FACT SHEET

LOCATION: 515 Bloomfield Avenue
Montclair, NJ 07042
973.655.9000
www.mesobrestaurant.com

CUISINE: Authentic Ethiopian

OWNERS/CHEFS: Berekti Mengistu
Akberet Mengistu

MENU: Authentic Ethiopian food using only fresh ingredients and seasoned with spices imported from Ethiopia. All vegetable dishes are vegan. Coffee (bunna) is imported from Ethiopia and roasted fresh as used. Teas (shai) are fresh blends of loose-leaf teas and spices. Mesob grinds spices for the teas daily. The flavors include cinnamon, ginger, cardamom and cloves in a black-tea base.

INTERIOR: On the walls hang works from the Mengistu’s collection of Ethiopian and Eritrean art, including traditional tribal papooses made from leather and trimmed with seashells from the Red Sea. The most collaborative effort of all produced the most striking result — the seven cylindrical lamps that cast a toasted-wheat glow over the bar that runs down the center of the room. Each lamp is a tan cylinder four feet tall made of paper-thin leather stretched on a metal frame. The parchment-like leather is covered with rows and columns of burnt-umber-colored characters — the 33 letters of the Amharic alphabet, each of which has seven vowel-sound variations, and a table of Amharic numerals. One of the lamps, instead of the alphabet, is painted with scenes of life among Ethiopia’s Afar tribe.

Mesob, which is pronounced with a short e and a long o, is named for the round wicker tables, with their decorative dome-like covers, at which Ethiopian families traditionally dined. Patrons can sit at mesobs near the front windows, or at regular tables. Wherever they sit, they will hear recorded Ethiopian pop music, improvisational and rhythmically intricate, playing softly in the background.

New York bridal gown designer Manalé, who is Ethiopian, chose the palette of earth tones for the awning, menu and interior.

-more-
PRIVATE DINING OPTIONS: Restaurant has seating for 80 guests. Private parties can be accommodated on Mondays or by special arrangement.

CATERING: Services available on and off-site.

HOURS: Tuesday through Sunday
Lunch: 11:30am - 3pm
Dinner: 3pm - 10pm
Brunch: Last Sunday of each month 11am-3pm
Closed Mondays

RESERVATION: Reservations recommended
Phone: 973-655-9000
Online: www.mesobrestaurant.com or www.opentable.com

PARKING: Street parking
Municipal lot behind restaurant

ATTIRE: Casual

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE: Yes

CREDIT CARDS: Visa, Mastercard, American Express

MEDIA CONTACTS: Vickie Smith-Siculiano, Marketing & Public Relations Manager
Vickie@mesobrestaurant.com
MONTCLAIR, NJ (WABC) -- Ethiopian cuisine may be one of the world's best kept secrets, and now a restaurant in New Jersey wants to change that.

One restaurant serves authentic Ethiopian food that has become a favorite of both vegans and meat lovers.

The name of the restaurant is "Mesob", which is the Ethiopian word for these very large baskets that are woven there.

When you step inside "Mesob", you'll see those baskets and taste the food that requires a hands-on experience.

"Mesob" is located at 515 Bloomfield Avenue in Montclair, New Jersey.
TIBS WET/ZIGNEE RECIPE

Utensils:
Heavy-bottomed medium-sized saucepan
Wooden spoon

Ingredients:
3 cups chopped shallots or red onions
2 cups vegetable oil
1 medium tomato minced (optional)
1 cup Ethiopian hot pepper
1 tsp ground nigella seeds
1 tbsp minced garlic
1/2 tsp ginger
1 tbsp Ethiopian spiced butter
1 lb beef cut in cubes
2 cups boiled water
1/2 tsp false cardamom

Instructions:
Sauté onions over low heat, stirring until translucent and soft. Add oil to the onions, stirring gently to mix well. If you choose to use tomato, add into the mixture at this point. Add Ethiopian hot pepper and salt (to taste) and mix together. Add garlic, ginger, and nigella seeds, mixing well. Stir occasionally. Cook for 15 minutes or when oil starts to rise to the surface and the mixture is a deep, rich, reddish color add the meat. Cook for 10 minutes and add boiling water. Add butter and false cardamom, cook for 5 minutes and remove from heat.

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Dining On Ethiopian Cultural Food

My9 Celebrates Black History Month

As we celebrate Black History Month, we find you don't have to go far to experience Ethiopia. Food is a big part of this African country's culture. Christine Persichette takes us to a restaurant in Montclair, where she really "digs in" to this unique way of dining.
My first visit to Mesob was at the insistence of my vegan friend. My second, third, fourth, and fifth visits, however, were by my own craving.

Seven years ago, two sisters from Ethiopia, Berekti Mengistu and Akberet “Aki” Mengistu, opened Mesob Ethiopian Restaurant, at 515 Bloomfield Avenue, in Montclair. Berekti and Aki prepare and serve traditional Ethiopian food.

There is no item more ubiquitous in Ethiopian cuisine than the crepe-like, soft, spongy, slightly tangy, almost sour, and completely addictive flatbread, known as Injera. According to Berekti, Injera is unique and indigenous to Ethiopia and made no where else in Africa. Injera plays an essential role in Ethiopian table culture by encouraging, if not demanding, family style eating. At meal time, a large Injera is laid on a plate, while other preparations are placed on top of the Injera. Injera is both utensil and bread; to eat the food, one rips off a piece of Injera, uses it to pick up the food, and eats both together.

Want to take a peak inside the Ethiopian Kitchen? Watch the video to see Berekti make authentic Injera, and check out what else is cooking inside the Ethiopian kitchen. For extra footage, click here
Here’s Berekti’s recipe for Injera:

Utensils:
2 Large bowls with lids
Wisk
Small measuring cup
Ladle
10-12 inch heavy nonstick flat or shallow skillet or nonstick frying pan; must have lids
Round rattan charger or placemat (minimum 14 inches in diameter)
Clean white cotton tablecloth

Ingredients:
2 cups teff flour
11 cups cold water
1 cup self-rising flour
1 cup wheat flour
1 cup barley flour
Pinch of fenugreek powder (optional)

Mix 2 cups of teff flour with 6 cups of water in a large bowl, using your fingers to break up any lumps. The batter should be smooth and almost runny. Cover and set aside.

The batter for Injera is very temperature sensitive. If the temperature in the house is hot, allow the batter to ferment for 2-3 days. If the temperature is mild, allow 5 days of fermentation. If the temperature is cold, allow 6 or more days for the batter to ferment. If the batter is not fermented well, the Injera may stick to the pan when you cook it. Check the batter after the 6th day: if all the water has risen to the top and is separated from the batter, then fermentation is complete. If the water has not separated, allow to ferment for another day and check again.

After the batter has fermented, in a separate bowl, mix together self-rising, wheat, and barley flours, and fenugreek powder with 5 cups of water, using your fingers to break up any lumps. Pour into the teff batter and mix well. Cover and set the batter aside at room temperature for 24 hours.

Afterward, refrigerate for 4 hours. Drain off any water that has separated from the batter into a small measuring cup and set aside. Mix batter well – it should be smooth and runny. If the batter is too thick, use the drained water to make it thinner. If the water is not needed, discard.
Preheat skillet or frying pan until hot enough that water droplets sizzle on the surface. Stir the batter, and ladle one-half cup into the measuring cup. Start pouring the batter into the center of the skillet, and continue pouring in a circular motion until the batter covers the pan. Cook until bubbles or “eyes” cover 80% of the injera and cover for 30 seconds. Remove cover and check the injera; if the edges are curling, the injera is done. To remove injera from the skillet, carefully lift one edge and slide the charger or placemat underneath and pull the injera onto it. Carefully slide injera onto the tablecloth to cool.

Stir the batter well, and repeat the steps mentioned above for each injera until the batter is finished.

For leftover Injera, store in tightly closed container. At room temperature Injera can last up to 2 days but it is best to refrigerate it.

Making injera requires patience and may take a few tries before you get it right.

Note: The batter may have a fermented odor but this is part of the process. For a less fermented or “sour” Injera, reduce the fermentation time from 5 days to 3 days. This type of injera is known as afleña injera. It is also good for people who have trouble digesting fully fermented Injera.

In honor of it’s Seventh Anniversary, Mesob has launched their first ever creative contest, the winner to be awarded a $25 gift certificate. The challenge is this: express your Ethiopian food experience in just 7 words. Entries can be in a creative sentence, or in a 2-3-2 catch phrase, here’s an example, “Eat meat. Or go vegan. Eat Ethiopian.” Entries can be submitted in person at Mesob Ethiopian Restaurant, or by e-mail to Mesob@saywowmarketing.com. The contest will run until Friday, October 29, 2010.

Shai (tea) at Mesob
Restaurants that push the environmental envelope
PLUS: anatomy of a LEED building

Big-bang marketing plans
Technology preview: What’s 2011 got in store?
MARKETING
GRAND SLAMS

Big ideas, big ROI

BY DANA TANYERI

STANDOUT FOOD AND SERVICE ARE GREAT, BUT NOT NECESSARILY ENOUGH TO ENSURE survival, let alone growth, in this environment. Last rites have been read the past couple of years to plenty of restaurants that did a good job of providing both. In many cases it comes down to marketing and the power of a good idea that separates the haves (i.e., places with buzz, customers, profitability...) from the have-nots. Here's a look at great marketing moves some made this year to keep them in the "haves" column.

IDEA: Create-Your-Own Powerhouse Salad Contest

RESTAURANT: Saladworks, 100+ units in 11 states

GOAL: Create excitement, get new recipe ideas, boost fan interaction with the brand

EXECUTION: Via Facebook and Twitter, fans were invited to submit recipes for their own signature salads using ingredients from the chain's 50-item True Nutrition menu, plus up to two ingredients not on the menu. Three winning salads named for their creators were featured systemwide as seasonal LTOs during 2010. Beyond bragging rights, each winner was awarded $500.
RESULTS: Several thousand recipes poured in during the five-week contest entry period and several thousand new Facebook and Twitter fans signed on. “The social media buzz extended as we rolled out the three winning salads one by one throughout the year,” says John Scardapane, founder, president and CEO. “By getting submissions from around the country, we also got insight into regional taste preferences and by inviting the use of up to two ingredients that we don’t currently carry, we got ideas for new items to add to our menu.” The contest also helped create awareness and trial of new ingredients recently added to Saladworks’ menu. The company realized a 5 percent to 8 percent bump in comp-store sales for a few weeks following each LTO introduction. But the best long-term result, Scardapane says, is the social media buzz and customer interaction generated.

WHY IT WORKED: Customers appreciated that their ideas were solicited and put back into the brand; it provided a peek at ingredients and combinations that the chain’s fan base is most interested in now; the R&D team got a huge infusion of fresh ideas; and it was cheap, with just three $500 prizes awarded and virtually all of the marketing taking place in free online space.

IDEA: Social Media Blitz

RESTAURANT: Mesob Ethiopian Restaurant, 1 unit, Montclair, New Jersey

GOALS: Generate trial, increase repeat visits, educate and excite consumers about Ethiopian food and culture.

EXECUTION: Too busy running their restaurant to try social media marketing on their own, Mesob owner Berekti Mengistu hired friend Vickie Smith-Siculiano of Say WOW Marketing to help. Since January, the 80-seat ethnic independent has jumped into all of the major social media marketing venues—Facebook, Twitter, FourSquare, YouTube, Flickr, Groupon, Yelp, e-mail newsletters, you name it. The restaurant takes a highly interactive approach online, constantly asking fans what they think, what they like, what they’d like to see done differently at Mesob. And it acts on feedback. One example: A new monthly Sunday brunch was added at the suggestion of Facebook fans who wanted to try Ethiopian specialties beyond what’s on the regular menu. Mesob is also big on visuals, posting myriad videos and stills of the kitchen crew at work, signature dishes being prepared, its traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony and events such as Facebook fan club dinners to engage and educate.

RESULTS: Volume is up nearly 15 percent this year. Facebook fans now number nearly 700 and a Groupon
offer far exceeded expectations. “I thought we’d sell maybe 30 but we ended up selling more than 400 coupons by promoting it on Facebook and Twitter, too,” Mengistu says. “Most of those were new customers and many said they would never have come in had they not learned more about us on Facebook. For a small, suburban, ethnic restaurant to have such a great year in this economy, something is really working,” she adds. “Social media is the best thing that ever happened to us.”

WHY IT WORKS: It educates people about a cuisine and culture that’s unfamiliar to many and makes it appealing and welcoming. It reaches customers where they increasingly are—online—and puts Mesob on a level marketing playing field with larger, better financed competitors. It’s affordable: The only cost is a retainer paid to Smith-Siculiano.

IDEA: Name Your Own Price for Fish & Chips
RESTAURANT: Newport Bay, Newport Seafood Grill, 2 units, Portland, Oregon
GOAL: Introduce guests to the previously upscale restaurants’ newly repositioned casual ambiance and menu.
EXECUTION: On one Wednesday in September, both restaurants allowed guests to name the price they wanted to pay for Newport’s Alaskan Cod Fish and Chips, normally priced at $12.95. The offer was promoted via newspaper inserts, billboards, radio and a strong PR push—all at a cost of about $28,000, according to Scott Smith, CEO of Seattle-based Restaurants Unlimited, which acquired the restaurants in 2007.
RESULT: At a per-order food cost of $2.19, the restaurants netted an average price on Fish and Chips that day of $3.14. Comp-store sales for the day were up 93 percent. Sales of add-ons—appetizers, cocktails and desserts, which typically run around $1,200 on a Wednesday, totaled $9,800. Once word got out on blogs and social media, a line 40-people deep developed at lunch, and dinner waits reached two hours. “It really exceeded our expectations,” Smith says.
WHY IT WORKED: It was a compelling offer and part of a broader campaign to reposition Newport as a more affordable, family-friendly option.

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IDEA: Official Birthday Place

RESTAURANT: Nitty Gritty, 2 units, Madison and Middleton, Wisconsin

GOAL: Position "the Gritty" as the place for people to go to celebrate their birthdays

EXECUTION: Customers who come in on their birthdays are treated like royalty. They get a balloon, their name in lights in interior signs and are presented with a Nitty Gritty mug to use for free soda or beer during their visit and then take home. Logo T-shirts, cakes, sparklers and glow-light buttons are available for purchase. Every hour, celebrants’ names are announced and staff and other guests cheer for them. They’re given a Gritty birthday card that they can use once a month for a free mini sundae and they become members of the Nitty Gritty Birthday Club, which gets them additional deals and discounts. The restaurants’ walls are plastered with photos of birthday celebrants and each month one guest wins “birthday of the month” honors, receiving a $50 Nitty Gritty gift certificate and tickets to local events. Major prizes are awarded to those who hit key milestones—a five-day Hawaiian vacation went to the 100,000th celebrant, a Caribbean cruise to the 200,000th, and $1,000 each to the 300,000th and 400,000th birthday guests. Fun facts about people who have celebrated at the Gritty—from a day-old baby who first came in 1993 and has returned every year since; to the state’s former governor; to a 105-year-old regular; to 20-year-old quadruplets who have celebrated every birthday since their third—are posted on the restaurants’ Web site. All advertising includes the “Official Birthday Place” tagline.

RESULTS: An average of 50 to 60 birthdays a day are celebrated at the restaurants. The original location has expanded three times to reach 400 capacity. A second location, in Middleton, was added.

WHY IT WORKS: It appeals to all ages, is fun and family friendly. It goes well beyond the usual birthday freebie, creating a competitive advantage. It’s been consistently promoted to become the restaurants’ core brand identity.

The best wings you can serve, no bones about it.

All meat, no mess. That’s Brakebush boneless wings... whole muscle breast meat in a wide range of delicious varieties, including beer battered Tappers®, Buffalo, and Southern Select™. They’re a fully cooked, affordable wing solution.

Watch your menu fly high when you add wings. From Brakebush.

Making the chicken that makes your menu.

For more information visit: www.brakebush.com/tappers or call 1-800-933-2121.
Hot From The Kettle: Enhancing the Dining Experience

BY Melody Kettle | Thursday, Jan 27, 2011 3:00pm

The code to left is known as a Quick Response Code, commonly referred to as a QR code. The information-bearing squiggly lines are also referred to as Smart Tags or 2D Codes.

Many industries are beginning to incorporate these codes into their marketing, using them as a form of unobtrusive communication, by linking the QR codes directly to a url.

Mesob Ethiopian Restaurant is one of the first restaurants in the country to use these codes in their restaurant. Vickie Smith-Siculiano, Director of Marketing for Mesob, and her mother Debi Smith have created and placed information bearing QR codes throughout Mesob.

This presents an opportunity for the diner to enhance their experience. If you’re waiting for your meal to arrive and happen to be curious about the process of making Injera, or if you want to watch an Ethiopian fashion show, you can do this directly from your chair by simply picking up your smart phone, downloading the free app, (NeoReader is suggested for the iPhone, and Bar Code Scanner app for others) and scan the code. Voila! You’re taken to the video!

Speaking of which . . . click play to see the video

For further cultural immersion, such as the proper method of eating Ethiopian food and Ethiopian Christmas Day traditions, click here.
Ethiopian restaurant embraces QR codes

Mesob marketing manager discusses customer response
February 2, 2011 | By Alan J. Liddle

Quick response codes, those boxy information-packed cousins to bar codes, are being used by Mesob Ethiopian Restaurant in Montclair, N.J., to engage mobile-technology-savvy guests and spur buzz.

Consumers with camera-equipped smart phones can download free software — such as NeoReader or KaywaReader — to scan so-called QR codes for access to information, such as product details and business card data, or a link to a website with specialized content.

Mesob Ethiopian Restaurant started using QR codes last fall, said Berekti Mengistu, who co-owns the restaurant with her sister, Akberet Mengistu.

“It is exciting for us to immerse ourselves in technology and social media, and by having online conversations with our customers, we have learned more about them than we ever imagined,” she said.

“We want to create the best restaurant experience for them, and QR codes were a natural progression to engage our patrons with content they regularly ask for,” she said.

Vickie Smith-Siculiano, Mesob Ethiopian Restaurant’s marketing manager, recently answered NRN’s questions about QR code use at the East Coast eatery.

Are many guests scanning the codes?

We’ve had a very positive response from our tech-savvy patrons. What makes it so neat is that an ethnic restaurant of an ancient culture was so receptive to trying out a new technology that was so unfamiliar to them.
We found QR codes an invaluable way to enhance the Mesob dining experience for our patrons. They become involved in the culture of Ethiopia as well as have “table talk.” Complaints about wait time have decreased. Patrons are now more engaged and connected with the staff, and questions to our servers about Ethiopian culture and traditions have increased. Our wait staff has been educated in the use of the codes so they can help patrons make use of them properly. Mesob staff has also been involved in many of our video projects.

There are videos of the processing of Ethiopian coffee, a fashion show of traditional Ethiopian clothing, a coffee ceremony in Ethiopia, the making of injera in the Mesob kitchen.

**Are you able to track how many guests are scanning and who is scanning for possible tie-ins to digital marketing programs?**

We are able to learn which videos are [watched] most, as we regularly track statistics with from bit.ly ([http://bit.ly/](http://bit.ly/)), which we use to generate the QR codes.

We also use our Google analytics reports to see how the views are affected on our website, [http://mesobrestaurant.com](http://mesobrestaurant.com). We track website traffic on days we put up new codes. Our website hits increased when we started using the QR codes, so we do also use this as a measurement tool, [along] with the bit.ly stats on QR code scanning. This is because we include QR codes for visiting different pages on the website, including signing up for our e-mail list on our website.

The codes are also used to take people directly to our website, to our Facebook page [and, scanned from window signage] to OpenTable.com for reservations.

**How long are QR codes scheduled to run or be used?**

We consider the QR code program a permanent feature of the restaurant. We constantly update table cards with new codes and include them on all promotional signage. To promote a special Valentine’s Day event with traditional Eskesta dancers from Ethiopia, the signage in the window as well as promotional table cards have two codes — one for immediate access to our OpenTable reservations and the other to watch a video of these performers.

**Any “aha!” moments or lessons quickly learned?**

Because of the authentic ethnic culture of Mesob, we have to be careful not to “tech” it up too much. The restaurant has received high reviews for its décor, and we do not want to detract from that. Therefore, the codes are placed as unobtrusively on the walls as possible. Because a fairly large percentage [about 30 percent] of our diners are smart phone users, they spot the codes and are intrigued and interested. Other diners ask about them and are fascinated by the technology involved.

QR codes on table cards keeps diners occupied as they wait [to be] served, patrons have told us. It’s great when you walk through the restaurant and see a smart phone with a video playing on it, and sometimes you will even be invited into a conversation about the video they are viewing because they learned something. We have placed them on the walls, next to authentic Ethiopian wall
hangings, but we find that the table cards are most viewed, we assume because everyone has access to them no matter where they are seated.

Contact Alan J. Liddle at alan.liddle@penton.com.

Read more: http://www.nrn.com/article/ethiopian-restaurant-embraces-qr-codes