

WASHINGTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

Friday, January 8, 2010

Dean Gold: Keeping it real

Washington Business Journal - by [Missy Frederick](#) Staff Reporter

It has taken nearly a quarter century, but Dean Gold finally has the authentic, neighborhood Italian restaurant he always wanted. Gold started in restaurants, worked his way up the ladder at **Whole Foods Market Inc.** and opened Dino in Cleveland Park almost five years ago. But it was when Gold took over the cooking that Dino really came into its own.

How did you get started in the restaurant business? I spent 10 years at Whole Foods, but prior to that I worked in the restaurant business for about 10 years, mostly doing front of the house stuff in L.A. At some point when I was working in restaurants, I realized I wasn't getting any closer to having my own restaurant, so I began looking for something else, and ended up at Whole Foods.

So how did you end up moving from there to Dino? When Whole Foods began to lose its vision, I at some point left my opportunities in management and went into the stores. I had a good time, but my career there seemed to be petering out. Then I had a heart attack and had open-heart surgery and began re-evaluating my life. I was sitting in a trattoria in Italy 90 days after almost dying in the surgery. I realized I was doing almost 100 percent of my shopping at Whole Foods and yet not eating healthfully. So I began revamping the way I ate, removing commercial processed food from my diet. As I regained my strength, I began working toward opening my own place. I remember saying when I started working there, that in 10 years I would leave to open my own place. Nine years and 361 days later, I had signed my lease in Cleveland Park.

How did you end up in the kitchen? The first chef I had didn't work out because the food had gotten away from what I really wanted. The second chef had some personal problems and ended up leaving. The third chef came in and started doing something different. He had a French background, so we started working on a combination of French and Italian cuisine. When he went on a personal leave, I decided to keep the position open for him. But I started spending more time in the kitchen, taking over his duties, getting things better organized. And I started seeing a lot of what had been roadblocks to our success. These were all minor changes to make things run more efficiently, simplifying things, making things more classically Italian. I decided I didn't want to go back to the way things were. It was a different market we were in — chefs like Wolfgang Puck opening places up, and restaurants having to compete with that. Line cooks could leave for big salaries, work at corporate-driven restaurants.



Dean Gold

[View Larger](#)