

# Springwise newsletter | 9 September 2009

Some great new business ideas for you this week, from companies big and small: a Toronto cafe bakes customised cookies to order (in 2 minutes), a Dutch electronics giant expands its line of adult 'relationship care' products, an Australian service uses Twitter to crowdsource ideas overnight, and more. Our next edition is due on 16 September 2009.



## Customised cookies, baked to order in 2 minutes

Mix-ins have been a staple in many ice cream shops for years already, allowing customers near infinite possibilities in designing their own creamy confection. Now bringing comparable potential to the world of cookies is Toronto's [Sweet Flour Bake Shop](http://www.sweetflour.ca), which lets patrons design their own baked treats and eat them fresh from the oven just two minutes later.

More than 15,000 possible combinations face Sweet Flour customers, who begin by choosing the cookie dough base they'd like: original, peanut butter or oatmeal. From there they can choose from among more than 20 mix-ins, including chocolate chunks, dried blueberries and toffee pieces. Little patience is required after that, for Sweet Flour's baking process requires only two minutes before the customised goodies are ready to devour. Cookies are CDN 2.50 each, or CDN 19 by the dozen. Also available at Sweet Flour are customised muffin tops, cookie sandwiches and a signature homemade granola with mix-ins and fresh fruit.

Is there any food consumers \*don't\* like to customise in some way? We tend to think not. Keep the design-your-own innovations coming! ;-)

Website: [www.sweetflour.ca](http://www.sweetflour.ca)

Contact: [www.sweetflour.ca/our-location](http://www.sweetflour.ca/our-location)

Spotted by: Roberta Prevost



## Chic vomit bags for morning-sick moms

Morning sickness is an unfortunate reality for many pregnant mothers, and it's often compounded by the stress of being unable to predict where or when it will strike. Aiming to do away with the frantic search for an appropriate receptacle, [Morning Chicness Bags](#) offer a way for expectant moms to always be prepared.

Vancouver, B.C.-based Morning Chicness Bags come in six attractive designs that any mom would be proud to include in her purse. All are made of sturdy paper with leak-proof polyethylene lining and horizontal closure clip. Measuring 5 by 3 by 9.5 inches, the bags are priced ranging from USD 7.50 for a pack of 10 bags to USD 27.50 for a pack of 50. Morning Chicness Bags are available both online and through select stores in Western Canada and Oregon. International shipping is available.

And here's where we repeat one of our favourite refrains: everything can be upgraded! Whether it's vomit bags or [toilet seat covers](#), you can bet there will be consumers willing to shell out a little more for a nicer alternative, particularly when there's a social angle involved. What other seemingly lowly necessity could stand a fresh—and premium—redesign... ? (Related: [In-hospital spa services for new moms.](#))

Website: [www.morningchicnessbags.com](http://www.morningchicnessbags.com)

Contact: [info@morningchicnessbags.com](mailto:info@morningchicnessbags.com)

Spotted by: Sandy Manners



# 52 recipe contests to spawn crowdsourced cookbook

There are a multitude of foodie websites and blogs catering to most every culinary whim, but [food52](#) is one with an especially clear premise: 52 weeks, 52 recipe contests, and a crowdsourced cookbook to celebrate the result.

Whereas the recent movie and book "[Julie and Julia](#)" chronicle a young food blogger's journey through "365 Days and 524 Recipes" using Julia Child's "Mastering the Art of French Cooking, Volume I," food52 is in many ways its opposite, celebrating instead the recipes of home cooks. Conceived in part by former New York Times food reporter Amanda Hesser—who has also written several cookbooks in her own right—the site is now on its 13th weekly contest, this time soliciting recipes for "your best beef salad" and "your best fruit tart." Visitors to the site have seven days to submit their favourite recipes for each week's category. Hesser and cofounder Merrill Stubbs then pick two finalists for each category, testing them and photographing them first; then, for 10 days the contest is opened up to voting. Winning recipes and author bios will go into the food52 cookbook, which will be published by Harper Studio; authors will also receive a selection of supplies from Oxo, the project's sponsor. Runners-up and other entries, meanwhile, will be highlighted on the food52 site, where users will also have a chance to offer their opinions on the food52 cookbook's photos, cover design and title.

food52 is currently in invitation-only beta—using, interestingly, [Paperless Post](#) to send its invites—but will reportedly open up to the public next week. An online store is coming soon, and Hesser and Stubbs hope to follow up the current project with future books as well. One to watch! (Related: [Online marketplace for home-cooked meals](#) — [Customised cookbooks stir in online recipes.](#))

Website: [www.food52.com](http://www.food52.com)

Contact: [amanda@food52.com](mailto:amanda@food52.com)

Spotted by: Murtaza Ali Patel



## Zipcar perks: bicycle racks & passes to national parks

Car-sharing enterprise [Zipcar](#) is relentlessly innovative. Since we first covered them, they've grown to 325,000 members and 6,500 vehicles in the United States and Britain, and they continue to add new products and services to their offerings. The latest? Last week, the company announced that two dozen Subaru Imprezas and Outbacks in Seattle and Portland have been fitted with complimentary bike racks for autumn, while several dozen other Zipcars now include free passes to state and national parks.

By adding [perks](#) like these, Zipcar not only builds brand loyalty, but also shows potential customers that car-sharing isn't just a good alternative to car ownership, but comes with extra benefits, too. This specific add-on will no doubt win over a few Seattleites and Portlanders who've been holding on to their cars specifically for the easy access it gives them (and their bikes) to the Northwest's great outdoors. What can you add to your own product or service that will delight, attract and retain customers? (Related: [Zipcar's iPhone app will find and unlock cars](#) — [Zipcar and Zimride join forces on college campuses](#) — [In Paris, a city-wide scheme to share electric cars.](#))

Website: [www.zipcar.com](http://www.zipcar.com)

Contact: [info@zipcar.com](mailto:info@zipcar.com)



# Domino's delivers pizzas to doors on beach & in park

Most people order pizzas when they're at home or at work. Aiming to broaden those delivery horizons, [Domino's Pizza](#) in the Netherlands recently placed white doors in the park and on the beach.

Dubbed Domino's Delivery Points, the doors prominently featured the company's phone number, as well as doorbells for delivery people to ring. Dutch director of marketing André ten Wolde explained that as long as they're within delivery range of a local Domino's, customers can have a pizza delivered pretty much anywhere: at the beach, on a boat, in the park, etc.

Targetting summer beach crowds and an influx of students in Amsterdam, the campaign—developed by creative agency [Indie Amsterdam](#)—draws on the power of showing instead of telling. Does your product or service have hidden benefits that you could demonstrate in an equally effective (and cost-effective) manner? (Related: [Beach barbecue on call in Copenhagen](#) — [Balloon-enabled pizza delivery in Paris](#).)

Website: [www.dominos.nl](http://www.dominos.nl)

Contact: [www.dominos.nl/Corporate/contact](http://www.dominos.nl/Corporate/contact)

Spotted by: Judy McRae



# Philips expands line of massagers for couples

As much as the current economic recession is negatively affecting consumers' spending on new homes, durable goods and luxury vacations—to name just a few of the commonly cited casualties—so it's buoying sales in other areas. To wit: citing increased "cocooning" at home and a correspondingly heightened focus on couples' sexual relationships, Philips is expanding its offerings in a category it calls [relationship care](#).

A euphemism it may be, but there's no denying the numbers cited by Andrea Ragnetti, CEO of the company's Consumer Lifestyle division, in the keynote speech last week at the IFA show in Berlin. Specifically, 70 percent of consumers surveyed recently by Philips—more than half of them married or living together—said they use or would be open to using sex toys or marital aids. That's probably why the company's existing Dual Massager has done well, and it's certainly part of why the company is now expanding its relationship care line, which was developed with the help of UK relationship expert Paula Hall. The latest offering in the line is called the Sensual Massager, and it's now available online as well as at retailers including Boots, House of Fraser and Amazon UK. Philips' online pricing for the Sensual Massager is GBP 79.99, while a version packaged with candle moodlights is GBP 89.99.

All of which goes to show once again that tough economic times don't mean the opportunities are gone—they've just changed direction. How can \*your\* brand tap into consumers' stepped-up focus on life, love—and sex—at home...?

Website: [www.consumer.philips.com/c/relationship-care/19277/cat/gb/](http://www.consumer.philips.com/c/relationship-care/19277/cat/gb/)

Contact: [www.support.philips.com](http://www.support.philips.com)



# Web-to-print tool creates personalized magazines

Helping readers take blogs offline, [Zinepal](#) lets any user convert their favourite online content into eBooks and printable, magazine-style PDFs.

Users of British Columbia-based Zinepal begin by selecting content they like from blogs, Atom/RSS feeds and other websites. Zinepal then reformats that content into a printable PDF and ebook format for use with the Amazon Kindle and other electronic readers. Users can preview and edit or reformat the resulting "zine," even adding a title and logo of their own to customize the publication. Advertising images can also be included at the bottom of each page. Once their zine is complete, users can print it or request an e-mailed copy; they can also request that new zines be automatically created each day or week from the content they choose. Zines can be made public on the site for sharing and searchability; zine feeds, meanwhile, provide a way for users to offer subscriptions to their publications. There is currently no charge for using Zinepal. A [video on blip.tv](#) explains how the process works.

Similar also to [BlueMailCentral](#), [Peggy Mail](#) and other tools that help forge the [OFF=ON](#) connection, Zinepal gives readers one more choice in deciding how their content is delivered. Even beyond that, though, it has the potential to spawn a whole new generation of small, niche publications similar to the (discontinued) [The Printed Blog](#) but put together by independent thinkers, organizations or even brands. One to try out! (Related: [Magazine publishing for everyone and every niche.](#))

Website: [www.zinepal.com](http://www.zinepal.com)

Contact: [info@zinepal.com](mailto:info@zinepal.com)

Spotted by: Murtaza Ali Patel

# Guide to BYO-friendly restaurants



When it comes to eating out, budget-squeezed consumers are increasingly seeking out wallet-friendly alternatives to the traditional, full-service restaurant meal, as we've already noted in our stories about [Charlie's Burgers](#) and [Kogi Korean BBQ](#), to name just two. Picking up on that theme comes [GoBYO](#), a site that aims to guide restaurant-goers to venues that will let them bring their own wine.

GoBYO maintains a database of more than 17,000 restaurants that allow patrons to bring their own wines in 10 metropolitan regions of the United States. Now covering Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Southeast Florida and Washington/Baltimore, the site includes "wine-friendly ratings," corkage fees, phone numbers, cuisines, features, price ranges, daily schedules and maps for each restaurant, as well as links to restaurant websites and reviews. (GoBYO contacts every listed restaurant frequently to confirm current data—most have been re-contacted within the past 90 days, it says.) Visitors to the site can search for a BYO-friendly restaurant by name, distance or type of cuisine as well as more than 40 other restaurant features—availability of live music or a children's menu, for example. Results can be sorted or filtered, and links for each restaurant present Google maps and reviews on Yelp and beyond. GoBYO's FAQ page includes a section on BYO etiquette, and for restaurants that participate in OpenTable.com, consumers can even click to reserve a table. An iPhone app is also available, as is a special carrying case that holds up to three bottles of wine.

Created by the makers of DiningInfo.com—which tracks restaurants with waiter service—ad-supported GoBYO is currently free for both restaurants and users. One to partner with or emulate in a wine-loving—but markup-shy—city near you...?

Website: [www.goby.com](http://www.goby.com)

Contact: [www.goby.com/popup.php?act=contact\\_us](http://www.goby.com/popup.php?act=contact_us)

Spotted by: Cecilia Biemann



# Service uses Twitter to crowdsource ideas overnight

If two heads are better than one, it's hard to argue with the premise of crowdsourcing, which taps multiple brains for a common end. Now offering such capabilities overnight is [Ideas Culture](#), an Australian firm that puts creative thinkers around the globe to work via Twitter to solve a client's problem by morning.

Businesses with a challenge to solve can enlist Ideas Culture's "Ideas While You Sleep Service" to get a pack of ideas along with an evaluation matrix and implementation plan by 10 a.m. the next morning. After registering, they need only submit their challenge online by 4 p.m. By 6 p.m., Ideas Culture gets the challenge out to its Twitter-based Ideas Agents, who spend 15 to 30 minutes each on the problem. There are more than 200 agents from eight countries on the books, and each earns AUD 100 for four sessions, according to [a report in the Age](#). Problems tackled so far have included recruiting more male customers for a singles matching service and increasing attendance for professional development events, The Age reported. Pricing—normally AUD 880—is now AUD 495 through a special trial offer.

Is there no stopping the power of the Twitter-enabled crowds? London's [Royal Opera House](#) is another organization that apparently doesn't think so. For more on putting that power to work for your brand, check out [trendwatching.com's briefing on foreverism](#). Time to start thinking in 140 characters! ;-)

Website: [www.ideasculture.com/ideas.php](http://www.ideasculture.com/ideas.php)

Contact: [enquiries@ideasculture.com](mailto:enquiries@ideasculture.com)



## Hot sauce made & marketed by prisoners

It's a rare entrepreneur who doesn't have challenges to overcome, but for most, incarceration isn't one of them. That's not stopping a group of inmates in Florida's Hillsborough County Jail, however, from making and selling their own line of hot sauce. [JailHouseFire](#) hot sauce comes in three varieties—Original, Smoke and No Escape—all made by inmates at the minimum-security jail from peppers grown right there onsite. What's especially compelling is that rather than glossing over the product's roots, the prisoners' marketing of the sauce makes the most of its origins, with slogans like "So Lethal" and "Murder on Taste Buds." Prices are USD 7 per 5-ounce bottle or USD 3 for a 1.5-ounce bottle of No Escape—which certainly sounds like it lends itself to smaller quantities. The sauces are currently available only online; all proceeds support inmate programs.

The lesson? Never shy away from flaunting all that's interesting and different about \*your\* product's origins, with all the product storytelling and [still-made-here appeal](#) you can muster. The result could set your brand... er... free? ;-)

Website: [www.jailhousefire.org](http://www.jailhousefire.org)

Contact: [lparker@hcs0.tampa.fl.us](mailto:lparker@hcs0.tampa.fl.us)

Spotted by: Jim Stewart



## Ben & Jerry's Hubby Hubby celebrates gay marriage

On the first of this month, gay and lesbian couples across the state of Vermont gained the legal right of marriage. By way of celebration, iconic Vermont ice cream maker Ben & Jerry's has renamed its well-known *Chubby Hubby* ice cream [Hubby Hubby](#). The peanut butter cookie dough (with fudge and pretzels) ice cream will be served in Ben & Jerry's scoop shops throughout this month, a gesture that sees Ben & Jerry's partner with marriage equality group [Freedom to Marry](#). The two partners are also publicly supporting the first gay and lesbian marriages to happen in the state, and aiming to encourage other US states to follow in the footsteps of Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Iowa, and Maine, down the aisle to marriage equality.

Although Hubby Hubby will only be served in Vermont, Freedom to Marry's website urges citizens to "bring Hubby Hubby to your state", indicating that Ben & Jerry's may have plans to do the same in other states with successful gay marriage campaigns. Meanwhile, Ben & Jerry's is buzzing up the message via its Facebook fan page, and the renamed flavour is a trending topic on Twitter. The branding exercise has even gone so far as to wallpaper Freedom to Marry's website with Ben & Jerry's trademark cartoon clouds.

The company is no stranger to big social gestures. Their employee-led Ben & Jerry's Foundation donated over USD 1.9 million in 2008 to "support the founding values of the company: economic and social justice, environmental restoration and peace through understanding, and to support Vermont communities." It's no surprise, therefore, given their penchant for left-leaning publicity, that they are making themselves part of this historic occasion in Vermont. It could help their bottom line, too. As our 'hubby' trendwatching.com [noted in its briefing on Pink Profits](#), more and more companies are discovering the brand loyalty and profits to be gained by appealing to the relatively high-earning GLBT market. (Related: [Spanish wine for gay men.](#))

Website: [www.benjerry.com/hubbyhubby](http://www.benjerry.com/hubbyhubby)

Contact: [www.benjerry.com/contact-us](http://www.benjerry.com/contact-us)



## School lunch menus published via Twitter

School lunches are increasingly a focal point in the ongoing battle against childhood obesity, drawing even [the attention of British celebrity chef Jamie Oliver](#). Following survey results suggesting that one of parents' top concerns is that they don't typically know what's on the menu on any given day, the UK's [School Food Trust](#) has partnered with Somerset County Services to publish its school menu each day via Twitter.

Beginning this fall, parents who subscribe to the trial service by following [@SCSSchoolmeals](#) will receive a tweet each morning showing what's on the school menu. Any parent, grandparent or caregiver can follow, whether their child currently eats school meals or not. The feed will also be used to update parents on special theme days, taster sessions and how to apply for free school meals. The trial is part of a raft of new initiatives the School Food Trust is piloting to increase use of school meals; results will be made available online.

Chris Wainwright of the School Food Trust explains: "With this trial, parents will be able to ask what children thought about the food on offer, and which lunch option they chose. It gives parents the information they need to start discussions about healthy food."

Given that [some 6 million people](#) visit Twitter each month, it's not too surprising that more than 100 local councils in the UK are currently on Twitter—nor that the UK government recently published a 20-page guide urging MPs and civil servants to embrace the microblogging platform. Consumers can use Twitter to [track their packages](#), [file civic complaints](#) and [apply for jobs](#); where could the ability to tweet benefit *your* brand...? (Related: [In Jakarta, healthy meals at sponsored food carts for kids](#).)

Website: [www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk](http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk) — [www.myschoollunch.co.uk](http://www.myschoollunch.co.uk)

Contact: [info@sft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:info@sft.gsi.gov.uk)

Spotted by: Judy McRae