

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.



Ensan Wong

**Chef de Cuisine, Liquid Art House
By Foodservice East**

Born in Managua, Nicaragua to a Nicaraguan mother and Chinese father, Ensan Wong moved to Costa Rica and later, to Boston. As the child of restaurateurs (the family owned seven restaurants), the aromas of those restaurants were in his blood and later, led to his gravitating into becoming a chef.

FOODSERVICE EAST SECRETS OF SUCCESS

FSE: How did you happen to wind up at Liquid Art House?

WONG: I never went to culinary school but I was at OM in Cambridge, MA when Rachel was the chef there, with a friend for drinks. She came out and my friend knew her, and told her I was interested in a job, so she suggested I come in for an interview. I wound up cooking there. I decided I wanted to go to culinary school – the best – so I packed up and sold everything, got a loan and moved to Paris! I didn't speak French, I didn't know anybody there and I didn't have a job.

FSE: You wound up at Le Cordon Bleu Paris, I've heard. What did you study?

WONG: Pastry, with Pierre Hermé, one of the best pastry chefs in the world, and another internship in cuisine at Le Meurice hotel, where I was later given the opportunity to become part of its food operations team. I made my way through the ranks to become Chef de Partie at the Restaurant Le Meurice, one of the most prestigious fine dining restaurants in Paris.

FSE: You were working at the highest level – what was that like?

WONG: It was intense and amazing, and changed my life.

FSE: When Rachel was planning Liquid Art House, she asked you for help in finding a rotisserie in France. What was that like?

WONG: I'd been working with Alain Ducasse and was exploring opportunities so it was perfect timing. It was a fantastic opportunity and I looked at a half a dozen rotisseries and got her information.

FSE: What led you to take the job here in Boston?

WONG: I'd enjoyed working with Rachel at OM and am still excited. We could've bought a Combi-Oven to do chicken but this is special. The rotation really makes it special. We started with the chicken – very simple. We decided to make the chicken the star, so we just brush it with butter and salt, pepper and garlic.

FSE: Did you cook chicken this way in Paris?

WONG: The French like their chicken and pigeons rare or medium rare. That's not the case here. In

this country, Americans hear 'rotisserie chicken' and they think of the ones in their supermarket that they buy and bring home to heat up. That's their image and they don't want to wait for the chicken to cook. We cook ours to 155 degrees internal temperature and let it rest for a half hour so it's still moist. We've had customers ask for crispy skin, but that's not rotisserie chicken.

FSE: What else do you have planned with the rotisserie?

WONG: Chefs are using them to cook the whole animal – sustainably. We're trying to increase what we do with it and this fall, we'll be adding new items to a new brunch menu that will be cooked in it. We've also done whole pigs in it. We did a 27 lb. pig for four people recently.

FSE: How do you serve the chicken?

WONG: We prepare a jus and then, a sauce for it. These are special chickens that eat better than most humans. We do the jus in the classic French way and it's expensive and labor intensive. We have two guys who do it and roast the bones, use the thighs and the wings, and it takes three days. They're special Green Circle chickens from D'Artagnan. You can buy jus that's manufactured and sold in bags but we don't want to do that with this chicken. Rachel and I set out to be approachable and we want our food to be excellent and not intimidating.

FSE: What is the 'secret' of your success?

WONG: It's pushing my own boundaries and my own creativity.