

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.



PHOTO CREDIT: Michael Wechsler Photography

Richard Friedman, president and chief executive officer of Cambridge, MA-based Carpenter & Co., Inc., a real estate and investment firm, graduated from Dartmouth with a B.A. in philosophy. It's stood him in good stead in a career filled with thoughtfully planned development projects, beginning with the Hyatt Regency Cambridge in the 70's. His newest high profile hotel, The Liberty Hotel, is an adaptive reuse of the former 19th century Charles Street Jail.

FSE: How did you become a developer and what led you to do so many hotel projects?

FRIEDMAN: I got into development indirectly in the early 1970's when I developed the Hyatt Regency Cambridge. That project was the result of a warehouse, which was subsequently torn down. I hit it off with the Hyatt people and started doing other hotels with them all over the country. One thing just led to another. Hotels are a combination of retail, real estate, show business, etc. It's a perfect fit for me.

FSE: In the urban settings in which many of your projects are located, how do you create hotel restaurants that become destinations in and of themselves such as Henrietta's Table, which was one of the first restaurants in the northeast to focus on sustainable foods, or Rialto in The Charles Hotel in Cambridge?

FRIEDMAN: It's very important to create restaurants that are destinations and it's really quite simple: great design, great food, great service and a fanatic attention to detail.

FSE: How did the Lyons Group become involved in the foodservice side of The Liberty Hotel and what role do the restaurants play in the overall project?

FRIEDMAN: The Lyons Group came in at the end but they have enormous talent and create a lot of vitality. In independent hotels like the Liberty, foodservice and bars are how you make your reputation

since the local community judges you by them and not by your national reputation, which would come with a chain. We strive to have the best bars and restaurants in Boston with a lot of energy and a lot of creativity.

FSE: Both the Liberty and the Charles show extraordinary attention to simple yet sophisticated elements that are both welcoming and comforting. Can you say something about the role design plays?

FRIEDMAN: Design is absolutely essential. Almost every hotel in this country is badly designed and we are fanatic about selecting great designers, challenging them to do their best and we have a lot of input ourselves in the design. Customers are sick of cookie cutter products and are sick of hotels and restaurants that have nothing to do with where they are geographically and sociologically.

FSE: What was the biggest challenge in converting an historic jail into a luxury hotel?

FRIEDMAN: There were many challenges. From a financial standpoint, it was convincing financial partners that this project was physically doable. From a construction standpoint, it was an engineering marvel to keep the costs reasonably reasonable and not have the building fall down during construction. The Liberty was a huge undertaking and we had a great team.

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

FRIEDMAN: I make no distinction between my business and personal friends. I try to only do business with people that I like and then there’s really no difference between work and play. I’m also a classic workaholic.

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

For more online only exclusives, please visit www.foodserviceeast.com