How to Start a Food Blog



This guide will enable you to make your own website within 74 minutes or less. We'll provide you with basic knowledge, step-by-step instructions, and detailed screen caps to help get you through some of the more complicated sections. This guide is aimed at responding to basic website building needs, while focusing specifically on the real food niche.



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WELCOME

Your talent in the kitchen speaks for itself. Your family, guests, co-workers, and the random recipients of your goodies know and confirm this. But why not open it up to the entire world? Why not teach people how to be creative in the kitchen, to dump takeout food habits, and even teach them to eat and live healthier? You need a mouthpiece for this, and since most people would rather check for recipes online than buy expensive cookbooks, it is probably high time you started your own food blog! This way, you will immediately become a member of a tremendously large community of foodies who are actively promoting their recipes and lifestyle and health advice, and are always willing to contribute, interact, and even promote you!

Building your own food blog is not a difficult task, however daunting it may seem in the beginning. It suffices to search on Google for food blogs - there are so many that it's impossible that all the people behind them are tech-savvy. Blog websites are affordable (there are straightforward ways in which you can be online for less than the amount you spend on the ingredients of one single recipe), they are trendy, and last but not least, they can become a steady source of passive or active income for you. It is up to you to decide whether this is a hobby, or a business that you're about to make happen. And don't forget - whatever you choose, you will still have fun in the process, meet interesting people, and even improve your cooking skills.

We at **First Site Guide** take pride in offering niche-oriented blog tutorials and guides, and we just couldn't skip the vibrant world of food blogging. Not only have we devised a guide for you with all needed information for the green one, but we have provided it with screen caps and step-by-step descriptions, so you could feel immediately at ease, and even work with your intuition and creativity. What is more, we have spent quality time with lots of prominent food bloggers and discussed their passions, motivation, and about their experience back when they were anonymous or just starting. Their priceless advice helped us shape up this guide - and offer you realistic and at the same time rewarding blogging experiences for the foodie newbie.

When you decide to get online and start building your internet reputation, there are two main things you will want to secure at all costs: you will want to be able to move around your blog at ease, and provide to your readers a rewarding experience. This means that your blog needs to be both functional, and enticing - and we have gathered up information on how to do both. You will soon realize that it's not any harder than taking out of the oven the perfect sponge cake, or setting the table for the most honored guests - it just takes the shortest while to get accustomed to it.

Being online is not a form of teleportation, but we've got everything covered. From affordable solutions of hosting and domain name, to tested recipes of building your website, we take great pride in presenting everything to you in all needed detail.

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And if you want to become more social (most of our interviewees ascertain that a well-rounded internet presence is built on social media just as it is on a perfect blog website), or if you want to get some money from blogging, well - our chapters about social media engagement and monetization are already in this guide. What's more, we will tell you how to get top-drawer photographs for your blog, write engagingly, and at the same time, use your own voice - these are added values that will help you achieve your desired success online.

So: have you decided to get started with your website? First Site Guide's here to help! Here is what you will find in our Food Blog Website Guide:

- Professional assistance in choosing your domain name
- Easy induction for setting up your account with a hosting provider
- Crucial information about the right content management system
- Interesting information about using search engine optimization tools

Wait, there's more: how to choose a theme, how to get your content online, how to get your photos in shape, or how to start earning money from your blog - and you can really trust us - we've gathered examples and advice from successful food bloggers from all over the world!

The extra perk:

We know that reading a guide just doesn't do it today - when you could just see everything in action online. This is why we have additionally created a sample website for a food blog - based on the exact same instructions that are comprised in our guide. Not only will you be able to see the front-end results of back-end efforts, but you will also have at hand a benchmarking tool for your website management, for your to-do list, and last but not least for sample content to get you started! So make sure you check foodblog.firstsiteguide.com while you're reading.

BLOG QUICK START

When you're starting with your blog, you may become discouraged by the threads of information, often times truncated, which you find on the internet. Most of the times, you have to draw your own conclusions, and learn from your mistakes. Well, with your food blog, there's no need to! We've got everything you need in order to have a head start, and being at the same time proud of yourself for having done a terrific work, one, by the way, for which many people end up spending lots of money. But let's start with the basics!



Step 1 - Selecting a domain

When you visit your favorite websites on the web, you use their name in order to access their contents. A Google search starts from the Google homepage, whereas a chat with a dear old friend on Facebook will start from your personal Facebook page. You get to them, and any other page, because you know their address, and type it in the address bar of your browser. In order to get to them, you use some conventions, with web names being sandwiched between a 'www.' and a '.com' - though, the top-level domain (such as the ending .com) can vary - a choice of up to 0.5k TLD's (top level domains) can be added to the website name. In order to have your own online kitchen, you will need to pay an inexpensive amount, usually on a yearly basis - so that it is yours, and not somebody else's. Let's see how we can get there!

When you choose your blog name, you will need to give careful consideration to some factors. Please remember the domain name is not a screen name for your account, which you can change, or a new email address you can always change with another one. Your blog name is unique, it should reflect your personality and style, and also tell people what they're about to read on the page. For your convenience, we have prepared a short list of advice aimed at fine-tuning your choice of a domain name:

1. Brevity is golden. Even services with shorter names such as Facebook and Twitter go for shorter variants for their links <u>fb.com</u>, and <u>t.co</u> are respectively. This is because it is very important to be accessible and memorable. You could of course name your blog:



But we very much doubt too many people will remember what it really is called, and be able to access it. You should aim at something short and memorable. This is a better example:



So, take a look at this - Quick Bite - now that's a winner! There's not too much information, the word order in the domain name is obvious, and also memorable. When you will earn money from your blog, you may even purchase a vanity shortener for your needs, or use services such as TinyURL for making your links even shorter.

No matter how creative you are, the domain name will never include everything you want to talk on your blog.

So choose the shortest and catchiest name - people will remember you, and know how to look you up and access your content.

- **2. SEO is crucial.** When you choose your domain name, you should bear in mind the fact that not only contents, but domain names as well decide to a large extent how accessible you are in search results. SEO (search engine optimization) specialists ascertain the fact that in their algorithms, search engines place a certain amount of importance on web domain name, too. Therefore, your short and memorable domain name should also be specific for your niche.
- **3. Clear-cut is the best way to go.** The topic of your blog should stand out of the domain name even for someone who has not visited your blog before. If you are already notorious for your cooking, you can use your name, but if you are not stick with a clear description of what your blog will actually be about.
- **4. It should read YOU.** All the food bloggers we have interviewed agree on one point the foodie internet business is about being genuine and exhaling comfort to your readers. Don't barricade yourself behind a name that does not represent you you need to feel a strong connection to your blog, and make it clear to your readers, too! Why not start directly from the first impact? Remember that no matter how good or bad first impressions they are, they do stay.

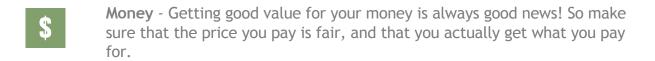


Step 2- Securing your hosting

We are getting closer to the moment when you are online! If you have already found the perfect domain name for your food blog, it is now time to concentrate on hosting.

If you've been shopping around for kitchenware, you remember how difficult it may sometimes be to find the exact shape, size, quality, or price range for a pan - it always seems that those product managers have been inspecting someone else's kitchen! Well, hosting - which is, the set of features that allow your domain name and contents to be accessible to your readers 24/7 through their desk-top and mobile browsers - is the same - the offer on the market exceeds the demand, and is not always as reliable or affordable as you may need. Hosting is a paid service, and some people usually prefer to get one-time deals for both securing their domain under their name and for purchasing hosting, whereas other people prefer to keep them separate with two providers. Since it is more likely to get best buy deals from bundling up your domain name and hosting service, it is this option that we recommend.

The number of factors that you should pay attention to when buying your hosting is practically boundless, but these are the key points you should take a look at when you're shopping:





Load time - Optimal load time is in the range of milliseconds. While your blog content is key, hosting provider's servers also have a say in this.

Support - 24/7 support is key for those times when accessing your blog is an issue - next-day, or worse - next-week solutions are definitely not what you're shopping for.

Features - Hosting providers should offer different special features, such as apps, themes, design options and tools.

Reviews - A simple Google search for reviews of the services you are currently prospecting is going to enlighten you, and help you make a more refined choice.

At **First Site Guide**, we take a professional interest in finding out which are the best solutions for hosting. Based on our expertise, we would like to recommend to you a topnotch service offered by <u>WebHostingHub.com</u>. Their offer features the best - from reliable support to great value for your money - with prices starting from as little as \$3.99 per month. An extra per year of \$11.99 will secure ownership of your domain.



There's more! When you click on the link below, you will get an exclusive 50% off deal for the first year of your online presence: FirstSiteGuide.com/hub.

Step 3- You're online!

Whereas different hosting providers will have different sign-up and check-out processes, we are going to walk you through the sign-up, and purchase process of your domain name and hosting plan with WebHostingHub - a five-star, tried and tested option we heartily recommend. Visit: FirstSiteGuide.com/hub for perks and immediate access to your blog!

Part 1

If you clicked already on the link we provided, you will be presented with a browser window in which you can get access to all the features provided by WebHostingHub, such as your personal account, purchase and checkout options, as well as your own account management panel (usually called for ease of reference AMP) - that is, the place where you're going to find all vital information regarding your account's status, services, validity, etc.



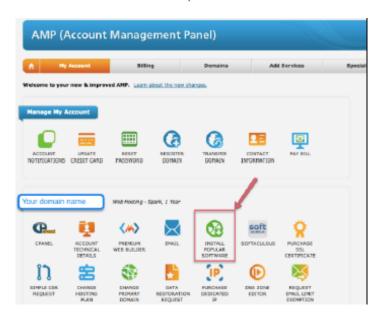
In order to locate your AMP, you just need to sign in to to <u>webhostinghub.com</u>, log in using the top right-hand corner button. This is what you will see:



Part 2

Upon successfully logging in with the information provided to you in your welcome email, you will find yourself in the main panel of your account: All your domain- and hosting-related actions will be performed from inside this panel. Whether you want to install your **content management system** (for short, **CMS**), or check the status of your services, here's where you need to go to.

This panel comprises various tools, applications, and help items, all provided for your ease of access, and comfort. Clicking on **Install Popular Software** will guide you to the installation of your content management system. The convenient, one-click auto-installer called **Softaculous** is also provided here.



What is a content management system? In order to build, manage, or add content to your website, you will need a visual interface that lets you perform all the above actions - and even more. Instead of working with code, you will be able to do everything: upload, move, size, drag, drop, copy, paste, link - you name the limit! The complicated coding and design behind each website are still there, but they are performed based on your visual input by the content management system. While numerous options exist, most popular choices are just a few - such as Joomla!, Blogger, or Drupal, but the international vote of popularity goes to WordPress - the content management system we use in this guide, as well.



Step 4- One click and you're there: your WordPress installation

WordPress solo installation is probably not the easiest thing you have ever done, but luckily, there's a hassle-free install of WordPress in your AMP. **Softaculous**, which is provided by WebHostingHub in the **Install Popular Software panel**, however, is a blessing for the newbie blogger.

Part 1

Click on the WordPress button from your Control Panel.



Part 2

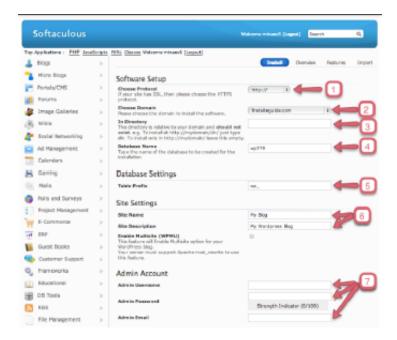
The next page will display the WordPress tab of the **Softaculous** installer, informing you about the current version of WordPress with a technical summary of features. Click on the top right hand corner **Install** button.

Part 3

In the provided form you need to fill out some crucial information:

- (1) protocol (http:// and http://www. are your choices, but either will ensure redirection);
- (2) domain name (your available domain will be listed here by default but if you have more than one domain available, make sure to pick the one you're currently managing);
- (3) directory (you do not need to fill it out if you install WordPress in your root directory, but if you want a subdomain installation, you can specify it here);
- (4) database name, and
- (5) table prefix should be left as they are;
- (6) the title and subtitle (tag) of your blog both can be edited at a later stage from inside your WordPress Dashboard;

(7) your login information, namely - a user name and a strong password - both of which will be used as your credentials every time when you log in to your Word Press Dashboard.



Part 4

Fill out the form, check the accuracy of your input, and then confidently hit the **Install** button. Upon refresh, the successful installation will be confirmed.

You're on! Now you can easily access your blog's content management system - or rather, your blog's kitchen - and start building your blog ,and adding content at your ease. In order to do so, you need to access from your address bar your domain name, followed by '/wp-admin'. For your eyes only, you will be able to access the backend of your blog from URL/wp-admin.

WORDPRESS COOKBOOK



Step 1- Getting the gist of WordPress

We are going to walk you through WordPress and what it does soon enough, but before that, let's go on a quick reconnaissance mission to see what WordPress has to offer! We have chosen WordPress because the trust of millions of users worldwide could not be in vain. Since 2009, WordPress is quoted, without any interruption or disagreement on the topic, as world's most popular hosting platform.

And this is not a fad, but a very conscientious choice: it works perfectly with blogs, but also with company websites. It is highly customizable, it allows for unprecedented ways of looking at the world wide web in terms of creativity and functionality. Knowing coding or design can be a sure plus when dealing with WordPress, but you can get true web gems out of it even if you do not know the first thing about blogging. Additionally, its worldwide availability, as well as the fact that it has already been localized in tens of languages, makes it such a popular choice.



Step 2- The quest of the perfect theme

You're already online, but there's nothing much showing on your blog. WordPress installations come with a default theme, some sample pages, posts, and comments. It's time to dabble around with what your readers will see. You may want, in the process, 'lock out' readers from your blog, until you reach that perfect look and start-up contents you're about to provide. Several plugins (which is, 'helpers') are available for this task, including the very straightforward Lock Out plugin. You can read more about plugin installation in the section 'Plugins: the key ingredient' from Chapter 4.

Themes are visual layouts for your blog. Since you will most likely do no coding in your use of WordPress, you need a way to display your content - for instance to 'tell' your blog to display your articles in a certain way and in a certain location on page, to place your menu somewhere, or to add to your sidebar some elements. This is what a theme is, and does: it creates a standard way to display contents on your blog. Plus, it saves you a lot of time automating actions that you would otherwise need to perform individually, over and over. You may want to think of themes as sugar coating - it needs to be neat and entice your guests to take a bite. No one wants to eat something that looks strange - and we can assure you, no one wants to spend too much time on a blog that looks strange, either. WordPress alone, in its repository of themes offers 2k+ themes to choose from, and additionally there are paid (premium) themes you can purchase if nothing satisfies your theme appetite!

Because the choice of a theme is rather tough, and you should bear in mind more than just one thing, we have prepared for you a quick Q&A in order to help you identify the perfect theme:

- * Free or premium? There is a wide choice of superb free and premium themes the latter being available at prices between \$3 and \$1000 but it definitely makes more sense to look into free ones at first. Preview themes, make notes of the features that take you aback the most, or find extremely useful, and try to narrow down your choices to the ones that include the most of them.
- * Make up your mind. What matters to a very large extent is what YOU want. Since you are in charge of your blog's look and content, you should aim at making the most of

the features offered by a theme, but at the same time, not be encumbered by extra features you do not want and it may take one million years to remove.

- * Take one moment to think of your readers. Your readers already come to you with their experience of the web. They expect some things to exist (for instance a search box, or a menu), and at the same time, they need to be positively impressed. Plus, with today's fad of reading both on desktop computers and mobile devices such as phones and tablets, you should aim at a theme that sports also a functional and esthetic mobile version looking neat, and loading fast.
- * Where are you headed to? If you are just starting, you may have a notion of what you intend to achieve with your food blog. Thinking ahead about things that you will want to add at a later date, or things that may change the way you look at your blog completely (for instance displaying ads, or selling your recipes as an electronic book) will also mean that you give yourself more chances to succeed.
- * Who are your readers? Your readers play an important part in the theme selection process. You need to provide to them something they are accustomed to, and can navigate at their ease, but also something that surprises them, and makes them remember you for your unique touch.

Because what you have in mind is a food blog, we have additionally identified some key elements that you will definitely want your theme to feature:

- mild tonalities in order to accommodate very colorful photography
- very good management of photo galleries
- photo viewer, preferably with captions
- page templates, including full-width
- good integration of social media
- good tag and category management
- customizable header, or even separate headers for different pages

Many of the other things you need do not specifically need to be included in your theme, because you can always add them with help from plugins!

In order to help you at this stage, we have selected a couple of free themes that can be used for pushing forward your existence on the world wide web. All of them can be downloaded directly from the <u>wordpress.org</u> repository of themes, or from their respective developer's websites.

*Food & Diet

*Hassiumize

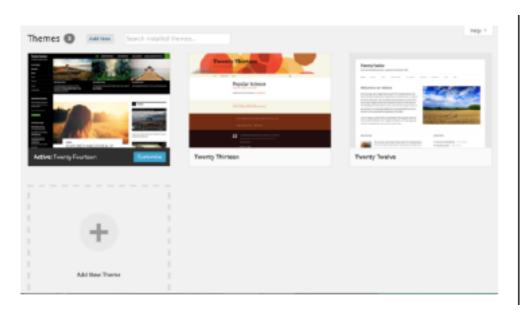
*Happy Food



Step 3- Installing your theme

Theme installation is the process through which you make the undeniable connection between your blog and its layout. Since in 99% of the cases one blog can only have one theme at any given time, and since further customizing a theme means that the respective customizations will, or will not 'hold' when changing the theme, it makes sense to go on with this step only when you are absolutely sure about the theme you are going to use.

In our complete walkthrough for the download, and installation of your theme, we have used the **Happy Food** theme - but no matter the theme of your choice, the process will be identical. The quickest and simplest sure-fire way to install your WordPress theme is directly from your **Dashboard**.



- 1. Download the theme Happy Food from here.
- 2. In your Dashboard, click on Appearance, and then choose Themes.
- 3. Click on Add New, and then on Upload.
- 4. Upload the downloaded file from your hard drive.
- 5. Click on Install Now.
- **6.** Upon confirmation of successful upload, click on **Activate**.

You can now visit your blog's front-end (by inputting your website URL in the address bar of your browser, OR from choosing Visit website from the top-most menu of your **Dashboard**), in order to take a look at your new kitchen.



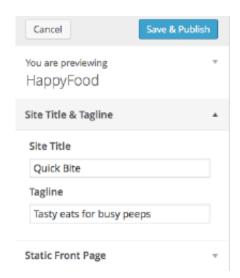
Step 4- Your theme with a twist

Now that you look at your theme, it may seem that nothing much happened. That's because there's a number of easy and fun steps you still need to go through, in order to make your blog scream you all over. There is content to be added, tags and categories to be created, you will need a menu, and some other elements. Many of these you will be able to perform through customizations made to your theme. Most themes allow you to customize their layout, colors, image parameters, text sizes, etc.

There will also be things that you will not be able to perform directly on your theme or even if you could, that would take time, and there are the little 'helpers' we have previously mentioned, namely plugins, which will take care of functional and esthetic aspects of your blog. But let's start from the very beginning with some minor tweaks that will make a lot of difference!

Your theme with a twist

Happy Food is not only a theme that looks great, but also one that allows you numerous customizations. We will begin with a couple of them that can be performed directly from your Dashboard, from the new menu item called Happy Food. Here's what you can customize first and foremost:



- 1. Go to Appearance, and choose Customize.
- 2. Insert your desired site name under **Site Title**.
- 3. Insert your desired tagline under Tagline.
- **4.** Choose whether your front page will display static content (i.e., a page of your choice), or your articles.
- 5. Click on Save & Publish.

Additionally, the theme we have chosen comes with a variety of customizations under the new **Dashboard** item titled just like the theme: **Happy Food**.

Go there and change:

- * Site logo. The site logo can be a text or an image. Select your new logo image in order to upload it, or write the new name.
- * Site name. From the same General panel, write your desired blog name so that it reads on the top of the browser tab with your name.
- * Slider contents the best way is to display in your top slider your most recent articles, because of the nice, sleek panoramic way they introduce contents. You can tweak the slider to show the featured photo of your posts, to give the title, and even to give a short and enticing preview of text from the article.
- * Layout choose whether the default layout includes left/right hand side sidebars, and how many.
- * Social buttons check the services you want to activate in the mobile (floating) social bar.
- * SEO add the meta description and meta-keywords of your website, very useful for improving your website's performance in search results.

Make sure to confirm your choice with the right hand side green check (\mathcal{I}) sign after each change in order to confirm your choice.



Step 5 - Permalinks

Another one-time tweak you should decide on from the very beginning is the way your blog's pages and posts are going to be displayed via their respective URL's. **Permalinks**, a porte-manteau combination of 'permanent' and 'links' allows you to decide on the way to organize your blog's contents. The default WordPress installation page and post names are quite ugly and opaque, but you can change the way they are displayed with just a few clicks! User-friendly, SEO-friendly, memorable links are being served right away!

- 1. Go to your Dashboard, and under Settings and choose Permalinks.
- 2. You will be given a few standard options to name your pages and posts, but also custom ones, you can make yourself. We suggest choosing Post Name as your permalink algorithm. This will render your URL's as URL/contact and URL/15-minute-muffin-recipe which, you may conclude, is a very easy way to deliver information both to your readers, and to search engines.
- **4.** Click on **Save** in order to propagate the respective pattern of URL rendition site-wide.

A word of caution. If you get around to setting your permalink structure after you've already created content - which we do not recommend - make sure you do this wisely. To begin with, changing the permalink structure affects ALL posts and pages, including the ones that you have already created. This is why, when you do that, you should check your existing posts and pages for internal links - which will not change automatically (e.g. when you make reference to your Contact page, or remind about a similar recipe you are now re-visiting with a twist). So there's extra work ahead! Additionally, if you already shared your contents before setting the permalink structure change on social media, you can kiss goodbye their future impact - readers of your statuses, tweets, etc. will be guided to now non-existing links. This is why this step needs to be performed before you have created any form of content on your blog.

MANAGING WORDPRESS

The next challenge ahead is to create content for your food blog. If you've got so far to the conclusion that it's easy as pie to manage WordPress, you are right in your assumption - as long as you know what you're doing, it will all go smooth. And like most things, once you get the gist of the things, you will be able to work with WordPress as confidently as you work in your kitchen!

For a quick roundup, contents is usually presented in your website under the form of pages (static content), and posts (or, articles) - the latter being introduced on your blog in a chronological suite with most recent article featured topmost.

The contents of your blog pages and posts will vary - you can have texts, photos, links, videos, embeds of social media - basically everything that you need in order to populate your food blog with quality content. Now let's get better acquainted with WordPress!



Step 1- Your blog's kitchen

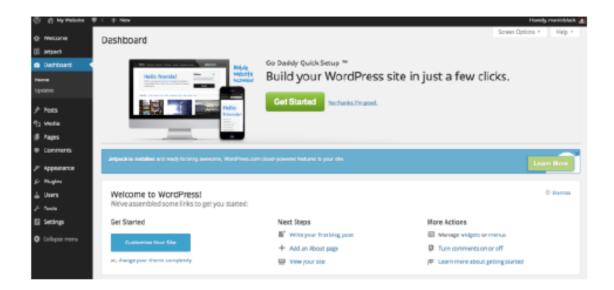
All the actions that you need to perform in order to make your food blog look better, be more functional, or richer in content will be performed from the back end of the blog - the area available for you alone once you access the /wp-admin section of your URL and key in your username and password. Of course, as your blog grows, and more people collaborate on the blog, you can grant this kind of access to different users as well, with varying hierarchical levels. But for the time being - it's only you in there. Conversely, on the 'outside' of the blog, on the front-end, anything you make available will be visible for all your readers. But let's start from the back-end, called Dashboard in WordPress, and see what it's all about!

Your **Dashboard** is nothing less than a set of your most praised kitchen utensils. Here you will introduce the ingredients (the contents), and with your utensils, you are going to create awesome front-end displays, contents, galleries, - anything that takes your fancy, for that matter.

It is extremely user-friendly (and gets even more so with each new update), but it takes a couple of minutes to get accustomed to it - and after having performed each Dashboard action at least three times, you'll be able to get around at your ease, and do things like they were recipes you have done for some time.

This is your **Dashboard**. It is made up of three main areas.

The top toolbar. The top toolbar is visible for you alone, both on the back and front-end. You can disable it on the front-end if you would rather access your Dashboard from a separate browser tab. It is a great way to have quick access to some basic **Dashboard** functions, such as logging in and out of the blog, visiting the front-end of your blog, or keeping tracks of updates, or comments in queue for moderation.



The main body. The main body of the Dashboard is a quick glance at what you have on your blog right now - such as the number of pages, posts, tags, comments which are approved, or awaiting moderation. You can also find important information about updates that should be made, and since it is made of customizable modules that can be moved around, added, deleted, etc. - you can add practically anything you wish to have quick access to on the Dashboard main page.

The left hand side menu. This is the section of your Dashboard you're most likely to access. Visual and functional aspects of your blog are available in this menu. Let's see what's cooking!

A first section hosts **Posts**, **Media**, **Pages**, and **Comments** - let's call them content management units, shall we? Each of them can be expanded, and they lead to different sub-sections, each with their specific outcome. Under **Posts**, for instance, you can write new articles, manage old ones, or deal with their categories and tags. There's a section devoted to writing articles and pages coming right up!

Not only content related, but also functional elements are to be found in the left hand side menu. Dropdown menus are provided for sections eloquently titled **Appearance**, **Plugins**, **Users**, **Tools**, **Settings**. It's worth your time to try and become familiar with each - because they will be key in managing your theme's look and functions. We have previously worked with **Appearance**; more about the remaining units in the next sections and chapters.



Step 2- What's on the menu?

If you visit any website, you will realize that under one form or another, they are all endowed with a menu. Menus are collections of quick links - which can be organized horizontally, but also vertically (hierarchically), and point to sections of your blog that your readers are most likely to access. There's more to it, however: you can even bring to the attention of your readers sections that they would otherwise miss completely, had they not been pinned in a menu, and even other internet locations which you want to advertise.

Generally, one website means one menu, but there are themes that allow you to use two and even more menus on-page. Additionally, you can have different menus on the same page or different pages - let's say that you need for your front page a link for your blog, but once accessed, the blog page has a menu containing all the categories (e.g. types of recipes, types of meals, cooking level of difficulty, time, and even serving sizes!). You will need to tag properly your articles in order to do that - learn how in the section about **Tags** and **Categories** below.

- 1. In order to get things started, navigate to your **Dashboard**, and find the section called **Menus** under **Appearance** in the left hand side menu.
- 2. A left hand panel will present you the things that you can readily add to your front-end menu. These are pages, categories, or custom links.
- 3. The right hand side panel, however, will show you what the menu structure will look like. You need to name your menu, and hit Save in order to make sure that whatever changes you make to your menu will be preserved.
- 4. In order to populate your saved menu, click on the left hand side checkboxes next to each item (page, category, custom) and click on **Add to Menu** each time.
- **5.** If you want to re-order the items in your menu, there are two basic options you have:
- 6. You can drag and drop them up and down (first listed will also mean first shown in the menu).
- 7. Or, you can **drag and drop them laterally** (and they will be displayed with a little left indent). This, rather than making menu entries, will make sub-entries, which will be displayed as dropdown items in your front-end menu.
- **8.** Each of these changes needs to be saved, so make sure to click the **Save Menu** button under or before the menu structure.

After creating such a menu, it is time to get everything online! In order to do so, you need to look for the subsection called **Menu Settings** in your **Menus** section (right under **Menu Structure**) and make sure to click the checkbox that says **Primary Menu**, so it should be properly displayed on your front end. To cap it all, the **Save Menu** button needs to be hit one more time in order to make the changes live.



Step 3- You are served: your first post, or page

The part about which you were most excited when you thought about making your own food blog is drawing near! Yes, we are talking about creating contents for your food blog. Articles can cover a wide range of topics, they can be organized under different headings, and they can include a variety of media: text, image, video, embeds - all of which we will cover in the current section for your convenience. Little by little, if you follow the steps provided by First Site Guide, you will see with your own eyes how your readership grows, becomes faithful, and starts engaging with your content. Notoriety is around the corner, and not just for a few chosen ones!

Anything that you want to share to the world can be done via two posting options: **posts**, and **pages**. Both can feature **photo** and **video content**, **links**, **categories** and **tags** - all of which will be explained in their interaction with published content in this very important section of the First Site Guide primer for food bloggers.

For the time being, try to set in your mind the following main differences between pages, and posts: while pages are usually limited in number, and point to strategic static locations of your blog (see below for a choice of pages a food blog must definitely have), posts can come in any number, and they are ordered chronologically unless you affect the way they are displayed. At the same time, unlike posts, about which we will talk next, pages do not need categories, tags, and comments can be closed, should you wish to do so.

Pages

Based on our review of successful food bloggers, these are very common examples of pages for websites authored by foodies:

- * About Me your story with cooking, or anything else you want to let out about yourself
- * Contact ways of getting in touch with you;
- * Cookbook contents this is a page you can actually create through a plugin, in order to have a one-pager with all your recipes, sorted according to your criteria;
- * Terms and Conditions for information about media credits, health info, cuisine preferences and inspiration, or even a caveat about advertising if you are going to use monetizing options.



Publishing a new page is going to seem fun, and really easy to do.

- 1. Go to the Pages section from your Dashboard, and click on Add New.
- 2. You will be presented with a next screen in the main area of your **Dashboard**, with some important fields and boxes the first of which is concerned with the title here you are going to write the title of the page aim at a short, inform ative, and if possible, fun one!
- 3. The text box for the main content of your page is where you are going to input your text. Some people prefer to write their texts in offline text editors and then simply paste them in their pages and posts and that's because the text box menu provides an option for pasting in plain/formatted text. And more than that kind of all the main functions you expect from a text editor are going to be there: formatting style (bold, italic), formatting sizes (headings, paragraphs), indenting, bullets and numbering, colors, links, text alignment, etc. Don't worry about taking too much time to write if your internet connection does not fail, WordPress is programmed to auto-save your drafts quite frequently. A history thereof is also presented to you below the history, so you can easily revert to previously saved versions.
- 4. On the right hand side, several boxes will present you with the page's administra tion. The first one is the most important one the one that allows you to save the draft for later, or conversely, publish the page. If you're editing an existing page, you can update it. Additionally, if you don't want the page to be published immediately, you can also schedule it for a later time or date!
- 5. Hitting the button that says Publish will get your page online.
- **6.** Can't you see it on the blog front end? Make sure the page is appended to the active menu, following the steps from the previous sections on menus.

Posts

As a food blogger, you will find yourself many a time in the position of having to publish something - the number of recipes you want to share to the others is practically unlimited, and kitchen tips and tricks abound.

So it makes a lot of sense to become accustomed to the way posts and their related content work.

If you have already published a page, you roughly know how posts work - and that is because the visual editor of both pages and posts is similar.

However, posts come with a lot of extra features that make them more versatile and more likely to be spotted by your avid readers.

The most important extra options you get with posts are the ones related totaxonomies (i.e. ways of organizing your posts). By default, posts are displayed on the blog chronologically, with the most recent post featured topmost. Here are some clever ways to **organize your posts** by:

- * **Default**, i.e chronologically. This way, your faithful readers will know you published something new by just checking out your main page.
- * Exclusive, i.e. omitting one or more categories or tags from the home page display. This is useful when you want to use some posts as featured on special pages.
- * Category since you are going to assign one or more categories to each post, these categories (i.e. topics) can become ways of sorting out, and displaying contents.
- * Tags whereas the number of tags of a food blog is incremental with each new post published, some people prefer to add ways to look up contents by ingredients.

The most important thing about these ways of organizing your content is that you will not need to create new pages function of the way you want your posts to be displayed. Rather, WordPress comes with an in-built ability to archive posts, which means that you just need to bait WordPress with a criterion, and it will feature an archive page containing the posts qualifying for the respective criteria. It is just as if you had made a search for specific content - and the posts are the search results.

Tips for successful food blogging

When you write for your food blog, there are dozens, literally, of things you should take into account. Below we have prepared a starter kit for the successful food blogger - inspired by the food bloggers whom we have interviewed, and our own expertise.

- 1. Aim at a constant flow of new articles. Whether daily or weekly -that's your call! But make sure you create a schedule and keep to it. More than anything, your faithful readers need to be rewarded by your new articles.
- 2. Write in a natural, comprehensible and friendly tone. Read aloud to yourself what you have written to check. Does it sound fishy in any way? Don't hesitate; change it.
- 3. If you write recipes, make sure the title and link of your new post reads exactly the same the name of the respective recipe and nothing else. All other information may be added into the post content, so don't overdo it in the title. Clear titles with names of recipes are good both for your readers, and for search engines.

- 4. Decide on your own lexicon. Don't use instructions once, and then shift to directions, or method or anything like it. Both search engines and your users like to see structure. So decide on main headings for the sections of your posts, and stick with them. Additionally, always use the same kind of text style (recommended: Heading 3) for them. They stick out visually, and are indexed as such by search engines.
- 5. Try to word your articles anywhere between 200 and 700 words. Not only people have attention spans, but search indexes too so you are actually doing yourself a favor.
- 6. Use a plugin for lists be they ingredients, or steps you will need to point out there's a 'list' thing behind what you're doing.
- 7. Always title your photos before uploading (to see how to mend this after upload, see the next section). If you're aiming at a gallery, and there are more pictures, e.g. presenting the steps of a recipe make sure you number them, state the recipe, and step.
- 8. Always make the finished product photo the featured photo of your post.
- **9.** Strive at using keywords (e.g. main tags of your post) in the first 25 words of your article. This helps readers get a better grip of what they are about to read, and, as you can already tell, helps with SEO.
- **10.** Do not copy contents recipes, or photos from other bloggers. If you are thrilled by a recipe and want to try it out, do it with a twist and provide your own photos. No post at all will always be better than a copied one.

Below you will find some suggestions for topics suitable for food bloggers. You may not cover them all at once, or regularly, but there should be a common thread to your blog. Use this list when you have writer's block and do not know what to write about next.

- * Recipes and re-visiting recipes
- * Seasonal foods
- * International cuisine you're trying out
- * Restaurant, product, cookbook or market reviews
- * Kitchen layouts tweaks you have done to your kitchen in order to better serve your needs
- * Festive meals how you set the menu, seating, servings, accompanying music, everything that takes your fancy
- * Kitchen tips and tricks
- * Cooking classes, courses, accreditations
- * Hot deals, sales, and coupons

It's not just text, but also images, videos, and links that can be added to your posts.

Tasty photos of tasty dishes

Not only because your readers need to be drawn by the food photography you put on your blog, but also because you will need clear illustrations for your recipes, it is very important to provide **rich and vivid visual contents**.

4

Food photography is an important part of what you will be doing, so it is better to make sure you know the challenges ahead! Even for the blogger debutante, it is really easy to get good quality food photography, if you follow some basic advice:

- * The lighting is uniform, and there are no unnecessary shadows, blurred areas, or stark contrasts.
- * You have cleaned your tabletop! And unless decoration is key in your photos, make sure not to distract your readers with background elements.
- * You take photos of all relevant steps in your photos, but do not overdo it. Adding a yolk in an already pre-finite composition is not photo-worthy, but kneading is.
- * Make a mental map of the steps you are about to photograph. Write them on a post-it note if necessary, because you know you cannot 'undo' actions you have already performed, or take out ingredients.
- * If possible, keep the same focal distance and light conditions. Unless you shoot macros of food details, you need to keep your readers' attention focused.
- * Before taking each photo, wash your hands if you got 'dirty', clean leftovers, adjust lighting if necessary.
- * Do not over-edit. If you need to, make sure you adjust levels, and crop out distracting materials.
- * Save at a resolution of 72dpi that is enough for the web, and additionally, you will not need to worry about loading time when you or your readers access a page with let's say 10 photos over a mobile connection.
- * Save in *.jpg or *.png formats they are rendered the best online.

Forgot anything about your photos? Do you need to rotate, crop, resize, rename? The good news is many of these actions can be performed directly from your WordPress Dashboard! But let us go there, one step at a time.

Part 1 - Loading Photos

There are two basic ways to load your photos: via the **Media** panel from your Dashboard, or directly in your **posts**. Either way, the photos will be available for later use, and even re-use, and not just for the post they were assigned to - they can even stay 'unattached' and saved in your gallery for later use.

Here is what you need to do in order to add a new photo to your Media gallery:



- 1. Go to Dashboard, choose Media, and click the Add New subsection.
- 2. You can either drag and drop one or more photos from a folder window from your computer to the area which says **Drop Files Here**, or choose the button that says **Select Files** and select said photos.
- 3. On confirming the upload batch with **OK**, the photos will take some time to upload. Wait until each photo's progress bar halts at 100% to make sure the photos are properly uploaded.
- **4.** Ready! You can now visit your photo collection in your Dashboard's **Media sec tion**, under **Library**.

If conversely you're already editing a post and want to throw in some photos:

- 1. Choose the media button from the menu.
- 2. A pop-up window will open, allowing you basically the same functionalities as the Add New section from your Media panel.
- 3. The pop-up window also contains information about inserting the uploaded photo(s) into your post in a right hand side panel. You can choose: photo specifics (title, description, caption, or alt text i.e. the text someone sees when hovering with the mouse over the photos); display settings: (alignment, link to, size). The link is important because: you can leave it empty, you can link to a larger (original) size of the respective photo, or even link to another page (and even product in a store see more in Chapter 5 about monetization).
- 4. Click Insert into Post.

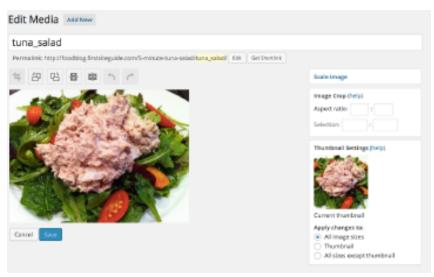


Part 2 - Editing Photos

There are even more editing capacities for photography ingrained in WordPress. Here's a short rundown of the features you can edit:

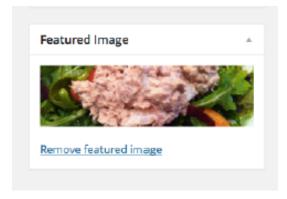
- * Crop. Discard the details you want to leave out from your photo.
- * Resize. Resize proportionally to any desired size.
- * Rotate. Change the orientation of your photo.

For any of the above changes - click on **Update** in order to save any of the committed changes.



Part 3 - Featuring a photo

Current WordPress installations allow, regardless of the theme of your choice, **featured photos**. Featured photos, even if 'overwritten' by themes (i.e. not displayed in the front page) are crucial in post listings, archive pages, and even when shared on social networks - as main, accompanying photo for articles.



- 1. In order to assign a featured photo to a post, while you are in the editing panel of the respective post, look at the bottom of the right hand side column, where you can find the **Featured Image section**.
- 2. Click on the Set Featured Image button.
- **3. Upload**, or select an already uploaded photo following the procedure for post photo upload explained above.
- 4. Click once more **Set Featured Image** to confirm.
- **5. Save** the post as well to commit the changes.

Videos

Videos are a massively popular way to introduce contents with food bloggers. Unlike photos, if you have a video setup, the whole process of cooking can be documented and made into a full tutorial of your cooking expertise. What is more, they are extremely easy to integrate within post and pages.

If your video is already available online, you need to visit the hosting service (such as **YouTube**, **Vimeo**, or **DailyMotion**). All of them come packed with embedding options. For instance, for a YouTube video, you will need to visit the "**Share**" section beneath the video, and then "**Embed**". Copy the code provided there, and paste it into your new post window.



If you are, instead, about to share a video that you made yourself, then you need to follow the exact same steps for uploading new photos. WordPress's "Media" section allows not only photos, but also videos. Alternatively, aim at creating your own YouTube channel, upload your new videos to YouTube, and embed them like regular videos. This way, you can have several other features and actually, thanks to YouTube's own search engine, address a whole new audience who can become hooked on your food blog.

Other embeds

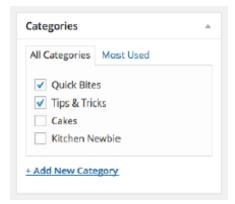
Additionally, recent WordPress versions have default add-ons for embedding other media - such as **Twitter** posts, or **Facebook** statuses. Just copy the link of any such update that is publicly accessible (i.e. not from a protected Twitter account or from a status update that is shared with only a custom group of people on Facebook) - and paste it in your post's text editor. The front end will display in a very attractive way the respective embed, with all their native functions (your readers, if logged in, can re-tweet or mark a favorite the Twitter post, or even like and share the Facebook status).



Categories

Categories are going to prove crucial in the management of your food blog content. Since people are always on the lookout for a new recipe, they are more likely to browse main categories - such as appetizers, salads, soups, main courses or deserts - and by assigning your articles to the category they fit in, you make their access, and experience a lot easier, and more fruitful at the same time.

A default WordPress installation comes with an **Uncategorized** 'category'. You should either delete, or rename it, and make sure never to leave uncategorized content. This may burden the task of your readers to find their way in the maze of your content.



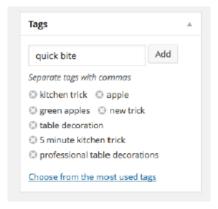
Categories can be added either from their designated rubric in the **Dashboard** (under **Posts**, there is a **Categories** panel), or directly from a post. In the latter case, you can go on the right hand side column and choose under **Categories**, either to assign an existing category, or to create a new one, and then assign it to the post.

One thing that you should not forget is that categories can become **menu items** on your blog. Check the section on menus above if you want to see how, or our sample blog which has already implemented this awesome function.

Tags

Tags are another way of sorting out the content of your blog. Rather than 'labeling' content, they act as keywords, and in that they serve both your readers (for instance when they want to see all recipes which have lettuce as an ingredient, regardless of their category), but also search engines - which help users get relevant results when they search for something.

If, for instance, you are writing a recipe for spring salad, try to figure out which are the tags that best suit your post. Ingredients come first to mind as a natural choice, but you could also include preparation time, the number of servings, dietary or allergy related information. Tags are entered as comma-separated values, do not need to be capitalized, and words can be even merged together.



Links

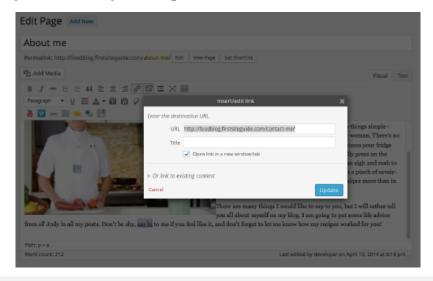
'No man is an island', they say, and the same thing is true of blogs. In today's world, it's only rarely possible not to link to other contents. Several things come to mind - variations on the same recipe you are writing about, vendors, partners, similar blogs you are backing up, affiliate links, and even internal links (i.e, links that refer to contents that is to be found on your blog, such as a contact page, a reminder about a previously published article, and so on.

There are two main types of links:

Part 1 - In-post

These will be links added to text.

- 1. In order to add a textual link, select (highlight with the cursor) some text you would like to transform into a link, and then click on the Link button from the top of the text editor.
- 2. Type in, or paste an already copied link.
- 3. Or, search and link to existing contents.
- 4. Confirm your choice by clicking on the blue Add Link button.



If you made a mistake, or simply want to unlink something, simply select the linked text once more, and choose from the menu of your text editor the button next to the Link, namely, Unlink.

These will be links added to pictures.

In order to assign a link to a picture, when you upload it, and/or insert it into a post, select under **Display Settings** the link you want your image to point to: its own link to the full-size version, or a custom one (contents from your blog, or from another domain).

Part 2 - Blogroll links

Blogrolls are ways to support, or to show affiliation. Blogrolls are usually located in the sidebar or footer, under the form of a widget. The next section on **Widgets** will show you how to do that. Here are some examples of links which you can include in your blogroll:

- * similar blogs
- * collaborators
- * retailers and other industry factors you trust
- * affiliate links (see more under Chapter 5 about monetization)
- * 'link exchange' (i.e., agreeing with another website owner to mutually add their respective links in order to help increase their reputation, credibility, and page rank with search engine).



Step 4 - Widgetizing your sidebars

When you browsed for a theme, you must have noticed that the theme descriptions stress the presence of sidebars, which are widget-ready, or widgetized. Most WordPress themes come with already designated **sidebar areas**. One or more sidebars can be provided to the left hand side, or to the right hand side, or either side of your blog, and contain valuable information, as well as tools for better navigation in the blog. The default installation of WordPress comes with other sidebar units you are less likely to use (or rather, your readers are less likely to use; such as a **calendar**, **meta administration**, **archives**, etc.) - which you can easily remove from your sidebar.

Here are examples of the most common areas of a sidebar:

- * a search form
- * a countdown of recent posts
- * ad spaces
- * blogroll

The functional units of a sidebar, called **widgets**, can be very easily customized (added, deleted, moved, filled out, etc.). **Widgets** are available in great numbers in your **Dashboard**, under **Appearance**, and then **Widgets**.

Here's the unfailing procedure to get a widget in a designated sidebar:

- 1. **Select** the sidebar you want to customize (provided there's more than just one on the website).
- 2. Remove (by dragging and dropping outside of the sidebar area) the widgets you no longer want to use.
- 3. Add new ones from the panel of available widgets. In order to do so, dragging and dropping them inside the sidebar area.
- 4. Click on Save! You don't need to save the sidebar as well, the individual save of the already added widget will immediately materialize on the blog!

Below you will find the procedure to add a new widget to your sidebar - and we have in mind the one we mentioned in the previous section, namely, your blogroll.

Your website's blogroll

In a nutshell, your **blogroll** contains tools for networking, trusted services and partners, and allows the readers to 'read through' your affiliations. It also provides to them extra reading resources for those rare moments when there is nothing new on your own blog. Most bloggers we interviewed ascertained the importance of both networking and collaboration with other food bloggers - so you need to have a sort of 'living room' where to welcome your guests!

Links for the blogroll can be added with help from a plugin called Link Manager (the installation procedure is 100% identical with the one of an 'average' plugin, as explained step-by-step in the next section). Before WordPress version 3.5, links were supported natively by WordPress, but were mysteriously removed from default installations in versions 3.5 and later. Let's assume that the plugin is already installed.

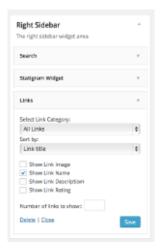
- 1. Go to Dashboard, and then to Links.
- 2. Click on Add New.
- 3. In the rubric that says Name, give the name (or nickname), or just the domain name of the website you want to link to.
- 4. In the rubric Web Address, provide the full URL of the respective website.
- 5. Click on the right hand side blue button Add Link.



The above action needs to be repeated for each individual link you want to add to your blogroll.

In order to get your link collection online under the form of a **blogroll**, you will need to edit your **sidebar**.

- 1. Go to Dashboard, and then Appearance.
- 2. Chose Widgets.
- 3. Drag and drop the Links widget in the sidebar of your choice.
- 4. Re-order the other existing widgets if you think it is necessary.
- 5. It's all set, so check the front-end of your blog: your blogroll is now online.





Step 5- Plugins: the key ingredient

Plugins are meant to improve several hundreds percent your experience of WordPress, as well as that of your readers. They are 'helpers' - they make your blog look, and feel better! New features, new functionalities, new fine tunings of your food blog's looks - well, plugins do that, and more! Because so many people are involved in the WordPress community, and many of them have the same interests as you have, there are even plugins that are developed, and serve food blogs! Special plugins for food photo galleries, as well as plugins for recipes, and even for building a shopping list that can be printed based on your recipes - these are all things you can achieve with plugins!

When you need a new plugin, it suffices to search on the WordPress repository based on your keywords. A simple search for 'food' brings up to date close to 100 plugins - that just to give you a notion of how many hard-working and creative people are involved mostly voluntarily into the WordPress business. For very specific and refined purposes, or conversely, for purposes that are extremely simple but no one has thought about them, there are also, just like in the case of themes, premium plugins.

Here's what the plugin installation experience looks like:

- 1. From your Dashboard, select Plugins, and then Add New.
- 2. Search for a plugin (either by exact name, or keywords).
- 3. Read the right hand side description. If you need more information, or want to see a preview of the respective plugin in action, visit the wordpress.org repository of plugins.
- 4. If your mind is set on installing it, click on Install Now.
- 5. In the pop-up window, confirm you want to install the plugin with OK.
- **6.** Wait for the plugin to be downloaded, installed. A confirmation dialogue will ensue.
- 7. Choose Activate Plugin in order to make it live on your blog.
- 8. That's it.

You're in luck today! We have already prepared a list for you of the most useful plugins for your food blog's enhanced look and feel.

Your website will look and feel better because of the following plugins:

- * <u>List Category posts</u> automates an archive page for all your recipes, nested under their categories (e.g. all posts under main courses, all posts under desserts, etc.)
- * <u>KitchenBug</u> a creative way to look at your recipes allowing for constant formatting throughout your blog, as well as adding nutritional value information, and allowing users to print your recipes in a print-friendly-format
- * <u>Shopeat</u> transforms your recipes into shopping lists for your visitors to download on their smartphones
- * Google Analytics for monitoring site traffic, referrals, and keywords
- * Header and Footer opens up new spaces in your blog's layout
- * Photospace Gallery full-width galleries
- * EWWW Image Optimizer improved quality & loading time of photos
- * Bottom of every post a great way to add automatically sponsored links
- * <u>Ultimate WP Query Search Filter</u> allows your users to sift through your recipes using for instance two rather than one ingredients, in order to find out what they can cook based on what they have in their fridge!
- * Link Manager blogroll management
- * <u>Pretty Link Lite</u> free URL shortener

You will become more social thanks to these awesome plugins:

- * Instagram Image Gallery creates sidebar galleries for specific #hashtags
- * Contact Form 7 customizable contact form
- * $\overline{\text{Digg Digg}}$ a floating/fixed bar of social media sharing options
- * $\underline{\text{Disqus Commenting System}}$ commenting system with multiple sign-in options
- * WP Polls opinion polls for your website's sidebar

- * <u>Subscribe for comments</u> engagement tool for your readers
- * Pinterest Hover Pin-it Button pin-it button for your images
- * Facebook Like Box Widget constant touch with your Facebook fanbase
- * Tweet My Post automatic tweets of your new posts' titles and links

Because different plugins require different measures to be taken, we are going to walk you through the installation, setup and customization process of one plugin that is particularly helpful for foodie bloggers.

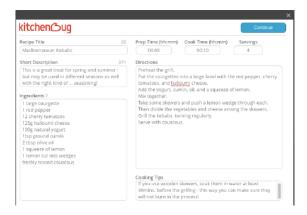
The plugin we strongly recommend you to use is called **KitchenBug** and it's an incredibly useful plugin! Not only does it manage the way your recipes are displayed, but allows users to print your recipes for their kitchen scrapbooks, and also to see nutritional info about your recipes!

Start by downloading **KitchenBug** from the WordPress repository of plugins (<u>link</u>). Install and activate it following the procedure explained above in the current section.



- 1. Upon successfully installing and activating this plugin, a new rubric will show up in the left hand side menu of your **Dashboard**, titled **Kitchen Bug**. Visit the **General Settings** tab.
- 2. Select your theme (recommended: Starter).
- 3. Check the box next to **Show Nutritional Facts by Default** if you wish that option to be enabled.
- **4.** Choose whether upon on hover you want links to **Wikipedia** pages of the ingredients (not entirely necessary, but may be useful for some sites).
- **5.** Check the box next to the settings for the **KitchenBug Collect** function, which allows users to create a virtual scrapbook of their recipes.
- 6. Click on Save Changes to confirm your choices.

Now, it is time to create a new recipe to be inserted in your post!



- 1. Create a new post and title it adequately.
- 2. Assign it to a category and add in the tags.
- 3. Click from the text editor menu on the kitchen mitt icon.
- 4. In the pop-up window select Create New Recipe.
- 5. The new pop-up will allow you to key in your recipe. The title is already filled-out (the title of the post). You can supplementarily add a short description. Also, you can write the ingredients, one by one. If your recipe is composed of different things (e.g. a sauce and a main), create headings by preceding their title by a colon (e.g. :Sauce, or :Meat). Include one ingredient by line. Key in preparation time, cook time, servings, as well as directions and cooking tips.
- 6. Click on Continue.
- 7. After analysis, you will be prompted to add your main pic for the recipe. Add it like a regular **Media** upload.
- 8. Add a category, and a type of cuisine for your recipe.
- **9.** When you are ready, click on **Add recipe to post**.

Below you can see the fruits of your labor:



As you can notice, not only the text you have added will show on the post page. This awesome plugin also added the nutritional info, allows users to select the number of servings in order to get another estimate of ingredients needed, and they can go from metric to US measurements directly from the recipe. Additionally, top right buttons allow them to share the recipe, to print it for further reference, or to collect it in their KitchenBug account!



Step 6 - Social media for foodies

Many of the food bloggers who are successful and active nowadays - including the ones we have interviewed during our research convene on one point - your blog's presence IS crucial, but nowadays you need social media in order to thrive. Social media promotes communication between people, who this way, become 'social' online. This can be done through images, like for example on Instagram, short updates, like on Twitter, or a combination of the above, like Facebook, or Google+, to name just a few of the most popular international social media.

The number of advantages brought up by your presence on social media is huge. Here are but a few:

- * You will have access to new audiences and to word-of-mouth recommendations of your content. You can double and even triple your audience within a couple of minutes and all food bloggers testify that according to their Google Analytics stats, social media accounts for 50%+ of their influx of visitors.
- * You can even do better with Pinterest. Foodies love Pinterest and arrange in their panels all the useful recipes of links building their own customized cookbooks. If you want to be featured in them, be ready to be shared on Pinterest, and start pinning your own contents for others to be able to re-pin it.
- * You can even manage your audience with platforms such as Facebook, you can target your posts to different audiences not stressing the ones who might not be interested in an update, but most certainly letting the ones who are truly interested in your content know there is something new on your blog! Most people even expect to be notified via social media rather than visiting your blog to check out what is new! * All social media is compatible with any kind of links so why not spread monetizable links through social media? You never know whom and when will just 'click' and earn you money!

Below we have prepared a quick checklist for your social media adventure:

Part 1 - Present to your readers share-ready content

Food bloggers agree: you want to succeed as a food blogger, you will need to make your contents **readily accessible for sharing** on various social media networks.

A social media bar providing icons for the most representative social media will save your visitors time, and make them feel comfortable - most of the websites they are visiting are granting them the same experience. The **Digg Digg plugin** gives you all the socializing you need, and makes your content share-ready.

Part 2 - Let people know how to find you

People will become interested in you as an individual as well. So make sure you have more than one option to be reached on the Contact page, but also make sure you do not let anyone invade your privacy.

Part 3 - Don't be shy - say hi to your fans

Facebook fan (or 'like') pages allow you to communicate to your fans in a more refined way you would do from your personal profile page. In order to see your community of readers and fans grow, take advantage of Facebook's own Facebook fan box.

For this purpose, you will need to install the **Facebook Like Box Widget plugin**. After installation and activation, look it up in the **Widgets** area, fill out your Facebook Page ID and URL, tweak and save your settings. Drag and drop the widget in your desired location onto your sidebar and you're ready to rock!

Part 4 - Pin to be re-pinned

Pinterest, despite being younger than Twitter or Facebook, turns out to have a very steady and solid popularity. You can get to new audiences with a very simple plugin: Pinterest Hover Pin-It.

Once installed and activated, it's already online! Visitors who hover over your food photos will be able to see a little 'pin' in the corner. If your photographic content is really good, how many people will resist the temptation of pinning it to their Pinterest boards?

Part 5 - Communicate to your audiences automatically

You don't need to log in and out of your social media accounts if want to let people know what you've been up to on your WordPress powered food blog - there are plugins such as **Tweet My Post** which actually tweet your post title and link (or a customized tweet layout) just as you click on **Publish** in your new post!

You can additionally enable **Selective Tweets** for your Facebook page - as a Facebook page app, and if you add the #fb hashtag to your tweets, the same message will display on your Facebook page wall, as well! All you need to do is to visit the <u>Selective Tweets</u> Facebook page and choose the button **Use Now**.

Pair your Twitter account and your Facebook page, and from now on, when you hit Publish, there'll be an automatic update for your fans and followers, on Twitter AND Facebook.

Part 6 - Use #hashtags on social media

Hashtags are a very clever ways to deliver information. For instance, if you add #food in a tweet, the respective tweet will not only be read by your followers, but also by everyone who visits the link generated for the respective #hashtag! Hashtags were a Twitter invention, but they are widely used on Instagram, and though late to adhere, they are available on Facebook, too!

Here is a selection of the most popular hashtags for food bloggers: #nom and #foodpic (used by people who share pics of what they are currently eating); with #cooking, #recipe, #foodlove, #foodism, #foodreview, #foodventure and #foodtravel following up. You will not be able to use them ALL in an update (and it is considered bad manners to cram your tweets with a lot of #hashtags), but make sure to include the relevant ones in your updates - they are gold for your traffic and user engagement.

MONETIZING YOUR FOOD BLOG

What about making some money out of your food blog? Although the idea may seem far-fetched to the beginner foodie blogger, if this is something you have in mind for a later date, you should actually think about it profusely from the early steps of setting up your blog! Here is why:

- * You can write with a sales frame of mind from the very beginning, even when you're not actually selling.
- * You can 'test the waters' with your recommendations of products, services and see how interested your readers are in your opinion and think how that can translate into money.
- * You can, of course, start with baby steps and brew some incredible recipes for your money making strategies for later on.
- * Last but not least, you can nibble on other food blogger's experiences check out what they do in order to make money online, and go for tried and tested versions instead of being disappointed by your own failures.

There are multiple ways in which you can **monetize your food blog** (i.e. make money), and you do not have to settle for just one. You can, in fact, use a combination of many monetizing options that you can use simultaneously. You will not retire to an island in order to count your money any time soon, but with baby steps you will go from securing the money for web maintenance (domain and hosting) to making a small profit, and from there it can only get better if you are doing it right.

Part 1 - Write a cookbook

Many food bloggers bundle up their recipes into cookbooks. You don't need to be famous in order to write a book - but if you are writing for the web, why not broaden your horizons and go into publishing? You are writing, anyway, so it will only take a couple of hours to get published.

Why should you do it?

- * First of all, because you are producing content which can with some tweaks be read by people who would otherwise not stumble on your blog.
- * Secondly, it gives you status. Although it has become increasingly easy to be published (and even self-published), most people still associate publishing a book with status.
- * Last but not least, it will generate you income.

The easiest option would be to publish an ebook of your content. If you are writing on various topics, make sure to bring them together under one topic, to ensure cohesion. For instance, you could find the one ingredient that is omnipresent and title your book 'recipes with rhubarb', for instance. Or you could bring your recipes together regionally, and promote your region's cuisine.

Our recommended way of self-publishing is through Amazon. Not only is Amazon the larger retailer of books, but it also provides the perfect platform for self-publishers of ebooks. Through their program entitled Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing, you get assistance on designing your electronic book, but also ways to promote your book enrolling in their program you can create Free Book Promotions (offering your ebook for free for as many as 5 days in all stores in order to get reviews, and sales rank), or Kindle Countdown Promotions (in which you get an incremental algorithm of prices which allows your buyers to get offers in a limited timeframe, thus increasing sales).

What you should expect.

Amazon gives you the opportunity to publish and monitor your earnings with a variety of reports - which means you will always be in control of what is happening. 35/70% royalties (i.e., the money you get as an author, as opposed to the money Amazon makes as a publisher) are available for different markets and different price ranges. The minimal sale price for the .com market is somewhere at \$3 - which in a 70% royalty scheme means that you need to sell 10 copies of your book in order to pay for your domain's yearly fee! Imagine what happens when you sell 2,000 copies - and that's not as impossible as you may think!

Part 2 - Individual sponsors

The direct sale of ads fits perfectly the needs of the newbie foodie blogger. If you want to make some money, why not allow legal entities to place ads on your blog for a moderate fee? The easiest way to get around this as a beginner is to call up your local groceries and restaurants - if you build a local, rather than an international community, they will be happy to throw in some money to be featured in a local blog.

What you should expect.

Ads on a beginner's blog, no matter how good, cannot cost someone an arm and a leg. Make your choice of prices moderate, and make a plan beforehand. Provide your blog with ad spaces of different sizes (rectangles with customizable sizes, leaderboards, wide skyscrapers), have at hand information about pricing and throw in some perks such as free ad time (up to one month for larger package deals), and generally, make known your availability to select and host ads. You can start from moderate amounts such as \$10 a month, because that's a fair price for a beginner, but monitor your traffic and make sure when it's time to announce potential advertisers about your worth. Make a note somewhere to change dramatically your pricing when you hit 1,000 daily visitors.

Part 3 - Google Adsense

Google recognized early on the potential of the ad market, so their own Adsense has quite a history on the market. It is to date one of the largest movers and shakers on the market, and offers quite enticing solutions for the publisher of ads.

Google Adsense does two things. First of all, it measures your audience in order to set your price per click, and scouts your audience's interests in order to see what they may be interested in, so as to display relevant ads. Second, they provide ad content to you regardless of your number of visitors, so they save you some legwork in looking for advertisers. Google Adsense is great for the beginner blogger and their passive income.

What you should expect.

If you are 18+ and have a Gmail account, you can set up your Google Adsense account within minutes. Spend some time to read the terms and conditions, to set your favorite ad sizes and locations, as well as payment preferences. Google will then assess the PCP of your blog (i.e., pay you are receiving per referred visitor from ad to outgoing link), reportedly 61% of whatever an advertiser pays per click to Google.

If an advertiser pays \$0.8 per click, you will receive on this deal \$0.8*61/100=\$0.488. PCP usually starts from \$0.05, and payments are issued when you gross \$100 (that means, in theory, after your first 1,000 average clicks) either by post order or transfer to your account.

Part 4 - Ad Networks and Aggregators

Ad networks and aggregators are versatile ways in which ads are connected to your content. Some of them require your exclusive faithfulness (i.e. they expect you to deliver a certain average traffic, or to deal exclusively in some brands), while some of them are open to doing business with just anyone. Some will require you to present accurate data about your numbers of visitors, while say in not so many words that 'anything goes'.

Here are some networks and aggregators really worth checking out! To begin with there's <u>Amazon</u> - which is also one of the best payers in terms of commissions, <u>BlogH-er Ads</u>; <u>DailyBuzz Food</u>; <u>Martha's Circle</u> - powered by no one else but Martha Stewart, Foodie Blogroll; and ClickBank.

What you should expect.

Ad networks and aggregators save you time and effort, and at the same time they do not pay you per clicks, but instead a small commission on successful purchases from your visitors. They will know it is your visitors (there's synergy and a dashboard full of statistics in your account in any of the networks), and they will know whether the respective visitor has or has not successfully purchased anything from their advertisers. This is harder to achieve, and most users report a conversion rate (i.e. number of referred visitors who actually buy something rather than 'window-shop' online) of 5-10%. You will need a good sales drive in order to get to that kind of conversion, but the income you are going to get is massive! With a successful sale of \$100, you may get as much as \$5, but imagine what happens when you help sell at several thousands a day!

Part 5 - Affiliate commissions

Affiliate commissions are a universal way to get income - not only for food bloggers, but you can always choose to get affiliated with retailers from the food industry. Affiliate commissions are best defined as the income you are getting from a successful sale carried out by one of your website's visitors from a retailer's website. When you get affiliated with a retailer, you get your personal key, which is (usually automatically) embedded on all your outgoing links to that retailer - so that the retailer knows who has facilitated that sale.

It is very common for retailers to offer affiliate opportunities, as a tacit rule of business, knowing that when they pay you a commission on a successfully checked out sale they actually gain in customer base, sales, and ultimately they cut traditional advertising costs.

What should you expect.

Whereas in principle the mechanism of affiliate commissions is not entirely different from that of ad networks and aggregators, affiliate commissions give you leeway to actually choose in the most pragmatic way what to advertise for.

You do not need, once affiliated, to ask permission to link to an ingredient or kitchen utensil - you just do it, in the most natural way: you write your articles the same way you do if you were not monetizing at all, but add links in the relevant sections so that people know where to get their ingredients, kitchenware, or whatever product you have in mind and is available on your current affiliate provider's stock. The successful checked out products (also called conversions) earn you a commission averaging at 2-5% which you can cash in when you gross a certain amount (it depends from retailer to retailer, but think anywhere around \$100) or in a specific timeframe (for instance, at the end of the current month for the previous month's successful conversions).

Though you need to know that you are going to have some sales in order to give it a try, do not underestimate luck. The affiliate links are not just links to specific products, and even if the possibility of someone purchasing the exact same product from the exact same brand that you are advertising for through an affiliate link, see the bigger picture: your affiliate key is a universal referrer and stores cookies in the visitor's computers when they click on any given affiliate link. The respective cookies are stored in the visitor's computer for a limited period of time (the average is 90 days), unless, of course, they clean up their cookies. This way, not only the linked product matters, but actually any product from the retailer's website successfully purchased by a visitor with a valid referral cookie pointing to you will bring you money. Now, if you think of it in terms of large-scale retailers, such as Amazon or eBay, you can just see the proportions of this affiliate business, and what it can do for you.

OUT OF THE OVEN: YOUR BEST RECIPE YET

If you have followed and observed our guidance, you are now sitting comfortably in your chair and admiring your work: your food blog.

Actually, you have to admit - with your creativity and flair, it may be the best recipe yet you can boast with.

Now it is time to get content, to get social, and viral. With our expertise you can easily start monetizing your food blog, and impress everyone with your web presence. You have done a great job going online - and being online will even show in your kitchen - you will feel more confident, responsible, and you will be enriched from your engagement with other food bloggers - discovering new tips and tricks and trying on their recipes. Enjoy your first Food Blog!



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