

# Brewing the American Dream

## A HELPING HAND FROM SAMUEL ADAMS

by Amelia Levin



**“We thought Chicago was a perfect city to come to... some of the best restaurateurs in the country are here.”**

*— Jim Koch, Founder of Brewing the American Dream*

Jim Koch knows what it's like to be a little “in the dark” when you're starting a small business.

“I had an MBA from Harvard when I started my brewing business, but I had no idea about setting up a payroll, or packaging design, or how to source quinoa in 200-pound sacks, or negotiating a real estate loan, or at what point you need an accountant. Those are the kinds of questions that come up all the time when you're starting out. You literally have to be the CEO of everything.”

“Now I'm literally living the American Dream,” Koch said in a face-to-face meeting in Chicago. “I started Samuel Adams in my kitchen and literally pulled myself up by the bootstraps over the years. I would love to help someone else create another Sam Adams, whether that's in beer or cupcakes or coffee.”

Business owners shouldn't have to go through the extreme learning curve he did. That's why Koch has decided to give back—and just this year, even more.

Koch started his Brewing the American Dream program in 2008 to offer craft breweries and other small businesses in the food, hospitality and beverage industries manageable loans along with ongoing educational opportunities and other resources for those just starting out.

What started as a small philanthropic endeavor in New England has expanded into a nationwide initiative including other states: New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Now he's come to Chicago to offer the loans, and they're good for between \$500 and \$25,000 a pop.

“No bank is going to lend that small of an amount—they like to loan hundreds of thousands of dollars at a time because that's how they make money,” Koch says. “It can be hard for small businesses to get smaller loans because of that—even the Small Business Administration loans can require \$50,000 and up as a minimum amount.”

That's a hefty sum to pay back. Paying back any loan can be a challenge as it is, that's why Koch is excited about partnering with Chicago-based ACCION, a non-profit lending organization for small businesses, particularly those in the food and hospitality industry, to manage the loan process.

ACCION has pledged to walk qualified businesses selected by Samuel Adams through the loan application and credit check process as well check in with the businesses to make sure they're able to pay back their loan at a fair interest and not go into default.

Since launching the program in Chicago this fall, already two businesses have received loans: Pecan and Charlie's Mobile Cupcakery, a soon-to-open cupcake shop on wheels, and Boleres Enterprises, Inc., a wholesale premium and fair-trade coffee distributor.

“We thought Chicago was a perfect city

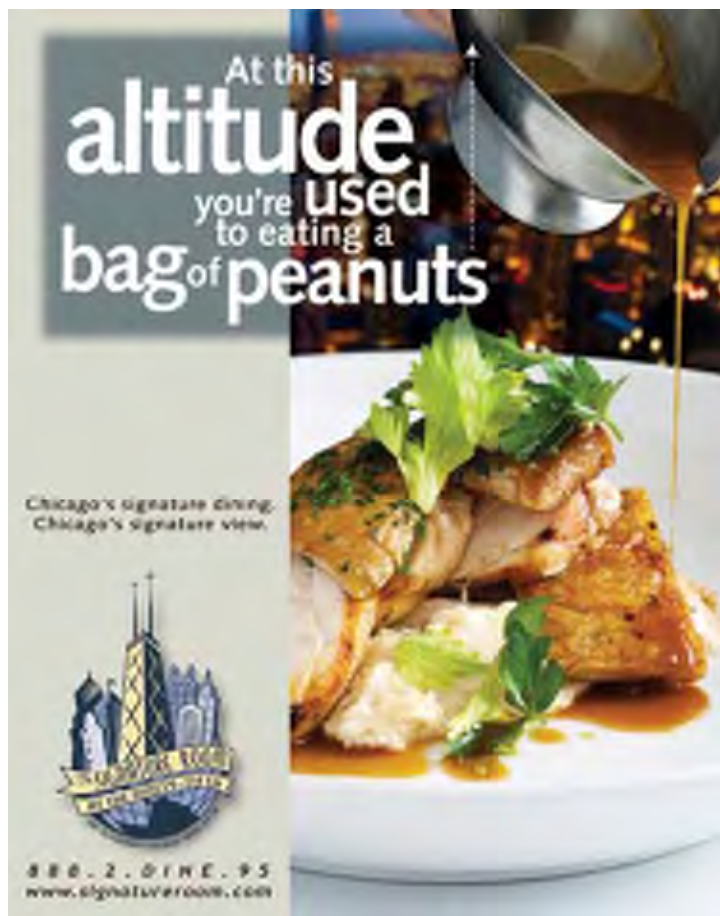
to come to,” Koch says. “It’s a very fertile area for startups in food and beverage – some of the best restaurateurs in the country are here, and it’s certainly a center for food and drink.”

Throughout the course of the loan, Samuel Adams will also offer continuing education and other opportunities, including business literacy seminars, webinars and in-person “Speed Coaching,” which are special, in-person events held around the country in a format similar to “speed dating.” Businesses can sign up to meet with lawyers, accountants, marketing and sales trainers, public relations consultants, real estate professionals and other experts in their field to get 20 minutes of advice on specific aspects of running a business.

Heads up Chicago-area craft brewers: if you’re outside the city limits in other Midwestern states, say, Indiana, you can apply for a loan and take advantage of this opportunity through Samuel Adams. And, all Chicago-based small businesses in the food, hospitality and beverage industries can apply. [ec](#)

To apply for a loan or for more information: [www.samueladams.com/btad/index.aspx](http://www.samueladams.com/btad/index.aspx).

**Amelia Levin** is a Chicago-based freelance writer and regular contributor to *Edible Chicago*, specializing in stories about food, foodservice and the restaurant industry with experience in news reporting. She is also a certified chef and recipe developer.



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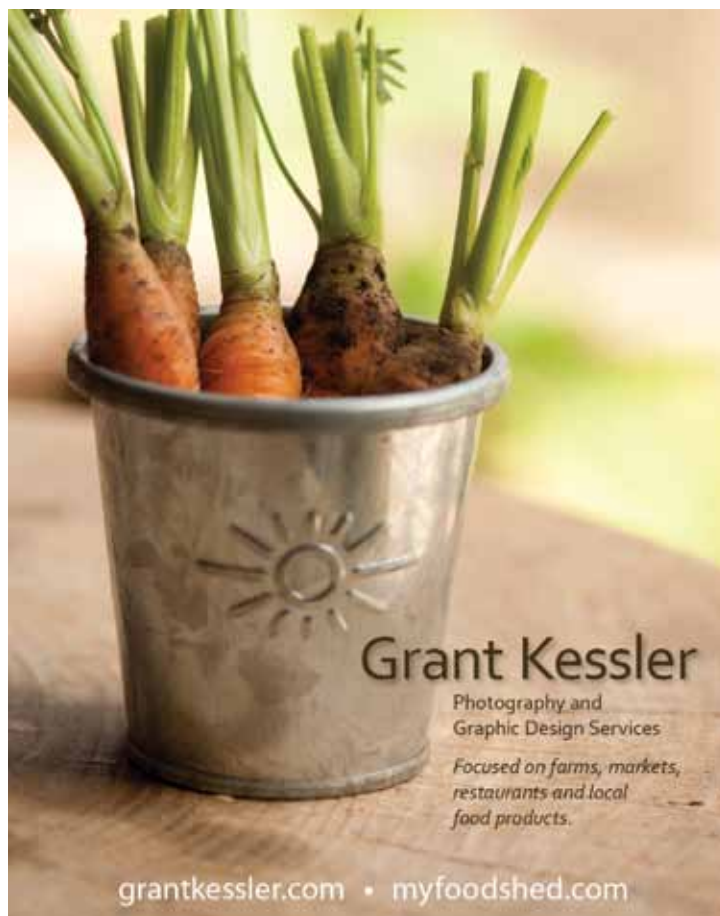
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