

FOODSERVICE EAST PRESENTS

SECRETS OF **SUCCESS**

April 2017

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



Cochon555

5 Chefs, 5 Pigs, 5 Winemakers
By Foodservice East

Created in 2008 in response to the lack of education around heritage breed pigs, Cochon555 is a nose-to-tail culinary tour dedicated to supporting family farmers and educating chefs and diners about the agricultural importance of utilizing Old World livestock. Cochon555 works with every type of restaurant and bar imaginable – Mom-and-Pop, farm-to-table, BBQ, Michelin star - and participating chefs all share one core value: they source products responsibly.

FOODSERVICE EAST SECRETS OF SUCCESS

FSE: What led to your involvement with heritage breed pigs?

LOWE: After doing school in Iowa, I ended up in Atlanta in the marketing community. I was very big into doing – inspiring people – with food and wine events at private homes, and working on wine programs in restaurants. But it was a crowded space there and I wanted to do something I could really own and develop on my own. Heritage breed pigs became just that thing.

FSE: The Cochon555 tour now reaches 20 cities – are there plans to add more next year?

LOWE: We try and add new cities, when appropriate, every few years. This is usually based on a particular city emerging as an interesting restaurant town. A few years ago that was Minneapolis. This year, it was Nashville's first time up.

FSE: Since Cochon555 began about eight years ago, you've added other elements – Heritage BBQ as an event that will be in Boston Sunday, April 9th at SoWa Power Station. How did that come about and how has it grown?

LOWE: Heritage BBQ was conceived to help raise awareness about what barbecue means beyond our borders – live fire cooking with native spices and traditions that go back centuries. We want it to be inspired. But it is also meant – as are all our actions – to help further facilitate relationships and connections between farmers and restaurants, in this case those who also focus on grilled foods and barbecue traditions no matter where they come from.

FSE: What can you tell us about your sister charity, Piggy Bank, a pig farming sanctuary, and its role?

LOWE: The first component of Piggy Bank is a farm we are developing in Missouri, where 10 breeds of heritage pigs will be bred to help share with farmers looking to get into the heritage breed space or in need of a safety net. The second component is an agricultural knowledge database we are building and calling Open Access Agriculture. It is meant to use the power of information to help farmers overcome the sometimes-isolating existence of running a farm to enhance their ability to expand and succeed.

FSE: What do you consider to be your 'secret' of success?

LOWE: At Cochon555 and Piggy Bank, we focus on community and on the future of safe, honest food, first and foremost. We hope this drives all of our success.

FSE: Since the beginning of Cochon555, has chef interest in heritage breed pigs increased? How do you get the word out to the foodservice community?

LOWE: What was once an obscure menu item is becoming a viable economic space and three words now on the lips of many chefs: heritage breed pork. With our hard work and theirs, we hope this space can grow to become similar to, say, grass fed beef in the future, but even more affordable.

FSE: What lies down the road for Cochon555 - you've added new elements each year so we wondered what we can expect in the year ahead?

LOWE: We listen to the communities we connect with in 17 stops each year, so in that sense until we've wrapped each tour, we can never tell. Which is part of the fun!

FSE: If you weren't doing Cochon555, what might you be doing?

LOWE: I'd be working on an educational concept for the wine industry, while wondering why my wife can't be better as I work on the Piggy Bank farm!

FSE: Tell us about Bespoke and how that event came about?

LOWE: Rob McKeown from our staff will answer this:

MCKEOWN: BESPOKE was conceived as a way to bring to life many of the ideas we hear people talking or asking about as we talk to them at our events. By bringing together academics and the food/hospitality community, we hope to inspire, educate, and eventually create action in a variety of areas.

FSE: What can you tell us about the alliance with the Oxford Food Alliance and BESPOKE - An Exploration of Taste & Thought?

MCKEOWN: As arguably the founders of food studies, the American Friends of the Oxford Food Symposium bring with them an incredible perspective – and knowledge base - about the meaning of food and its potential to inspire and even address problems in the larger food industry. The format of our day-long BESPOKE event is, we feel, an innovative take on food talks and academic conferences, with some of the leading thinkers in everything from food and media to politics and culture addressing issues we think our fans will care about.