receiving 0.2 percent. The Stacy's brand created The Stacy's Rise Project to help female founders grow their businesses at the same pace as their male counterparts.

Beginning today, Stacy's Rise Project, in partnership with Alice, a leading online resource for women and other minority entrepreneurs, is officially accepting applications from female founders of food and beverage businesses for the chance to win prize packages that both grow and nourish their businesses. Renowned entrepreneur, food expert, actress, best-selling author, and Top Chef executive producer Padma Lakshmi will join a judging panel of recognized business professionals to select five finalists to each receive a \$20,000 funding prize, entrepreneurial advice and business development support. One deserving female founder will receive an additional \$100,000 grand prize award to help her business rise to the next level.

"The economic empowerment of women is the single most powerful contribution we can make to advancing gender equality. When women have economic independence, they invest back into their families and their communities, creating an undeniable upward cycle of prosperity," said Ciara Dilley, vice president of marketing, Stacy's Snacks. "We are excited that the Stacy's Rise Project will now provide female founders of food and beverage businesses with the mentorship and financial support they need to achieve their dreams."

**Helping Women Rise**

Now through June 21, applicants can apply to Stacy's Rise Project by submitting a one-minute video and details on their "recipe for success" or, in other words, background information on their company's history, their unique product or service and, intended use of the funding. To be eligible to apply, Stacy's is looking for female-founded businesses that currently sell a food and/or beverage product or service and have an annual revenue of at least \$25,000. Full details on the eligibility criteria and how to apply can be found at [stacysrise.helloalice.com](http://stacysrise.helloalice.com).

Entrepreneurial powerhouse Padma Lakshmi will join the Stacy's Rise Project judging panel made up of esteemed business professionals -- which includes Elizabeth Gore, president and chairwoman of Alice, Shawn Kelly, co-founder and CEO of SnackNation and Lisa Wang, CEO and co-founder of SheWorx -- to narrow down the submissions to five finalists. Lakshmi is helping Stacy's launch the funding program at Circular Summit, a two-day conference hosted by Alice that gathers female founders in Santa Rosa, Calif.

"Establishing a successful food and beverage business venture requires relentless diligence and determination, which is especially true if you are a female founder," said Lakshmi. "As an entrepreneur who overcame many obstacles through the years, I know how important it is to have access to resources and a strong network of mentors and peers alike to help you overcome the inevitable growing pains. I am proud to partner with Stacy's Pita Chips to support female founders and help level the playing field for women."

The Stacy's Brand will award \$20,000 to five finalists in July. From there, they will engage in mentoring and the winner selection phase through October. In addition to the funding awards, each finalist will receive invaluable experiences and access to resources, including: an in-person kick-off at Frito-Lay's headquarters, ongoing mentorship with personalized one-to-one guidance and advice from an experienced PepsiCo executive, office hours with industry experts and a face-to-face session with Stacy Madison, founder of Stacy's Pita Chips. The program culminates on November 19 – Women's Entrepreneurship Day – with the announcement of the \$100,000 grand-prize winner.

All female founders who apply to Stacy's Rise Project will also get access to [PepsiCo's WomanMade Community](#), a virtual convening of passionate female founders on Alice who have come together to share

and engage in resources and ideas to grow their businesses.

"Together, Stacy's Pita Chips and Alice are bringing tangible and meaningful support to women entrepreneurs in the food and beverage space through funding, mentorship and marketing," said Elizabeth Gore, president and chairwoman, Alice. "This is exactly the kind of initiative that is important in creating a more inclusive ecosystem for business owners, and the bottom line is that supporting women entrepreneurs is also good business."

For more information on how to submit, visit [stacysrise.helloalice.com](http://stacysrise.helloalice.com).

### **About Stacy's® Snacks**

Stacy's Snacks is one of the many brands that make up Frito-Lay North America, the \$15 billion convenient foods division of PepsiCo, Inc. (NASDAQ: PEP), which is headquartered in Purchase, NY. Learn more about Frito-Lay at the corporate website, <http://www.fritolay.com/>, the Snack Chat blog, <http://www.snacks.com/> and on Twitter <http://www.twitter.com/fritolay>.

### **About PepsiCo**

PepsiCo products are enjoyed by consumers more than one billion times a day in more than 200 countries and territories around the world. PepsiCo generated more than \$64 billion in net revenue in 2018, driven by a complementary food and beverage portfolio that includes Frito-Lay, Gatorade, Pepsi-Cola, Quaker and Tropicana. PepsiCo's product portfolio includes a wide range of enjoyable foods and beverages, including 22 brands that generate more than \$1 billion each in estimated annual retail sales.

At the heart of PepsiCo is Performance with Purpose – our fundamental belief that the success of our company is inextricably linked to the sustainability of the world around us. We believe that continuously improving the products we sell, operating responsibly to protect our planet and empowering people around the world enable PepsiCo to run a successful global company that creates long-term value for society and our shareholders. For more information, visit [www.pepsico.com](http://www.pepsico.com).

### **About Alice**

Founded by Carolyn Rodz and Elizabeth Gore, Alice is a free website that helps business owners find the right path to start and grow their companies by matching them with resources and opportunities. As a social enterprise, Alice supports equal access and opportunity for all business owners, no matter where they come from or who they know. [www.helloalice.com](http://www.helloalice.com)

### **About Padma Lakshmi**

Emmy-nominated Padma Lakshmi is internationally known as a food expert, model, actress and best-selling author, as well as the recipient of the 2016 NECO Ellis Island Medal of Honor and Variety's 2018 Karma award. Lakshmi serves as host and an executive producer of Bravo's Emmy award-winning Top Chef, which recently wrapped its 16th season.

Lakshmi established herself as a food expert early in her career, having hosted two successful cooking shows and writing the best-selling Easy Exotic, which won the "Best First Book" award at the 1999 Gourmand World Cookbook Awards. Lakshmi followed this success with the publication of her second cookbook, Tangy, Tart, Hot & Sweet. In 2016, she released her food memoir, The New York Times best-selling Love, Loss and What We Ate, which also won "Best Lifestyle, Body & Soul" at the 2017 Gourmand World Cookbook Awards, followed by The Encyclopedia of Spices & Herbs. In Spring of 2018, Padma collaborated with MAC Cosmetics for a worldwide capsule collection called #MACPadma.

In 2017, Lakshmi became an ambassador for the ACLU, focusing on women's reproductive health and immigration issues. Padma also serves as a Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Development Programme. She is also co-founder of the Endometriosis Foundation of America, and serves as a Visiting Scholar at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

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