



What is foodhippo?

foodhippo.ca launched on the morning of December 7, 2016.

The first users who stumbled across the site described it as both an “odd amalgam of aimless observations and juvenile teasing” ([buster84](#)), and “a sour, simmering broth of perceived slights in which thinly-veiled threats and disturbing revenge fantasies float around like bits of gristle” ([loose_moose](#)). Most visitors to the site were singularly unimpressed, but one of them, [coolkecool@me](#), begrudgingly recognized the foodhippo creator’s “grandiose aspirations”:

“It’s unlikely you’ve ever heard of the author whose work is featured on this website—his two previous literary ventures include an iPhoto book about a trip to Italy (total print run: 1), and a confusing ‘cookbook’ that didn’t sell a single copy. This time the writer’s notional subject is restaurants, but his true goal is nothing less than to explore the *human condition*. Why he felt compelled to forego more accessible genres such as poetry, historical fiction, screenplays, westerns and greeting cards, and instead organize his thoughts in an awkward and disjointed series of restaurant ‘reviews’ is, quite literally, beyond comprehension” ([coolkecool@me](#))

Other web surfers who weighed in later in the day saw nothing even remotely ‘literary’ on any of foodhippo’s many web pages.

They described “an unfiltered obsession with food and eating” ([fabytmHD](#)), and “a Babelian mishmash of unfortunate dining-out experiences” ([truejaysfans8](#)) that, in the estimation of prominent social media poster [killa_wat](#), was “... written by people who dont’ know much about food and even less about spelling and punctuation”.

So what is foodhippo?

- Is it a lone writer’s ambitious attempt to come to an understanding of the essential nature of human interaction (based on years of painstaking research done in kitchens and dining rooms not just in Ottawa but in other Canadian venues as well)?
- Is it a gathering place for misfits who can’t cook (so they have to eat out) and who can’t write (but who write anyway) passing judgement on things they don’t understand, like food?
- Or, perhaps even more pressing: do foodhippo’s ‘*Recommended Ottawa Restaurants*’ and ‘*Other Canadian Restaurants*’ even exist?

A simple google search conducted on the afternoon of December 7 didn’t produce answers to any of these questions.

I had to go deeper, into the Dark Web, where if you dig deep enough into the digital murk, they don’t even use zeros and ones but instead, zeroes and *minus*-ones (there was even the odd -2 and -3 bouncing around).

It was there that I found a peer-to-peer portal to the foodhippo webmaster. Here’s a transcript of our conversation (recorded for training purposes):

me: ‘Hello?’

voice: ‘Hi’

me: ‘Is this the foodhippo webmaster?’

voice: ‘No, I’m the foodhippo administrator’

me: ‘I need to talk to the foodhippo webmaster’

(there was a clanking and banging that conjured up images of the Wizard of Oz behind his curtain, but it may just be that the webmaster was in his kitchen making coffee)

foodhippo webmaster (picking up phone): ‘Hello?’

me: ‘My friends are afraid that this whole foodhippo site is part of a cyberwar being waged by the same Russian hackers who brought down Hillary Clinton and ruined my friend’s Election Night party. They’re afraid to open the foodhippo url you sent out’

fhw: ‘What are they afraid of?’

me: ‘That the link you sent is some kind of *Trojan Hippo* that, the second you double-click on it will unleash a digital code that will take control of their hard drives and steal all their personal information—’

(sound of fhw slurping something, probably coffee)

me: ‘So they’re all at home with their lights off and blinds drawn and their computers unplugged’

fhw: ‘And?’

me: ‘Well is it true?’

fhw: ‘Your friends worry too much’

me: ‘Okay but, here you are publishing reviews of restaurants that in a weird way seem to belong to us but that can’t be because none of us is in the restaurant business. On top of that, most of the reviews aren’t all that good, and none of our restaurants gets more than two stars out of five, and one of them only gets a half-star—’

fhw (interrupting): ‘And?’

me (weakly): ‘—and that seems harsh’

(long pause; the only sound is the sound of fingers tapping on a computer keyboard)

fhw (in a superior tone): ‘There, I just posted another review about the waiter at *Vive la bouffe* being argumentative’

(bang as fhw’s phone is slammed down onto base unit)

me: ‘Hello?’

(sound of dial tone)

And that’s how it all began on December 7, 2016.

With more questions than answers.

With no way of knowing for sure whether we’re just a simple group of friends who, on occasion, like to eat at one another’s homes, or a confused group of struggling café and bistro owners who are doing everything we can to impress an increasingly hard-to-please customer base, always hoping for that one glowing review that will vault us into restaurant supremacy.

That review has yet to materialize on foodhippo.ca.

So far, the reviews on foodhippo have not been kind.

But maybe, now that web users are building up their nerve and opening the link and starting to surf the foodhippo restaurant pages, we’ll finally get a better sense of what foodhippo.ca is.

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The reviews, recollections, observations and fabrications on this website were written by foodhippo’s webmaster, who was afraid that if they’d been written by actual restaurant patrons they would have been too earnest and sincere. In these entries, the author has used *dining out* as a metaphor in his ambitious attempt to comment on and critique modern manners, morals and practices. The author hereby disclaims liability for any disgruntlement provoked by his social commentary.

Questions? Concerns? To send a note to the foodhippo.ca moderator, click here

