



*Traveling Spoon shines a light on locals shaping the culture and stories of a destination*

## **BAY AREA TRAVELING SPOON ACQUIRES CHICAGO-BASED MEAL SHARING** *Traveling Spoon expands its global footprint as a leader in culinary tourism*

**BAY AREA, CALIFORNIA (May 7, 2020)** – As the travel landscape will inevitably be changed by recent global events, the need and importance to support local economies will take center stage. By bridging the gap between the food and travel industries, food tourism tells the story of a destination’s history, culture and people. The connection between food and tourism provides a platform for local economic development, and more and more food and travel companies are helping to market destinations while supporting the local culture. **Traveling Spoon** is one such company passionate about creating micro-entrepreneurs and giving money back to local economies through tourism. Studies show that only 15-25% of every dollar spent in tourism goes into the local economy. At Traveling Spoon, **65-80%** of every dollar spent goes directly back into the hands of locals providing these experiences.

In an effort to expand its global footprint, Traveling Spoon recently announced that the culinary tourism operator is acquiring **Meal Sharing**, a Chicago-based company founded in 2011 by **Jay Savsani**. With a presence in over 2000 cities and 125 countries, MealSharing is a global platform that connects people with home cooked meals while traveling or right in their local community. Jay Savsani spent years working in technology and came up with an idea to create a website that brings the world closer together via food. A pioneer in the sharing economy food space, Savsani graduated from The Lewis University with a marketing degree in 2007 and came up with the idea while backpacking in Cambodia. It was on this trip that he found himself sharing an authentic meal with a Cambodian family on their farm in the countryside where they talked about everything from culture to food to family and more.

As part of the acquisition, Savsani will be joining the Traveling Spoon team and will be working together to integrate Meal Sharing’s hosts into the Traveling Spoon host community under the Traveling Spoon brand. The acquisition will enable Traveling Spoon’s host expansion and accelerate their efforts into the US more quickly and effectively.

“From our first conversations, we were struck by Jay’s passion for travel, and for helping travelers to connect more deeply with the places they are visiting,” says Steph Lawrence, co-founder of Traveling Spoon. “Our goal has always been to

## **For Immediate Release**

become the culinary tourism leader, and to help make travel more meaningful. We are thrilled to work with Jay to help realize this mission together.”

Founded in 2013, Bay Area, California-based Traveling Spoon connects travelers with private, authentic food experiences, from market tours to homecooked meals to cooking classes, with locals around the world. The company’s mission is to make travel more meaningful. 100% of experiences are private and 100% of hosts are vetted. The company was founded by **Aashi Vel** and **Steph Lawrence** who met at the Haas School of Business at the University of California, Berkeley. The two women quickly realized their shared passion for food and travel, and for helping travelers connect with meaningful travel experiences and preserving food traditions. Since its inception, Traveling Spoon now operates in 60 countries and 180 + cities across the globe from Asia to Europe to Central and South America. With ten new destinations launched this fall, Traveling Spoon just announced its new destinations for 2020, along with several new food experiences that continue to take travelers *off the eaten path*.

## **Now Offering Online Cooking Classes**

In light of COVID-19, Traveling Spoon has also recently launched online cooking classes. Through its private, online cooking classes, guests are able to learn to make dozens of international dishes from the safety of their own kitchens, all while supporting local cooks around the globe. Traveling Spoon currently has over 30 class offerings, from learning to make ravioli from scratch from a local Florence resident, to learning to make sourdough bread, to cooking delicious Moroccan tajines, to learning to make Indian flatbreads. New classes are being launched each week. All classes are private and are \$25 per initial screen (\$15 per additional screen).

## **New Experiences**

Traveling Spoon goes beyond the ordinary by offering authentic experiences that open travelers’ minds to new flavors, cultures, heritages and traditions around the world. Experience the joy of a homemade meal (and eat it the way the locals do) over conversation about food and culture. Learn about cultural and culinary traditions passed down through generations as you chop, grind and cook in a local kitchen. Explore a nearby market with your host, discovering local and regional produce before returning home to cook and eat together. One of Traveling Spoon’s **newest experiences** is a **plant-based California cooking class in the home of a French Laundry chef**. Join Nicolas Ferreira, a former chef with French Laundry and Per Se, as he welcomes guests in his home in the Cole Valley neighborhood of San Francisco. Walk through the Ferry Building farmer’s market with Nicolas, a lively, open-air, local market that features artisanal foods and fresh regional produce. Explore Californian produce sold by Nicolas’s favored vendors at the market, purchasing a few ingredients and then going to his home to begin the cooking class. The hands-on cooking class will feature several plant-forward California dishes using local and seasonal ingredients such as Umami broth from seaweed, deviled avocado with caviar and more. Additional experiences around the globe will be available throughout the year.

By creating a community of fellow travel and food travelers around the world. Traveling Spoon brings together the young and the old, families and friends, locals and tourists. From solo travelers to families with children to honeymooners looking for the unusual, Traveling Spoon appeals to anyone with a love of food and desire to learn about different cultures through its food. From the budget conscious to the more affluent traveler, Traveling Spoon’s extensive array of experiences range from \$18USD to up to \$246USD per person. A perfect gift for anyone who travels for food, Traveling Spoon now offers a gifting feature on its website. Give the gift of travel with convenient gift cards that are available to print or send by email and send someone *off the eaten path*.

## **About Traveling Spoon**

Founded in 2013, Traveling Spoon connects travelers with food experiences, from home cooked meals to cooking lessons, with locals in their homes around the world. Experiences are 100% vetted and 100% private. Learn how to cook pasta from an Italian in her central Florence home, or grind curries from scratch on a family farm in Thailand. Traveling Spoon offers experiences in over 180 cities in over 60 countries around the globe. The company was founded by Aashi Vel and Steph Lawrence after they met at the Haas School of Business. Investors include Erik Blachford (former CEO Expedia), George Butterfield (founder of Butterfield & Robinson), and Anjan and Emily Mitra (owners of DOSA SF). For information, visit [www.travelingspoon.com](http://www.travelingspoon.com) or email [hello@travelingspoon.com](mailto:hello@travelingspoon.com).

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Media Contact: Katherine Han | [katherine@katherinehanpr.com](mailto:katherine@katherinehanpr.com) | +1-727-543-2944