



A Technical Guide to Restaurant SEO

The best way to drive more traffic to your restaurant's website?

Three words: search engine optimization, also known as SEO.

SEO can help your restaurant become more visible online and stand out from the competition. It helps increase website traffic, drive customer engagement, build brand awareness, and boost credibility. Simply put, more website traffic leads to more diners which equals more revenue.

All BentoBox websites include built-in SEO features, as well as tools that make it easy for you to keep optimizing as your business grows. Search engines favor BentoBox websites because they are fast-loading, responsive, mobile-friendly, searchable, and clickable.

For restaurants who want more details about what's happening behind the scenes and a deeper understanding of technical SEO, we've put together a comprehensive guide.

Table of Contents

What is SEO?	4
Technical SEO Key Terms	5
Page Titles	7
Meta Descriptions	9
Page Content	11
Schema	13
Sitemaps	14
LocalSync	15
How to Measure SEO Performance	16
General Best Practices	18

What is SEO?

Search engine optimization is a set of best practices that make your website more friendly to search engines, so you can rank higher for relevant search terms. This brings more guests to your website, drives more reservations and online orders, and makes it easy for website visitors to find the information they're looking for — like your menu or hours.

Starting in 2016, Google began to emphasize that websites should consider its purpose, and fulfill its purpose to the best of its abilities. This included an update in instructional materials given to Google's human Search Quality evaluators, which emphasize that each website should display "E-A-T", or expertise, authority, and trust within its niche. The [latest update](#) in December 2022 modified the acronym to "E-E-A-T," adding experience into the mix.

Google's goal is to direct every user to high-quality, trustworthy information. That's why in the game of SEO, the North Star is to focus on creating quality web pages with trusted information on pages that load quickly.

This means that the priority of any restaurant website is to provide users with useful information they expect to see, including:

Up-to-date menus

Reservations

Hours of operation

Gift cards

Address/Location

Online ordering

Contact information

Seasonal info



Technical SEO Key Terms

SEO can get fairly technical at its highest levels, but the important concepts are easy for anyone to understand. Here are the nine most important terms to keep in mind. We'll dive deeper into each topic throughout this guide.

Page Title

The name of a web page as it appears at the top of the browser window and in search engine results. Also called a title tag.

Meta Description

A human-readable overview of a web page's content that displays under the page title in search engine results.

Headings (H1, H2, etc)

Also known as header tags or heading tags, these help organize content on your website into sections to create a page hierarchy. Typically, H1s are the title of your web page with H2s to H6s working as subheadings. These help improve readability for both search engines and website visitors.

Image Alt Text

Description of an image that is used by screen readers for accessibility, indexed by search engines, and displayed on the web page if an image doesn't load.

Site Speed

The amount of time it takes to load a web page. A fast load time signals to search engines that your website is high-quality.

Mobile Responsive

Ensures your website design adjusts to a smartphone screen.

HTML Sitemap

A list of all pages on your website. This helps search engines find and categorize your content for better SEO, and it also helps website visitors navigate through your site.

Robots.txt File

Tells search engines which pages on your site to crawl.

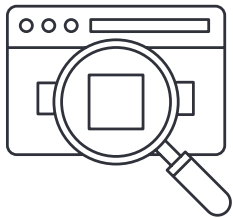
Schema Mark-Up

Code that aids search engines in comprehending and representing your website content in search results.

6 Fields to Optimize for Better SEO

Google is able to learn information by “crawling,” or indexing your website. When Google does this, it checks particular areas of your website’s structure and content for signals of what your website is about.

Google then calculates a ranking/positioning for your website based, in part, on how it interprets those signals. That means that the first step is to optimize every “SEO” field.



The six fields to optimize are:

- 1 Page Titles
- 2 Meta Descriptions
- 3 URLs
- 4 Headings (H1s, H2s, etc)
- 5 Image Alt Text
- 6 Schema Fields

Page Titles

The page title is what the user sees when the page shows up in the SERP (Search Engine Results Page). It's what Google scans to understand your content.

In the example below, “BentoBox: Beautifully Designed Mobile Friendly Restaurant Websites” is the page title.

BentoBox: Beautifully Designed Mobile Friendly Restaurant Websites
<https://getbento.com/> ▼
BentoBox offers restaurants beautiful, mobile friendly websites that drive revenue and customers — complete with a simple, hospitality-focused management ...

In this case, the page title accomplishes three things:

- Tells users what the webpage is about
- Incentivizes a click with compelling marketing language, “beautifully designed”
- Includes keywords that BentoBox should rank for: “restaurant websites,” “design,” “mobile”

For restaurants, it's important to write a great page title for your homepage. Your homepage is likely the highest-traffic page on your website because it's the entry point for a visitor to navigate to other pages.

You can set your homepage page title by using the following format to optimize it for diners searching for you, or for a food option like yours in your city:

[Restaurant Name] | [Type of Food] Restaurant | [City, State]

If you're a multi-location restaurant, follow the format above without [city, state] — unless all of your locations are within the same city.

Example

Copenhagen Bistro Cafe | American Bar + Restaurant | New York, NY

For other web pages besides your homepage, you can use this formula:

[Page Purpose] - [Restaurant Name] in [City, State]

Example

Our Story - California Grill in Whittier, CA

Note: Every page should have a unique title. If more than one page has the same title, a visitor to the site may be confused as to the purpose of each page. ***Make sure your title tags fit in 60-70 characters.***

Page Titles Q&A

Why do we include the location in the title tag?

There are many factors that influence a restaurant website's ranking, but at the core, a restaurant website is trying to target local traffic. In other words, a restaurant's visitors are likely going to come from the immediate location around it.

That means that we have to use any signals available to tell Google not only what the restaurant is about, but where it is.

Putting a geo-region like the "City, State" into the homepage title is a good way to let Google know the location of your business and your target area.

How long does it take to go into effect when you change a page title?

The title of the page will update on the website as soon as you make the change and press "Save."

On Google or other search engines like Bing, the new title will display within a few hours or 1-2 days depending on how often your site is crawled (larger sites, or those with a lot of content, get crawled more often).

Which pages should have titles?

Every page should have a title. Leaving any page without a title, or with a default, non-optimized title is missing an opportunity.

Meta Descriptions

The meta description appears below the page title and URL in the SERP (Search Engine Results Page) and provides Google with a short summary of what that page is about. Users typically glance at the first few words of the page title and the first few words in the meta description when deciding which result to click in Google. That means the meta description is your first and best chance to convince someone to click on your site.

Two Hands NYC

www.twohandsnyc.com/ ▼

Bright & airy cafe with juices & espresso drinks plus light fare like pastries, salads & sandwiches.

Google does **not** consider a meta description in its algorithmic ranking of a website. However, meta descriptions have an indirect impact on search rankings in that they can influence a web page's click-through-rate (CTR) in the SERP (Search Engine Results Page) and a higher CTR will lead to higher rankings. Test different language until you find the best short description of your website that is going to drive clicks.

Your meta description should give a description of what a website visitor can find on that page. For your homepage, it should indicate who you are, what kind of food or beverages you offer, and anything about what sets you apart.

Note: Keep the length to between **130-160 characters**. There is no maximum length, but if it is longer than 160 characters, it will be truncated.

Examples

California Grill

California Grill features burgers, sandwiches and brunch specials everyday at our family friendly Whittier, CA location. Try our happy hour cocktail specials!

Two Hands NYC

Bright & airy cafe with juices & espresso drinks plus light fare like pastries, salads & sandwiches.

Pro Tip

Do not use quotes (“ ”) in meta descriptions. Google reads double-quotes as an HTML element, which is a signal to truncate the meta description after the quote. It is safest to not put any quotes or any non-alphanumeric characters in the meta description.

Meta Descriptions Q&A

Why do we include the location in the title tag?

The meta description will update on the website as soon as you make the change the hit and press “Save.”

Search engines like Google and Bing, on the other hand, will display the new description within a few hours or 1-2 days, depending on how often your site is crawled (larger sites get crawled more often).

Which pages should have meta descriptions?

Every page should have a meta description, but at the very least, make sure these pages do: Locations, Menus, Reservations, Specials, Events, and Contact Us.

What if a page on the site has no meta description set?

If Google does not see a meta description, it will create one based on the page content.

While this likely won't hurt your overall SEO, it makes sense to control the messaging of meta descriptions by creating unique meta descriptions for each site.

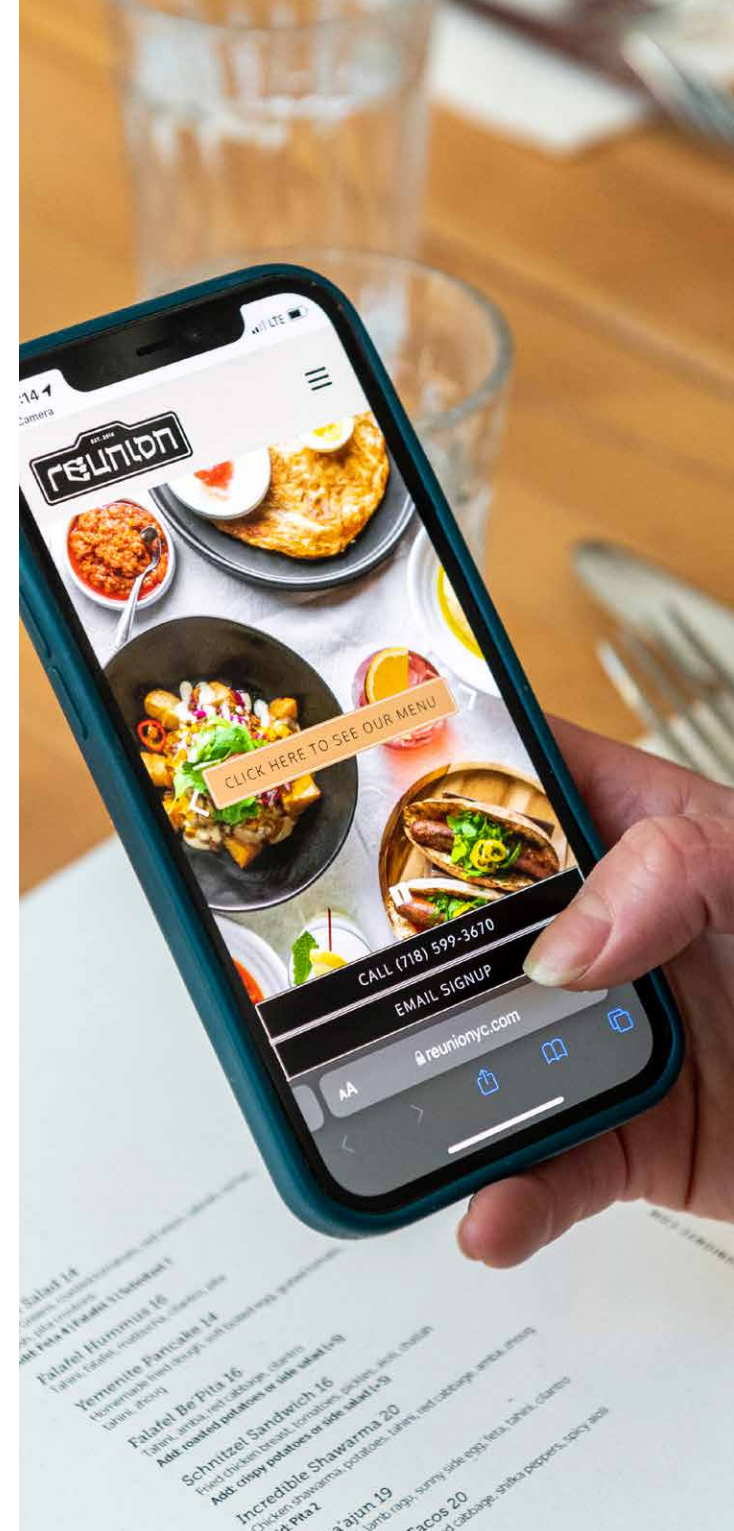
Note: Occasionally Google will actually override a pre-set meta description if it thinks there is more relevant or useful information elsewhere on the page.

Page Content

On-page content is one of the most important factors that influence a website's standing in Google.

Here are some general guidelines to follow when optimizing page copy:

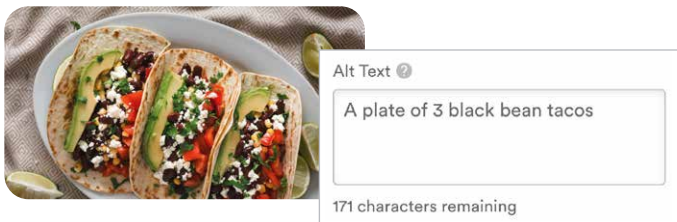
- ✓ Create a clear hierarchy with [Heading tags](#) (e.g., H1, H2, H3 etc.)
- ✓ Use ordered lists (Google likes structure!)
- ✓ Emphasize important page copy with stylization (bold, italicize, underline)
- ✓ Emphasize internal links
- ✓ Look for opportunities to ask and answer questions
- ✓ Write for a 9th grade reading level
- ✓ Emphasize seasonal content like Valentine's Day and Halloween



Page Content Best Practices

Alt-Image Text

Make sure each image has descriptive alt text. Alt text is the text that appears when an image doesn't download on a webpage. It's also read aloud by screen readers for anyone with an eyesight impairment or blindness. Your alt image text should describe what the image is for screen readers with words that diners are likely searching for.



If your website or online ordering runs on [BentoBox](#), our platform automatically generates alt text for every image automatically, with the ability for you to update the text if needed.

Pro Tip

Do an audit of your top pages on your website. Does the alt text include words that you're known for? For example, you can change the above image's alt text to "[dish name on the menu] in a bowl at [restaurant name]."

Text-Based Menus

Google can't scan PDF menus to understand what menu items you offer. This means that when a diner searches online for your restaurant name and menu item, they won't see a search result for your website's menu if you're using a PDF. This could drive them to a third-party marketplace to order or push them to another restaurant altogether if they can't find what they're looking for.

Relying solely on PDFs for website visitors to access your menu is also a website accessibility issue that could expose you to an ADA violation.

Read more: [What Restaurants Should Know About Digital Accessibility](#)

A best practice is to have a text-based menu (with the ability to download a PDF version of the menu, if you wish). If you are a BentoBox customer, your menu is set up as text for you before you launch your new site.

Schema

Schema is structured data or code which is added to a website so that a search engine like Google can better understand what the website is about. This kind of markup essentially tells a search engine the role of each part of a website by using labels.

What does “schema” mean?

A “schema” is just any kind of coding or organization system. In this case, the code is called schema because of [Schema.org](https://schema.org), which was formed in 2011 as a collaboration between major search engines specifically to create this kind of code.

Think of schema as a type of code which helps a website by making its individual components more understandable to Google.

```
meatpacking-menus/">
  <meta name="Revisit-After" content="5 Days">
  <meta name="Distribution" content="Global">
  <meta name="Rating" content="General">
    <meta property="og:site_name" content="FIG & OLIVE">
    <meta property="og:title" content="FIG & OLIVE |
Meatpacking | Menus">
    <meta property="og:type" content="article">
    <meta property="og:url"
content="https://www.figandolive.com/nyc-meatpacking-menus/">
    <meta property="og:description" content="Founded in
2005, FIG & OLIVE, with nine locations across New York, Los
Angeles, Newport Beach, Chicago, D.C. and Houston, showcases the
refined flavors of the coastal regions of the Mediterranean.">
    <meta property="og:image"
content="https://getbento.imgix.net/accounts/a630da93843741458f0
```

Where does schema come from?

There are several ways to generate schema code. BentoBox dynamically generates the schema we use via JSON-LD, a type of javascript. Because BentoBox specializes in websites for the hospitality industry, we support these schema types that are specific to restaurants:

Restaurant

Menu

Menu items

Cuisine type

Price

Events

Reservations

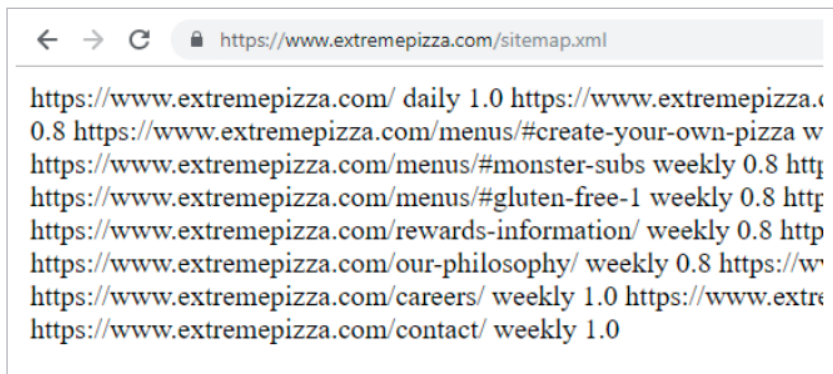
Location

Subscriptions

Sitemaps

A sitemap is a list of all the pages on a website and how they are organized. Google and other search engines look at the sitemap as a “table of contents” for your site. For large websites that have many subfolders or sub-directories, a sitemap helps Google understand which parts of the site are the most important.

Sitemaps are automatically generated for all BentoBox websites.



The contents of a sitemap are auto-generated and contain:

- All published pages of a website.
- Meta-data about your pages, which is used to give search engines additional information about the relative importance of each page on the website.
- Each page on the site is automatically assigned a “score” based on how important that page is to the overall site hierarchy. The range of possible scores is 0—1.0. A score of 1.0 is automatically given to all pages featured in the top site navigation on all BentoBox sitemaps.
- An estimation of how often the site content is updated, with the homepage set to daily and all other pages set to weekly.

You can view the sitemap file of any website by adding “sitemap.xml” to the end of the web address, e.g. **`https://www.extremepizza.com/sitemap.xml`**.

The best way to convey this information to Google, other than just waiting for Google to crawl your website, is to submit your sitemap urls to Google via the Google Search Console tool.

You can submit a new sitemap by navigating to Google Search Console > Sitemaps (on the left toolbar panel).

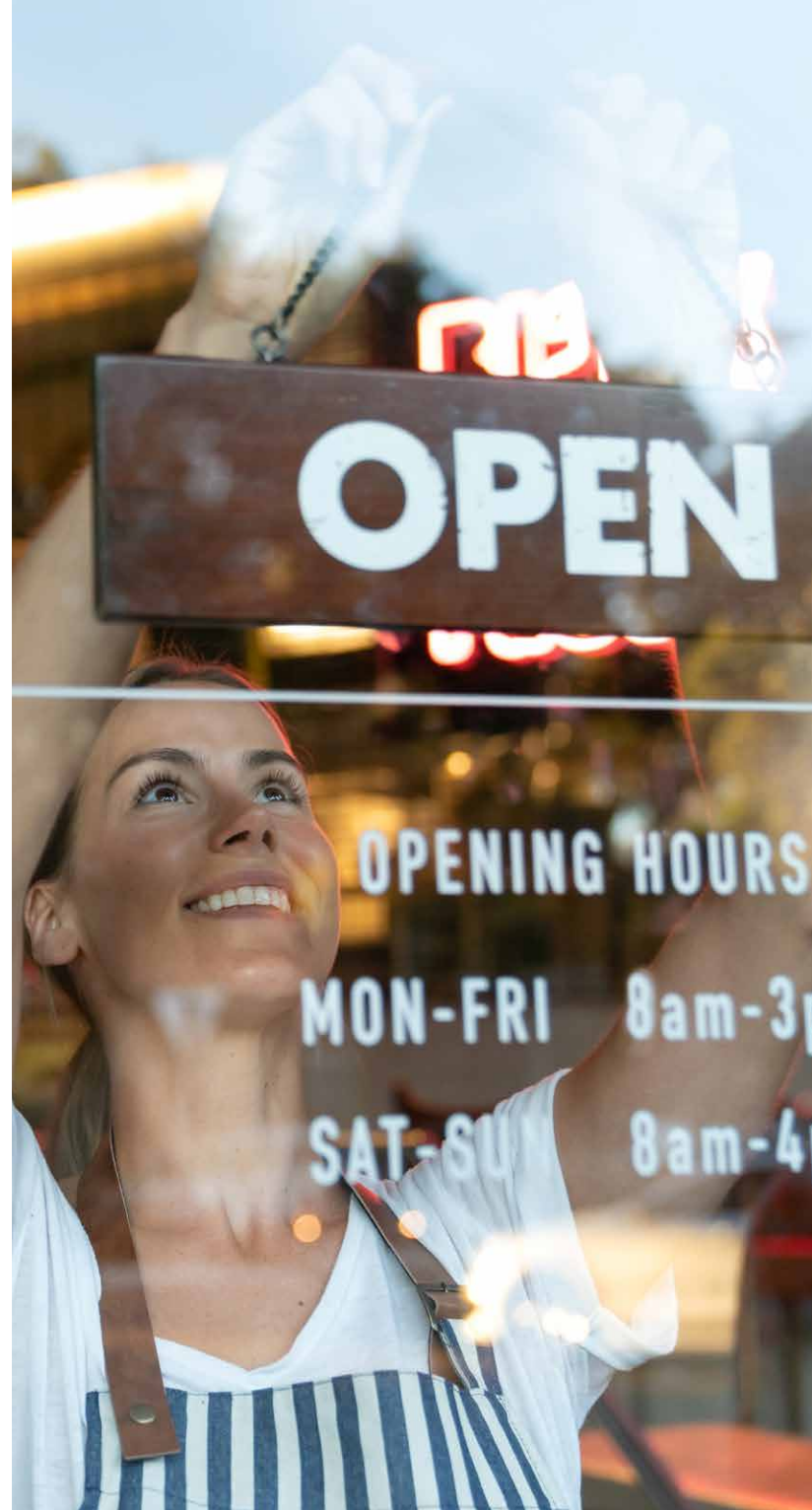
LocalSync

[LocalSync](#) allows you to improve your local rankings and discoverability online, and save time by updating all your important business information in one place.

LocalSync is another key element of good SEO. The purpose of LocalSync is to recognize changes that happen on your website and automatically reflect those changes on channels like Google, Facebook, and FourSquare. LocalSync automatically edits your business's name, address, phone number, and hours of operation for you, so you're not relying on a person remembering to do this or risking human error.

This helps your website's SEO by providing Google with the most up-to-date information about your business. If you do not send this info directly, Google has to retrieve it, which is less efficient and can lead to inaccurate listings.

Even if you don't update your LocalSync content everyday, daily updates may be beneficial. The more Google knows about your business's hours of operation or menus, the better it can display that information to its users. Google is constantly updating its algorithm, so daily updates are best practice.



How to Measure SEO Performance

Once your website is set up, you can monitor SEO performance in several ways. You can track top-level SEO metrics easily with Google Analytics.



Metrics to track include:

- ✓ Top pages getting organic traffic
- ✓ Sources driving all traffic to the site (measure organic traffic)
- ✓ % of organic traffic coming from mobile vs. desktop
- ✓ Organic conversions

Google Search Console

Another way to track organic traffic, diagnose common search issues, and get keyword level reporting directly from Google, is to sign up for [Google Search Console](#).

Here's how Google Search Console can help your restaurant:

- See the search keywords that brought people to your website. For each keyword, you can also see these metrics:
 - **Impressions:** this is how many times your website showed up in Google search results when someone searched the keyword.
 - **Clicks:** how many times a website visitor clicked to your page in response to searching this keyword.
 - **Average Position:** The average ranking of your website for a keyword. If your Average Position is 2, for example, it means that your site shows up as the second search result when someone searches that keyword.
- Track whether anything on your website is broken or not working properly on the technical side. For example: Does your site have any pages that are not redirecting properly? Are certain pages hidden from Google that you want people searching online to be able to see? Is your mobile performance 100% across all your pages?
- Submit information to Google about your website status, sitemaps, and individual URLs for re-indexing.

Taking control of your Google Business Profile is another important step in controlling your restaurant's web presence. Although your website is your most important online presence, providing information directly to Google about your menus, hours of operation, etc. can be a great way to inform your customers — and the world's biggest search engine — about everything happening at your restaurant.

General Best Practices

- ✓ Claim your [Google Business Profile](#).
- ✓ Control your Google My Business listing by using LocalSync, which keeps the hours, description, and menus correct and up to date.
- ✓ Ensure your website's content is always up to date.
- ✓ Encourage other websites such as partners, diners, or community boards to link to your website. These are known as backlinks and can boost your rankings in search engines.
- ✓ Encourage your customers to leave reviews on your Google Business Profile. Google weighs these when deciding the ranking of your site.



Get More Tips and Best Practices

Visit [our blog](#) for the latest
restaurant industry insights
and resources.