

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.



Two young women from Connecticut and Ireland who began working together at Costello's Tavern in Jamaica Plain, MA recently opened JJ Foley's Café in Boston's SoWa neighborhood next to the classic JJ Foley's pub. Katie Grealish and Emma McEwen share an appreciation of Boston sports, good food, friendly service and the art of creating comfortable spaces. All sandwiches and salads are under \$10, and entrees include homemade Shepard's Pie, mac and cheese, meatloaf and fish and chips.

FSE: Affordably priced neighborhood restaurants with a cozy feeling seem to be coming into vogue - what do you attribute that to?

GREALISH: We are very fortunate to have such a great choice of places to eat right on our doorstep. Neighborhood restaurants and pubs are doing a fantastic job at producing great food at an affordable price that sometimes may give some high-end places a run for their money!

FSE: When did you open Costello's Tavern in Jamaica Plain? How large is it and is the menu like the one at J.J. Foley's?

GREALISH: I opened Katie's Kitchen, a local neighborhood tavern seating 70 people at Costello's in June of 2005. The menu is somewhat similar to Foley's but we concentrate more on burgers, hot dogs and pizza. Also, like JJ Foley's, we serve a Brunch on weekends.

FSE: What is your arrangement with J.J. Foley's and how did it come about?

GREALISH: JJ Foley's has been a family run bar since 1909 in the South End and now are very excited to see the neighborhood change in such a positive way. The new dining room and kitchen was finally finished earlier this year. We knew each other through the industry and were very excited to combine our specialties.

FSE: How many people does Foley's accommodate?

GREALISH: JJ Foley's seats 60 people in the dining room, 50 in the tavern. We can accommodate private parties up to 150.

FSE: What's the average check?

GREALISH: Appetizers are \$6 - \$12, sandwiches and entrees \$7-\$14. We also have daily specials where chef Michael McEwen can show off his talent of putting an edge on comfort food.

FSE: What inspired the Pressed Fluffernutter sandwich?

GREALISH: Our chef grew up on the North Shore not far from the Fluff factory, the peanut butter and Fluff sandwich was a local favorite.

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

GREALISH: Well that is yet to be determined! We hope to be a great success and benefit to the neighborhood. We work well together and know each other's strengths and weaknesses and use that to our advantage. We try to get to know our guests and if you do, you find out very quickly if you're on the right path!

We both continue to serve and bartend and this helps a lot to stay in touch with what we are trying to do. Our staff and the Foleys are great and we have a great working relationship with them. We treat them with respect and they do a great job for us, and that is a huge part of any restaurant's success.

Positive thinking, dedication and hard work are key, We think that to succeed and survive in the restaurant business, you have to have a genuine love for it. And that we do!

FSE: What's next? Will there be other neighborhood pubs?

GREALISH: Absolutely - but one step at a time! Consistency is the name of the game and right now we want to concentrate on making Foley's the best it can be.

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