

When we collated the results of our annual Chef Support survey one of the clearest responses we had was that you, our chefs, needed more support in marketing yourselves and drawing in new customers.

Let's start with the obvious - you are unique. Your product is unique. The way you blend ingredients together is unlike any other chef on earth and, because of this, you have your own story to tell.

Telling your story can be done through a variety of mediums - you can start by talking to everyone you meet. To broaden your market share and to grow your customer base would take a long time though and you would most likely spend more time being out needing to talk to others than you are concentrating on your product - your food. Luckily there are many other ways to reach many people at once so let's explore them.

### *Tips for online marketing*

#### **Put effort into the photography of dishes**

The better your food photography becomes the more people will appreciate it. Look at posting your photographs in places that will get it shared

#### **Put time aside each day for posting on social media but use it wisely**

Social media is a wonderful tool - you can reach millions of people all at the click of a button. The problem is a 'like' on a photo from Canberra, Australia isn't going to lead to an additional sale so be sure to make the hashtags count. Create a list that you will attach to every image and keep them related to improving your sales. Think about your location (#berlin, #charlottenburg, etc), think about your dishes (#burrito, #daal, etc) and then start to join them - #berlinfood, #berlincurry, #wilmerdorfdinner, etc. And don't forget to add your own name as a hashtag and #homemeal!

Be sure to sign up your unique name on all social media platforms - you need to make sure your customers can find you easily wherever you are.

#### **Encourage your existing customers to share photographs of your food on their social media**

When you have repeat customers don't be afraid to ask them to share the food you are making them on their own social media. You can incentivise this by turning it into a competition and running monthly prize draws for those actively promoting you.

Be sure to record who of your customers is promoting you and then select one of them at random for a free dinner. Alternatively keep a list of who is mentioning you in their social media and slip in a 'bonus' dish or side along with a thank you note; by letting them know you see how supportive they are everyone feels good and word spreads about your offering.

#### **Collect positive reviews and share them on social media**

When customers compliment you don't be shy on sharing those compliments. Be sure to tag them in any posts

#### **Claim your business name on all social media and set them up to share with each other**

Even if you only intend to use a single social media channel we advise you to sign up with your unique name for all accounts as you go through the process of setting up your business. The last thing you want to do find as you expand is that you are having to use multiple names on the various platforms as it will make it a lot harder for your fans to find and follow you.

Once you have all the accounts set up use the profile to write a short bio and add a link to send anyone that finds you back to your main social account.

Should you want to be active on all social media platforms but with a reduced amount of time you can consider the use a third-party social media platform (for example: Buffer, Hootsuite) which will allow you to schedule posts up to a week in advance as well as cross-sharing so your posts appear in multiple places at once.

You can also explore the settings and allow Instagram posts to be posted to Twitter and Facebook at the same time

#### **Use Google My Business**

You are a business - make the most of the exposure Google offers. Benefits include being featured on maps, increased SEO, a higher ranking in searches and the ability to make a professional impression.

### *Tips for in-person marketing*

#### **Go to networking events for entrepreneurs - and eat free breakfasts**

You started a business - you sell your product online. You are an Entrepreneur. And one thing entrepreneurs should be doing is meeting other entrepreneurs. Be open, enjoy the experience and don't be shy about what you are doing - it could lead to catering office events, providing food for launch parties or picking you up a new round of customers.

Betahaus.com runs Betabreakfast, Female Founders Club host breakfasts and if you search through Eventbrite and Allevvents you will find who is offering what and when. Just remember to change your settings to Berlin.

Who knows, you might even find yourself sharing a chat over a coffee and a croissant with the HomeMeal co-founders!

#### **Partner up with other small businesses**

Word-of-mouth doesn't need to be about you telling everyone you know nor does it need to rely on your customers sharing your information. Both of these examples are great but by speaking with and about other small businesses it encourages them to do the same about you.

Entrepreneurs are a supportive bunch. Many of them are in the same boat, trying to acquire new customers without spending a fortune on publicity. Partnering with other businesses, not just other chefs, to cross-promote each other's products or services is a sound idea. This could involve doing a joint social media campaign, running a contest or giveaway together, or even just exchanging links through your social media. By teaming up with another business, you can reach a whole new audience of potential customers. Consider offering in-store tasting sessions at your favourite ingredient shop - showing off how good the products from the shop taste and how good your dishes are!

#### **Partner up with local charities**

Don't throw food that you won't sell, donate it to a charity. Aside from the obvious benefit of helping others in a less privileged position than yourself it helps spread goodwill. The more you are sportive of a single charity the more they will get to know you and the more supportive they are likely to become. You can always encourage the charity to mention you in their press releases.

And while we are thinking about charity work and their press releases...

#### **Pitch your story to local journalists (print/radio/tv) and bloggers**

Your work on HomeMeal can be of interest to those journalists in Berlin that cover entrepreneurial and food-related stories. If you have moved to Berlin from another country and your food is heavily influenced by your homeland then think about travel writers too. As your story is unique to you - with your own history, inspiration and goals - it makes sense to share it with people that spend their working life sharing stories. Think in terms of *local* and *industry*.

Don't forget to mention that when, on the odd occasion, you have spare food you share it with a charity and that readers could do the same.

#### **Commit a percentage of your income to promo material**

To make money you need to spend money. You might have the best ingredients, the most creative recipes and years of culinary experience but if no-one knows you exist it is all for nothing. Stickers with your social media name, stickers with a QR code (linking to your HomeMeal page), flyers with a brief overview of what you offer, a tee shirt with your social media name (to wear shopping when you go to the market for ingredients) and business cards for when you are at those entrepreneurial breakfasts. All of these are quickly available through

#### **See what promotional material your suppliers publish - and ask to get involved**

Can you contribute a recipe to a newsletter, can you offer an insight into how you use a specific product for their social media? When you champion a brand you are also championing yourself.

#### **Go to local food markets and use it as a networking event**

Don't just walk around the market looking for the best ingredients at the best prices - use it as an opportunity to network. Take samples along to stall holders and encourage them to taste what you cook with their ingredients. Develop a network throughout the market, wow them so much you have them talking about you with their client base and ask if you can leave flyers or pin a QR code to their stall. It won't affect their business if their other customers order from you as you will start buying in bigger quantity, which is win-win!