The Ultimate Guide
to **Creating a Restaurant Website**

TouchBistro®

Shoes are on, the door is locked, and the car is started. But, before anyone goes anywhere, out come the phones. It's dinner at this place or that place, and the best menu wins.

Did you know that 86% of people look at restaurant menus before going out to eat? That's huge! That means having a website for your restaurant isn't an option – it's a must. It's your responsibility to make sure all of the information your prospective customers are looking for about your restaurant is right there on the web where and when they need it.

You can of course, hire someone to create your website for you. But if a professional designer and web developer aren't in your budget, you're in luck. These days it's easier than ever to tackle this task on your own.

We're going to walk you through the process so you can do it on your own in a relatively short amount of time. While writing this guide, we actually created an example restaurant website to show you how easy it can be to create your own website and we'll be using it as an example throughout this guide. It took one of our marketing employees only six hours total from start to finish using a website management tool that has easy-to-use built-in templates, so we're confident that you can do it too!

We've also included a cheat sheet of Internet terms at the end, so if you come across something you don't quite understand, that is highlighted in green, head to the glossary on page 22 to clarify.

Ready to create your restaurant website? Let's do this!

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: **Prepare**

Before you dive head first into becoming a website whiz, take some time to get your ideas and materials together. These three first steps will make the next ones much easier.

1. Get Organized

The first thing to do when starting any project is to get organized. Prepare yourself for the time you're going to spend: grab a coffee, put on some music, and get comfortable. A website has many parts and tasks, so sign up for a free task organization account like Trello or Asana and use it to manage the whole process from beginning to end. Or get a new notebook and use it to take notes, make lists, and keep yourself on task, checking things off as you get them done. Proper organization at the start can make or break a project!

2. Seek Out Inspiration

Look at other restaurant websites, and take a look at the one we made for this guide. Make notes of what you like and what will work for your restaurant, but try not to spend too much time in this phase. You can get visually burnt out and become overwhelmed if you go down the rabbit hole of Internet research.

Stick to checking out the websites of your favorite restaurants and seek out simple designs. Look at the content and layout, without getting swept away with fancy visuals or complicated designs. The key is to set a goal and keep it top of mind: present the information people are seeking about your restaurant on a website where they can access it easily. So keep it simple.

About

Here you can go into as much or as little detail as you want. Running a family restaurant? Give a detailed history. Have a fun story about why you started your food truck? Be sure to share it. However, if you're at a loss for what to say, here's an easy way to write a quick "About Us" paragraph or bio: What you are, what you do, and two relevant and interesting facts about you.

Copy

Copy refers specifically to the words that will be on your site. It's best to write it before you start if you don't already have it on hand.

Links

Getting all of your links together at the same time will save you so much time later. Keep them in a document for easy access. This should include any embed links for your takeout and delivery platforms, like TouchBistro Online Ordering or other third-party apps like Uber Eats or DoorDash; as well as online booking systems, like TouchBistro Dine; and for embedding your location on Google maps. You'll also want to add your social media links, so people can easily connect with and follow your accounts, along with links to review sites.

3. Gather Your Materials

By taking the time to get everything together that will be on your website, you'll save yourself a lot of time. Any information about your business that you want presented on your website, compile it into a document, a file on your desktop, or a physical file.

This is a list of the content you'll need to gather:

Basic Information

Your location, hours, and contact info are the main reasons people are coming to your website. You might also want to add parking information, transit options, reservation policy, or any other information that people often call to find out.

Menu

You'll need a text file of your menu so you can copy and paste. Avoid using PDFs since they're less likely to be indexed search engines, which means that if someone searches your restaurant name and a menu item in Google, your menu might not show up in the search results. Also, PDFs can make for a poor user experience on mobile devices.

Other Page Info

The other pages you have on your site will vary depending on what you want to share with your customers. These extras might include: customer quotes, a gallery of venue or menu photos, your philosophy or the chef's philosophy, your team such as your chef, staff, and founders, and any notable partners like local farmers or other suppliers you work with. Some restaurateurs even start a blog to share recipes and other behind the scenes content.

You can also have pages or sections for any press or media coverage, accreditations and awards, and any special features of your restaurant. For example, if your venue was designed by an architecture firm that you want to mention, or if it's in a historical building, a design or history page would be a great addition.

If your restaurant is located close to a stadium, museum, or local landmark that brings in tourists, you might want to have a page with information for guests such as what's nearby to do and see. For example, mention the local haunted house, or UFO sighting spot that brings in tons of tourists each year.

If you want to learn more about commission-free online ordering options for your restaurant, check out this page.

If you want to learn more about capacity management and contact tracing through online reservations, check out this page.
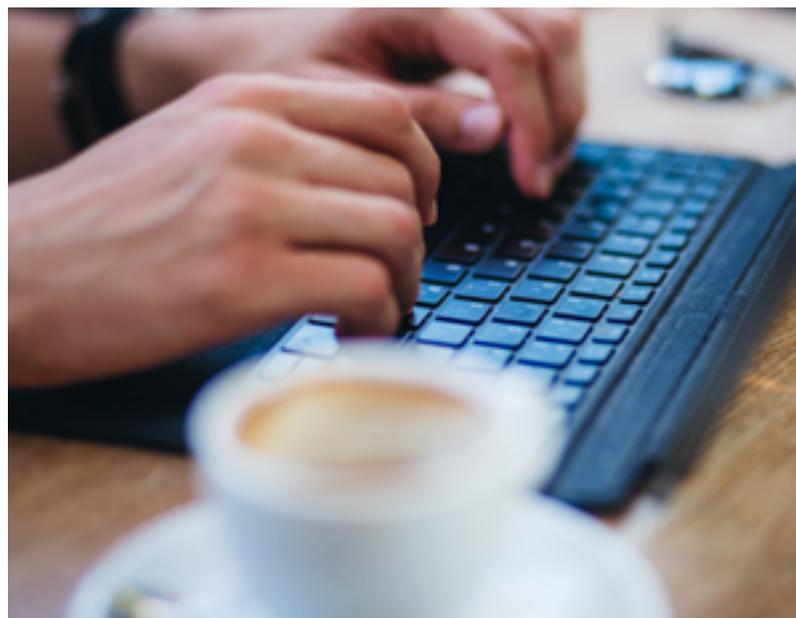
4. Collect Your Design Elements

Your design elements are the visuals that you'll display on your website. You might have to reach out to your graphic designer or photographer to collect the files you'll need.

Logo

You'll need your logo design file in a .png format. A .png means the background of your logo is transparent, so that if you place it on a colored or patterned background, there won't be a white square around it, as there would be if you were to use a .jpg file.

Images

Having high-quality images of your food, your venue, customers, and staff will take your restaurant website from good to great. You'll need large (1080px) .jpg files. Choose 6 to 10 images that showcase a good mix of food, venue and vibe: include photos of your food, restaurant interior and exterior, guests enjoying themselves, and/or images of chefs, staff, and founders.

Favicon

A favicon is the little symbol that appears in the far left corner of the tab that you're reading. It's a tiny piece of your logo usually. You can easily make a favicon from your logo <u>here</u>.

5. Map Out Your Sections

Once you've gathered all of your content and design, take a look at it. You may have a slim folder with your basic information: location, menu and social profiles, or you might have on your hands a robust folder full of details about the history of your restaurant, facts about your location, profiles on the staff, and several menus. Whatever you have, take time to think about and plan what information will go on each page. You might want to put the directions and hours on your Contact page, or you might want them on the home page. It's up to you – just think about what your customers would expect to see, how they will navigate your website, and make it easy for them to find the information they need.

Chapter 2: **Create**

Now that we have our building blocks – our content, images, and plans – we're ready to start creating! This is where the fun begins. Take your time going through these steps and take mental breaks if you need them.

1. Choose a Website Builder

The first thing you need to do is to choose a website builder. This is a website where you can create a website without having to use any coding. The builder consists of a number of templated website designs and layouts that you choose from and can then customize. From there you enter your copy and design elements into drag and drop blocks on pages, which you can then move around to suit your needs

We suggest using Squarespace or Wix. Each of these website creation sites have steps that walk you through the setup process from choosing a domain, to entering a menu, to making your site go live. We chose Wix and created our website in six hours over the span of two days, but similar results could be achieved with Squarespace or other builders.
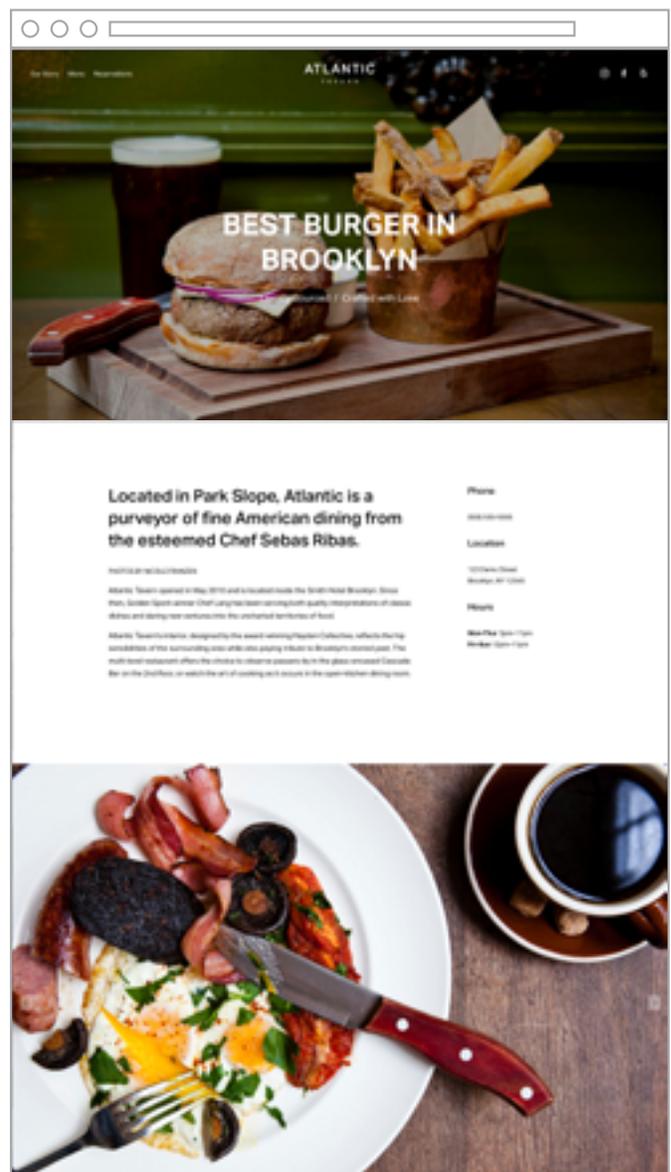
Atlantic Template from Squarespace

Understanding How Domains and Hosting Work

Think of a website as a house. A domain is like an address, or the address sign on that house. Typing a web address into a search engine like Google, or into the bar at the top of your browser will bring you to that website, or the "house" at that address.

Hosting is like the land the house sits on. Website builders host the website you create on their servers. This is where your site is saved. Normally you could switch to a new hosting company if you wanted, but since hosting is part of the Website Builder, you won't be able to move your site to a new host directly. Your house and the land it's on can not be separated.

For example, if you are using Squarespace and get a discount code for Bluehost, you can't switch your website to Bluehost. You'd have to cancel your Squarespace website and build another house with Bluehost. Though, you could keep your domain (your address) and direct it to another house.

2. Choose a Template

If a website is a house, then a template is the frame that allows you to design and decorate your house. When choosing a template, make sure it has all of the features you need before you start. If a platform offers restaurant website template options (both Squarespace and Wix do), we suggest you choose one of those as they have the features you need, like a menu for example. Finally, make sure that whichever template you use is mobile responsive. Both Squarespace and Wix sites are naturally mobile responsive.

Why Does My Site Need to Be Mobile Responsive?

As of 2015, Google ranks pages that are mobile responsive higher, meaning they show up higher on a page of search results. So you need to make sure that your site looks great on all screens – computers, tablets and smartphones. Your website builder will have preview modes so you can check and edit the design on each device.

3. Input Your Information

Once you sign up, and have chosen a template, you'll be brought into your site which is ready to be edited. You'll want to locate the site manager. This is where the controls are to change the design and layout of your website. In both Squarespace and Wix it is located on the left hand side.

Navigation: The navigation, or nav bar, is the list of links that are found along the top of each page that link to pages on your site such as, about, contact, and menu. You should have already outlined in the prep stage what information is going on what page and what pages your site will have.

To set up your navigation: Adding new pages will add their respective links in the nav bar. If you create a page and you do not want it to appear as a link in the nav, you can drag it into the "Not Linked Pages" area in Squarespace, or set it to "Not Visible" in the pages list in Wix.

Menu: Most website creation platform templates have a menu option, so the text can be indexed and searchable. Both Squarespace and Wix offer menu options.

There are options for pricing, menu times, descriptions, and images. You can also add multiple menus, for lunch, dinner, brunch, cocktails, etc. If you have great pictures of your menu items, be sure to include those as well.

Pages: The number of pages you have on your site will be determined by the amount of information collected in the first chapter.

Take things page by page, adding information as necessary. At this stage, don't worry about design, just make sure that you enter all the text and drop in any photos. You can come back and change sizes and fonts later in the design stage.

Be sure to get in the habit of saving as you go – if you leave the page or close it without saving – your changes will be lost. So make your mantra: save, save, save!

Footer: The footer is the very bottom part of your website. It usually contains information and links such as the About, Contact, and Location pages, as well as an email sign up if you do email marketing (or want to in the future!). You can also put your social media links here.

4. Design

The design stage can be intimidating for some and liberating for others. No matter your skill level, you can have a great website simply by organizing your content clearly. Great design isn't always about fancy graphics and slick infinite scrolling. It's about making something useful, easy to navigate, and well thought out. Approach your website the way that a customer would: What are they visiting your site for? What are they looking for? How can you make it easy for them to get what they need?

Design Don'ts

These are design crimes you want to avoid.

✕ Don't use decorative fonts for paragraphs.
✕ Don't use really small fonts.
   This 9pt is too small to read comfortably.
✕ Don't use H1 headings for sub-paragraphs.
✕ Don't underline anything that isn't a link, since people will try to click on it and get frustrated.

Design Cheat Sheet

Some things don't need to be learned the hard way.

- Sentence spacing on the web is one space after a period – not two.

- Sans serif means a clean style font, think the **Helvetica** font instead of **Times New Roman**. A serif font is more traditional, giving people feelings of elegance and trustworthiness. A sans serif font is more modern, conveying a message that's approachable and clean. Neither is better than the other. Just choose fonts that match your restaurant brand and how you want to make customers feel.

- Try to keep to 2 fonts. If you're choosing from a drop down menu selection, record the font name and size on a piece of paper next to you to keep it close to make consistency easier.

- Choose fonts that are easy to read.

- 16pt for paragraph text and 25 to 30pt for headings is standard. (pt is for points, which is a sizing metric for design.)

- Headers (H1, H2, H3, etc.) are numbered in order of importance. H1 is the page title, H2 is for main headings, and H3 is for sub-headings. Don't use more than one H1 per page. This is so that Google can read your site properly and interpret the key info.

- Use colors consistent with the branding of your restaurant and restaurant logo.

- Use hover colors that are different from the link color. This way, when people hover their mouse over it, they will know it's a link they can click (if you don't have underlined links).

- Use clear, well-lit images of your restaurant.

- Make sure there is a navigation bar on every page.

- No page should be a dead end. Try to link to other pages at the bottom of long pages, or guide the visitor to your menu or location in the footer.

- If you're stuck or don't understand how to do a specific task or use a certain feature, use Google to search for answers using the format: platform, template, topic. For example "Wix ice cream template image size help."

Chapter 5: **Publish**

Once you're happy with what you've created – and you've double checked that all your links work and your spelling and information are correct – have a friend take a look. A second set of eyes is always a good idea. Then it's time to go live!

Keep in mind the different devices and even browsers that your customers may be using. Test your site on mobile phones, tablets, and laptops to make sure it looks consistent across each platform or browser (Google, Safari, Firefox, etc.), all the links are working (including your external links for reservations and online ordering), and there aren't any bugs.

Do I need a domain and how do I get one?

As mentioned in chapter 2, a domain is a web address. And yes, you need one. Why? Because myrestaurant.wix.com is not a professional domain. In order to have a neat and respectable web address, you will need to purchase a domain. Most website building platforms, like Squarespace and Wix, offer the first year cost of your domain for free when you sign up for a paid account with them for your first year.

The website builder you're using has a guide that will walk you through making your website live once you are ready to publish. Simply follow the steps of choosing your domain and entering a payment, and they take care of all the work of connecting your domain to your site – or back to the house reference, making sure your address goes to the correct house. You will have to upgrade to a paid plan at this point if you're using Wix to remove the Wix ads. Start here with Wix. And here for Squarespace.

If you already own your domain such as, thevortexrestaurant.com, for example, you can redirect that domain to the new website you've built. Similarly, if you want a more unique domain such as a .ca or .ninja, you can purchase it through a site like Dreamhost, GoDaddy, or Bluehost. To connect one of these third party domains to the site you've

just created, follow the steps outlined on your website builder's help page. They will have very detailed instructions for each domain provider. You can find the page easily by Googling for example, "Connect Dreamhost domain to Squarespace." Click here to find your domain provider guide for Wix and Squarespace.

The name I want is not available. What should I do?

Sometimes the website name you've chosen isn't available. This is possible if you have a popular restaurant name, or your restaurant is the name of something well known. If you can't get the web address you want, be creative by adding a prefix or suffix. Your state or city can be a good suffix, but you can try adding "the" to the beginning, "restaurant" to the end, or any number of other options. Just remember to keep it clear and relevant so people know it's you.
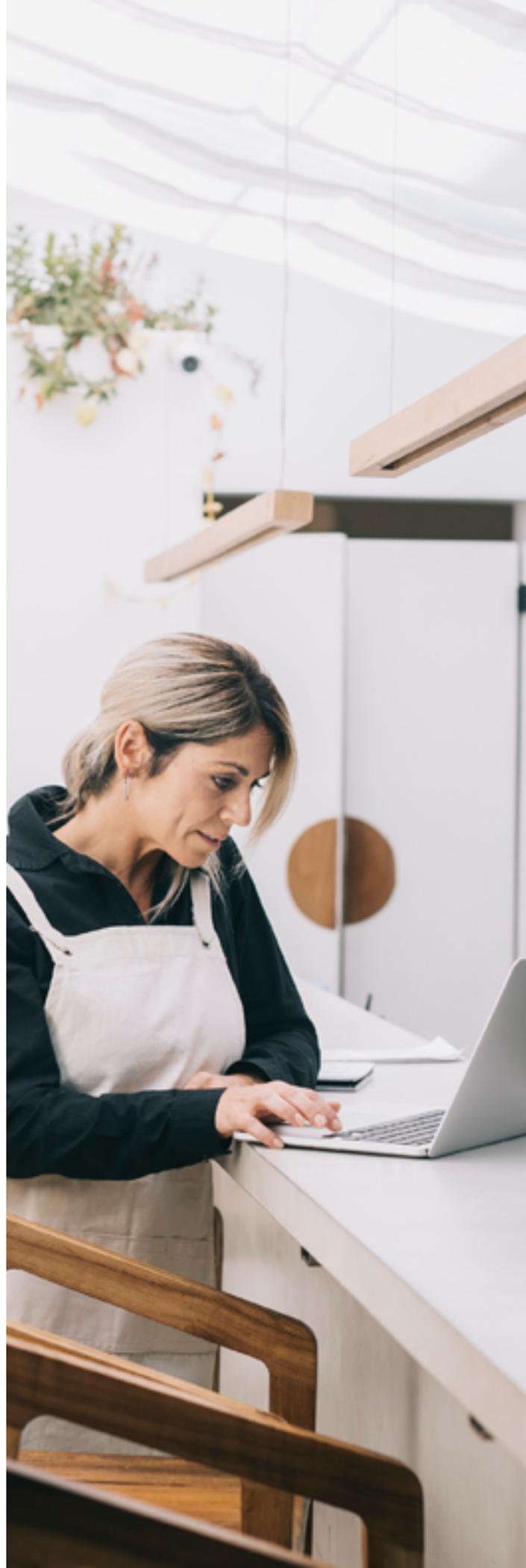
2. Get Your Analytics Right

When using a platform and template site, much of the behind the scenes Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is being done for you. To make sure your site ranks in search, follow the tips below.

SEO Best Practices:

- Avoid repeating content. Each page should have unique content and sentence structure.

- Make sure your headers (H1, H2, H3, etc.) are in order as mentioned on page 17 so that your site can be read and indexed properly.

- Enter your business information in the settings section of the platform. Search engines read and use this data on your site, whether you can see it or not.

- Purchase a domain, and make sure it is set up so that your website address doesn't have the .wix or .squarespace in it.

- Claim your business on Google, and make sure to put your new website link on your Google business page.

Conclusion

Managing your online presence used to be much harder. You'd either have to know how to develop a website from scratch, or shell out a ton of cash for a web designer to do it for you. These days, with affordable and templated website builders created for beginners, it's easy to create a top-notch website for your restaurant.

GLOSSARY OF INTERNET TERMS

Blog: A blog is a weblog, or a journal that is updated and kept online. A blog can be private or public.

Browser: A browser, web browser, or Internet browser is a software that is used to locate and display web pages. Chrome, Safari, Firefox, and Internet Explorer, are all examples of web browsers.

Content: Refers to the words, images, videos and audio recordings that are on your website.

Copy: Is a type of content, but specifically refers to words.

Domain: A domain is a web address.

Drag and drop: Refers to clicking on an object in a page, such as an image or block of text and moving it to another area of a page.

Embed links: A snippet of code that is injected into a webpage from another webpage or application.

Favicon: A symbol or icon that appears in the far left corner of a browser tab.

Footer: The bottom section of a website. A footer usually appears on every page on a website.

Jpg or Jpeg file: Image files that are used for the web.

Hosting: A service that provides a way for people and companies to make a website accessible on the Internet.

Indexing: The way that a search engine like Google matches a site with a search query.

Infinite scroll: A web design style where a page keeps reloading content preventing the footer from appearing.

Mobile responsive: A style of web design that allows the content on a site to respond and adapt to the screen in which it is being viewed.

Navigation / Nav bar: A section of a website intended to help guide visitors to the information they need.

Pages: A web page is information that is displayed on the Internet within a website.

Robot: Also known as an Internet bot, is a software that does automated tasks. They read text and files on pages on the Internet, sorting them according to the way they've been programmed to.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO): A method used to rank higher in search results on search engines like Google, in an effort to increase the amount of visitors to a website or webpage.

Template: A predesigned website that can be customized.

Website builder: A website that helps a user create a templated website.

TouchBistro is an iPad and integrated payments solution built for restaurant people, by restaurant people. Our system helps thousands of restaurateurs around the world increase sales, delight guests, and save both time and money. Find out how our solutions can help make it easier to run your restaurant. Book a demo today!

www.touchbistro.com
1-855-363-5252

TouchBistro®