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# The TableTech rundown: Boston start-ups trying to upgrade the restaurant experience

Posted by Scott Kirsner

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By Scott Kirsner, Globe Columnist

Cambridge-based Locu announced today that it has collected more than \$600,000 in funding from angel investors, making it the latest restaurant-related start-up to raise money. Who else in Boston is trying to improve the experience of eating out? Here's my list...

- TotalTab. View your bill at a bar or restaurant, and pay it using your mobile phone. Self-funded so far. Founder Nick Reuter says the company will look to raise money early next year, when it has a beta version operating in a local restaurant.
- Tasted Menu. Founded in 2009 by a recent Harvard Business School grad, the company is still in stealth mode, but seems to want to tap your social network to recommend specific dishes at restaurants. Has raised an unspecified amount of angel funding. Founder Alex Rosenfeld says coyly, "We're a new entrant in the restaurant social recommendation space. We'll be complementary to some existing players, competitive with others, but most importantly I think we're bringing something proprietary, unique, and (most importantly) useful to the table, no pun intended."
- Locu (formerly Goodplates). When I first wrote about Goodplates back in May, the MIT-spawned start-up was hoping to persuade diners to use their mobile phones to take photos of their food at restaurants, and upload ratings and reviews to a Web site. But as founder Rene Reinsberg began to demo the service publicly, and pitch investors, he started to notice how crowded the resto-tech space was. Over the summer, Goodplates changed its name — the company is now known as Locu (pronounced "low-koo") — and began focusing on using humans and intelligent software to digitize and categorize information from restaurant menus. They plan to help restaurants share menu information with lots of Web sites and mobile apps that would like to deliver it to their users, and create an API that will give developers access to the info. Pricing isn't yet set, but they hope to generate revenue from both parties. Raised \$600,000 this month from a group of angel investors. (That's the Locu team pictured at right.)
- Leaf. Cambridge company trying to render extinct that faux-leather bill presenter that's dropped at your table at the end of the meal. What if instead, your waiter handed you a small tablet computer that allowed you to review what you'd eaten, split the check, figure out the tip, rate each individual dish and beverage, and swipe your credit card to pay?
- AisleBuyer. mDine service, announced last month, will allow you to use your mobile phone to choose what you'd like to eat and pay using your mobile phone. Company hasn't yet announced any café or restaurant partners. AisleBuyer has raised \$11.5 million
- Textaurant. Brookline start-up that enables restaurants to manage their wait-lists with a PC, and buzz diners when they're ready via their mobile phones (instead of those expensive coaster-shaped pagers.) In use at Fire & Ice in Boston, Finale in Cambridge, and Jerry Remy's at Fenway (only on game days). Hoping to raise a seed round in the next quarter. (I covered them here last fall.)
- Objective Logistics. Trying to motivate servers — and increase restaurant revenues — by ranking performance on a leaderboard. In use at several local Not Your Average Joe's locations.
- Crave Labs. Helping restaurants expand their customer base using social media and mobile devices.
- GoodEatsFor.Me. Similar to Crave Labs, helping restaurants use social media to see what diners are saying, and

distribute special offers.

- Survey on the Spot. Newton company assists restaurants with designing feedback surveys that customers can fill out on smartphones or tablet computers. In use at restaurants like British Beer Company and The Ninety Nine.

(Last year, I wrote about E La Carte, another TableTech company that was born in Boston, but is now based in Palo Alto.)

Know of others? Post a comment or drop me a line.

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