

Summer Kitchen Cafe: From Paper Menus to Rich Digital Listings

How Summer Kitchen Cafe Evolved to Meet the Needs of Their Customers



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Unless you’ve been hiding under a rock for the last few years, you know that the way consumers find local businesses has fundamentally changed.

This is something that all local business owners need to be aware of, but it is especially important for local merchants who own or manage a restaurant.

Take James Dillon, owner of the Summer Kitchen café in Rosemary Beach, FL. When James opened for business in 1999, most restaurants were not thinking about the value of having their menus available online.

“When we first got started, we actually walked around handing out paper copies of our menu,” James recalls. “A lot has changed since then.”

Part of what’s changed for restaurant owners like James is that the needs of his customers have also changed drastically. Paper menus, print advertisements, and passing foot traffic are no longer enough to bring new customers through your door.

Customers are searching for businesses on their mobile devices, checking review sites and online listings, and using social media to connect with their favorite restaurants and local businesses.

“Today, there’s so much more we need to be doing,” explains James. “It’s something we’ve started paying attention to in the last few years.”

The danger of not being in control of your own information

Like a lot of restaurant owners, James jumped into the online world by first creating a website and eventually getting started on Facebook.

He then began to use search engines to search for his business online. The good news was that there was already a lot of information out there about Summer Kitchen Café. The bad news was that most of that information hadn’t been updated in almost a decade.

“I’m not sure if everyone is cognizant of the information that’s out there, but the stuff that’s online really never dies,” explains James. “We found menus on some sites that were 10 years old and had never been updated. It really got my attention.”

With the help of his daughter, James began looking into how he could take control of the information that was out there. Their first attempt was to track these menus down one-by-one.

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“The process was way too cumbersome,” James recalls. “On some sites the menus were embedded, on others we found outdated pdfs. It was impossible to keep everything up-to-date.”

Fed up, James decided to look for a better option.

“We began looking for an easy platform that would let us update our menus and distribute them more easily,” explains James. “That’s when we discovered Single Platform.”

Managing expectations

At first, James wasn’t sure what to expect. Up to that point, keeping up with his online listings had been a nightmare with more negatives than positives for his business. After working with a representative at SinglePlatform to set up his new digital listing however, James’s expectations slowly began to change.

“We were surprised at how easy it was to use,” James recalls. “To be able to update our menu in a single location and have it published in so many places without any extra work has been a huge timesaver.”

With SinglePlatform, the hours James had spent updating menus online were replaced with a few easy steps. Now when a change or update was made to the menu, it would repopulate on sites like TripAdvisor, UrbanSpoon, YellowPages, and other places he knew his customers were searching.

Finding time to do more

With less time spent keeping track of online listings, James says he has more time to help grow his business. “We’re focused now on improving our own site and doing more on social media as well,” explains James. “Being able to have our menu populate on our website and Facebook has been a huge help.”

Now, no matter where people are discovering Summer Kitchen Café—whether it’s on their website, through Facebook, or via an online search—James knows the menu they find will be the same one being offered at Summer Kitchen Café that very day. That’s also freed him up to be more proactive about getting that information in front of his target audience.

With SinglePlatform’s social media tools James has the ability to schedule and share special announcements with his more than 1,100 Fans on Facebook. He has also started encouraging Fans and patrons at the café to help “share the love” and review Summer Kitchen Café on sites like Yelp and Urban Spoon.

Why it’s important for small businesses to evolve to meet the needs of their customers

A lot has changed for James since the days of passing out paper menus to local residents. What hasn’t changed however is the type of service or the quality of the dishes being offered at Summer Kitchen Café. That’s great news for James and his customers. Today it’s never been easier for people to find out what’s on the menu.

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