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Food bloggers chronicle their delicious obsessions

The Boston Globe

By Ethan Gilsdorf, Globe Correspondent | January 12, 2005

They're known as FatMan Seoul, tastee, Splendid Spatula, and Sal Monella. And they like to hang out in places like the Accidental Hedonist, Hungry Tiger, and Food Porn Watch.

ADVERTISEMENT Sometimes they chime in with a comment, but mostly they just like to watch. Or read. Or pretend they're eating.

They're not sexual deviants but "food bloggers." And the websites and weblogs they visit, create, and update on a daily basis all share a single fetish -- for food, with a capital "oo." "Some people eat to live," FatMan Seoul announces in a blog that's a field guide to his forays into Korean cuisine. "Some live to eat. I belong to the latter, and it shows . . . at all the anatomically wrong places!" The link to his e-mail address doesn't say "contact" but "Burp Me!"

Weblogs, or blogs, are akin to online journals. But they also include links to favorite sites and resources, a way for readers to comment, and an archive for discussions and disagreements (careful what you post). Armed with digital cameras, keyboards, and easy-to-use software, gourmands can now create online shrines to beloved or dreaded aspects of the culinary realm: a memorable visit to a Parisian patisserie, a cool must-buy fondue pot, or a warning to skip an overpriced bistro. There are blogs for beer or pizza and blogs based around themes like "18th Century Cuisine" or a single city, such as Saigon. Some are written by chefs and other food professionals.

Shaun Chavis moved to Boston in August to attend Boston University's Culinary Certificate and Master of Liberal Arts in Gastronomy programs. Soon after, she began Burning My Fingers. "I wanted to create my own record of culinary school and also share the experience with people who knew me," Chavis says. On her blog, you might find a lesson in sausage making or a sticky encounter with strudel dough.





The vast majority of food bloggers are amateurs whose enthusiasm spills out into cyberspace for anyone who'll nibble at their words. "I think in a way blogs are cooking shows for the Internet," writes Pim Techamuanvitt, who runs the popular blog Chez Pim. "That's what we do really -- we talk about the stuff we cook, or the things we ate." The voracious Bay Area traveler, originally from Bangkok, says she began her blog like many addicted Internet users: as a series of e-mails to family and friends. "I was sick of writing 30 identical e-mails to update everyone on what I was doing," she says. When her friends began asking for recipes and restaurant recommendations, Chez Pim was born.

Techamuanvitt found that the more she wrote on food, the more readers were seduced by her descriptions of pig fests in London and sublime couscous in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco. She now gets between 3,000 and 4,000 hits a day. "I've got a lot of comments and e-mails saying how they live vicariously through me," Techamuanvitt notes. "Frankly, I am not entirely sure if I should be flattered or freaked out by them."

Food blogging is so popular that this year the first annual "Food Blog Awards" were launched by Kate Hopkins, who runs Accidental Hedonist from Seattle. "Yes, a half-dozen or so food blogs have been recognized by some of the mainstream media," says Hopkins. "But there are well over 100 food blogs out there, and plenty of good writing." So she wants her awards to draw attention to the more obscure backwaters of gastronomic cyberspace. Hopkins announced winners last week.

Chez Pim won for best restaurant reviews. But the big winner for "Best Overall Blog" was Chocolate & Zucchini, the creation of a French woman, Clotilde Dusoulier. The site gets about 4,500 visits a day and recounts, in English, Dusoulier's daily Parisian food adventures, such as a 900-word ode to and instructions for a tarte tatin with salted butter caramel.

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-  [SINGLE-PAGE FORMAT](#)
-  [E-MAIL TO A FRIEND](#)
-  [TOP E-MAILED ARTICLES](#)

LIST OF BLOGS

Pick a peck of food blogs
From the hundreds of food blogs out there, we've chosen a selection of some of the best. Once you visit one, you'll find columns of links to dozens of others. Soon you'll be traveling from one food crossroads to another. Remember to leave a trail of bread crumbs.

Some 2004 Food Blog winners: Chocolate & Zucchini
<http://chocolateandzucchini.com/>

Chez Pim
<http://chezpim.typepad.com/blogs/>

The Food Section
<http://www.thefoodsection.com/>

Boston-based blogs and sites: Burning My Fingers

Deus Ex Culina
<http://deusexculina.robsama.com/>

Gastromancer
<http://gastromancer.com/>

Other sites and blogs: Chowhound
<http://chowhound.com/>

[C'est moi qui l'ai fait](#) (in French)

FatMan Seoul
<http://fatman-seoul.blogspot.com/>

Foodblog (comprehensive list of food blogs organized alphabetically)
<http://kiplog.com/food/>

Food Porn
foodporn.com

—ETHAN GILSDORF

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-



In 15 months, the blog has turned Dusoulier, a computer engineer, into a professional food writer, cooking instructor, restaurant consultant, and conference speaker. "My ambition is to make a living from those food-related activities, something I had never considered before starting the blog," wrote Dusoulier, who now has a book deal with an American publisher.

Another oft-cited blog is Adam Roberts's the Amateur Gourmet, this year's "humor" winner. It's easy to see why: Aside from the site's snappy prose, its "Saturday Night Live"-worthy comedy sketch mpegs, such as "Great Moments in Musical Theater Featuring Eggs" and "Project Sourdough," are hilarious. "Though I don't make money at all," Roberts remarks, "I love knowing that there's an audience."

It was Roberts's Janet Jackson breast cupcake photo essay, featured on CNN, that brought his blog instant fame. He originally stumbled into blogging as a law student (he's since abandoned that for an MFA in dramatic writing at New York University). Cooking shows led him to his own kitchen experiments and eventually to Chowhound.com -- the low-tech, less snazzy grandfather of the whole online food phenomenon.

"We're iconoclasts, not followers of buzz," says Jim Leff, describing the community of Chowhounds he's helped nurture since 1997. He says his movement is seat-of-the-pants, compiling "chowconnaissance" by eating its way through strange neighborhoods and never settling for anything "less than supreme deliciousness, amen. (That's the chowhound prayer.)"

Chowhound is not technically a blog -- Leff claims he's never read one -- but a website akin to a community message board that covers the country and has regional subgroups. Desperate foodies type messages they're certain someone will answer. "Pho!?", "Best chicken salad?," "Help! Quintessential Boston lunch," "What's good in Dorchester?"

The camaraderie is normally kept strictly online, but on occasion the interpersonal contact boils over into the real world. Bloggers in Paris have met for potluck dinners, and in San Francisco they have congregated in Golden Gate Park for massive cook-offs and tastings.

On the Boston message board, on Jan. 4 at 17:31, a Chowhound named Burt asks, "Anyone know of a really excellent Jewish rye bread resource on the North Shore?"

"I'm no rye bread expert but Karl's Sausage Kitchen (Rte 1 N, Saugus) has some dark rye that I enjoy," is the reply from "Chris VR" at 19:01.

Forty-five minutes later, Karl S. interjects, "That's Lithuanian-style dark rye, not like Jewish deli rye."

Techamuanvivit, the Chez Pim blogger, says, "I could ask Clotilde [of Chocolate & Zucchini] or Pascale [of C'est moi qui l'ai fait] in Paris when I need to find out about something specific to French food. I could also ask Anthony in Vietnam about something there, or Jeanne from South Africa. Or they could ask me for something Thai. With the blogs, your foodie community could expand from a block party to cover pretty much the entire world." ■

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