

Hi

Picture the scene . . .

You're in restaurant and the waiter brings over a conch shell and places it in front of you. He reaches inside the shell and produces a pair of headphones connected to a mini ipod secreted deep within.

He asks you to put them on . . .

You hear the sounds of the seashore, the gentle sound of the waves and call of seagulls overhead.

Then the waiter brings you a mini glass topped table with what can only be described as a mini beach scene - only this one is edible - including the foam of the waves, sand, seaweed and oysters!

The combination of sound, visuals and taste takes the whole idea of eating to a completely different level!

And that was just one of 15 (yes, fifteen!) courses we ate at The Fat Duck in Bray on Tuesday lunchtime - Heston Blumenthal's 3 Michelin starred restaurant.

Other weird and wonderful highlights included snail porridge, nitro-scrambled egg and bacon ice cream and whisky wine gums. The latter were presented on a mirrored picture frame - whiskey wine gums in the shape of whiskey bottles were placed on a map of Scotland. Each gum was infused with each particular whiskey.

Now this isn't a restaurant review (although if you have the money and are broadminded in your cuisine, it definitely deserves it's reputation as one of the world's best restaurants). No what I wan to draw out of this are some interesting

business ideas (both positive and negative), that we might learn from.

First off, Heston has got his Competitive Advantage (or unique sales proposition) absolutely figured out. Where else in the world can you go to a restaurant that specialises in 'molecular gastronomy'? But the important point here is that by creating a unique experience, they are able to charge top whack prices.

I am too embarrassed to say how much our meal for 3 cost as it would feed an average family for 4 months!

But ever-interested in how much a business made, we worked out that the restaurant must be bringing in at least £7 million a year - and they only have around 20 tables and 2 sittings a day! Even deducting the high cost of staff, they must be clearing at least £3 million a year!

Now I'm not suggesting for a moment that you go to the extremes of The Fat Duck, but whatever business you are in, it is worth seeing how you can create a unique experience for your customers - it doesn't matter if you never meet them, but what can you do to make the experience truly memorable - one that will stick in the minds of your customers and make them more likely to return to you?

Could you give away a surprise free gift with all orders? I know this sounds weird, but a very successful German business I know places a packet of sweets in every order!

Could you offer a courtesy follow up call, visit or email?

It doesn't matter if you are running a domestic cleaning service, publishing ebooks, or manage a construction firm. We are all in a competitive market and much of our efforts are trying to make sure that customers come to us rather than our rivals.

But don't get too tricky! When our waitress came over to serve our egg and bacon ice cream, she announced:

'Good morning, time for your breakfast!'

OK, this might be funny, but it's starting to stray into the realms of Disney theme parks!

It was also great to see Heston using the public domain

Before our 12th course (a tiny Victorian ice cream cone) we were given a little booklet about Agnes B. Marshall - 'The Victorian Queen of Ice Cream'.

Agnes was something of a genius in the field of ice-cream making, she developed the idea of supercooling ice-cream using compressed gas. One of her Victorian machines made a litre of ice cream in 3 minutes; apparently this cannot be matched by any modern machine on the market!

Her books on ice cream were bought by publishers Ward Lock who also owned the rights to Mrs Beeton's books. Alas they never republished Agnes and she fell into obscurity.

Now, as far as I can tell, her recipes are freely available in the public domain . . . free to reformat and publish by anyone!

It makes you realise what a hidden treasure trove of ideas and products are waiting to be discovered in the public domain. And just because they are over 100 years old doesn't mean they are not relevant to today. In fact, their vintage can actually add authority and a unique sales twist.

I know I bang on about public domain a lot, but for anyone who wants to get into online publishing (but doesn't want the expense of getting resale rights), this is perfect solution.

If you want to know how to create your own public domain business, I recommend you check this out. [Click here](#)

-
A packed weekend of children's birthdays, school charity events and an Amy Winehouse concert!

Not sure which one will be the most traumatic!
;-)

Regards

Nick

 [Previous](#) | [Next](#)

 [Back to top](#)