

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.



Tyler Elliott

Pastry Chef, Moxy, Franklin Oyster House, Jumpin Jays Fish Cafe, Portsmouth, NH
By Foodservice East

Staying close to home, Tyler was accepted into the Le Cordon Bleu Culinary program where he received his certificate in Culinary Science and studied Business Management. In Tyler's search for the perfect internship, he came across the Wentworth by the Sea, which was set to reopen just before his internship started. Being one of only four grand hotels left in New Hampshire, Tyler was drawn to its charm, history and newly invigorated energy. After Tyler's internship ended, he remained at the Wentworth by the Sea and quickly became an integral part of the pastry department. Tyler worked his way up to Executive Pastry Chef, where he continued his career for nearly twelve years. Tyler worked alongside many renowned chefs and cooked at the famed James Beard House.

FOODSERVICE EAST SECRETS OF SUCCESS

FSE: Where did your interest in baking begin?

ELLIOTT: When I was growing up, every family member had a specialty dessert they would make for different seasons, occasions, and holidays. Berry picking in the summer my mother made the most delicious pies, berry shortcakes, and smoothies! My sister on holidays relieved my mother of the baking portion and would cover Apple pie and banana cream pie duty. My grandmother would come stay with us for holidays from across the country and had cookie duty for Santa. Homemade snickerdoodles and decorated sugar cookies.

FSE: When did you realize you wanted to bake professionally?

ELLIOTT: While I was working towards my culinary degree I had a professor teaching my advanced baking and pastry class. He was from a military background and I liked the strict excessive compulsiveness of his curriculum. I was quite challenged by this.

After accomplishing the culinary program I landed a job at Wentworth by the Sea hotel and spa. There were no limits to what could be accomplished there. With the skills and organization from my professor I was sure this was what I wanted to progress towards.

FSE: Where did you study and how did that influence your style?

ELLIOTT: I took on a business degree program at McIntosh college close to home. They offered a culinary arts major a part of the Le Cordon Bleu schools. I carried out culinary critique, hospitality, and business strategy.

FSE: Your creations are mini-works of art – what's the origin of that creativity?

ELLIOTT: I suppose it's the magnitude of support I get from coworkers, friends, and family. I have no rules however I'm my biggest critic. So if it's not perfect enough to me it's not good enough for anyone.

FSE: Do you bake at home as well as at Moxy and its sister restaurants in Portsmouth?

ELLIOTT: Yes! Always looking to impress friends and family coming over for dinners. I am often doing multiple coarse meals as if they were coming

into a restaurant. Entertaining has always been really fun for me.

FSE: When you dine out, what do you order for desserts?

ELLIOTT: Ooohhhhh, this is tough. Well, I suppose depending on where I go, I will order anything unusual or out of the ordinary. For instance recently up in Portland I ordered parsnip soft serve, delicious! Though I also order traditional items to enjoy other fellow pastry chefs work. I never turn down a good Creme brûlée or anyone's home-made ice creams!!!

FSE: What is the biggest challenge in creating desserts today and how do you address that?

ELLIOTT: The largest challenge would be to create something and trust that the evening staff delivers the finished product up to my standards. The challenging part is just me not being there to do it myself which is my favorite part. However I am blessed with the greatest teams at all restaurants that take into consideration the time and effort I put into every detail.

FSE: You recently made the largest chocolate chip cookie we have ever seen! How did you keep it from breaking?

ELLIOTT: I had to remove a bit of the flour and replaced it with cornstarch. When they bake, it keeps them from baking flat. They hold their thickness, allowing the outside to create a strong "unbreakable" barrier that's crunchy and the inside perfectly chewy. I couldn't just make a simple old tollhouse cookie.....

FSE: What is the hardest thing about your job and how do you deal with that?

ELLIOTT: Time and Space. I go in very early, adjusting my production time to be out of the restaurant's way as staff tends to come in the early afternoon. So setting my alarm for 3:30 a.m. is no stranger to me. I utilize the space I have. Sometimes people walking by the restaurant think it's open early because when they look in the windows the bar is covered in cakes, whoopie pies, breads and custard, all cooling, waiting to be put away.

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

ELLIOTT: What first comes to mind is coffee!!! However I like to challenge myself by constantly trying new things and adding little touches to it of my own. I try to keep menus not so "traditional " or "expecting". Although, some menu items aren't going away but I can always change them. It's always a plus if there's a small piece of history to a dessert. For instance Marlborough pie (an apple custard) was brought over by the colonists in the late 1600's. It was a forgotten dessert, but I turned it into a bar, then caramelized it like a Creme brûlée. I used the apple peels, transforming them into cinnamon skin chips to add another crunchy component to the dish aside from the brûlée top.

FSE: What do you see yourself doing 20 years from now?

ELLIOTT: In 20 years, I see myself with a successful family- owned restaurant. There's nothing worse than being apart from family especially when you are working so hard. To bring the two things you love most together would ensure happiness for both me and my loved ones.

FSE: In your spare time, what do you do for fun?

ELLIOTT: I consider myself a "foodie". So at any opportunity to try something new or travel to trending restaurants I'm there! Aside from that I love planning my next "getaway". Vacations, road trips and long weekends are the best stress relievers!