

taste drive

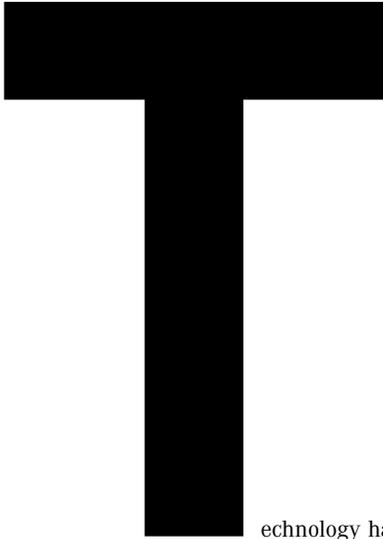
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# DIGITAL DINING

*Welcome to the world of surfing and savouring. With your table cloth metamorphosing into an interactive screen, an online whiskey tasting session and portals allowing you to order food online; it will soon be time to bid goodbye to the waiter*





Technology has arrived at your dining table. And how. Today, you can order a meal of your choice, reserve a table at your favourite restaurant and post a review about it thereafter – all from the luxury of your home. And this is just the beginning. You can choose ingredients, avail of discounts, watch the chef cook up your meal on a webcam, play a game, order for a cab to drive you home and a lot more. The click of a mouse just got a lot more powerful. And for the foodies, the experience of slurping and gorging got revolutionised. Let’s take a tour of the digital dining world and see what’s there in store for us.

### PICK WITH A CLICK

Gone are the days when you had to physically go to a restaurant and try out several dishes before you could make a choice. Scores of websites have been launched across major cities in India to look after the likes and dislikes of your taste buds. Visit a website, select your city and decide upon a restaurant based on the ratings. The menu of the listed restaurant will pop up, which will not only carry the names and prices of the dishes but also the ingredients used in their preparation. Pay via credit card ([www.foodkamood.com](http://www.foodkamood.com)) when you place the order or just scan through the menu for reference ([www.foodiebay.com](http://www.foodiebay.com)) and make payment to the representative of the restaurant on delivery. Says Roopesh Deshpande of Mumbai, who regularly orders food through these sites, “These websites are great for the sheer versatility they allow you.” Whether it is Chinese, Italian or plain junk, they have it all. Since everything is neatly organised under sections, it is easy for you to make choices. One such site, which offers awesome food choices in the capital is [www.planforme.com](http://www.planforme.com). If you are a resident of Bengaluru and are fond of organic food, then visit [www.hungryzone.com](http://www.hungryzone.com) and order from Lumiere restaurant, which serves good organic

food. And if you want to surprise your spouse with her favourite cake, your choices are unlimited; [www.monginis.net](http://www.monginis.net) offers a wide choice when it comes to cakes, chocolate bouquets and baskets. Other good choices are [www.mall.coimbatore.com](http://www.mall.coimbatore.com) and [www.indiangiftsportal.com](http://www.indiangiftsportal.com).

“Indians are just about warming up to the idea of ordering food online. As of now, they are content with using the Internet as a tool to discover eating joints and then place the order by calling up at the restaurants,” says Deepinder Goyal, owner, [www.foodiebay.com](http://www.foodiebay.com). For those of you who think likewise, think again. For with online food ordering, you have to register just once and your details get saved and the next time you order all you have to do is change your menu and explore. Some websites like [www.mhungry.in](http://www.mhungry.in) also give you the option of saving nine of your most commonly ordered menus at your favourite restaurants. So, just click on “the usual” every time you order lunch from office and save on your precious time. The facility is also available on your mobile phone. To sweeten the deal there are various discounts that are offered on online orders, which are not available on a physical visit to a restaurant. So, next time your friends bounce on a day when you decided to skip dinner, just visit one of the websites and let them choose their own menu while



The websites record your frequently ordered meals to save time.





**T** The interactive table at Clo Bar in New York lets you choose a wine from a list of 100 unique selections from around the world.



you cater for drinks and good music. This sounds like a win-win situation, totally.

### **ON YOUR OWN AT CLO WINE BAR**

This fascinating wine bar and shop goes a step ahead in using technology. It is a one of its kind wine bar in New York offering an interactive table to enable you to select your wine from a list of 100 unique selections from around the world. All you have to do is swipe your Clo card, which is your personalised debit card and get your favourite tasting poured from a custom-made machine. So, no bartender, no waiting. Get your wine when you want. Kitty Kalra, owner, Khan Chacha, a famous eating joint in the capital, says, “Though this is a good idea, I personally feel that in India people look forward to the warmth of a waiter when they visit their regular eating joint. So, the popularity of the concept will vary with the clientele in question. ”



**T** Inamo at Soho in London offers indulgences like setting the ambience depending on your mood, playing a game, ordering for a taxi and more.



# WATCH THE CHEF COOK UP YOUR SPECIAL DISH ON THE WEB CAMERA.



## ORDER IN A MOMENT AT INAMO

For those who have visited Soho in London, Inamo would be a familiar name. This restaurant allows you to take complete control over your dining experience with an interactive table that lets you select your meal, pay your bills and more all via the table. Lamps above you are replaced by projectors and the table cloth transforms into a screen with graphics with the aid of which you can set your own ambience depending on your mood. And while you wait for your Oriental fusion meal to arrive, you can play a game of “Battleship” with your partner or beat him in a puzzle. If you are not in a mood to play, you can simply watch the chef turn out your special dish. Yes, there’s a web camera that allows you a peek-a-boo into the kitchen. But for those of you who prefer a smiling waiter, there’s always one waiting to take a call at the press of a button. Once you have savoured the meal, which combines flavours from Japan, China, Thailand and beyond, order for a taxi to take you home, right there with your interactive table!

“Inamo is visited by foodies of all age groups, both sexes, and by people from many walks of life,” says Danny Potter, owner of Inamo. “It is an exhilarating experience for a guest when drinks just seem to appear out of thin air when no one has actually placed an order with a waiter. And it is the magical appearance of the first drink that entertains people the most,” he adds. Riyaz Amlani, owner, Impresario Entertainment and Hospitality Pvt. Ltd., believes that this trend will soon find its way in India as well, once technology

becomes cheaper and people more tech-savvy. “We will incorporate it in our eating joints only when we have the technology to make the experience of our customers more pleasant,” he adds.

## TASTING WHISKEY ON TWITTER

It was a moment of achievement when Glenfiddich, a renowned company producing malt whiskey from Scotland, announced its Vintage Reserve this year. Not because the tasting of the casks and the selection was carried out by eight connoisseurs from different parts of the world but because it was all done via Twitter. The connoisseurs tweeted their impressions to each other over a two-hour period while the world followed their tweets, envying them all along. How many get to taste whiskeys set to mature way back in 1978? Anish Trivedi, the Indian connoisseur who was invited to do the tasting mentions in his blog, “It (the twitter discussion) focussed attention on the whiskey, not the conversation that is usually carried out when nine men get together with a glass in their hands, so it worked quite well!”

If this isn’t enough, listen to this, there are websites like [www.nutridiary.com](http://www.nutridiary.com), [www.my-calorie-counter.com](http://www.my-calorie-counter.com) and [www.fitday.com](http://www.fitday.com), which help you count the calories that you consume and the amount you burn through exercise. You can even keep an online diet journal to keep a track of your weight gain and also read through tips for weight loss. So, go ahead and let technology revolutionise your eating habits in a big way. We say netizens, surf and gorge on. ////////////////mm