



MEDIA RELEASE

Editor's note: images available to [download here](#)

Amex delivers \$300,000 USD in Grants to 20 Small Aussie and Kiwi Restaurants Making a Positive Impact in Local Communities

Sydney, Australia 27 November 2025 – Twenty standout restaurants - 15 across Melbourne and Sydney and five in Auckland - have been selected as grantees of the American Express Backing International Small Restaurants program. Each restaurant is receiving a grant of \$15,000 USD (\$23,000 AUD / \$25,000 NZD) for critical improvements to their business, supporting their long-term growth.

Globally, the initiative is awarding more than \$1.4 million USD to 97 small and independently owned restaurants across 14 cities in Australia, New Zealand, the UK, Mexico, Japan, Canada, Spain and France, honouring restaurants that have demonstrated a positive impact in their local communities.

In partnership with the International Downtown Association (IDA) Foundation and supported by Mainstreet Australia, the American Express program offers grants to small, independent restaurants, empowering them to make critical improvements like refreshing dining spaces, enhancing digital tools and improving kitchen operations.

Robert Tedesco, Vice President of Global Merchant Network Services for American Express Australia and New Zealand, said: “Now in its fourth year, the American Express Backing International Small Restaurants program has provided \$867,500 AUD in financial support to Australian restaurants and for the first time this year, \$125,000 NZD to New Zealand restaurants. These grants are all about empowering small restaurants to thrive, enrich the dining culture we all love and support their local communities. At Amex, we’re passionate about backing small businesses because when they succeed, neighbourhoods flourish.”

Mainstreet Australia President Troy Stuchbree, said: “As we celebrate the Backing International Small Restaurants program, we are continually inspired by the resilience and positive impact of the small, independent restaurants selected as this year’s grantees. These restaurants are the heart and soul of their main streets and through the generous, sustained support of American Express and the IDA Foundation, Mainstreet Australia is proud to help strengthen the fabric of these local communities.”

One of the 15 Australian grantees is Porcine in Sydney. Known for its classic French fare, the 35-seater bistro champions small regenerative farmers and heartfelt hospitality. Co-owned by chefs Nik Hill, Matt Fitzgerald and Harry Levy, the team is using the \$23,000 AUD grant to improve the restaurant’s weather-affected courtyard, refurbish aging facilities, and continue offering a welcoming, community-focused dining experience.

“When you work within a quirky old building like the one we do, there’s always something that needs love, and as a small independent team, we don’t have deep pockets to fall back on. This grant gives us the chance to finally do some of those things: re-do the bathrooms for our guests, add heating and fans, fix the kitchen floor that’s 30 years old, and make our little wine bar more comfortable for our regulars. This kind of support helps us make a dramatic improvement in a short time - something that keeps a place like Porcine thriving in the neighbourhood we love,” chef Nik Hill said.

The Lebanese Grocer is one of five small restaurants in Auckland to receive \$25,000 NZD. Chef and owner Elie Assaf is using the grant to build a commercial kitchen and develop a new line of house-made grocery products based on his family recipes, helping to diversify their revenue.



"When we opened the Lebanese Grocer, it was my way of carrying my family's legacy forward - sharing the flavours, memories and traditions that were passed down to me. What began as a small neighbourhood spot quickly became a space that connects people through culture, hospitality and good food. We applied for the grant because we're at a pivotal stage of growth. As a small, family-run business, this grant is a chance to turn a challenging period into one of expansion and resilience. It allows us to move forward with our kitchen build, invest in our product line and continue serving our community in a meaningful way," owner Elie Assaf said.

This initiative complements American Express's Backing Historic Small Restaurants program, which has provided over \$8 million USD to 180 restaurants across all 50 U.S. states, D.C., Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands since its creation in 2021. Together, these programs have delivered over \$11 million USD to support more than 410 small restaurants globally. American Express has long championed small businesses, launching Small Business Saturday 15 years ago and founding Shop Small, now a global movement across the UK, Japan, Australia, Canada, Mexico, France, Spain, New Zealand and more.

2025 Backing International Small Restaurants Program Grantees

Australia

- Porcine - Sydney
- Anchovy - Melbourne
- Banh Meats and Co - Sydney
- Beach Bar @ Carrum - Melbourne
- Butter Sydney - Sydney
- Hudson's Bakery - Sydney
- La Coppola - Sydney
- Little Growling Cafe - Melbourne
- MAIZ Mexican Food - Sydney
- Milhouse Canteen - Melbourne
- Mokum Cafe - Melbourne
- Saigon Alley - Melbourne
- Tahina - Melbourne
- The Moat – Melbourne
- Tokyo7 Japanese Restaurant - Melbourne

New Zealand

- Annabelles Restaurant - Auckland
- Brewd Hawt Chicken Co - Auckland
- Lebanese Grocer - Auckland
- Pici - Auckland
- The Lumsden Freehouse - Auckland

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ABOUT AMERICAN EXPRESS

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ABOUT INTERNATIONAL DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION

The International Downtown Association Foundation is a charitable nonprofit organization working in collaboration with the International Downtown Association (IDA) to provide education, research, and support for creating prosperous city centers, commercial neighborhoods and liveable urban places for all. For more information, please visit downtown.org/foundation and follow IDA Foundation on [LinkedIn](#) and [X](#).