

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.



Before there was a craft beer movement, 21 years ago, there was young chef with a vision. Marc Kadish, creator of Sunset Grill & Tap in Allston, MA, developed an operation that quickly evolved into a legend among aficionados of great beers and ales.

FSE: How did you get started in this industry?

KADISH: It's the old kitchen cliché: born in a stock pot, raised in a Bain Marie. My grandparents owned a penny candy store and my father was in the hotel business, where I would spend hours hanging out with the top chefs. As a kid I would dine out for most meals. My favorite food was escargot.

I was a frequent diner at Joe Tecce's, the No Name, The Rib Room and Polynesian Village at the old Somerset Hotel on Commonwealth Ave. in Boston, Jack & Marion's deli in Brookline, the European in the North End, and Giovanni's in Framingham. I knew all the best diners for breakfast. Good food is just who I am. I don't know anything different.

FSE: You've been on the cutting edge of beer – scouting out great craft beer, matching beer with foods, and creating recipes using good beers – for a very long time. You've been at the forefront of creating a culture where beer bars can flourish here. How did you decide to go in this direction?

KADISH: I'm a beer slut. I could never say no to a new beer and I'm a beer geek. In opening up a new place we wanted to do a few things the best and over the top. Micro-brewed beer was always our theme and specialty from day one and we quickly emerged as the place for the best beer selection. We did the first formal chocolate and beer tastings in Boston and brought notoriety to the city and beer as the scene was developing.

FSE: One of your slogan's is "life's too short to drink cheap beer." What changes have you seen in beers since you began?

KADISH: It's been huge. Micro-brews are called craft beer now. Some beers became big, others perished. But the sophistication level is huger than ever. Who knew sour beers would become a hot category that people would pay 10 bucks a pop for? Belgians and IPA's are still booming. Competition is out of control.

FSE: What would you say has been the 'secret' of your success?

KADISH: That's a secret! No, it's paying attention to detail, hard work, and perseverance. We keep it fresh and are always looking for new things. We don't let it get 'same old, same old.' We have all the old favorites but we have new beers coming in the door every day. I like to keep it fun and exciting.

FSE: What are your favorite beer/food combinations? What kinds of beers lend themselves to use in recipes?

KADISH: I love chocolate and beer, pizza and beer, nachos and beer, mussels and beer -I better stop because I can't think of much that doesn't go with beer.

If you pick beer in terms of sweet, bitter, strong, smoky, fruity etc., which are all easy to find, you'll match up well with what you're cooking. It's easier than wine because the flavors are more diverse in beer.

FSE: Where do you see the craft beer movement going?

KADISH: It will continue to boom, grow and become more mainstream. Competition will start to get ugly because there is only so much beer consumed every day. Still, it's a great time to be a beer drinker and not too late to jump in. I know there are still a few out there that just have not gotten to yet.

FSE: Sunset Grill has been described as "legendary" with its 112 taps and wide variety of brews. What's been the biggest challenge creating and maintaining a legend?

KADISH: People's expectation are bigger. We have to work harder on freshness, service, updating, glassware cleanliness, line cleaning, having the newest, coolest brews and not resting on our reputation from the past. We know we are only as good as our last meal and beer served.

FSE: What lies ahead for beer in this country and particularly, here in the Northeast?

KADISH: I see more and more good beer, brewers trying to out- do each other, more gourmet flavors, more beer geeks and website blogs, and Twitter, which all equal more respect for beer!

FSE: What do you like to eat and drink when you're not working? Do you cook with beer at home?

KADISH: I'm spoiled rotten, when it comes to beer. I like full flavors and something i have not had before that's fresh. I don't drink as much as you would think. I drink a lot of fresh brewed gourmet ice teas. I'm a fan of rustic, ethnic peasant food. It is sad but I rarely cook with beer at home. I hate to crack a good beer and have it evaporate in a pan, whereas at Sunset with 112 beers on tap, we spill more than some places sell.

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