

# KITCHEN PORTER

ARTICLE NUMBER FOUR FROM THE ACCLAIMED INDUSTRY FOOD EXPERT, JOHN PORTER. THIS MONTH, JOHN GOES DIGITAL AND TELLS US HOW TWITTER, FACEBOOK AND OTHER DIGITAL MEDIAS CAN HELP GET PEOPLE THROUGH YOUR FRONT DOOR.

I had a rather strange experience in the gents of a central London pub recently. Before you turn the page in shock, I should stress that this story is entirely suitable for a family audience. Anyway, I was fully focused on the task at hand, when a voice piped up from the stall next to me: "Are you Pieandapint on Twitter?"

Once I'd recovered my composure, I was able to confirm that I do, indeed, tweet as @pieandapint. My new friend was a beer blogger who was at the pub to attend the same press event as me. In the circumstances, shaking hands didn't seem appropriate, but having previously only 'met' online, at least we'd progressed to talking in the real world.

On the face of it, the social media boom isn't entirely good news for pubs. Students who would once have put the world to rights over pints of cider in the pub now rant on Facebook instead. However, new research for the regular Deloitte Taste of the Nation survey shows just how important social media sites have become to the eating out market:

37% of consumers use social media when deciding on where to eat and drink out.

61% of 18-34 year olds consult social media on their 'going out' decisions.

24% of consumers use social media to search for discount vouchers.

Clearly, independent pubs can't compete with the managed players in terms of discount vouchers. Indeed, you may take the view that the kind of punter who downloads and prints a "two carvery meals for a fiver" voucher, and cites his legal right to a glass of tap water to accompany it, really isn't the type of business that's worth chasing.

## “ON THE FACE OF IT, THE SOCIAL MEDIA BOOM ISN'T ENTIRELY GOOD NEWS FOR PUBS”

On the other hand, I've come across a number of quality food pubs that have worked out how to use social media cannily. In this most typically British of summers, one licensee who has a great barbecue menu has been using Twitter to issue daily updates based on the weather forecast, to let customers know if the al fresco menu will be on offer.

Another pub has been using Facebook to run a customer vote on the forthcoming weekend's Sunday roast, taking the view that anyone who had voted for the beef then had a vested interest in turning up to sample it.

Try letting the online world know what your pie of the day or curry of the week is. You may be surprised at the trade it generates. And if you bump into me on Twitter – or in the gents – don't forget to say hello.

John

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