

Restaurateur of Arizona



Restaura TOUR OF ARIZONA Food & Beverage News from around our state

An e-mail from Melanie Gurvits at The Library of Wine & Tea in Prescott announcing the launch of streaming video on ustream.tv got us thinking about how Arizona F&B pros are using technology and social media to spread the word about your operations. Here's Melanie's take on the reaction to her "bar cam."



A night at The Library as seen on UStream

"We've had a fantastic response from our friends outside the USA and from those who just can't make it because of being outside of Prescott. They all feel like they're still part of our Library family." Global followers of The Library's streaming videos hail from areas as far flung as Japan, Africa and Dubai. Many are military serving in the Middle East, "so it's fun and brings all people closer," says Gurvits.

More and more Arizona restaurants are using videos on their own websites and on sharing sites ranging from YouTube to Yahoo video, to promote business.

Scottsdale-based DineKing typically spends about 90 minutes on site at a restaurant to shoot "a two-minute commercial explaining the cuisine, inspiration, menu and the overall 'vibe' of their establishment." Restaurants already being showcased with DineKing's professionally produced and edited spots include Posh, Elements, Pure Sushi, Tomaso's, Roka

Akor, The Mission and Autostrada.

Key Magazine now offers KEY 360 Spotlight, a "rich media experience" of slideshows, virtual tours, podcasts, HD video clips and mapping. More than a dozen F&B and hospitality venues have already signed on: Arizona Broadway Theatre, Avanti, Brix Wine Spot, Cadillac Ranch, Carefree Station, English Rose Tea Room, Fort McDowell Casino, Greasewood Flat, Harrold's Corral, Macayo's, O'Donoghue's, Scottsdale Plaza Resort, Sedona Rouge and Tradiciones.

On David Mink's blog on the Dream Systems Media website (the company has offices in Queen Creek and Sandy, UT), he advocates restaurants' use of Twitter coupons. Mink's vision (as he calls it):

1. Every restaurant that has a "meal card" (punch card with, for example, buy 10, get one free) that includes their Twitter and Facebook URLs on the card.
2. Every restaurant instructs their patrons to sign up via Twitter and Facebook for daily menu updates and daily coupons.
3. Every restaurant posts their daily special and accompanying coupon at 10:30 a.m. via Twitter and Facebook.
4. Every day the restaurant sees an (influx) of 20-50 patrons who would not have come otherwise, but were reminded/persuaded/convinced via a simple Facebook update or Tweet.

Savvy restaurateurs that they are, Fox Restaurant Concepts has already jumped on the social media bandwagon. Vice President of Marketing Debbie Porter tell us that Fox Restaurant Concepts already has a Twitter presence and that, by the time you read this, they will have launched a Facebook page and blog.

"Our goal is to jump in and do our best to take advantage of all that the Internet and newer forms of social media have to offer so that we can continue to build stronger relationships with our guests."

The 27-unit group's VIP E-Club boasts some 50,000 members who regularly receive e-blasts on upcoming events, openings, specials and promotions. Their website's "Talk to Sam" feature "allows guests to communicate directly with Sam Fox, our President

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and CEO," Porter relates. "He reads every single one of these e-mails. These messages are also distributed to our entire leadership team. We go over these e-mails in detail at our weekly staff meetings and have a policy where we will respond directly within 48 hours. This goes a very long way with our guests and is extremely valuable for us to measure guest satisfaction."

Social and websites can also be a valuable — and often unbiased — source of feedback and word-of-mouth promotion for your operation. Take, for example, this recent urbanspoon.com glowing user review of Jax Kitchen in Tucson. "... My chicken was juicy and flavorful and the steak was comparable to [a well-known national steakhouse], only way cheaper! Service was flawless, as well."

Urban Spoon also links to media reviews and blogs and you can even check to see if you're on their "100 Best Restaurants in Phoenix" list (some very interesting choices, we might add).

Open Table's Diners' Choice Lists give feedback in categories from Most Booked (Maggiano's, on this date) to Fit for Foodies (Noca is No. 1) and Best Overall (Kai).

Several Arizona dining blogs serve up both straight-from-the-hip opinions of recent dining experiences and updates on our local cuisine scene.

Seth Chadwick's *Feasting in Phoenix* features uncensored reviews of hundreds of Valley cateries (including food photos), plus links to nearly 40 other Arizona and national food blogs. Be sure to check out his "future feasts" list to know if Chadwick is headed your way.

EricEatsOut.com bills itself as "sometimes rude, occasionally crude, ALWAYS hungry" and the 30-something blogger does his best to live up to the hype. But look beyond the smattering of f-bombs he drops and his admitted love affair with Noca and you'll find generally fair-minded food writing (albeit heavily stacked with the Valley's upper-tier restaurants).

Tucson's Karyn Zoldan, principal postmistress for circleoffood.com, has her finger on the pulse of the Old Pueblo's noshing

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news. From Zoldan's "Chewish Tucson" recently: "The Uptown Bistro is coming soon to downtown. (What courage downtown restaurants have!) Uptown Bistro will occupy the former Monkey Box space on Stone across from the library."

Social media can also help you connect with your fellow culinarians. Join the 70-or-so-member Scottsdale Culinary Institute Alumni group on Facebook, or Gregory Casale's (Paradise Bakery Executive Chef, formerly chef/owner of Gregory's World Bistro) modeling Phoenix Chefs Club. You'll even find a Chef Beau "Beau Mac" Macmillan fan club (of which at least one much-lauded Valley restaurateur is a member!).

On the opposite end of the tech spectrum, there's the age-old practice of barter. Arizona Trade Exchange, with some 500 members, affords restaurateurs a virtually cash-free means of acquiring products and services. Vice President of Operations Jerry Armenta cited examples of how the Exchange works:

Erick and Rochelle Geryol own Boulders on Broadway (formerly Old Chicago) in Tempe. They were spending a lot of money on plumbing services and realized that they could use the same plumber the previous owner was using and pay him with trade credits by joining Arizona Trade Exchange. Erick and Rochelle also utilize their trade credits to purchase accounting services, janitorial supplies, paper supplies, T-shirts, dental service, vet service, dry cleaning, audio/video service and vent/hood cleaning.

"Bob and Ling Hui (owners of Silke's American Grill in Mesa) and their staff love the trade," reports Armenta. "The food servers love that more people come to the restaurant, (more tips) and the owners love that they can purchase goods and services with trade credits. It makes sense to the owners of Silke's to barter their food for trade credits because it's costing them 28 cents to earn a trade dollar, (their food percentage cost per dollar earned), their overhead (i.e., payroll, utilities, rent)

doesn't change. They're able to pay for services that they were paying cash for like advertising, A/C service, accounting, window tinting, flowers, pest control service, electrical service, grout cleaning, daycare service, personal services and employee gifts — items that they may have put off for a later date if they didn't have the extra cash and trade available."

In September, Michael F. Murray (publisher of The Sous Chef software and veteran chef/chef trainer) will open The Chef's Loft at SouthBridge in Scottsdale. Besides cooking classes for the public, Murray indicates that "professional programs for the industry" will be scheduled and "We'll feature local, national and international chefs as instructors to prepare special dinners designed to raise funds and awareness for food charities.

"Our demo kitchen has state-of-the-art Viking equipment," Murray notes. He shares, "We're in negotiation with three production companies right now to use The Loft as home for national and local culinary and lifestyle shows." Stay tuned for more on that once contracts are inked.

Cheers to The Mission's Michael Bunker, who was crowned Arizona's Top Bar Chef at the Skyvodka competition at Canal. Let's hope he can repeat what we hear was a dazzling performance at the nationals, to be held during Crave Arizona in October.

Wishing much success to Albert Hall and Lila Yamashiro on their new role as operators of the Tea Room at Tohono Chul (starting this month) and on the upcoming opening of their new Marketplace at Acacia, with breakfast, lunch and dinner takeout (including vegan and gluten-free items) and a retail shop featuring "gourmet and hard-to-find culinary items, special seasonings and ingredients."

Congratulations to System Concepts Inc., developer of FOOD-TRAK, on receiving *BoardRoom* magazine's Excellence in Achievement Award for Technology/Software Product of the Year. The award was presented on June 14 in Boca Raton,

FL. Be sure to check out the FOOD-TRAK Wine Module, an add-on component to help monitor, track and analyze bottled wine inventory.

MONTHLY MILESTONES

July 4, 1890 — Bill of fare from the Tucson Restaurant, 12 N. Meyer St.: Chicken soup, roast chicken, roast beef, boiled ham, champagne sauce, fresh salmon. (From "History shows Tucson really knows how to celebrate 4th," *Arizona Daily Star*, July 2, 2000)

July 4, 1986 — Grand opening of Carolina's Mexican Food at 12th Street and Mohave in Phoenix.

July 1994 — Flagstaff Brewing Company opens with the mission "To not only provide craft-brewed beer to a thirsty mountain town, but also to break the mold that has typified the atmosphere, structure and goal of brewpubs for all too long ..."

July 1997 — El Paso Bar-B-Que opens its fourth location in Ahwatukee.

July 4, 2003 — Casino del Sol in Tucson opens its expansion with "four new distinctly themed restaurants" including Bellissimo and Tequila Factory.

July 2007 — The Apple Farm Bakery and Restaurant moves to Benson after a successful run in Tucson.

July 11, 2007 — Restaurant Depot opens its second Valley location in Mesa.

July 1, 2008 — Northern Arizona University begins construction on a 12,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art kitchen and training facility to include demo labs, hotel room mock-ups, classroom facilities and office space.

Send your F&B news to Barbara Rothschild at RestauraTour@eatiquette.com or (602) 765-1746 (fax). ■

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