

FOODSERVICE EAST PRESENTS

# SECRETS OF **SUCCESS**

September 2013

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



## **Paul Krawic**

**Executive Chef, Mystic Marriott Hotel**  
**By Foodservice East**

Chef Paul Krawic took home the Newport Chowder Festival's top prize this year for Octagon Restaurant at the Mystic Marriott Hotel in Southern Connecticut for his Asian-inspired "Dragon Chowder" with alligator lobster and skate wing. The dish took the award in the "Most Creative" category, recognizing the skills of its creator who fell in love with food as a child and never looked back.

# FOODSERVICE EAST SECRETS OF SUCCESS

## **FSE: How did you decide to become a chef and what were the early influences on your cooking?**

KRAWIC: I was introduced to the art of food at a young age from my father who was very determined to feed his seven kids in a nutritious way. At one point he removed all salt from the house to reduce our sodium intake. He bought a huge spice rack with 30 or so different spices and that is how we learned to season our food. Also, we learned at a young age to cook our family's daily meals. When I entered the work force my first job was a dishwasher at Holiday Inn and I was exposed to the culinary world. I fell in love with everything food and haven't stopped yet.

## **FSE: Who were you mentors along the way?**

KRAWIC: My early mentors were the chefs I worked for, and especially a good friend who was attending the Culinary Institute of America and would show me what he was being taught when he returned to work each weekend. This influenced me to choose this career path in life. Throughout my career I have had the opportunity to work in many different locations and venues.

## **FSE: What's the 'secret' of your success?**

KRAWIC: The "secret" if you want to call it that is what anyone who succeeds at anything in life has - passion. Whether it is your job, marriage, hobby or a goal you set, without keeping the passion in it you will not be as successful as you have the potential to be.

## **FSE: What advice do you give to culinary students?**

KRAWIC: School teaches you the basics of the field. It should, more importantly, teach you the habit of thinking and behaving intelligently. Daily practical experience teaches you how to excel in the field. You must have a passion for the art of food because it is a very challenging profession. Lastly, in this industry you are only as good as your last meal. Keep yourself fresh in the field and challenge yourself daily.

## **FSE: What are the biggest challenges in your job and how do you meet them?**

KRAWIC: Some of the bigger challenges I face in my job both here or anywhere-is keeping the staff excited and educated on a daily basis. Ultimately my job is to train others to be better at what they do. Nobody can do it all and without a dedicated and

passionate team then I would fail. Managing the daily operation of a kitchen requires that I wear many different hats. Outside of the culinary aspect of what we do here there are the financial responsibilities, human resource responsibilities and personal responsibilities to name a few. Knowing what hat to wear (and many times you have to wear multiple) for each challenge requires a balancing act and skillful art to being successful at each task.

## **FSE: If you weren't a chef, what would you enjoy doing?**

KRAWIC: I suppose if financial and family responsibilities were not a factor I would love to be a fisherman. Being outdoors and with nature energizes and grounds me. It is important to me to keep the connection with nature and the world around me.

## **FSE: What are the factors that have led you to excel as a chef?**

KRAWIC: Personal drive; passion for the art; family

## **FSE: How do you balance the demands on your time as a hotel chef between Octagon, catering, room service, banquets, etc.?**

KRAWIC: While it is nice to set a daily schedule and routine of my responsibilities, the reality of the daily business demands are far from routine. I need to keep a balance of my time based on the needs at the time. I try to take care of my administrative duties early in the morning as well as work on menus because this is the time when it is slowest and I can generally work uninterrupted. I have a strong support team that keeps the operation running at its optimum level.

## **FSE: In your off-hours, do you cook at home? If so, what's in your refrigerators?**

KRAWIC: I love to cook at home when I have the time. I average a 12-13 hour work day and generally by the time I get home I spend what little time I have left with my one-year old twins before they go to bed and then eat dinner. This usually means I prepare something quick but nutritious that both my wife and I can enjoy. When I am off, that's a different story. I have more time to prepare more exciting meals for us. I love to keep a fully stocked pantry of many different spices and condiments that will allow me to prepare food in whatever style or cuisine that I am in the mood for.