SOCIAL FOOD
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SOCIAL FOOD

A Recipe for Social Media Success

INTRODUCTION

You've put it off for long enough, but it's officially time to jump on the social media bandwagon.

If you're new to social media, the whole process of choosing a platform and deciding what to post can be overwhelming. Not to mention social media networks are constantly updating their layouts and guidelines. But social media doesn't have to be overwhelming anymore.

There are plenty of social media platforms to play on, but which one is right for *your* restaurant or food business? When it comes to food products and restaurants the big three are: Facebook, Instagram and Pinterst.

If you have lots of time, Twitter can be valuable as well, but if you are just putting your toe in the water, start small and grow.

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General Rules

As you read through the suggestions for each platform the same themes appear over and over again.

- Be social. This is not mass media if you are going to be active and want to see results be prepared to interact with fans and followers. Ask questions, share tips, say thank you when people share your content or include you in theirs.
- Build relationships with others in your field. The restaurant around the corner and the food blogger half way across the country are both talking about food, and talking to people you want to get to know. Tag, share and interact with their social profiles and they will be more likely to interact with yours.
- Don't treat this as just one long advertising campaign. Use this as an opportunity to build and demonstrate your brand personality along with your delicious products.
- Have fun. You are already in an industry people love, yes people love food. Build on that love with a fun light touch on your social media profiles.

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Posting 101

When it comes to sharing content on your company Facebook page, you have the freedom to set your own schedule. Facebook doesn't require a ton of maintenance. You can share photos, videos and content as often as three times a day, or three times a week. It's entirely up to you. Find a schedule that works for you and stick to it. Posting consistently on Facebook is important because the platform's ever changing algorithm makes it more and more difficult for your posts to be seen. This means you need to keep a continuous stream of content on your page.

Best Practices for Sharing Content on Facebook

Getting likes, having your content shared by others, and receiving comments on your posts is a little harder than it used to be. Organic reach for has decreased, as Facebook expands their advertising program.

You will have to work harder and smarter using more creative posts, videos and slide shows to attract and engage your community. Be warned, Facebook will punish your page if you bribe fans to like your page or posts. As part of their "Like-Gating" rules, you cannot offer fans anything in return for them liking your page or posts.

The bottom line, stop worrying about likes and focus on starting conversations and creating great, sharable content.

And remember to notice, like and interact with fans. The more you take the time to acknowledge people, the more they are likely to return again and again.

Content Mix

A good rule of thumb to use when deciding what type of content to post on Facebook is the 50/30/20 rule.

Allow 50 percent of your content to be fun and friendly. Don't be afraid to posts pictures, graphics and videos. Invite fans to comment on your posts by asking questions. This will help start conversations and increase engagement

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Keep the questions simple. Something people can answer in just a few words without a lot of research. If they have to think long and hard before they respond, they will simply move on to something different.

30 percent of content you share should be useful and informative. This is where your company blog posts come in. Share recipes, how-to tips, articles on nutritional studies, or different gardening techniques. This information can be loosely connected to your product or service. This broad based content allows you to reach an engage a wider audience as people share this content with their community.

The final 20 percent should be about your business. Promote your brand! Don't be super sales-y about it. For example, avoid "We just released our NEW monthly specials menu with BRAND NEW items! Come in today!" with a link to your website. That's a tad aggressive. Instead, give your audience subtle calls to action. For example, "This month's specials include x, y, and z. Give them a try and let us know your favorite!"

Don't forget to link content to your website, reservation page or menu. .

Make Images Interesting

The news feed is filled with images of all types. And there is a terrific payoff. A single, compelling image will get almost 40% more interaction than simple links or text-based updates. Here are a few things to keep in mind when selecting or formatting an image.

- The ideal size is 1200 x 627 pixels. It will fill the space nicely on both desktop and mobile devices.
- If you are going to use text, keep it away from the edges or the text may be cropped off on some devices
- If you think you might want to use the image as part of an ad you will need to keep the text to no more than 20% of the total image.

If one image is good, are more images better? That is true to a point. Uploading 3 -5 images at once creates a collage which allows you to showcase multiple images at once. However, you can have too much of a good thing. While fans may stop and look at a few images interaction will often decline if you put too many images in the timeline at once. People seem to be reluctant to commit to browsing 10, 15 or 20 images.

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Carousel vs the Slide Show

There are two options: the carousel and the slide show. To make the most of these two options a little planning is required.

- All images should be the same size and shape. If they aren't Facebook may stretch and distort the images to fit the format.
- Order matters. Both of these alternatives help lead a viewer through a story. Whether they are scrolling or simply watching the images change. you have a chance to present a series of related ideas as one cohesive story.

In the carousel option, viewers scroll through images at their own pace. These types of posts tend to generate higher engagement as the viewer clicks to see the next image in the sequence. This subtle commitment to the story you are trying to tell results in significantly more click through to websites and offers.

In contrast, the slide show is a more passive type of content. Images will automatically rotate without sound when someone happens upon it in their timeline. The motion of the image tends to stop people momentarily. If your objective is to reach a wide audience, perhaps generating more page likes the slide is a good choice.

Video, Video, Video

Right now, Facebook's algorithm favors original content videos. With all the videography tools out there, making a high-res video with great content is actually relatively easy. Or for something simple, Facebook Live is a great way to interact with your audience and show off a new product or menu item.

Canvas

A canvas combines the best of both worlds. In one post you can combine video, static images, and carousels. The downside is that they only work in mobile environments.

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Reviews, Reviews, Reviews

You can't pick and choose which reviews you wish to have seen. You can either turn on or turn off the review function. Reviews validate your restaurant or food product, but a few bad reviews may turn off potential customers

We know consumers are more likely to believe a review rather than any claim someone makes about your brand. At the same time, people are more likely (about 10x) to leave negative comments so you need to actively solicit positive reviews to balance any negative ones which are published.

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INSTAGRAM

Owned by Facebook there are many similarities in how to use Instagram. There are some major differences too:

High Quality Photos and Videos

This is a photography site. If you want to get noticed in the feed your images need to be high quality, no blurry images, or bad cropping. Do it right or don't bother. In general, the images should speak for themselves. Sure a clever caption may increase interaction, but if the image is not dramatic, colorful or engaging, no one will stop long enough to look at your image.

If your food doesn't look delicious in the pictures no one is going to want to come to your restaurant to try it or buy the ingredients to make the dish at home. To get the perfect image don't just snap and go. Take multiple images, from different angles. Do a few close ups and some wider angles, so you have some white space around the images. Then pick your best image.

Hashtags in Balance

Like Twitter, hashtags on Instagram give users an easy way to search for and discover your content. The right hashtag can help increase your reach, encourage more engagement and even attract new followers. But when you use too many hashtags in your caption it distracts from the image in the news feed.

One way around the problem of too many hashtags is to keep the caption simple place the hashtags in the comments. That way the post looks good in the feed and the content is still searchable. Wherever you place your hashtags, make sure they are relevant for the images you are sharing.

Interact! Instagram is Social

Instagram is not a broadcast medium, it is a social platform. If someone takes the time to comment on your content respond. Use Instagram to connect with other foodies, restaurants, food bloggers and more. Remember that social media is about ego; people share content hoping to be noticed. If you take the time to like their posts, comment and interact, they will be more likely to interact with you.

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You can even reach out and request an S4S (shout out for shout out) post exchange. This works best when you find someone with about the same number of followers in a similar market who is willing to share your content and give you a shout out to their community in exchange for you doing the same on your account.

Brand Your Content

Sure you can simply post any image which comes along, or you can be more strategic. Look for images with similar colors, styles or even add your logo to the image so when someone sees content in the timeline, they immediately know it is yours.

Solicit User Generated Content

You can only create and share so much content from your account before people start to feel like you are overwhelming them. That's where your fans come in. Ask them to share their favorite recipes and photos and tag you. Create a hashtag so you can track their submissions and even consider offering a prize to encourage more engagement. Collect the content and repost the very best, being sure to tag and credit users for their submissions.

Encourage people to talk about you. Especially in the food industry reviews and testimonials are critical to give new potential customers a level of comfort to try out your product or restaurant.

Video is Visual Too!

Static images are great, but we are definitely seeing a shift to video on Instagram. Don't be left behind. Don't just show a video of the finished product, use video to show off how something is made. There is a reason those accelerated tasty videos are so popular, people love food, but they want it to seem easy to make.

Balance is Key

As with any social media platform the key to success is balance. It is fine to have some product-focused and even promotional content in your feed as long as it is interspersed alongside the more entertaining, informational and simply beautiful images as well.

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PINTEREST

Your Pinterest presence should look exactly like your business. It should evoke the same message you write within your core values and strive to inspire your employees and customers. The only difference is it's not a bullet point list, but rather a visual representation of your brand's values and goals.

Posting on Pinterest

Pinterest doesn't require a lot of maintenance, but it is a network you will have to update daily. Spend five to 10 minutes adding or re-pinning new pins to your boards. It doesn't take a lot of time, but you do need to be consistent. And remember, if you are uploading your own images to Pinterest, they need to be high quality, professional photographs.

How much is too much? Brands see scale results when they pin 15 to 30 items per day. While that might be overwhelming on Facebook or Instagram, it is just right on Pinterest.

Share Everyone's Content

Pinterest is a social community so the idea is to find and share images which fit your brand. When scrolling through Pinterest daily, re-pin images which stand out and fit the voice of your brand.

An added bonus of re-pinning is you may expand your followers. Each re-pin notifies users who have a similar interest or style as your company.

Don't expect conversations. Pinterest isn't a traditional social network. Engagment is measured in the number of re-pins and re-pints are driven by high quality content.

Multiple Boards

Not all your followers will be interested in everything you share. Make a multitude of boards for specific subtopics within your Pinterest. Catchy board titles attract attention and help visitors grasp a sense of a company's style. Individual boards give users a chance to quickly scroll through to see related pins.

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Remember the Description

Descriptions on Pinterest often get the short end of the stick or are completely ignored. The pictures tell a visual story which will be interpreted by the viewer, but the descriptions clarify your company's voice and brand.

Make your descriptions a must-read. This is your chance to show your sense of humor and your story telling abilities. If the description includes key words, it will improve your chances to be found when people are searching for products like yours.

Video on Pinterest Too

Pinners have a huge appetite for video: **75%** say they're likely to watch videos about topics that interest them, compared to **55% of people** on other platforms.

Buy It Button

Back in 2015, Pinterest initiated a new "Buy it" button. Since then, we have seen more and more companies using Pinterest to sell their product right in the app. These "Buy It" buttons eliminate a step in the buying process and help increase impulse purchases.

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Do you need to be on Twitter?

Things to consider before you jump in to Twitter:

- In comparison to Facebook and Instagram, the Twitter community is relatively small. Facebook has 2 billion users worldwide, Instagram 800 million, Twitter is 500 million.
- It is a time consuming platform. Twitter is high volume and low value. That means the main focus of Twitter is how often you are tweeting, not how detailed the information you're sharing is. You should be tweeting frequently throughout the day to keep your account active and visible in the timeline.
- The Twitter community expects you to be responsive. So if someone complains about service they want to see a response in minutes not hours.
- Twitter fans are loyal so if your customers are on Twitter it will make sense. Not sure if they are, ask them.
- Twitter is about brevity. There is no room for long descriptions or wordy explanations with the character limit, so you need to be comfortable creating minimal messages.

Become a part of the community

At its core, Twitter has always been a network for conversation. But over time, marketers lost that connection and began using it as a mass messaging channel. Take it back to the essence and focus on creating personalized experiences and engage in conversations with your followers.

Thank individuals for coming in to visit your restaurant, ask about their experience. A local restaurant built an incredibly loyal following by taking the conversation off line. If you tweeted you were in the house, you might have a plate of their special appetizers delivered to your table.

That surprise interaction creates a loyal and engaged following.

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The Sharing Content on Twitter

Use Twitter to promote your business, but make sure you're not solely promoting your business. You don't want your Twitter feed to become one long stream of self-promoted content.

Ask your followers questions and share links to interesting articles thought leaders in your community are publishing. Links, statistics, facts and tips are the types of content you should be sharing with your followers. Don't forget to share videos, graphics and photos on Twitter, too.

Use Hashtags . . . Correctly

Hashtags were invented on the Twitter platform. Although other's use them today, this is where it all started. The purpose of the hashtag is to make content searchable. Before threaded messages, it made it easy to find all the people talking about a particular topic.

"Trending" hashtags and topics are prominently displayed on Twitter so it's easy to join in the most popular conversations. You can also search for hashtags that are relevant to your business. Research shows tweets containing one or two hashtags more than double the chances of engagement. However, you must be cautious not to overdo it. The same research shows that exceeding two hashtags on a Twitter post actually reduces the chance of engagement by 17 percent

Following and Followers

Following people increases both your own number of followers and it further validates your business. But be careful with who you follow. Do your research and find the leading food bloggers around your area and/or within your specific food industry.

Establishing relationships with "foodies" gives you the opportunity to invite them to try your product, leave a review, and (hopefully) become a lifelong fan.

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GOOGLE+

Google+ isn't really a social media platform, but an SEO tool. If you are actively creating new content for your other social media accounts simply post similar content with links to your website onyour Google+ page.

Sharing Content on Google+

Google loves Google. So when you post links to your content on Google+, Google will then reward you by adding value to your SEO. Google+ is very low maintenance.

Share graphics, photos and videos on your Google+ page. YouTube directly links to your Google+ page, which makes sharing videos that much easier. Take advantage of the large cover photo space on Google+ as a great visual branding opportunity. You can post as little as one time a week or as many as 10 times a week.

Google+ reviews

Google+ has replaced Google Places, and customers who are on Google+ can leave reviews on your Google+ page regardless of whether you are active there. In this situation, often the best thing you can do is be responsive. If it's a positive review, thank them for leaving it and ask that they come back.

If it's a negative review, have a method set up where they can confidentially send you their contact information so that you can reach out to them via phone or email to discuss their unpleasant experience. Studies have shown that if you resolve an issue, 95% of unhappy customers will come back

Similar to Facebook, reviews on Google+ can make or break a business. In fact, over 80% of people trust reviews as much as a personal recommendation.

With restaurants and food producers, the competition is often very heated. With so many businesses competing for the same clients, reviews are more important than ever.

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Start with a Content Calendar

If you're short on time and resources, creating an editorial calendar is a great way to stay organized and keep social media from becoming a dreadful task. The further ahead you can plan, the easier it will be to have great video, beautiful photos and interesting recipes or tips when you need them.

Remember that each platform has a different rhythm and you will need to plan your schedule accordingly.

Be flexible. You don't have to plan and schedule every single post down to the exact minute it will publish. Leave one or two slots open for when something fun or spontaneous comes up.

Typical schedule by platform:

- Facebook: 5 – 10 times a week. That is an average of 2 times most days. More than that and you start to overwhelm your audience
- Instagram - 1 time a day. Use additional time to share and connect.
- Pinterest 15 – 30 pins a day
- Google+ 3 – 5 times a week.

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Annual Calendar

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Theme												
Holidays												
Featured Products												
Special Offers												
Contests												
Special Events												

Create yearly calendars to identify themes and resources you will need. Don't wait till the last minute to find that great Halloween photo or terrific chili recipe. Working ahead lets you focus on your core business in peak times.

Use your annual calendar to drive your weekly planning.

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