

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.



Jack Bardy, owner of Pho Republique in Boston's South End and operating partner at Beehive, was working for a foreign development agency that provided technology to human rights groups around the world when he had, as he puts it, "an epiphany over a bowl of Pho in a mom and pop Vietnamese restaurant."

His first Boston restaurant, Pho Republique, opened in Cambridge in '97 and was later destroyed by fire shortly after his second unit opened in the Hub.

Bill Keravuori, senior v.p. of the real estate development firm, the Abbey Group, and entrepreneur Darryl Settles invited him to operate Beehive, a restaurant/jazz and music club that opened last summer in the underbelly of the historic Cyclorama Building.

FSE: How would you describe Beehive and its cuisine?

BARDY: I always had a dream of the Beehive concept. It's in an artists' building and it's about art and music. Anything goes. It's rustic, Bohemian fare with old European and American influences – a sophisticated comfort food menu.

FSE: What sets it apart from other neighborhood places?

BARDY: It's a restaurant with 200 seats for dining and another 100 outdoors. We're moderately priced, mid-range with a check average of \$30 to \$35 with drinks.

FSE: The space was once a boiler room and woodshop and now has antique chandeliers, draperies, a stage, and oversized works of art on its brick walls. The transformation to restaurant/club serving a late night crowd evokes an artist's studio. What role does the music play?

BARDY: Boston has some of the best musicians in the country. A jazz club sounds good on paper but it's very hard to execute well. Right now, it's just a baby. It will take a couple of years to find its groove. It's all about the repertoire of the performers. It's about finding musicians that fit into our space and play to our room. The music needs to blend in with the atmosphere and not overwhelm it.

The customers can listen to the music, but there are areas in the restaurant where they can meet with friends and talk. It allows a kind of free form kind of evening. Music can add a great vibe to a restaurant.

FSE: Which comes first – the restaurant or the club?

BARDY: We are a restaurant, first and foremost. The two come together well at our newest addition, a Live Music Brunch on Saturday and Sunday. Our food is eclectic, edgy bistro fare.

FSE: What do you expect this year in a challenging economy?

BARDY: When I opened Pho in '97 there were some years of a weak economy, and I had double digit growth. People always go out to eat. The corporate holiday parties may suffer but if you have a quality product, the best will do fine.

FSE: What would you say is the secret of your success?

BARDY: I'd say it's the ability to run a restaurant as a profit-making business.

FSE: When you eat out, where do you like to go?

BARDY: I really like casual local joints with simple food. I'm a restaurant junkie.

FOODSERVICE EAST

The Business-to-Business Publication of the \$80 Billion Northeast Foodservice Industry



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