

PROFILE

rohini dey, ph.d.

vermilion restaurateur & founder let's talk womxn

A leading restaurateur, proponent of Indian cuisine with her unique Latin twist at Vermilion, and zealous champion of women – former World Bank economist and McKinsey & Co. management consultant – Rohini Dey straddles the worlds of business and philanthropy across the US and India.

Rohini's career spans several phases:

- She taught in *Academia*, has a Master's degree in Economics from the Delhi School of Economics and a Doctorate in Management Science from the University of Texas.
- She worked at the *World Bank* in Washington, D.C. leading development projects on foreign direct investment and coauthored a book on infrastructure privatization.
- At *McKinsey & Co.*, she led management consulting projects for Fortune 100 firms with knowledge development in hi-tech and growth.
- As an *Entrepreneur*, Dey combines her business credentials with her passion for food by establishing Vermilion restaurants in Chicago since 2003 and in NYC Manhattan for a decade (2008-2017).
- As a *Writer* and *Speaker*, Dey has written 30+ policy and business opinions for CNN, Miami Herald, Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun Times, Huffington Post, Thrive Global and Crain's Business (#1 op-ed 2016). She has spoken and keynoted at Politico Women Rule, The Global Economic Summit (US State Dept.), TEDx and NATO Summit for Chicago. All her writing proceeds go to the non-profit (MSEdG – Educate Girls Globally) by the Dey-Kohli family.
- As a *Women's Activist*, Rohini founded Let's Talk Womxn in 2020 and leads this action movement of women restaurateurs to build scale together. She has grown this to 700+ women restaurateurs and entrepreneurs across 14 cities with explosive expansion underway. In 2011, to redress the "gastro-ceiling," she cofounded the James Beard Foundation Women's Leadership Program which she led and chaired for a decade, founding WCL, WEL and Owing It. Rohini is a staunch supporter of women in business and education of girls globally.

Rohini is profiled for entrepreneurship by CNBC in their Consumed docu-series, the Financial Times, Time, and O magazines. She has been lauded in the NRN Top 50 Power List in 2021, NRN Top 25 Women of Influence 2022, NAWBO Advocate of the Year 2022, Timeout Women of the Year 2021, ATHENA International Leadership Award 2021, Chicago Top 10 Power Women 2022 by Better, Top 50 Power Players 2022 by Chicago Social, AAPI 2021 Unsung Hero, Innovator of the Year MenuMasters 2022. She is featured nationally on the TODAY Show, Good Morning America, Squawk Box, Food Network, WGN NewsNation and others. Rohini has been awarded Woman of Distinction by Children's Hope, Philanthropy Award by American India Foundation, Entrepreneur of the year – India by the City of Chicago, WCO Women's Leadership Award by JP Morgan Chase, and the WE Women Empowerment Award. Rohini is a senior donor of the American India Foundation (AIF), an active member of The Chicago Network (TCN), International Women's Forum (IWF), the Women's Forum of New York (WFNY) and NAWBO. She is on the Advisory Council of the Illinois Restaurant Association. Rohini is known in the lifestyle space: Women of Influence – *Michigan Avenue*, 50 most beautiful Chicagoans – *Chicago Magazine*, Beautiful Homes – *Chicago Social*, Entertaining with Flair – *Chicago Magazine*. She stays connected to academia by engaging actively with the entrepreneurial departments of business schools (University of Chicago Booth, Kellogg, Columbia University).

Rohini went entrepreneurial in 2003 driven by her conviction that Indian cuisine in the United States is confined to stereotypes, fine dining is excessively Eurocentric, and most global cuisines are marginalized to a murky "ethnic" fringe. At inception, Vermilion was acclaimed "Best Restaurants" for its Indian-Latin fare by *Chicago magazine*, *Travel & Leisure*, *Town & Country*, *USA Today*, *Bon Appetit*, *Wine Enthusiast*, 3 stars *Chicago Tribune*, *Esquire*, 4 Stars *NY Daily News*. Apart from being a Trustee of the James Beard Foundation for a decade and helping bring the JBF Awards to Chicago, Rohini is on the board of the PSA World Squash Championship, and on the Advisory Council of the Illinois Restaurant Association. Chefs launched and mentored by Vermilion have competed and judge on Chopped, Iron Chef, Top Chef, and opened restaurants of their own. Rohini frequently judges Food Network shows.

On a personal level, Rohini has two daughters, is an avid reader, loves dark movies, is a policy wonk, still loves to dine out, thrives on travel, runs daily (Chicago Marathon, Half Ironman), is an amateur chess and squash enthusiast, and has accomplished a personal dream - climbing Mount Kilimanjaro.