

Social media

Restaurants can use social networking to announce deliveries, fix problems and even wind up the sommelier.

Louis Villard
(@spiltwine) reports

If you felt your internet slowing down between the days of 30 October and 1 November it wasn't the fault of your service provider but most likely due to the 100-odd laptops sucking up all of Europe's internet juice en masse in Lisbon during the European Wine Bloggers Conference (EWBC).

Fourteen different countries united with the main objective of creating a stronger relationship amongst the wine bloggers of Europe. 'Language barriers are there online but if you put everyone in a room with a glass of wine and food, these issues are secondary. It's all about creating a stronger network. This can happen face to face,' says Robert McIntosh (@thirstforwine), blogger at www.wineconversation.com, and one of the conference organisers, along with Gabriella and Ryan Opaz (@catavino) of www.catavino.net. That pretty much sums it up when it comes to social networking – it's all about creating relationships.

Some books you can read en route to conquering the social media world:

The Twitter Book

by Tim O'Reilly and Sarah Milstein

The Woofie Factor by Tara Hunt

Bloggng for Dummies by Susannah Gardner

140 Characters: A Style Guide for the

Short Form by Dom Sagolla



Do you blog or tweet? If not, in today's digital world, there are many who think you should – but between setting up for service, prepping the food and hauling the wine shipments up huge flights of stairs, who has time to sit at a keyboard?

Alexis Gauthier, the head chef at Michelin-starred Rousillon (@roussillon_sw1) tweets from his kitchen. 'We use it to let our customers know more

about us. I mention if some fresh fish has arrived, for instance,' he says.

'The other day I posted that we burnt something. But we also use it to let the guests know if Roberto [della Pietra – head sommelier] is in a bad mood – and encourage them to ask him lots of wine questions if he is.'

Sommelier Stephen Nisbet is writing a series on wine faults on l'Ortolan's (@lortolan) blog. 'It brings traffic to our restaurant site. We can see our hits jump up after I tweet something,' says Claire Dunford, from the Reading restaurant's marketing team. 'But the real benefit is the feedback from customers that you wouldn't have gotten first time around, but rather read about online afterwards.'

Restaurants can prolong their conversations with diners beyond the dining experience

Caitlin Ferguson from Vinoteca (@vinoteca) keeps a constant monitor on what is being said about the wine bar and restaurant and was able to get in touch with a customer who had a bad experience. 'I read about the bad experience and got in contact. I was not only able to figure out what happened and when, but also relay this information to the restaurant manager.'

Bringing traffic to your website, being able to fix something that went wrong – if these reasons don't convince you to tweet and blog, McIntosh has another argument in favour of social networking: 'The whole point of social media is it allows you to get your personality across. During service, restaurants only have a limited time to do this. With social media, sommeliers and staff have the opportunity to prolong their conversations with interested diners beyond that of the actual dining experience.'

Rest assured that Imbibe is at the forefront of all this tweeting activity. Follow us on @imbibeuk and befriend [imbibepublications](https://www.facebook.com/imbibepublications) on Facebook.

TIPS AND TRICKS

Interested now? Here are some ideas to help you get started...

- Facebook and Twitter are completely different outlets in social media.
- Facebook is more about connecting with friends and perhaps friends of friends, while Twitter is about connecting with like-minded people, who have common interests to you.
- Twitter isn't only about saying what you are doing but also interacting with others, and even asking what you can do for them.
- Create a fan page on Facebook for your restaurant – get some devotees and people you know are interested in your establishment.
- When creating a Twitter name, use one that is easy for other people to remember and, more importantly, easy to spell.
- The top three blogging sites are Wordpress.com, Blogger.com and Typepad.com – now get started already.