

Secrets of Success

an online exclusive from Foodservice East

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



Like an alchemist brewing up a potion, good bartenders such as Dana Seabury at Boston's Tamo in the Seaport Hotel weave and mix different flavors and textures to delight and excite their customers' palates.

Drawn to the industry in her teens, Seabury mixes things up between classic favorites like "Dark and Stormy" and her "Zen-gria" or the "Fuzzy Zoeller" which combines pink lemonade, Absolut vodka and iced tea.

FSE: How did you decide to become a bartender? Were you always interested in cooking/creating different tastes?

SEABURY: I have always been into design and building and originally wanted to be an architect. Instead, I build with liquids...taste and texture instead.

FSE: What's your background? Did you do other types of work before this or were you always drawn to the hospitality industry?

SEABURY: I became hooked on hospitality in my teens. I was a hostess, then a college student, then a server, then a college student again and then behind the stick, so to speak – classic bartender history.

FSE: How did you happen to come to Tamo?

SEABURY: I came to Seaport to track down my friend and former manager, Steve Wood, for a reference (pre cell-phone days!) A month later, I was working here in room service, and soon afterwards, a position opened up in what is now Tamo. Thanks for the reference, Steve!

FSE: What's popular this year? Are people returning to the classic cocktails?

SEABURY: People are returning to the classics – they aren't afraid of gin or bitters anymore. Similar to comfort food, people are drinking what they know and like.

FSE: This summer you're offering Harbor Island Martinis – what's the most popular and how did you come to create it?

SEABURY: The Grape Island is by far the most popular. We have had it on the menu previously, under different aliases. I don't recall how it came to be – trial and error, perhaps?

FSE: What kinds of things influence the drinks you develop?

SEABURY: I like to try new things and create drinks almost like a potion...a little of this, a little of that. Our drink list has a bit of everything but the ordinary.

FSE: What's your 'secret of success'?

SEABURY: I think I have succeeded by not being afraid to try new things, listening to what guests are looking for, and having the support of my co-workers and managers throughout my time at Seaport... Just shy of 10 years! Also, I give a lot of credit to good initial training and skilled colleagues I work with.

FSE: At Tamo, what kinds of beverages are most popular – cocktails, wines, beers? How popular are all the great new craft beers?

SEABURY: We have a nice selection of wines at Tamo; there's something for everyone. Our "Zen-Gria" is really refreshing and we have a great selection of local craft brews on draft. My family is from Maine, so I tend to favor those!

FSE: Are more people eating at the bar these days? What can you tell me about the bar menu? Do certain items go particularly well with different cocktails?

SEABURY: People are drawn to Tamo for the drinks (and our seaside location) but our menu pleases palates. It is filled with great appetizers, salads and sandwiches. My favorite is Chef Klein's Tuna Tartar and the burger is terrific. Flight Night with the Sliders is delish!

FSE: Tell me about your "addiction to corks"!

SEABURY: It started out with me saving corks from nice wines and special occasions. Then I began saving just about any cork. Before I knew it, I had bags full of them. I feel like I will do something great with them. Maybe build a cork boat!

FSE: What do you think the next big trend will be in alcoholic beverages? Is molecular gastronomy influencing the bar as well as the kitchen?

SEABURY: Alcoholic beverages will always be evolving. Fresh ingredients always make the drinks better and keep the guests returning.

FSE: Do you create non-alcoholic drinks as well and if so, what kinds of drinks are in favor this year in that category?

SEABURY: We've created a few here and there but we tend not to create many non-alcoholic drinks.

FSE: I just read something from Zagat about a downturn in nightlife/bar business in New York this year – are you seeing effects from the economy on business, like people not drinking as much or trading down? Also, cocktail prices seem to have reached new highs in recent years – do you see them trending higher or coming down a bit?

SEABURY: I think people tend to drink both when times are good and not so good. I believe we'll see cocktail prices stay where they are for a bit; what I think we will see more of is drink specials, to entice guests to come in.

FSE: What's in your refrigerator at home?

SEABURY: I have some cucumber simple syrup steeping, Peak Nut Brown and Geary's Summer, and Taleggio cheese. The red wine on the rack has been a bit depleted.

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