

# BEENTHEREATETHAT

*A Case Study on Food, Travel, and Social Networking*

Who doesn't love good food? As any globe-trotting tourist might tell you, sampling the offerings of local cuisines is one of the greatest pleasures of travel. And in an era of bite-sized cameras and photo-snapping phones, it's never been easier for a traveler to take dinner home as a souvenir—without the doggy bag.

## **Cooking Up a Great Idea**

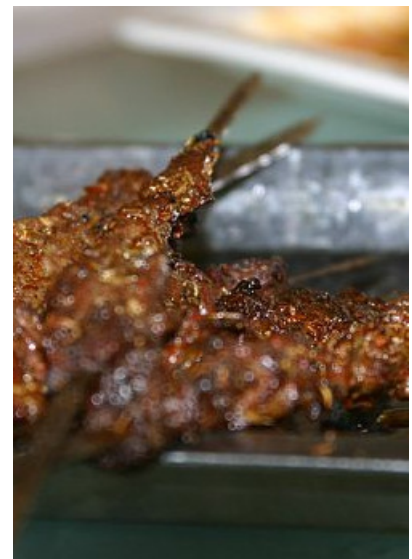
The thought of having food in digital form simmered in the minds of food writer Gayle Keck and BTAT partner R. Paul Herman as they surveyed their fellow attendees at the 2006 Salone del Gusto food festival in Turin, Italy. More than a few were carrying cameras ready to transform their meals into easy-to-carry digital memories.

“Wouldn't it be fun,” thought the duo, “to have a website dedicated to food photos from around the world?” Something like Flickr, elaborated Gayle, where users could share photos and comments, but focused on food.

Although the two had already successfully collaborated to create and sell the web business, iCanBuy.com, the technical expertise of the team still fell short. Gayle and Paul envisioned a dynamic new system where fellow epicureans could snap, upload, comment on, and share photos. How would a couple of non-programmers go about programming and implementing such a complex website from scratch?

## **The Challenge**

It's a common enough case: entrepreneurs with a vision for a fantastic new system, but not enough technical expertise to execute the idea. Although Gayle was already brimming with inspiration for how the site content would interact, and knew exactly how she wanted her user interface (UI) to look, her dream for a food travel website still needed a technical team to build it. Fortunately for Gale, a business partner of her husband had just completed a custom programming project and was very happy



*“There is no love sincerer than the love of food.”*

*—George Bernard Shaw*

with the services of the consulting company he contracted. He suggested the company to Gayle as a resource for the custom website she had in mind.

That's where Lambodar came in. Gayle had already conceptualized a strong design for the website's features and functions, and was able to provide the "look 'n' feel" herself for the site's graphic layout. She also knew enough about user and administrative functions to give her project managers a clear idea of what she wanted on the back-end.

Lambodar's conceptual engineer and project managers worked extensively with Gayle to flesh out the remainder of the project. Because Gayle was solidly behind an open source website so as to avoid constant license fees to Microsoft, the conventional LAMP stack (Linux Apache MySQL PHP) was used instead, with custom modules as our basic ingredients, and the recipe for the BeenThereAteThat website was finally complete.

### **Interactive Web Features**

Gayle envisioned a system where users could each manage an account of their photos and activities, but to ensure the security and privacy of her users, an authentication and authorization system needed to be added to verify and keep safe the user profile. Users could then create their own portfolios of tasty photos, comment on others' photos, and search for foods based on ingredients, location, and other qualifications. The customized search engine enabled easy searching for tagged photos. To top it all off, Lambodar added a blog in the form of Gayle's delicious, "Scoop du jour," as the final feature flourish.

Because BeenThereAteThat is a social networking as well as a travel site, Gayle wanted to show users where in the world their fellow food lovers were sending in photos from. Lambodar suggested that a Google map be integrated into the system to track submissions from users as far away as American to India and everywhere in-between.

To allow for different photographs to be posted to the site, a backend image handler and uploader module was installed to resize to accept conventional JPEG and GIF files. An Image custom display module allows the Administrator of the site to create custom pages showing views of food in a specific theme, as well as mark out a pool of images to cycle through for the homepage. A complex MySQL database was then implemented on the backend to record and collate the information that makes Gayle's site possible, including the ratings and review system, as well as the taste cloud. Finally, a secured Admin area allows the site manager to monitor e-mail communications as well as generate mass e-mail communications.

Lambodar Inc. was able to provide complete end-to-end service for BeenThereAteThat, supporting Gayle's project from conception to launch. This included assisting Gayle in finding a high-quality, hosting provider, installing and setting up the servers, as well as hosting a development environment and managing the final, live environment. All of the bug testing and quality assurance was done in-house, which not only saved on production costs, but also gave Gayle a direct line of feedback to the programmers as the site progressed.

### **Happy Eaters**

BeenThereAteThat is now in its second year of operation and continues to attract shutter-happy gourmands every day. At Lambodar, we thrive on long-lasting, collaborative working relationships, and are proud to continue to serving up the code on BeenThereAteThat as Gayle's behind-the-scenes website administrators.

### **About Lambodar Inc.**

Lambodar Inc. is a world-wide provider of dynamic software consulting solutions. Founded in 2004, Lambodar offers premium custom software for businesses at cost-reducing prices. Armed with a wide arsenal of open-source and proprietary programs at its disposal, Lambodar project managers work intensively to understand the goals and needs of each client to create the perfect software solution. With successful projects in industries such as: Finance, Retail, Healthcare, Insurance, Travel, Telecom, and Government, Lambodar has a proven record of the skills and experience for delivering world-class, quality services. Lambodar Inc. is headquartered in Cupertino, California. For more information, please visit <http://www.lambodar.com>.