

client: Chefshop.com

Three years ago ChefShop.com came to acadia creative to help them strategize ways to meet their objective—becoming the best food site on the web. It was a lofty goal for this small gourmet and specialty food store, which at the time had a very small retail storefront, a warehouse, and a Yahoo store. ChefShop realized that their potential market was huge and mostly untapped, and they wanted to bring their Internet presence up to a higher standard to better showcase their more than 5,000 products. They needed to create a more functional website that could handle a much higher volume of traffic. They wanted to be able to handle orders more efficiently. They needed backend systems with the capability of capturing all their products into a database to be able to manage their inventory in real time.



Working closely with ChefShop, acadia was able to identify the components critical to achieve their objective and helped them launch their new e-commerce initiative by developing the design, technology and e-commerce. We began by taking an off-the-shelf e-commerce and accounting application and customized it to integrate seamlessly with a point-of-sale system, Warehouse and retail store inventory, and online sale—all to work in real time.

Our approach included designing optimal page layout for every page within the website, streamlining the checkout process for users. We coded all pages and coded SQL databases for products, content, recipes, articles, and images. We created an internal advanced search engine that would display results from multiple categories. To help the client perform their own content updates, we developed a web-based administration tool for updating in the SQL database (the client could perform these updates without any knowledge of ASP, HTML, or SQL.)

Because this was a new initiative for them, testing and conversion rates were extremely important. We did strategic banner ad placement on Martha Stewart and on Cooking.com, and we developed a New York Times food & wine e-newsletter, with direct links to landing pages. We developed a testing strategy using variable design components that we could test the effectiveness against one another. We moved menus around. We placed products and descriptions in different formats. We changed the home page and sent out email newsletters weekly. Every single time we made a change we monitored it so that we could measure the success of the overall campaign. Conversion rates shot up dramatically, from the less than 1% they received through their former e-commerce program to over 4% through new design and new marketing.

By following our recommended strategy, ChefShop more than achieved their objective. ChefShop.com is rated the best food site on the web by Forbes, Yahoo!, Oxygen Network, and InStyle. And Oprah Winfrey's personal chef rated ChefShop.com his favorite site on the web in the September 2003 issues of O Magazine. The March 2004 issue of Seattle Magazine named ChefShop.com one of the top 40 Specialty Food Stores. We continue to support these efforts by providing ChefShop with technology, consulting and design support, and are planning the roll out of the latest updated system and design for April 2004.

*"Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!"*

Tim Mar, President