

FOODSERVICE EAST PRESENTS

SECRETS OF **SUCCESS**

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



Chef Laura Henry-Zoubir

Culinary Director, Dramshop Hospitality, Boston, MA

By Foodservice East

Laura Henry-Zoubir recalls walking around the house with a stick of butter in her hand as a small child because she loved butter so much! Sweets were her first love and she helped her mother make cookies and brownies. Upon deciding to become a chef, she took a part time job at New Hampshire's Bedford Village Inn, a fine dining destination. Today, her dream is to someday own a small bistro.

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SECRETS OF SUCCESS

FSE: What led to your internship at Biba, a starting point for your culinary career?

HENRY-ZOUBIR: I chose to go to Boston for my internship because of my love for New England. Having four very different seasons to change menus is part of my life. I sought out a chef who was creative, cutting edge and also a great mentor. The tag team of Lydia Shire and Susan Regis was the perfect fit for me. Both are creative and successful women chefs.

FSE: Were you always into food and cooking while you were growing up?

HENRY-ZOUBIR: My Mom is a great cook and she always prepared home-made meals, including vegetables from our garden. From a young age, I discovered the excitement of planning out a dinner, inviting people to come and having everyone appreciate the effort.

FSE: You've had an interesting and really varied culinary background from high end to ethnic to a club. How do you characterize your culinary style?

HENRY-ZOUBIR: I became involved with VICA and NH ACF and took advantage of any opportunity that came my way. This varied from ice carving competitions to getting a part-time job at a wedding cake shop. After CIA, I sought out establishments that would make me a well-rounded chef. I threw in the private club because it was my first executive chef position. I was responsible for all aspects of the kitchen and was able to put my menus in place. The Club also gave me key experience in banquet, buffet and catering production.

FSE: What's the secret of your success?

HENRY-ZOUBIR: I think I am where I am today because of my passion and drive. I treat every establishment as if I am an owner. I never count hours or how many days off I have. I just love to work and create. Being in the kitchen everyday can be so stressful if your head isn't in the right place.

FSE: What's the next big food trend?

HENRY-ZOUBIR: Restaurants, including the The Regal Beagle, Church and 14 Union are using local foods whenever possible. Chefs will be supporting local farmers much more over the next few years. Menus will change more frequently to use whichever fish, farm animal or produce is available on that day. With the local food movement comes the desire to use all natural products with no preservatives. It is our mission to serve healthy, delicious foods to our guests.

FSE: What kitchen implement couldn't you live without?

HENRY-ZOUBIR: I have a few things that I cannot live without. One is the Vita-Prep blender. I never want to make a sauce, soup or vinaigrette without it again! Other loves are the plastic "Y" peeler, a microplane and cast iron skillet.

FSE: What do you like most about being a chef and what do you like the least?

HENRY ZOUBIR: The best thing about being a Chef is the lifestyle. I would go insane to be in an office at a desk all day. I get to move, create and be active all day. There is a certain camaraderie in the kitchen. The team becomes your family and you would do anything for them. The stress level is my least favorite part of my job. I wake and go to sleep thinking about work. I drive my husband nuts by working a 12 hour day and then come home to jump on the computer and work some more! Sometimes I wish I worked a 40 hour week with 2 days off.... Ahhhh to dream!

FSE: Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

HENRY-ZOUBIR: In 10 years I hope to have a restaurant of my own. It would be a family affair. My brother and his wife would be the artistic inspiration with their artwork and be a presence in the Front of the House. My Dad would run the books from behind the scenes, my husband would be the Chef and I would get to run around like crazy as usual.

FSE: Do you cook at home? If so, what's in your refrigerator?

HENRY-ZOUBIR: There is minimal cooking happening at our house! We currently do not have any days off together so we tend to eat at work, order takeout or just pick on things like cheese and crackers. The key ingredients I make sure we always have on hand.... Sushi, eggs, English muffins, aged cheddar cheese, bananas, grapes, milk and espresso pods. That is my usual grocery list!

FSE: Where do you get your inspiration for new menu items?

HENRY-ZOUBIR: To get inspiration, I cannot just sit and write. I have to travel to markets, restaurants and wine shops. I also search the web for inspiration. Creating menu items is an ongoing process. I constantly write down items and flavor combinations. Sometimes ideas happen out of the necessity to make a special for service with ingredients in house. These are usually my favorite creations!