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**Photos Attached**

For Immediate Release

## **Education and Order Writing Top Features of GC Buying Group January Conference**

**Dallas, January 29** – GC Buying Group held their 15th annual Start the Year Member Conference and Vendor Showcase on January 10 and 11 at AmericasMart during the International Gift and Home Furnishings Show in Atlanta, GA. “Always the very best way to begin a new year! Returned to work very inspired. Bravo GC Team” gushed Jenny Morrison, owner Ginny Gordon’s of Morehead City, NC.

Retail attendance and vendor participation saw record high numbers for the two-day event. “You and your team did a great job with the GC meeting in Atlanta. Thank you for your fine work. The meeting was very successful and the vendor presentation certainly simplified the show for me.....great value in attending the meeting” declared John Melin, new owner of Ketchum Kitchens, Ketchum, ID.

“There are so many retailers within the Gourmet Catalog group that are just fantastic people, very kind and consistently great to work with” remarked Carter Malcom, President of Constructive Eating.

The exclusive member meeting includes a full day of education and idea sharing for stores. The meeting kicked off with an open discussion topic with stores sharing personal experiences regarding best sellers. The discussion was led by Chris Wiedemer, owner of Cooks World in Rochester, NY, and Martha Nading, co-owner of the Extra Ingredient in Greensboro, NC.

Education and strategic partnerships were on the schedule for morning and afternoon sessions. Stores learned from presentations by both Michael Gill of Pointy and Christopher Kimball of Milk Street. First on the program was Michael Gill of Pointy, who traveled from Dublin, Ireland, to introduce GC members to an exciting product and service that instantly allows stores and products to be found online locally. Michael stayed for the Thursday vendor showcase on the following day to answer questions and assist stores with more information, prompting his comment that the event was “a great experience and (it was) a joy to work with so many engaged and professional retailers.” Michael concluded by saying, “the team at Gourmet Catalog put on a great two days of education, networking and buying.”

Special guest speaker Christopher Kimball of Milk Street spoke to GC stores about his exciting and well-received new venture that combines cooking school innovation with a best in class, carefully curated assortment of products. An added feature of Milk Street is a social media option for independent retailers.

Education continued for the afternoon session. Paul Erickson of RMSA engaged store members with “9 Secrets to Compete and Win.” Bobby Griggs of Hammer Stahl reinforced the importance of proper sales staff training through his special presentation on “The Best Practices to Train Your Sales Team.” Store Members also heard from peers on cooking schools and demo programs. GC Advisory Board Members Larry Oats of KitchenArt, W. Lafayette, IN, and Steve Fricke of Cooks’Wares, Cincinnati, led the open discussion on the two related topics.

After a full day of learning and exchanging retail best practices, Store and Vendor Members gathered at Atlanta’s exclusive private membership Capital City Club for cocktails and dinner. Hosted by GC Buying Group, the elegant evening is beloved by all who attend for combining in a sophisticated, social setting industry personalities from all across the country

Day two presented the highly regarded Vendor Showcase, a private tradeshow for GC members where stores have a first look at many new products, learn firsthand how products work and have the opportunity to communicate specific needs. Exclusive special offers and personal networking with vendors add to the overall experience for store members.

“The Gourmet Catalog Start the Year Conference is a valuable tool to see our customers and kick off the year on a positive note. The energy and enthusiasm our retail partners bring is palpable,” reported Clark Stone, National Sales Director of Wusthof.

According to Janis Johnson, president and founder of Gourmet Catalog and GC Buying Group, “Both store and vendor members expressed great pleasure with this year’s special event. Everyone commented on the overwhelming, prevailing energy in the store meeting and vendor showcase.” Doug Huemoeller, president of Kitchen Window in Minneapolis, followed up the conference with a note reading, “Thank you for putting together one of the best Start the Year meetings ever! Fantastic new content. Please thank your entire team.”

After a wildly successful Start the Year, the GC team will focus on preparing for Chicago’s International Home and Housewares show in March, where the Group hosts a private breakfast meeting to prepare independent stores for buying success. The printed Review Workbook is their most valuable tool when tackling such a large show. For those eager to return to Atlanta, GC’s Summer School event will take place during The Atlanta International Gift & Home Furnishings Market in July.

## **About GC Buying Group**

GC Buying Group Members form the original and leading buying group in the housewares industry. Celebrating 37 years in 2018, GC works to ensure the success of independent retailers with a variety of programs and services, including discounts provided by 200 plus vendor members.

For more information on Gourmet Catalog, call: +1-214-855-0005, email: [info@gourmetcatalog.com](mailto:info@gourmetcatalog.com) or visit: [gcbuyinggroup.com](http://gcbuyinggroup.com).

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GC Store Members at the morning meeting discussing Best Selling Products.



GC Store Members writing orders during the GC Start the Year Vendor Showcase.