



Gourmet Kitchens, Inc.

Contact:

Kristin Sutter
Marketing Manager
Gourmet Kitchens, Inc.
200 N. Artesian Street
Chicago, Illinois 60612
Ph: 312-432-6827
Fax: 312-226-3940

Kristin.Sutter@lastminutegourmet.com
www.lastminutegourmet.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chicago Business Owners Named Finalists for Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year®

CHICAGO—(BUSINESS WIRE)—Lisa Johnson and Farzad Shahsavarani, co-founders and owners of Gourmet Kitchens, Inc., were named as finalists for the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year® award in the Midwest. This group of exceptional entrepreneurs was selected by an independent judging panel made up of regional business, academic and community leaders. Winners will be announced at a gala event on Friday, June 26, 2009 at the Hilton Chicago.

“For the past 23 years, Ernst & Young has honored outstanding entrepreneurs through our Entrepreneur Of The Year program,” said Randy Tavierne, Ernst & Young Partner and Midwest Strategic Growth Markets Leader. “These entrepreneurs make a tremendous difference within our communities and for our larger economy. We thank them for the positive impact they’ve had in the Midwest.”

Regional award winners will be eligible for consideration in the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year 2009 national program. Winners in numerous national categories, as well as the overall national Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year award winner, will be announced at the annual awards gala in Palm Springs, California, on November 14, 2009. The awards are the culminating event of the Ernst & Young Strategic Growth Forum, the nation’s most prestigious gathering of high-growth, market-leading companies.

This year, the Entrepreneur Of The Year awards program celebrates its 23rd anniversary. The program has expanded to recognize business leaders in over 135 cities in 50 countries throughout the world. Awards are given to entrepreneurs who demonstrate extraordinary success in the areas of innovation, financial performance and personal commitment to their businesses and communities.

Husband and wife team, Farzad and Lisa founded GKI as a corporate catering company in 1989 with only 7 employees. With a flexible, innovative business plan, GKI began making fresh food for retail in 2001 when the economy slowed. This new focus created a thriving company. Now with over 300 employees, GKI achieved over \$40 million in 2008 sales. GKI’s extensive growth is due to Lisa and Farzad’s innovative and optimistic management which includes traveling around the world to research future trends in products, packaging and machinery.

“As an entrepreneur, you pour your life into making your business succeed, so it is a great honor to be recognized,” said Lisa. “In tough economic times like these, it’s nice to be a part of a positive event and news story that lets current and future entrepreneurs understand that they can make it with hard work and perseverance.”

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Gourmet Kitchens, Inc. is a fresh food manufacturer on Chicago's Nearwest side. GKI's value-driven prepared meals, salads and other fresh products are sold to retailers nationwide under private labels or the Last Minute Gourmet® brand. Lisa is also an active member of the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) and is currently chairing the Women's Business Conference 2009 planning committee.

The Midwest award program recognizes companies based in Illinois, Indiana and West Michigan.

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