



**U.S. Small Business Administration Honors  
Portsmouth Restaurateur**

***Jay McSharry named 2013 Small Business Person of the Year***

**Concord, NH:** The U.S. Small Business Administration recently named Jay McSharry of Portsmouth the SBA 2013 New Hampshire Small Business Person of the Year. Jay McSharry is a successful restaurateur widely recognized for his leadership role in the vibrant Portsmouth restaurant community. McSharry will be recognized along with several other outstanding entrepreneurs at the annual NH SBA Small Business Awards event on May 22.

A 1990 graduate of the University of New Hampshire, McSharry began his working career in film and video production as a free-lancer for a number of firms in New York City and also worked at an advertising firm in New York. During a trip back to his college stomping grounds in New Hampshire, Jay realized that Portsmouth presented some interesting growth opportunities for the restaurant, hospitality and tourism industries. Despite some lean years and a high retail vacancy rate, McSharry saw the promise of a historic downtown in New Hampshire's only port city.

In 2000, with the help of a small SBA-backed loan from Fleet Bank and a book about how to run a business, McSharry launched Jumpin Jay's Fish Café with \$80,000 and 20 tables. Jay's location coincided with a downtown revival and helped make Portsmouth a dining destination.

Following Jumpin Jay's success, McSharry teamed up with several partners on other ventures, generally within a one mile radius of his initial restaurant. Today, McSharry's other operations include Moxy - Modern American Tapas, re-branded in 2012 from the original 106 Grill; The Red Door Lounge (2003); and Dos Amigos Burritos (2003) with five locations. Combined, the eight restaurants currently employ over 125 people. McSharry also started and sold three restaurants that are still operating and employ another 75. New restaurant operations are notoriously difficult to finance. McSharry knew this and he took advantage of SBA's 7a and 504 Loan programs throughout his business career. He obtained six SBA backed loans over the years, for over a half million dollars.

Between 2010 and 2012, while the number of restaurants remained constant, the combined operations have seen an impressive 25% growth in food and beverage sales, with equally impressive individual growth rates of between 13% and 42%. McSharry takes great pride when "alumni" from his restaurants advance in the culinary world or start their own businesses and he often gives them a hand.

Jay McSharry uses his success to help build the Portsmouth brand. He is on the Greater Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce board and is an active member and leader in the growing Restaurant Week, which brings thousands to the city to dine, stay and shop. He worked with local businesses to develop a unique downtown map and is engaged in a variety of other community activities and organizations, including Taste of the Nation, Share Our Strength, the Portsmouth Music Hall and the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. In 2009 he established the Jay McSharry Diversity Scholarship Fund at his alma mater, the University of New Hampshire.

McSharry does not shy away when situations require his personal commitment, such as with his support for using locally grown produce from a growing number of small farms in the NH seacoast area. While many farmers sell their products at local Farmer's Markets, McSharry recognized a tremendous opportunity for local farmers to collaborate and establish a delivery system to sell their harvest to local restaurants on a daily basis and is building an inventory and ordering portal that will help promote the growth of "Farm to Table" focused restaurants in Portsmouth and beyond. He has helped organize the small farmers and growers and is currently establishing a not for profit distribution company. McSharry's restaurants already source as much food as possible from local farmers.

Bill Young, senior vice president/chief of lending at Optima Bank & Trust Co., works with McSharry on the chamber board. "He's very visible in the community and he's been one of the stronger voices in promoting Portsmouth as a brand," Young said. "He's asking, 'How do you draw people not only to restaurants, but also to retail.' He sees the big picture. One of the things he is really involved in is Restaurant Week, and he helped increase participation from 15 restaurants to 40. And he's working on Shop Portsmouth, asking how do we build business in the community? I give him a lot of credit to open a new restaurant in a recession and convincing me to finance it."

The web page for Moxy - Modern American Tapas, McSharry's newest endeavor defines Moxy as "self-possessed confidence, an attitude of fearlessness in everyday circumstances." Mcsharry's commitment to Portsmouth and its business community give witness to "moxy" as a common ingredient in all his ventures.

"We look forward to honoring Jay McSharry on May 22," stated SBA district director Greta Johansson. "Despite the challenges of the hospitality industry and several economically challenging years, McSharry beat the odds not just once, but nearly a dozen times, launching one successful restaurant after another."

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To learn more about the NH event on May 22, visit [www.nhsbdc.org](http://www.nhsbdc.org); nationally, SBA celebrates National Small Business Week the week of June 17-21, 2013. McSharry will compete with the nation's top small businesses for the honor of National Small Business Person of the Year during SBA's National Small Business Week. The announcement will be made during an event in Washington DC on June 21.