

Short Order

TECHNOLOGY

Chat, Chart, and Check

Web sites give the inside scoop on restaurants and the industry. By Amanda Baltazar

The quick-serve restaurant industry relies and flourishes on networking. So it's no surprise that the number of Web sites offering dining recommendations and insider industry information is growing. QSR takes a look at some of the online options for keeping an eye on customers and industry insiders.



www.citysearch.com CitySearch breaks down its restaurant searches by city, food type, price, and special features, such as "BYOB" and "Historic Setting." There are reviews, and some restaurant listings lead directly to the eatery's Web site. There's plenty of space for quick-serves, with restaurant categories ranging from Pizza to Hamburgers and Deli.

www.roadfood.com RoadFood doesn't just give you a list of restaurants but also links up with Yahoo! to provide a map with search results clearly marked. The site includes sample menu items, photos of dishes, and information including wheelchair accessibility, outdoor seating options, and delivery availability.



www.chowhound.com Chowhound provides user-generated content with a mission "to allow unbiased consumers to share honest chow opinions with their fellow consumers." Geographical areas are fairly broad, but each has thousands of postings and within each visitors can search by keywords. The fun Topical section includes categories such as "Not About Food" and "Cookware."

www.fodors.com There are no fancy bells and whistles, but Fodor's offers just what readers need when looking for res-

taurant suggestions while traveling—reviews, prices, addresses, maps, and the ability to add their own reviews.



www.egullet.org eGullet is a forum where users gather to discuss restaurant goings-on in cities or states. There's a chatty, informal feel, and topics range from new restaurant openings to advice and complaints.



www.fohboh.com Written by industry insiders, FOHBOH is a social-networking site about the restaurant industry, for the restaurant industry. Even the Web site's name reflects that it's for those familiar with industry lingo. Forty percent of its members are managers, executives, and owners, while other restaurant employees, vendors, consultants, and allies to the industry make up the rest.

www.biteclub.com There's also an insider feel at virtual community Bite Club, where foodservice insiders can swap messages, contribute to blogs, search for jobs or employees, get information on the restaurant scene, or do some self-promotion.

www.we8there.com As well as restaurant reviews, we8there.com provides a featured chef and recipe, an article from *Wine X* magazine, and an "Anecdotes" section for users to praise or growl about recent experiences.



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Even if you aren't flocking to the Web, your customers are. Technomic found that Americans are visiting restaurants' Web sites and are likely to do it again.

96%

were satisfied with the online experience

91%

would be likely to do it again

79%

have visited a restaurant's Web site

37%

have ordered food online

44%

visit once a month or more

SOURCE: TECHNOMIC 2007/AMERICAN EXPRESS MARKET BRIEF