

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.



Michael Schlow, who with his zany partners, Christopher Myers and Esti Parsons, opened Boston's Radius downtown in 1999, proceeded to rack up a long list of "Best" accolades including the James Beard Award for Best Chef-Northeast in 2000.

His credentials include stints with numerous top restaurants and chefs, among them New York's Coco Pazzo and Le Madri; Sapore de Mare on Long Island; Ariel & Michael in New York; New Jersey's La Cucina and Ryland Inn; and Café Louis in Boston. In 2000, he opened Via Matta with his partners in the city's Back Bay, and later, Great Bay in Kenmore Square, before stepping out on his own to open Alta Strada in Wellesley, MA and later in the MGM Casino at Foxwoods in Connecticut.

Giving back has always been important to Schlow who travels each year to NJ to work with a black tie fundraiser Dinner of Hope that benefits children with AIDS.

FSE: What is it about New Jersey that seems to breed great chefs?

SCHLOW: The water.

FSE: What led you to become a chef?

DELUTY: My travels. Working in Paris and Italy!

SCHLOW: I was always drawn to the excitement of the restaurant business, loved everything that went into cooking (the meticulous behavior, the artistry, the dedication, the interaction).

FSE: Who were your early mentors?

SCHLOW: Craig Shelton, Pino Luongo, Jean Luis Palladin, Joel Robuchon. I always thought, even as a kid that Julia Child and the Galloping Gourmet were about the coolest thing on television since Space Ghost. As for The Frugal Gourmet, I always knew there was something wrong with that guy.

FSE: What's the greatest compliment you've ever gotten for your food?

SCHLOW: The greatest compliment is whenever someone approaches me long after a meal and still remembers in detail what they ate.

FSE: What's the hardest thing about being a chef/restaurateur?

SCHLOW: Dividing your time. You could easily work 24 hours/day, 7 days/week.

FSE: What do you enjoy most?

SCHLOW: There are so many things that I enjoy about this business. There is no one thing that is my favorite. It's that there are so many interesting components to the job that keeps it fresh and new for me.

FSE: If you weren't a chef, what would you be doing?

SCHLOW: There are many things that are of interest to me but I'm not sure I could do any of these full-time: photography, something to do with horseracing (certainly not a jockey), architecture, advertising, and music.

FSE: How tough has this year been and what do you see ahead? Are you optimistic?

SCHLOW: I'm always optimistic. I don't think about it so much as whether it's a bad year. It's always hard. You want to be better this year; you always want to be fresh, creative and at the top of your game and it's always difficult to maintain.

FSE: What's the labor market like at the moment? Are you finding it easier to hire good quality personnel?

SCHLOW: I'm not finding it easier. It's always difficult to find people with the core qualities of passion and drive.

FSE: What's ahead in the next year for your restaurant group?

SCHLOW: We plan to continue to move forward; to continue to be better than we were yesterday and look for opportunities that will be fun, exciting and continue to motivate.

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Susan G. Holaday, Editor & Publisher
Richard E. Dolby, Publisher Emeritus

197 Eighth St., No. 728
Charlestown, MA 02129-4234
617-242-2217 / 800-852-5212

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