

PUBLICATION

How These Two Black-Owned Businesses Are Thriving Thanks to the Power of Connectivity

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In the last issue of *Diversity Matters*, we explained that allyship includes using your skills and resources to help others advance and introduced BakerBridge, a Baker Donelson initiative that was created to support minority-owned businesses by helping them with legal services as they strive for sustained growth. The program is not simply about helping minority-owned businesses with one specific legal need or about pro bono services. To the contrary, BakerBridge is about creating long-term partnerships with minority-owned businesses. We work with these clients to not only help them understand their legal needs, but also to connect them to resources and appropriate counsel as they scale and enterprise.

In this issue, we highlight how two BakerBridge clients demonstrate another key component of allyship: using connections and networks to support and help each other. The stories of these two companies, City Tasting Box and Umami Food Consulting, show how important it is pay it forward.

City Tasting Box

Before 2020, Cristina McCarter, a Memphis "foodpreneur," could be seen around town, leading small groups of tourists and locals alike on walking tours highlighting local restaurants. When the pandemic effectively shut down the restaurant industry in March 2020, the future of McCarter's City Tasting Tours was up in the air. With deep resilience and her hallmark "do what it takes" attitude, McCarter made a "COVID pivot" and turned to her longtime friend from the food and beverage industry, Lisa Brown, to create City Tasting Box.

Today, City Tasting Box is an e-commerce shop that curates a food product box showcasing dozens of local foodmakers. The driving force behind City Tasting Box is McCarter's and Brown's passion for supporting and empowering those in the Memphis food and beverage industry. They are grateful every day to be able to share a taste of their beloved Memphis with anyone across the nation – get your taste [here](#).



Umami Food Consulting

With over a decade of experience in the food industry, Ali Manning is a food scientist by formal schooling and trade. Leaning into her creativity and passion, she created Umami Food Consulting when she recognized a gap in services and resources, particularly for businesses owned by people of color. The company offers product development, nutritional analysis, and regulatory standards for food entrepreneurs, with a long list of Memphis clients including City Tasting Box.

Manning's consultancy work has led to the development of Food Science for Kids, an educational program that teaches grade school children the science of food. Umami Food Consulting led Manning to the opportunity to become an author, and she has now published her first children's book, "Can I Play With My Food?" Get your copy [here](#).



BakerBridge

When BakerBridge was in its pilot phase, attorneys working on the initiative were tasked with identifying clients. One company immediately came to the forefront of shareholder Mary Wu Tullis's mind – City Tasting Box, which Tullis knew about through her Instagram connection to McCarter, an elementary school friend. Tullis reached out to McCarter to ask if City Tasting Box would want to be a part of the BakerBridge program. After initially pondering whether they even needed legal counsel at that time, McCarter and Brown ultimately said yes, and City Tasting Box became one of the Firm's first BakerBridge clients. Fast forward several months and Brown contacted Tullis to ask if she could connect her good friend, Manning, with the program. This resulted in Umami Food Consulting becoming a BakerBridge client in December 2021. The connections between Tullis and McCarter, McCarter and Brown, and McCarter, Brown, and Manning are not a coincidence. For more details on how we are all connected, how these connections are helping these two businesses enterprise and scale, and to hear additional insight and words of wisdom from these small business owners, listen to the first episode of Season 3 of the *Diversity Ever After* podcast, "[Celebrating Community of Minority-Owned Businesses.](#)"

