

FoodDiva fever

It's a problem that blights even the most informed gourmand on a Thursday or Friday night. There are so many restaurants in this town and more opening their doors every day, how can one keep up and make a decent choice of where to eat? Thankfully Samantha Wood, creator of FoodDiva.net is here with the solution. Her website aims to give the most impartial and comprehensive reviews of the UAE's establishments, combined with interviews with chefs and recipes.

There are 1 clipping(s) in 1 part(s) with summary available in: English

Published on: 16/03/2011 Name: City Times - Khaleej Times Supplement
Section: in the city Country: United Arab Emirates
Edition: 151 Language: English
Page: 2 Distribution: AE
Size: 63 cc
Ad Value: \$1,720.44



FoodDiva fever

If you want a comprehensive review of the best places to eat in town, check out FoodDiva.net

David Light
david@khaleejtimes.com

IT'S A PROBLEM that blights even the most informed gourmand on a Thursday or Friday night. There are so many restaurants in this town and more opening their doors every day, how can one keep up and make a decent choice of where to eat?

Thankfully Samantha Wood, creator of FoodDiva.net is here with the solution. Her website aims to give the most impartial and comprehensive reviews of the UAE's establishments, combined with interviews with chefs and recipes.

A veteran of the hotelier industry, Samantha writes all the content, but encourages participation from visitors to the site.

We spoke to her to find out more.

What can you tell us about FoodDiva?

It's not just about the fine dining experience. It's a complete spectrum of different venues, right through to cafes and pizza deliveries. The focus is very much on anything that is new in the market including a new menu or chef, for example.

I'm targeting anyone who is interested in dining out in the UAE and people in the food and beverage trade. Those in the industry are always checking out the competition and this site makes it easier for them to see what's going on. For people who like the reviews, the website has teamed up with a restaurant booking site, RoundMenu, so they can then go check the place out.

Why did you think this site was necessary?

My background is in the communications and hospitality industry. It has given me a critical eye on dining out. I love it and I consider myself a bit of a foodie.

I think Dubai is in recovery mode and you can tell that from the burgeoning dining scene. Taste of Dubai is always a success, new eateries are establishing themselves, so I felt there was a real gap in the market for reviews that were ultimately impartial.

How do you go about reviewing a restaurant to maintain impartiality?

I go in anonymously. I book the same way anyone else would, or in the case of deliveries or cafes, just order. I ask discreet questions to the waiters and bar staff, make notes then write it up. Most importantly, I pay my own way.

Do you accept anyone's contribution on the 'post a review' section on your site?

That's something I've just added. In addition to simply posting a comment, I want to give people the opportunity to come back with their own detailed views. It gives people the chance to respond to something they perhaps don't agree with constructively. It encourages dialogue and becomes very interactive.

Do you have a top place you have visited so far?

Currently La Petit Maison would rank as one of my favou-



rite restaurants. That was consistently good on all levels. I am looking at service, ambience and food and it was great on all three. Another all-time favourite is the Rivington Grill.

Would you agree that the standards are generally pretty high in Dubai's eateries?

I would to a certain extent, but where they fail is when there is a lack of training. You can go into many restaurants and the waiters can't talk about the food on the menu. They are ready to help and are willing, but they sometimes don't have an understanding of the cuisine. I think we're seeing a change in the right direction, but it can be a struggle.

Have you ever entered a restaurant and thought, 'what am I doing here?'

I am quite selective about where I go and eat. Though there are a lot of smaller cafes around town that do not deliver.

What would you consider a success for the site a year from now?

I'm looking to grow it organically. I want the subscriber base to expand and target sponsors and advertising. I also want to take it regionally. The first stop after the UAE would be Qatar.



Circulation and ad data supplied by:

MediaSource

MEDIAWATCH
Middle East