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SpotDining Mixes Local Philanthropy and Online Deals

By Sophie Braccini

Three years ago, a group of friends led by Lafayette resident Wymond Choy started brainstorming an online system for local dining deals that would also support local charities. Since each friend had a full time job it took a little longer than expected, but at the beginning of October they launched SpotDining.com, a service that lets you check for available deals at local restaurants before you head out the door. The service is free for restaurants and the two dollars that users pay to secure the deal goes to a charity of their choice.

"We were frustrated by the available online services like Groupon that were offering deals with an expiration date," explains Nicholas Chang, the marketing brain of the team. "This may be good for promoting a business, but for users, who are often procrastinators, it does not make a lot of sense. Our service is simpler. If you want to have dinner at a Lamorinda restaurant, you go online to SpotDining.com and see what the current deals are, and you go." He adds that the offers found on SpotDining are exclusive, posted in real time by the restaurants and can change every day. "The types of deals on SpotDining are unlimited: a free entrée, a dollars-off discount, a prix fix meal, or a special just for the day," he says.

Chang adds there are important benefits for the restaurants. "We believe that they will take advantage of our service to push hours when they have less clients, or to push products that are in season for a short period of time, like crab," he says. "On other online coupon sites they sell their service with a discount, but a percentage goes to the coupon organization, but not with us," he adds. "For now, we are not taking any salary and our system does not cost much to operate. Our end game is to get compensation later, once we've proven ourselves and can offer additional services."

Since its launch, SpotDining is expanding its range of restaurants. For more information and deals, visit www.spotdining.com.

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[back](#)

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