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## How to write a restaurant review blog

In this article, I'm going to present 10 simple steps on how to start a food blog. I've had relative amounts of success with food blogging over the years, with SETHLUI.COM seeing over 2.5 million page views each month. We're the top food blog in Singapore. My food blog was started based on doing restaurant reviews and we've done perfectly well for ourselves on writing reviews, but another great way is blogging about cooking recipes too. I'm only going to recommend tips and tricks that I've personally used and know works, so here goes: 1. Decide on your food niche and name your blog There are tons of food blogs out there. You need to decide on a niche to pursue, be it reviews or recipes. Either direction can work, but always try to niche down to specific cuisines, or geographical areas. I know a friend who focuses on recipes for cute bentos too. Decide on your blog name as well, and as far as possible, you want to incorporate your niche keyword in your blog's name. For example, if you're going to focus on recipes as a niche, you want the word 'recipes' in your blog's site name. The result would be something like: andydanrecipes.com or cookingwithandy.com. This is very important for search engine optimisation as google picks up your domain name as a big search criteria cue too, and one of the aspects I regret only learning later on after I've named my site. You also want to have a memorable, short, easy-to-spell blog name so your readers can go back easily. Use the below tool to check for your blog name availability too before committing. You'll also want to check with various social media channels whether your chosen name available. Try out this quick domain checker: 2. Get server hosting and create a website/blog You want to ideally create a website with a simple content management system so that you can easily create posts - WordPress in my opinion is the best packaged solution. Do note there is a difference between wordpress.com and wordpress.org ; wordpress.com offers free hosting on their domain like myblogname.wordpress.com, however I recommend getting a custom domain website like what I've done, installed with wordpress.org. A custom domain name is way more professional and the costs are really low. Also, you can't add banner ads unless you have your own hosted site, so monetising is very limited unless we have our own domain and server hosting. If you're looking to easily create a custom domain name and get website hosting, Bluehost has very affordable shared hosting fees from USD \$3.95 per month (\$2.95 if you use my link) and it's really just the cost of less than one meal a month to start a simple hobby. You can read my detailed tutorial on how to create a website with wordpress and bluehost, which would take you only 4 minutes or so to setup. 3. Add plugins and themes After you install wordpress, it's really easy to implement a website theme. There are tons of beautiful themes that are free, and there are paid ones as well, but it's all pretty affordable compared to hiring a web designer to customize your site. As a start, if you're doing this as a hobby I'd suggest either getting a free theme or something cheap below \$50. Look through the themes and install one that suits your fancy. A theme that's more graphics driven would be better for food blogs. Some plugins that I have installed: YOAST SEO Plugin (MUST get), Facebook Comments, Akismet, Wordfence. It's a combination of getting the look and functionality you require, but plugins might also slow-down your site so don't go too crazy on them. One thing to consider is also getting an AMP plugin so as to optimise your site to have an AMP (Accelerated Mobile Pages) version. AMP sites load faster and have better search results on Google, but it might take a bit more technical know-how to set up a customised AMP site. The plugins make it easier though, but limits what theme design you can have. 4. Add Content And Don't Stop Writing Start creating content for your blog by writing, adding photography or even filming videos. The number one reason people fail at blogging is because they stop writing, either because they lose interest or become discouraged at the results. It is going to take at least a year for your site to have substantial traction, and I'd advice writing at least twice a week regularly. You can't expect immediate results or everyone would be a successful blogger travelling the world eating the best foods. Stick with the program and have the discipline to continue even when you're busy. Remember, Rome wasn't built in a day. 5. Pick Up Food Photography For digital content, it is an absolute must to produce great imagery. Attention span is immensely short online, and visuals keep your audience drawn in. Besides, if it's about food, you definitely need pictures to show how delicious and salivating the food is. Take the time to learn about photography and make sure your content is always paired with relevant images. Also, you don't want to run into copyright issues, so taking your own photos will be the easiest and quickest method. You don't even need an expensive camera these days even. Phone cameras have advanced so much, any phone model after the iPhone 6S and Samsung S8 are good enough for digital photography. This pic right here on my Instagram account was taken with just a phone camera: Do note that if you're using a phone camera, you MUST take shots with ample light (daylight is the best), as well as edit the photo with an app like Snapseed or VSCO. Never leave your photos just as it is. 6. Network With The F&B Industry With Chef Andre, from The Former Asia #2 Best Restaurant, Restaurant Andre Although you can technically build a blog yourself, it is accelerated so much faster by networking in your relevant industry. Know who the big food bloggers are, see who the influencers are and make sure you get to know them. Great networks can share many useful tips, open doors to events and help to promote your blog too. Understand which PR agencies focus on food and make sure to network with them along with restaurant owners and chefs. Don't neglect this if you ever want to build a brand for your blog, as these bridges will carry you towards success in blogging a lot of faster. 7. Create Social Media Channels and Mailing List Subscription You want to minimally have a facebook and instagram account, this is especially true in Asia. Pinterest or twitter works too depending on region you are based, but are more American-based and suited more for news sites. Having more social channels create an integrated web to bounce users off each platform. For example, adding a Youtube channel definitely helps too and perhaps you might find it easier to make videos instead of write, but managing so many channels might be a challenge for some. You also most probably want to create a simple mailing list so that readers can get updated on new posts. I recommend either Mailchimp or Aweber. Mailchimp is free though for the first thousand subscribers so it's a great option for people starting out to build their list, but Aweber tends to be cheaper in the long run. 8. Promote Your Blog The best written blog is useless if no one reads it. After setting up your social media channels, you need to get readers. One quick way is to invest in Google Adwords, or boosting your posts on Facebook. I wouldn't really recommend these steps though, unless you already have an end product to sell. Buying impressions is a short-term solution and should only be used if you can convert the investment into revenue via a product/service. Some other ways to get more awareness is getting other blogs to link to your blog, joining relevant facebook groups, posting and participating in relevant forums, and of course organic traffic from search results. 9. Work On SEO and Building Organic Traffic Building your search engine optimisation is the single most effective organic method to getting consistent traffic. This however, takes an extremely long amount of time, patience and some technical knowledge of how SEO works. One of the basics to get you started is the Yoast SEO plugin that I recommended you to install earlier. Use that like a bible when you craft your content. One trick I use in the early stages is to analyse search terms and target long-tail, more uncommon content angles. You don't want to focus on generic, singular key words like cooking or recipes at the start, since these are already dominated by many other sites who have spent a lot of time building it. Focus on local and long-tailed key words instead that are very specific rather than short keywords. For example, perhaps some people are searching for a recipe to "Chinese Cured Sausages"; you could make a recipe on that since it's quite niched and not many other people would rank for this search term thus making this is a content piece that is good to pursue. End of the day it is about building up multiple long-tailed keywords that will ultimately bring traffic to your site consistently. You'll need to conduct some keyword research though to plan your content. 10. Monetize Your Blog After your have created a brand and have some significant form of traffic, it's time to monetize the blog. Technically by adding Google AdSense banners, you can monetize your blog from day one. But due to the low traffic, don't expect to earn much unless you're hitting thousands of visitors a day. We only started getting advertisers after hitting around 40k unique visitors a month, which took me about a year to build. Currently we're at 1 million unique visitors a month. Another big way we earn revenue is through advertisers. Some other ways of monetising include creating an e-product and using affiliate links to sell stuff. One that has worked for us are restaurant reservation links, as well as hotel reservation links like Agoda. Need More Help on Blogging? I'm available for consultation too if you would like to delve more in-depth into advance blogging techniques. If you'd like to engage me for private consultation on blogging and how to explore more monetization methods for your blog or perhaps increasing traffic, improving your organic SEO, feel free to drop me an email to setup as session. Have an interesting hawker story or good food to share? Email us at [email protected]







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