

## **Bio:**

Hala Achkar is the Founder and Chief Concept Architect of BONCHOU Eclairerie her latest creation based on a lifetime of experience and passion in the restaurant, food and hospitality industries.

Hala is a warrior woman entrepreneur with resilience. She grew up between two cities that take their food very seriously – Beirut and Paris. Food and the love of food has always been in her blood. She is a passionate foodie gourmet with an excellent modern pallet and a knack for identifying trends, spotting gaps in a market and finding opportunities for innovation. *“I learned a lot at a very early age where I would sneak into the kitchen to watch my grandfather dictating recipes to the pastry chefs creating delicious desserts and specially Eclairs which were my favorite”*. This is where Hala first learned the secrets of the business.

Hala is a seasoned entrepreneur. She brought Bagels to the Middle East by creating and developing a coffee shop chain called Tribeca coffee and Bagels in 1998. The company was built and successfully sold in 3 years. In 1999 she was put in charge of the Monroe Hotel in downtown Beirut, oversaw the construction and opened the hotel and its outlets, completing both on time and on budget. She was named Managing Director of the company in 2001 and in 2004, opened the Markazia Monroe Suites Hotel. In the first year the hotel generated 25% more revenue than planned. She served as Managing director for Monroe Hotel for ten years and was honored with the “Tourism, and Open Door for Women” Award from the Lebanese Ministry of Tourism for her achievements in the hotel and hospitality industries in 2007.

Hala has also created, developed and successfully managed several other start-ups including La Maison du Caviar, a trendy French dining restaurant located in the W hotel Doha in Qatar in 2009 which was then purchased by local Qatari investors in 2012; the Café La Joie in Beirut in 2011 an upscale French bakery and café specializing in choux a la crème; and La Maison du Caviar in Beirut, a fine dining restaurant modeled after the successful Doha concept in 2011.

After 20 years in the world of Food & Beverage in the Middle East and Europe she decided her next step would be to bring éclairs to America. *“I knew I wanted to make people smile and knew food was my secret weapon”*. Bonchou are eclairs with attitude; with high quality ingredients, exciting new flavors and modern twists on the classics. *“In my mind, dessert is a sweet treat that adds a jolt of joy to an ordinary day. I wanted to remind people of this, through the magic of éclairs. Éclairs are a light, bite-sized and a perfect canvas to experiment with flavors. Bonchou was my chance to bring NYC delicious bites of joy. One éclair at a time.”*