

# 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.



*Paul Booras, former owner of several restaurants in the Greater Boston area and most recently director of emerging brands for Legal Sea Foods, shifted gears and joined Unidine Corp. late last year as director of culinary systems and services.*

*He's made a transition from helping create the Legal Test Kitchen concept to implementing food production systems for a Newton, MA-based food and dining management services firm with accounts in senior services and business and industry.*

**FSE:** What led you to move from the commercial sector to the non-commercial side of the industry?

**BOORAS:** The driving consideration was the upside growth potential I see in what's going on with America's aging demographics. It's the perfect time to get involved in this.

**FSE:** Do you miss being behind a stove?

**BOORAS:** I do. I'm a chef no matter where my career leads me. I always challenge myself and this gives me the opportunity to do that. I work with cooks in our accounts and that lets you stay connected and learn. If I didn't learn, I'd think I failed. I derive great pleasure from my craft and find being able to pursue as well as mentor an art form as a life's work very inspiring.

**FSE:** You've developed a "Culinary Council" of chefs who will serve as leaders and create new programs and initiatives. What are the challenges and rewards?

**BOORAS:** The gifts of an entrepreneurial upbringing and years of business ownership have given me an ability to define and capitalize on emerging market opportunities. I have the good fortune of utilizing my career experiences in a way I never imagined as a chef-owner.

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

BOORAS: My secret is simple – define and make peace with your weaknesses and capitalize on your strengths. Surround yourself with complimentary personalities. Mentor the development and achievement of others. Take calculated risks and listen to your gut. Only you can define the ceiling to your success!

**FSE: What are some of the trends you're seeing in foodservice management today?**

BOORAS: There's a resurgent desire to gravitate to scratch cooking. This is a point of differentiation for us and important to our procurement. Quality of products is very important. There are a lot of sensible reasons to keep the food chain local. Saving energy is a huge piece.

**FSE: What can you tell us about the recipe system you're developing?**

BOORAS: We are scratching the surface of developing a seasonally specific recipe system that takes advantage of naturally occurring 'super foods.' Coming to this segment, I wanted to see how specific food selections could have a health benefit to the market we feed – for example, elderly people with suppressed immune systems. We're looking at cruciferous and green leafy vegetables and traditional grains such as millet and quinoa that meet our costing model. It's a challenge to feed people three meals a day for, say \$5.

We see a wealth of opportunity in unrefined grains, legume-based pastas, carbohydrate rich foods and starches that break down sugars that can adversely affect sugar balance. The value in this kind of diet is that it can substitute for protein-based dishes that have fewer nutritional elements.

We began making a list of 'super foods' and are looking at building cycle menus and seeing how to include them. It will be a constantly evolving process.

**FSE: How do you train chefs and cooks to use these foods?**

BOORAS: Delivery is a large piece – we have to deliver the tools and training materials to everyone in operations. We'll do phone webinars with chefs on recipes with purchasing information that's specific to where they are, with regional nuances.

**FSE: What do you do in your spare time?**

BOORAS: At Legal, I converted a leased fleet of trucks to run on recycled vegetable oil. At Unidine, I have a company that takes our used cooking oil free – we used to pay a rendering company to take it. I was looking for a way to recycle used kitchen oil and transform it to bio-diesel fuel.

## FOODSERVICE EAST

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



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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