

FOODSERVICE EAST PRESENTS

SECRETS OF **SUCCESS**

February 2011

An ongoing series of interviews with chefs, restaurateurs and foodservice operators, Secrets of Success looks at the paths taken to professional recognition and acclaim.



Jill Epstein

Publisher, Where to Eat & Drink

By Foodservice East

Jill Epstein founded Where to Eat & Drink 11 years ago, expanding it over the years into a major restaurant for Boston foodies. She is a regular correspondent on TVDiner and serves as an industry insider on a monthly radio show with Jeff Santos as well. Where to Eat has changed with the times, growing to cover the suburban areas and becoming a resource. At the same time, its website has expanded as well to offer more information including recipes.

FOODSERVICE EAST SECRETS OF SUCCESS

FSE: What is your background and what inspired you to do “Where to Eat?”

EPSTEIN: I grew up an hour from Boston and my parents were, and still are, big foodies, so I grew up eating in Boston restaurants. I attended the School for the Arts at Boston University where I majored in Graphic Design. A magazine that incorporated restaurants was a natural fit!

FSE: What changes have you seen in the Boston restaurant scene in the past 10 years and which have been the most significant?

EPSTEIN: My launch of Where to Eat in 1999 was in response to the explosion the restaurant scene had started to see. Growing up, the restaurant choices weren't as plentiful and the options for food types were more limited - mostly American, French, Italian, and Chinese. It has been amazing to watch the expansion of the local scene over the past decade - the labor of love that the local chefs and restaurateurs have put into their dining establishments is so impressive. Diners are more sophisticated and educated about food. Now on any night you can see people eating sushi, Malaysian cuisine, regional French and Italian cuisines, Mexican, Southwestern, Ethiopian, Senegalese, etc.!

FSE: Do you cook? What's in your refrigerator?

EPSTEIN: I do cook. I love to, but mostly simple and quick things as I have two little girls that either want to help or are pulling on my leg for attention! I use whole foods and really good, quality ingredients. Right now in my fridge are lots of fruits and vegetables; kale for a hearty mushroom, barley stew and wild salmon for a salmon with lentils and mustard-herb butter.

FSE: You've made lots of changes in Where to Eat - like adding “and Drink” - what's been the ‘secret’ of your success?

EPSTEIN: I'd say growing and changing with the times with a small staff. When we started we were just Where to Eat - a print publication with a small web presence. Now we have an active website with over 200 pages of restaurant information, a monthly online magazine with 82,000 subscribers, we do client eblasts, are working on an iPhone app and are experimenting with QR codes to imbed in the next issue which will hold even more and changing information for our readers!

FSE: In the most recent issues, you have short articles about chefs and their recipes - What led you to add these enhancements?

EPSTEIN: We've just followed the public interest... and our interest! I love reading the interviews, learning the quirky cravings of our chefs and trying their signature recipes out at home

FSE: As restaurants continue to open in Boston, do you see specific trends in types of cuisines that are new to the city?

EPSTEIN: The trend for a while now has been the locavore, sustainability movement. Thankfully, I think that is here to stay and we will see even more restaurants making efforts to feed us better quality foods that are locally sourced and aren't processed or raised with hormones and chemicals.

FSE: Over the past 10 years, is there one incident that particularly stands out as giving you the most satisfaction?

EPSTEIN: There are a few... getting hand-written letters from a few chefs in town that I'd always looked up to congratulating me on the magazine the most cherished from Julia Childs; Winning the 40 Under 40 award from The Boston Business Journal; and I look forward to my Food Network debut in February. I judged an episode of Bobby Flay's Throwdown!