

■ Online

Surfing for food

In the age of the Internet, it's hard to keep a secret. And great food should never be kept a secret, not when there's a cyber army of Malaysian foodies ready and willing to scour the *lorongs* (lanes) and *tamans* (suburbs) of the country for delicious dishes. Here are some of the best Malaysian food websites and blogs, each a gateway to the wonderfully varied world of Malaysian cuisine.

COMPILED BY SAM YEN



A Little Fat Monkey alifatmonkey.blogspot.com

As a voyeuristic peek into the dining deeds of a snug group of likeminded food bloggers, ALFM manages to strike a healthy balance of insights into everyday fare (Hong Ngek kopitiam on Jalan Tun HS Lee), hidden delights (steamed seafood pot in Bukit Tinggi) and the more premium fare (Sage at the Gardens).

Highlight Visuals are an indispensable tool in attracting readers and ALFM celebrates its meals in comic-style photo arrangements, replete with humorous pop-ups, vignettes and dialogue boxes. Come for the review of Rama V and stay for the collage tribute to Lady Gaga's *Bad Romance* that accompanies it.



Go Eat Out www.goeatout.com.my

As the Internet has democratised information, GEO is an online directory that attempts to democratise the Malaysian food scene. Acting as an information aggregator, the site has a comprehensive list of restaurants, reviews (user-submitted and blogs) and a lively community section, but by far its most useful feature is its searchable promotion section, which keeps track of the many, many, many discounts, buffets, promos, events and seasonal menus on offer across the country.

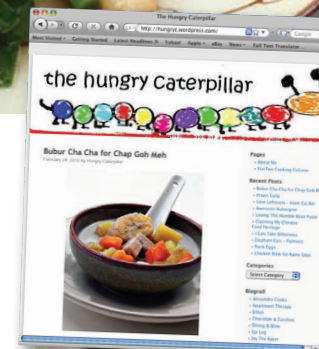
Highlight The (members-only) 'Vouchers' section contains printable coupons redeemable for freebies.



The Hungry Caterpillar hungryc.wordpress.com

Two parts Betty Yew, one part Chef Wan and a dash of Jamie Oliver for taste. The Hungry Caterpillar (named after the children's book by Eric Carle about a voracious butterfly-to-be) is a relatively new blog that sets itself apart by making food rather than paying for it. Most of the recipes featured so far are local or local-inspired, with a few Anglo/European treats (quiches, roast chicken, chocolate chip cookies) creeping in. The writing style, chockfull of childhood reminiscences, adds a spicy hint of nostalgia.

Highlight Blog entries typically revolve around inspiration by ingredients. A review of yellow bean paste (*taucu*) evolves into a recipe for braised ribs, while an ode to duck eggs leads into a guide for *telur itik masak lemak cili padi* (spicy duck eggs cooked in coconut milk)



Fried Chillies www.friedchillies.com

Claiming to be the country's most popular food website, Fried Chillies (FC) has been around long enough (since 1998) to build up a serious reputation and an equally serious repertoire.

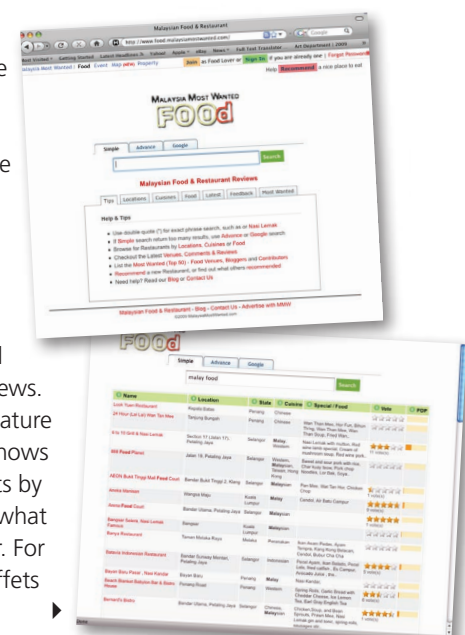
Taglined 'Where Food Is Serious Business', FC aspires to be a foodies' Yahoo!, an online gateway to all things food-related in Malaysia. Boasting an in-depth library of restaurant reviews, intriguing articles and an fascinating collection of videoclips, FC's coverage is almost always top-notch and the first port of call for much of the local food community.

Highlight FriedChilliesTV, the site's video section, is its unique feature. Professionally filmed and passionately delivered, several channels are on offer, each tackling a different aspect of cuisine.

Malaysia's Most Wanted Food www.food.malaysiamostwanted.com

The motherload and, according to Google Ad Planner, one of the most popular Malaysian food-related sites with some 100,000 unique visitors and 430,000 page views per month. Structured like Google's search engine, MMWF maintains a comprehensive directory of Malaysian eateries, searchable by restaurant, dish, cuisine type, popularity (as voted by the site's users) or official reviews.

Highlight Its 'Most Wanted' feature is a popularity aggregator that shows the site's most viewed restaurants by month and year, an insight into what fellow Malaysians are craving for. For 2009, for example, Japanese buffets handily topped the list.



▪ Online

A Whiff of Lemongrass
www.awhiffoflemongrass.com

Good writing and witty observations, therefore, are key to elevating a blog above the masses. AWOL provides both in spades. Focusing mainly on Klang Valley restaurants (with occasionally deviations outstation and overseas), AWOL deserves a bookmark in every KL food lover's web browser.

Highlight Photography on most local food blogs range from serviceable to mundane, but AWOL stands out from the crowd with its clean design and atmospheric, well composed snaps. Each blog entry is accompanied by a custom badge, a glance at which is usually enough to get an appetite whetted.



Rasa Malaysia
www.rasamalaysia.com

With mentions in international publications such as Manhattan's *The Village Voice*, *Saveur Magazine* and *Lonely Planet*, Rasa Malaysia has carved out a pedigree status for itself. A blog-style website, its content revolves around oodles of recipes (some 280 and counting), spanning the length and breadth of the Asian continent. Breezy writing makes for easy comprehension, while navigation is simple, thanks to the one thing many blogs lack: A well-maintained pictorial index.

Highlight Rasa Malaysia places a particular emphasis on Nyonya cuisine and culture (inherited from the Sino-Malay population of the British Straits Settlements). An off-shoot of Rasa Malaysia, Nyonya Food (**www.nyonyafood.com**), tackles Nyonya recipes in the Rasa Malaysia framework, providing instructions to whip up tasty treats.



Rasa-Rasa
www.rasarasa.net

Championing the virtues of Malaysian street food, Rasa-Rasa is a full-blown media portal (complete with recipes, reviews, interviews, restaurants, blogs and trimmings) that eschews fine silverware for the joy of plastic forks, spoons and chopsticks.

Highlight For those who like planning long, detailed trips dedicated to food, food and more food, Rasa-Rasa's nifty Trip Planner is a boon. Creating a customised (short, long, multi-day) culinary itinerary culled from a dictionary of country-wide food outlets is a step-by-step snap, together with coordinates that can be synced up to a GPS. 📍



What 2 See
www.what2seeonline.com

Focusing on the cornucopia of dishes that Penang has to offer, What 2 See acts as a quick gastronomic guide to the island's bountiful eats, highlighting promotions/events and bravely allowing visitors to attempt to answer the question: Which is the best *char koay teow* in Penang (and therefore, the world)?

Highlight Penang hawkers operate in their own time zone, often opening only on specific days or hours within a day. What 2 See attempts to dispel any disappointment by specifying each stall's business hours, as well as its GPS coordinates for intrepid travellers.

MAS
traveller.com

You can also find dining tips on Malaysia as well as selected Asian destinations at **www.mastraveller.com**