

TasteBuddies

“Dine with confidence.”

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Problem Description

You did the research, you read the reviews, looked at pictures, thought this was going to be a great experience. Except it wasn't. The staff may have been friendly enough, but the food was inedible.

With restaurant prices outpacing the rate of inflation in recent years (see Figure 1), dining out has become a higher financial risk for the average consumer [1]. High prices scare people from trying new restaurants [2]. Adventurous customers may be lured into trying a new restaurant based on online reviews only to find the food dissatisfying resulting in wasted money and disgruntled patrons who leave poor tips and angry reviews, which also loses the restaurant's online reputation.

But how do you know if a restaurant is just right for you? At present, there is no app that can help you reliably choose a restaurant based on your individual taste.

Food prices have risen more than wages and overall inflation

Percent change from January 2019 to May 2024

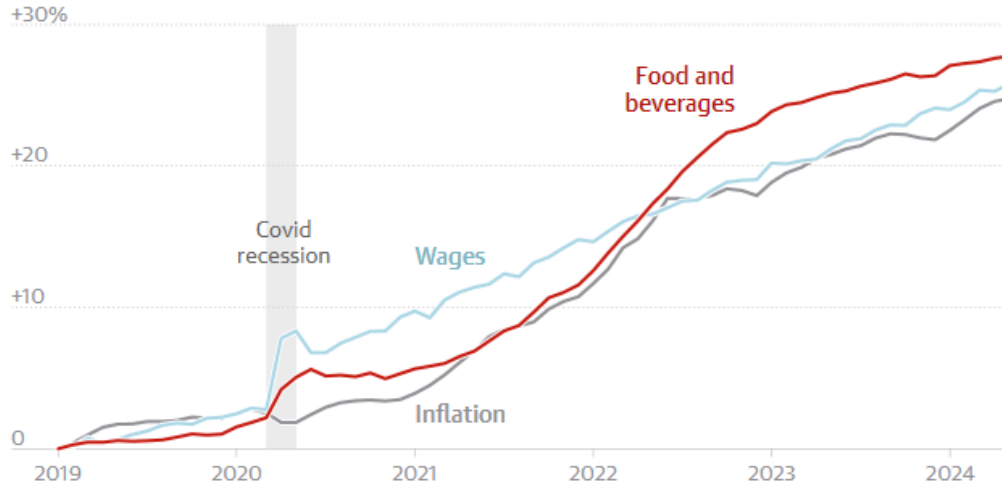


Figure 1. Food prices versus wages and inflation (source: The Guardian [1])

Solution

You need something that reflects your taste. Knows you, is personalized specifically to you. Nobody is exactly the same, so why would you expect their tastes to be? Instead of a one-size-fits all system, I propose a new mobile app that capitalizes on user data to cater dish and restaurant recommendations to

an individual user's taste, using data to cluster an individual with others who share similar preferences, which can serve as a guide to try a restaurant's new dishes. Instead of relying on generic reviews, the app will connect diners with others who share similar preferences, ensuring more accurate and tailored suggestions.

Patrons can feel as though they've gained their money's worth, and restaurants will have less food sent back; possibly resulting in less lost capital on both sides and increased tips for staff due to happy customers.

Key Features

- **Taste Profiles:** users can select their favorite restaurants and dishes, which will be used to create a taste profile. Recommendations will be based on the collective data of users with similar profiles
- **Intelligent Review System :** Instead of being influenced by those with vastly different preferences, people will be allowed to read reviews and a calculated rating from those whom they share a similar taste profile. The app will weigh reviews from people with aligned tastes more heavily. For example, if someone doesn't like
- **Customizable Filters:** Users can filter results based on allergies, dietary restrictions, and the type of dining experience they're seeking, such as casual or fine dining.
- **Mood-based suggestions** - Users may be prompted to share their mood, as research suggests that emotional states influence food choices. For example, people who are sad may want comfort foods, and those in a positive mood may pick the healthier choice [3].
- **Evolving Preferences:** the app will evolve with the user, allowing preferences to shift over time. Optional inputs like age can help the system adjust recommendations, such as accounting for changing spice tolerance.
- **Tastebuddies:** a special category of users who have an exceptionally high alignment with your personal taste profile whom they may follow. They would be people whose dining experiences closely mirror your own, providing the most accurate recommendations, providing an extra layer of confidence and while increasing user engagement.
- **Following users:** Users can follow their Tastebuddies, in addition to any user they may want to keep track of: including family, friends, celebrities, or strangers, adding a social dynamic where users can discover new dishes or restaurants based on recommendations from their chosen network.

- **Super Tastebuddies:** users with highly refined taste profiles with a large following can evolve into “Super Tastebuddies” who are essentially taste influencers, providing expert recommendations for particular cuisines and dishes, where users may trust them to try new, exciting, and delectable experiences.
- **Group Matching:** going for a company dinner? You can add users to a list and formulate a restaurant match that is most likely to please everyone in your party.
- **Restaurant Engagement Notifications:** restaurants may engage on the platform to update their menu which may send an opt-in notification to users regarding seasonal dishes and limited specials that the user previously loved, so users will never miss their favorite dishes again, increasing live engagements and benefitting both restaurant and clientele.
- **Machine Learning for Enhanced Recommendations:** the app will incorporate machine learning to refine taste profiles and user suggestions, allowing feedback which will help the platform improve. This will ensure recommendations stay relevant as new dishes and restaurants enter the scene.

Market Potential

Users

Everyone eats, and everyone wants to eat well. All people who dine out seldom or frequently can be our users. Thanks to the customizable filters, every taste and diet may be represented, being openly accessible to those with allergies or dietary restrictions. People who are adventurous who want to try things are as equally represented as those who are more conservative in their tastes who may just be out of town and hoping to find a good place to eat.

In town for a business conference? Check taste buddies. Lost but hungry? Check taste buddies Bored with the same old? Check taste buddies.

TasteBuddies provides the opportunity for a pleasurable experience where users expect a return on their investment in the mode of satisfaction. As previously noted, dining out is expensive, which makes trying new things risky. Why waste time sifting through unreliable and often bogus reviews to get an idea of where you want to go when TasteBuddies provides the convenience of offering a choice catered to your preferences. Users may take time to enjoy their experience by letting the app make the time-consuming decisions of where to eat.

Customers

Restaurants want to engage with clientele that fits them, just as much as customers want to find a restaurant they like. Restaurants gain a customer base who is less likely to complain and more likely to enjoy their experience and come again, building strong relationships through customer retention. There are fewer surprises, food sent back, and disgruntled customers. Staff receive higher tips due to their customer base having a pleasurable experience. If a restaurant has fewer savory reviews or dishes, they may learn to cut the menu item or tailor their menu to the items based on reviews that shows them what works. Thus, reducing food waste and lost expenditure.

This may also help revitalize restaurants and promote new business, price increases have driven customers to eat from perceptively cheaper fast-food alternatives [4].

Stakeholders

Local commerce. Food brings foot traffic which in turn helps business. Knowing the niche of a restaurant may attract certain businesses to an area aimed at the base clientele. More money put into the economy benefits the local area which in turn, benefits all residents. Beyond residents, farmers and other food producers benefit from having steady and reliable consumption.

Competitive Landscape and Challenges

Competitors:

According to Squareup.com, among the top review websites are Google Business Profile, TripAdvisor, Yelp, and Facebook.

All allow for users to write reviews. Google has the advantage of reaching wide audiences through its search engine, but lacks any personalization, recommending dishes only how generic reviews have rated a restaurant. While restaurants may reply to patrons, they are unable to update them on exciting new prospects. TasteBuddies eliminates the tactics of a restaurant replies (which often leads to extortion [5]) and focuses mainly on the restaurant reaching customers that want to be reached, allowing them to alert users on special items on their menu for returned fanfare.

TripAdvisor is heavyweight due to its time in the market, and attracts hungry users who are temporarily visiting an area, and also lacks personalization and ratings skew based on the amount of unmoderated reviews which may be artificially plumped. It has contributor levels, awarding users with badges for review milestones which incentivizes users to write more reviews. However, a heavy contributor may not have aligned tastes to you, but is skewing your perception to a previously unvisited restaurant. It also allows users to mark reviews as helpful or not helpful which may be prone to manipulation, skewing results.

Yelp seems to be experiencing a decline, but is much like the TripAdvisor for the nontraveler which adds on the ability to make a reservation for restaurants and follow users and have friends so you may see them first [6]. However, along with its competitors, it neglects the ability to recommend a dish or restaurant fielded by a population that shares your exacting taste. Reviews are also manipulated based on what a restaurant is willing to pay to promote better reviews over the poor ones, edging out fledgling restaurants and giving you an unbalanced scope [7]. Whereas TasteBuddies is catered specifically to the user and will not allow perceptions to be outrightly bought, benefitting both users and restaurants who don't have enough money to tamper poor reviews.

All platforms are highly susceptible to third parties writing reviews to inflate or sabotage ratings for restaurants [5]. While some like Yelp and TripAdvisor have attempted to combat fake reviews, it erodes trust in the platform. If you have a curated user taste profile, potential fake reviews are eliminated due to the varied nature of a user and solo postings being discarded when allowing a user to match with a restaurant or tastebuddy.































Feature	TasteBuddies	Yelp	TripAdvisor	Google	Facebook
Taste Profiles					
Personalized Dish Recommendations					
Lifestyle personalization					
Reviews					
Followers					
Restaurant notifications					

Figure 2. Key features of TasteBuddies versus competitors

Conclusion

Our revolutionary app changes the dynamic, offering user-centric recommendations to provide tailor-made dish and restaurant recommendations based on your mood and unique tastes. It has the capacity to garner trust and help local restaurants thrive by connecting users with those of similar tastes, encouraging people to be cautiously adventurous so they may be confident when they dine.

In a time of financial unease amid a sea of misleading reviews, find peace in a dining solution catered specifically to you. Take the risk out of dining, and enjoy yourself again by using TasteBuddies, where tastes and restaurants align. Dine with confidence.

References

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