

# Big Heart Hospitality

“Chopped” judge and influential culinary force Tiffani Faison values her employees above all else

## QUICK FACTS

**BOSTON**



**PROPRIETOR:** Tiffani Faison

**CONCEPTS:** Sweet Cheeks Q, Fool’s Errand, Orfano

WHEN IT COMES TO CREATING A PEOPLE-FIRST environment, “Chopped” judge and Boston-area regional powerhouse chef Tiffani Faison knows how to prioritize her employees, from a 5% kitchen fee on all bills to a firm zero-tolerance policy so that her employees never have to endure harassment of any kind.

Faison is the owner of Big Heart Hospitality, known for its three full-service restaurants and bar: Southern-inspired Sweet Cheeks Q, Southeast Asia-influenced Tiger Mama, adult snack bar Fool’s Errand and fine dining restaurant Orfano. (She recently announced that Tiger Mama would soon be closing to make way for a new, as-yet-unnamed concept to open in 2022.)

She also has another three concepts on the way — concepts that were scheduled to open with new food hall High Street Place in the financial district in Boston in March 2020 but were understandably delayed. Like her other concepts, the upcoming food hall outlets — champagne-focused wine bar Bubble Bath, pizza and grinders spot Tenderoni’s and seafood/raw bar Dive Bar — will be creatively immersive dining experiences.

“When you choose to spend your money and your time with us, I think that the unspoken agreement is that we create an experience where you get to leave whatever’s going on in your life at the door,” Faison said. “You can come in and have something that feels, smells and tastes exactly like when you were a child. ... I want people to be transported out of their everyday lives.”

As a “Top Chef” and “Chopped” alum, Faison has spent most of her career in the kitchen — both on air and off. She first opened Sweet Cheeks in 2011, followed by Tiger Mama in 2015, after which she formed



Tiffani Faison, “Chopped” judge and owner of Big Heart Hospitality



Sweet Cheeks Q is a Southern-inspired restaurant.

the hospitality group Big Heart Hospitality. Faison has also been nominated for a James Beard award.

In any of her restaurants, what’s most important to Faison is creating a people-first environment. For her, that means having a no-nonsense, zero-tolerance policy toward harassment or discrimination of any kind toward her employees or customers.

“I have worked tirelessly for the last 10 years to make sure that our work environment is free of harassment and discrimination,” she said. “If we have someone who is engaging in that behavior, they’re gone. I just don’t put up with it. We’ve created an environment where people can be exactly who they are and valued for their identity.”

Faison has sometimes had to completely sever relationships to protect her team, but she thinks it has led to a superior work atmosphere that has helped boost their employer brand during the labor crisis.

“We’re continuing to try and create ways where people make good money and have an environment that they feel good about being in and feel accomplished when they leave,” she said. “We’re creating growth and opportunity within the company.”

While portfolio growth could be an option for Big Heart Hospitality down the line, right now, Faison said she is focused on making sure her current businesses are healthy and stable.

— Joanna Fantozzi



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