

DAN COLASURDO

EXPANDING AND EXPERIENCING, EVERYDAY

By Doug Mace

Dan Colasurdo wears many hats and in his experiences has worn some that you would never guess. From service staff, to owner, to manager, to script writer and back again, Dan is a great example of the importance of balanced, educational and experiential learning that can be so successful in the food, beverage, and hospitality industry.

Since growing up in northern New Jersey and working in a pizzeria, Dan worked around food from a young age. While attending school at the University of Maryland he also worked at a local bar honing his service and bartending skills. By the ripe age of 24 he was already the operating partner at a restaurant in Silver Spring, Maryland called Cafe Bello.

For a lot of people owning their own business is often the lifetime goal, but for Dan it was just the beginning of a long journey. "It was a lot of fun, I was 24 to 27 years old. It was cool to be in charge and making my own decisions for the business." While he wasn't burnt out, he was starting to feel the repercussions of long hours as a restaurateur.

When the right opportunity came along Dan found himself working in Fells Point at Bond Street Social. A friend of a friend introduced Dan to the now General Manager of Bond Street and they hit



it off. So, as Bond was opening, Dan began a new chapter in his life.

Since 2011 Dan has served as a Bartender and Service Manager while also placing his focus on the beverage menu. "We split up the staff and the product so it makes it easier on everyone." The experiences as an owner are helpful, but it may be the studying and outside effort that Dan puts in that make him perfect for the role he plays.

In March of 2016, Dan passed his Certified Sommelier exam placing him in a class that many industry professionals only hope to reach. In explaining his work ethic, Dan went on to describe some of the

(continued on page 16)



(continued from page 14)

"homework" necessary to gain knowledge that surpasses everyday hospitality workers. "I'm only exposed to what I work with. We (Dan and other local aspiring sommeliers) do a tasting every week with about twelve of us to try new stuff."

Beer lovers rejoice as Dan is not lost on the importance of the grain as much as the grape. When asked about his interest in pursuing a Cicerone certification he stated, "I'm currently a certified beer server, which is the first step and can be done online, but it's pretty intense stuff. A lot of the production stuff is way more [to learn]. Wine is more of expanding what you know." Expanding what you know in a variety of fields and experiences is what he seems to be best at.

After owning his own restaurant and achieving distinguished levels of educational success most would assume that becoming a bartender slash Manager is a challenging test in humility. Furthermore that it becomes a fine line to toe. Dan welcomes the challenge and draws on it as another opportunity to learn.

"It's fun and it makes everyday different." Dan continued explaining the benefit of working side by side with employees, "Sometimes you see someone do the wrong thing and you ask, 'What are they doing that for?' Then you're able to understand why." Without missing a beat, and with a chuckle and a confident grin he went on, "At the same time you think, 'I know I could've done the right thing.'" Instead of viewing the dichotomy as difficult, Dan finds ways to engage

his staff, demand the best of them, and learn from them at the same time they are learning from him.

Challenging his staff comes from the ways he challenges himself to always improve. With pride Dan said, "We don't tell people to do things we wouldn't do ourselves." A manager who is working beside you and improving on their own provides a lighthouse beacon for each member of the team and the proof is in the pudding.

With drinks like the Smoked BLT on Rye (featuring Bulliet Rye with lemon and tonic and finished with a small spray of Lagavulin scotch) the breadth of knowledge is evident. With the balancing act of managing and bartending, the experience is evident, and with one conversation the passion is evident. ■



Favorite TV Show: I love Impractical Jokers. It's on all the time and it cracks me up anytime I watch it

Favorite Movie: Growing up Top Gun was definitely my favorite, but there was a period in college when that changed. My roommates and I didn't pay our cable bill for a few months, so all we were left with was a TV with a DVD player hooked up to it in our living room. The thing was that the DVD player drawer didn't open so the only movie we had to choose from was the Freddie Prinze Jr. classic, "Summer Catch." I've seen it probably over 200 times...

Something Nobody Knows About You?: I have a buddy from college who lives in LA and works for Fox Searchlight, and every so often he hits me up for ideas for movies or TV shows. Some of the ones we've come up with have actually made it pretty far up the line. I've also written two full-length movies that get shopped around every once in awhile, but they haven't made it nearly as far.