

The Restaurant Connection

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Gary M. Herndon Jr.

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The Restaurant Connection

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The Restaurant Connection is a program designed to help a Bulletin Board System earn money while offering a valuable resource to the community which it serves.

How many times have you thought, "I'd like to try a new restaurant tonight, but where is there to go, and suppose I don't like what they serve." Well, what if you were able to get on your computer and browse the menus of all the restaurants in your area. Or, suppose you are in the mood for chinese food, you jump on your computer and search for all the chinese restaurants in your area. Then you could look at the menus, find out where they are located, determine their price range, and even call them for reservations if they accept them. Well, dream no more. The Restaurant Connection provides this service.

As the sysop of a BBS or just an entrepreneur who is looking for a new business, you can use The Restaurant Connection to make money. All it takes is a little sales work, and a little typing, and you can be earning \$100,000 a year!

The following sections will help explain how this service works. However, this system is not very easy to explain in words. If you are unsure of anything, please use the contact information at the end of this document to reach me so I can be of further assistance.

TABLE OF CONTENTS  
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I. Program Documentation	
A. SYSOP.EXE - Database management utility.....	4
1. The Main Screen.....	4
2. Configuration.....	4
3. The Pull-Down Menu System.....	4
a. The FILE Menu.....	4
b. The RECORD Menu.....	6
c. The VIEW Menu.....	7
d. The PACKET Menu.....	8
e. The QUIT Menu.....	9
B. TRCDOOR.EXE - BBS Door communication software.....	9
1. The Command Line.....	9
2. Multinode Compatibility.....	9
3. The Main Screen.....	9
4. Menu Options.....	9
5. Sysop Functions.....	11
C. TRCVIEW.ZIP - Offline packet viewer.....	11
1. Menu Functions.....	12
II. Service Documentation.....	13
A. How It Works.....	13
1. Registering the Software.....	13
2. Signing up the restaurants.....	13
3. Entering the data.....	13
4. Telling the newspaper.....	13
5. Renewing your key.....	13
B. The Profit Opportunity.....	14
C. The Importance of Registering Soon.....	14
D. A Crash Course in Sales.....	15
III. Contacting the Author.....	16
IV. Future Plans.....	17
V. Software/User License Agreement.....	19

The Restaurant Connection

Gary M. Herndon Jr.

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I. PROGRAM DOCUMENTATION  
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Requirements: [PKZIP.EXE, PKUNZIP.EXE, and DSZ.EXE in your path]

SYSOP.EXE  
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The SYSOP.EXE program is used by the sysop to handle all the database maintenance required for the data files in TRC. This is where we edit the restaurant profiles, add new restaurants, and edit the screens that make up the restaurant's data. It is relatively easy to use, with a pull down menu system accessible by pressing ESC at the main screen.

The Main Screen  
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The Main Screen can be broken down into four separate areas; three windows and a status line. The top window contains the current restaurants information. This includes the name, address, phone number, the number of times the data has been accessed from remote, if a note file exists, and the restaurants characteristics. The second window contains more restaurant information such as subscription dates, expiration dates, sent to network dates, and payment information. The third window contains BBS information. This is the name of the BBS and it's NODEID, XX00 for the shareware version. The status line at the bottom contains two main pieces of information. On the left, the total capacity for the software, and on the right, the record number. It is from this screen that most of the functions are initiated.

Configuration  
-----

The first time you run the SYSOP.EXE program, or anytime it can't find the CONFIG.TRC file, the configuration window

will pop up. When this pops up, you must enter all the information it asks for or else an error will occur. This is all pretty self explanatory. When it asks for paths, please enter the full drive and path to execute the chosen program. i.e. c:\thedraw\thedraw.exe.

#### The Pull Down Menu System

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The system is accessible by pressing ESC from the main menu. Most all the commands also have 'quick key' equivalents that are noted on the right side of the menu options. Either method will work. To remove the pull down menu without choosing an option, simply press ESC.

#### FILE: Add Restaurant (A)

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Whenever you get new restaurant data, you must add it to the database files. When you select this option, a window will pop up, with input fields for the data. You may navigate

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End of Page: 4

#### The Restaurant Connection

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Gary M. Herndon Jr.

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around the input fields with ease using the UP/DOWN arrow keys, TAB and BACKTAB, and the ENTER key. Some fields will pop up choice boxes. You can use the arrow keys to choose the option, and the ENTER key to select. ESC aborts the process at any time. Once you fill out the form, a default packet will be created. This contains the five ANSi files RESTAD, MENU1, MENU2, MAP, and HOST, found in the default directory. You may edit these "templates" before hand. This way, all your menu files look the same, the data is just different. After the default packet is made, you can edit the screens inside the packet. This is done from the PACKET MENU. A pop-up menu will ask you which screen you would like to edit. Choose a screen by highlighting it and pressing ENTER. You will then be shelled to your ANSi editor. A reminder will pop up, telling you what to save the screen as. YOU MUST NAME THE SCREEN ACCORDINGLY. IF YOU DO NOT, PKZIP WILL NOT FIND IT!!! Once this is complete, you are done adding the new restaurant.

#### Description of Fields:

Restaurant Name: The name of the restaurant.

Address: The street name and number of the restaurant.

City: City restaurant is located in.

State: State abbreviation restaurant is located in.

Zip-Code: 5 or 9 digit zip code

Payment Method: How the restaurant paid you.

Amount Charged: How much money the restaurant paid you.

Subscription Date: Date restaurant was added to the db.

Expiration Date: Date restaurant subscription expires.

Price range: How much the average meal costs.  
Seating Size: The capacity of the restaurant.  
Smoking: Does the restaurant allow it?  
Cuisine: Which type best describes the menu.  
Reservations: Does the restaurant accept them?  
Dress: Required dress code.

FILE: Edit Restaurant (E)

-----  
After you have successfully added a restaurant, it can be edited at any time. By selecting the Edit Restaurant function, you can change data in the database. The window that pops up is very similar to the Add window. You can use the same keys to navigate. If you edit a field, it will change color to let you know that it has changed. Pressing ESC pops up a window allowing you to either save your changes or abort them. ESC aborts, and ENTER saves. This window only pops up if you have changed any data.

FILE: Delete Restaurant (D)

-----  
Use this function only if you never want to see the data again. This erases all packets, notes, and data associated

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End of Page: 5

The Restaurant Connection

Gary M. Herndon Jr.

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with the current restaurant. Select this option and a warning window will appear, ENTER confirms, and ESC cancels.

FILE: Reports (R)

-----  
Reports pops up a little window giving you some information on the overall status of your database. This includes total profit, number expired, number of hits, etc. Then, a window pops up asking if you want to print the restaurant data. This produces a hard copy, about 1/2 page in length of the data. If you do not want to print, simply press "N". If you would like a hard copy of all the restaurant data in your database, select "A" for all.

FILE: Configure (C)

-----  
This window allows you to change the configuration of your program. There are only a few fields that you may alter.

Board Name: The name of your BBS  
Node ID: DO NOT EDIT UNLESS REGISTERED!!!  
Path to ANSI editor: Full drive:\path\file to execute.  
Path to ASCII editor: Full drive:\path\file to execute.  
Path to ANSI Viewer: Full drive:\path\file to execute.

Again, if you edit anything, the color will change. Pressing ESC will pop-up the question window. ENTER saves changes, ESC cancels them.

FILE: Register (\$)

-----  
This window is used when you register your software. From here you enter your registration key, version number, expiration date, and your name. Further information on how to register your software will be sent with the registration receipt and key.

RECORD: Find Restaurant (F)

-----  
Use this function if you wish you jump to a record based on it's name. An input window will appear, and you need to enter as much of the restaurant's name as you can remember. TRC will find the first record that matches. If no match is found, you will remain at the current restaurant.

RECORD: Jump to Record Number (J)

-----  
Use this function to quickly bring up a restaurant based on it's record number. A window will ask for the number, and when you enter it, you will be placed at that restaurant if it exists. If that record does not exist, you will remain at the current restaurant.

RECORD: Add One year to Expiration (+)

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End of Page: 6

The Restaurant Connection

Gary M. Herndon Jr.

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This function serves as a quick way to renew restaurant subscriptions. When a restaurant has expired, the date will blink red on the main screen. Once the restaurant has paid for the service, activating this option will add one year to the the expiration date of the current restaurant.

RECORD: Scroll List (↑)

-----  
This simply moves to the next/previous record in the database. Use the arrow keys, or the pull down menu to accomplish this. This is the easiest way to navigate through the database.

VIEW: Restaurant Ad (V)

-----  
This command sends the RESTAD.ANS file to the local screen via the command entered in the configuration. If you use the "V" key to activate from the main menu, a box menu will

appear and you may select any one on the ANSI screens in the current restaurant's packet to view. The RESTAD.ANS serves as a generic, put whatever information didn't fit in any of the other screens, screen.

VIEW: Menu File 1 (V)

-----  
This command sends the MENU1.ANS file to the local screen via the command entered in the configuration. The MENU1.ANS contains the restaurant's menu, including food served and the prices.

VIEW: Menu File 2 (V)

-----  
This command sends the MENU2.ANS file to the local screen via the command entered in the configuration. The MENU2.ANS contains all the menu items that did not fit in the MENU1.ANS file.

VIEW: Map File (V)

-----  
This command sends the MAP.ANS file to the local screen via the command entered in the configuration. The MAP.ANS contains a road map that shows the location of the restaurant. It should give directions from well known roads or landmarks.

VIEW: BBS Advertisement (V)

-----  
This command sends the HOST.ANS file to the local screen via the command entered in the configuration. The HOST.ANS file is your BBS's personal advertisement. When the network version of this software is released (if the support is there), your BBS will get nationwide advertisement with this screen.

VIEW: Opening Screen (O)

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End of Page: 7

The Restaurant Connection

Gary M. Herndon Jr.

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This command displays the opening screen containing the registration information.

PACKET: View Expiration List (^)

-----  
This option displays a window containing any restaurants that are currently expired. This is the same window that pops up at the beginning of the program. If you haven't seen this window, it's because there aren't any expired restaurants. You can scroll this list using the arrow keys and select the restaurant to jump to by pressing ENTER.



PACKET: Edit Note File (N)

-----  
This command shells to the ASCII editor specified in the configuration and loads the current's restaurant's note file. You can tell if one exists from the main screen by looking in the box marked "Note File". Use this feature to store any information you need on the restaurant. For example, if an owner tells you that he needs his menu redone next Tuesday, make a note of it to remind you. This mainly serves as a scratch pad.

PACKET: Edit Existing Screen (P-E)

-----  
After you add a restaurant to your database, you will have to tailor the default screens to contain the proper information. If you like the layout of the default screen and just want to alter it, use this command. This will shell to the ANSI editor specified in the configuration and load up the screen you specify. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU SAVE THE FILE WITH THE PROPER NAME!!! If you do not, pkzip will be unable to update the restaurant's packet. From the keyboard, press "P". A window will ask you to add (overwrite), or Edit. Select "E", and then choose which screen to edit using the box menu that was displayed.

PACKET: Add Screen (P-A)

-----  
If you want to create a screen from scratch, use this option. BE SURE YOU SAVE IT WITH THE PROPER FILE NAME!!! This option overwrites the current screen in the packet. If you choose the MENU1 screen, be sure to save your work as MENU1.ANS before exiting your editor. From the keyboard, it is similar to the EDIT SCREEN command. This time, choose "A" from the window.

PACKET: Make default packet (M)

-----  
Located in the default directory of this program are some ANSI screens. TRC.ANS and HELP.ANS are used for the door. The others: RESTAD, MENU1, MENU2, MAP, and HOST, are the default screens for your packets. It is these files that are automatically packed into the restaurant's packet when

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End of Page: 8

it is initially added. If you wish for the current restaurant's packet to contain these screens, use this function. This is handy if you have decided to change the layout of all the menus in your database, or something like that. Or, if a packet has become corrupted, you can make a default packet to edit at a later time.

## QUIT: Exit TRC (Q,X)

-----  
This option exits the software, closing all files, and saving all unsaved worked.

## TRCDOOR.EXE

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The TRCDOOR.EXE program must reside in the same directory as the SYSOP.EXE program. This is the actual door that is to be executed by your BBS software. It contains powerful search routines to allow the BBS user to have power over what data he/she sees and what they don't. It requires very little. Please be sure that PKUNZIP.EXE is in your path, as well as DSZ.EXE for file transfers, the door relies on this.

## The Command Line

-----  
The most important command line parameter is -HELP. This will display all the command line parameters and what they do. If you wish to test out the door locally, -LOCAL works well. Most command line options are overridden with the drop file itself. Make sure that the path and dropfile are included on in the command line.

## Multi-node Compatibility

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This door has been designed to run in multinode environments. It access file in a shared manner and it's temp directories are node specific. It also has a log file that informs you of user's activity.

## The Main Screen

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The main screen can be divided into three main sections. The window at the top contains information about the current restaurant as well as number of restaurants in the data file. The bottom window also contains information about the current restaurant. The middle of the screen is used as a menu. The functions are described below.

## Redraw Screen [R]

-----  
This door is very reliant on cursor positioning. That is why it requires ANSI/AVATAR/RIP emulation. Sometimes, line noise can mess with your screen, but the door won't know it. If this occurs simple press the 'R' key and the screen will be sent again.

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End of Page: 9

### Choose Restaurant Preferences [C]

-----

This command invokes the search engine of the door. You must do this in order to build a list of restaurants that you are interested in. A window will pop up and ask you several basic questions. Just enter the corresponding number on the right of the window to answer the questions. If you do not care to choose a preference for the current question, simply enter '0' or press the ENTER key. After you have entered your preferences, another window will appear. This is the search results. It will tell you how many restaurants matched your preferences. You can choose a list that contains restaurants that match at least 1 preference, at least 2 preferences, etc. Then, the list will pop up. Use the '8' and '2' keys you scroll the list up and down.

### List Restaurants [L]

-----

This pops up the list of restaurants that currently match your preferences. You can scroll the list using the '8' and '2' keys. ENTER puts the highlighted restaurant into memory making it the current restaurant. ESC exits the list, leaving the last restaurant as the current restaurant. If you wish to alter this list, you must change your preferences by pressing 'C' at the main screen.

### Download Current Packet [D]

-----

This option allows you to transfer restaurant information for the host computer to your personal computer for later viewing. The packet is named with a .trc extension. You will need to download the offline packet viewer by pressing '0' at the main screen. It is a ZIP file and requires pkunzip.exe to install. Instructions are included in the archive. The packet that you download includes all the menus, the map, the other screens, and the relative data. You can download using X-Modem, Y-Modem, Z-Modem, or their variants.

### Make long distance request [M]

-----

Right now, this feature has not been included in this release. It will, in the future, allow you access to restaurant data from across the country. This way, if your planning a vacation in unknown territory, you can request information on the restaurants in that area. Then you will know where to eat, what to have, and how to get there. Please see below for more information concerning a networked version.

### Download off-line packet viewer [0]

-----

This option transfer the file TRCVIEW.ZIP from the host computer to the local terminal. It is needed to view

-----  
packets downloaded with the 'D' option. There are instructions in the zip file as well as a built in tutorial. TRCVIEW.ZIP must be in the default directory that TRCDOOR.EXE is in.

Quit [Q]

-----  
Exits back to the BBS System

Display Screens [1,2,3,4,5]

-----  
These correspond to associated restaurant data such as menus, maps, and advertisements. You can only view the information if there is currently a restaurant in memory. Once you choose a restaurant, you use the numbers 1-5 to display the ansi files.

Help [H]

-----  
Displays the file HELP.ANS locate in the default directory.

Sysop Functions

- [F1] - Displays status line  
[F9] - Displays status line help  
[F10] - Turns off status line  
  
[ALT-C] - Toggle Chat  
[ALT-H] - Hang up caller  
[ALT-L] - Lock out caller  
[ALT-J] - Drop yourself to dos  
[ALT-K] - Local keyboard toggle  
[ALT-D] - Drop user back to BBS

TRCVIEW.ZIP

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TRCVIEW.ZIP contains several files to aid in viewing restaurant packets off-line. Users of your BBS can download it directly from inside the door, granted it is in the same directory as the door software itself. The software is supposed to mimic the door to a degree, however, no searching functions are available. Users download the restaurant information packets, then use this to manage and view them. It also includes T.EXE a type replacement for WIN95 users. As a sysop, you really don't need to worry about this software, since you have the complete database manager in SYSOP.EXE.

Add Restaurant to Database (A)

-----  
When you select this option, the software will ask you to enter a complete drive and path to the directory where your downloaded packets are put. It will then search the

directory and add all packets in that directory. This

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End of Page: 11

The Restaurant Connection

Gary M. Herndon Jr.

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option is automatically invoked when the total number of  
restaurants in the users database is zero.

#### List Restaurants (L)

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This command pops up a window that the end user can use to  
select a restaurant packet to view. The arrow, page  
up/down, home, and end keys can navigate this list. Use  
ENTER to select a packet, and ESC to abort the operation.

#### Delete Restaurant (D)

-----  
Sometimes it becomes necessary to delete a restaurant from  
the database. By pressing 'D', the user is given a list of  
packets to choose. ENTER deletes the highlighted packet,  
and ESC aborts the operation.

#### Quit (Q,X,ESC)

-----  
Exits the program.



this to get the restaurants information. Also ask for a copy of their menu, it is important.

- Enter the data -

Once you sign up the restaurants, you the software to input the data into the program. This can be edited, so nothing is carved in stone. This is described in detail above.

- Tell a local paper -

Call up the paper and tell them about this new FREE service you have decided to offer to the community. It is free to the callers, and the restaurants get advertising. The paper helps more people learn about it, including restaurant

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End of Page: 13

The Restaurant Connection

Gary M. Herndon Jr.

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owners. Just be sure to leave information in the article about how to contact you.

- Renew your key -

When you register, you get a key that will work for one year. When it expires, you will need to notify me, so I can send a new one. The renewal fee is \$5 for each restaurant you have signed on to the service. So if you charge \$100 per restaurant, the renewal fee is 5% of your total income. In other words, if you have 100 restaurants on the service your renewal fee is  $100 * \$5 = \$500$ . This is 5% of the \$10,000 you are making. If you charge \$200, then the fee is only 2.5% of your income. Etc.

After the first year, your work becomes much simpler. You still collect from the subscriptions, but your work is lessened considerably. Remember, tell the restaurants to notify you if their data changes. IDEA: Give them two free menu updates a year, included in the initial service cost, and then charge a couple bucks for each change thereafter.

THE PROFIT OPPORTUNITY

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Perhaps a chart will best display how much money can be made with this software. Consider the two following examples:

Town Size	Small	Large
Number of Restaurants	100	500
Average amount charged	\$100	\$200
Yearly Earnings	\$10,000	\$100,000
- Renewal fee	\$ 500	\$ 2,500
Your Net Profit	\$ 9,500	\$ 97,500

As you can see, the profit opportunity is as big as you want it to be. If you are in an area like Chicago, or another major U.S. city, it might be wise to hire a staff to help you manage all the restaurants. 1000 restaurants, at \$250 each, equates to \$250,000 a year.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF REGISTERING SOON

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Companies don't like competition when it comes to business. It forces them to lower prices and offer more services. Well, here at TRC HQ, we believe that in this case competition is bad. Who wants to call one BBS to see some restaurants, and another to see some more. This is why, if you are the first in your local calling area to register, you will receive sole rights to this software in your area. In other words, I will not sell the software to your neighbors BBS. This gives you a monopoly on the restaurants. Remember, you must be the first.

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End of Page: 14

The Restaurant Connection

Gary M. Herndon Jr.

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#### A CRASH COURSE IN SALES

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Subscriptions are what give you an income over and over instead of just once. There are many ways you can go about selling the spots on your board. I suggest a one year subscription. What and how you charge depends on both you and the restaurant owner. The reason I am fond of the one year subscription is simply because the network is going to be based on the year. In order to keep your subscriptions, a bit of PR (public relations) is involved. You might elect to write a letter asking how things are and if any of the the data you have needs to be updated. Maybe you could tell them how many people have used the door software and things like that. Make them know that the advertising is working. If they only here from you when it is time to collect, there might not be a collection to take. I think a three month rotation works well in this case. Every three months make an effort to make contact with your restaurants. Remember \$\$\$ (it will keep you smiling).







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Instead of having to edit each menu for each restaurant, the sysop will simply choose a default menu design, and then input the menu information. The program will create the display files on-the-fly, from the data stored by the sysop.

#### Road Map CD in Rip Mode

-----

The door software will interact directly with a RoadAtlas CD located in the cd-rom drive. It will create a map for the user based on location, export it to a .PCX file, and display it in rip mode for the user.

#### TRC Nationwide Network

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This powerful feature has already surfaced in this release. The "Make Long Distance Request" feature in TRCDOOR.EXE will interact with the TRC Network once it is built. It will only be built if you, the sysops of the world, support this software in your area. Access to the network will be free when you renew your registration key.

#### World Wide Web TRC

-----

Wouldn't it be great to use your existing data files, and allow all the internet users in your area access to your data. Well, this improvement will allow for that. Using the CGI script language, this software will allow World Wide Web users to search your database from their terminal and get responses in HTML format. You will also be able to associate GIF and JPG graphic images of the restaurant's to be sent along with the WWW pages themselves. The PCX map files will also be converted and sent over the Web. Your site will also be accessible from a national server run by me. This will be a free upgrade when the support is there. It will most likely run on a Windows95, WindowsNT web server, or, if you still use DOS, you will be able to build

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End of Page: 17

The Restaurant Connection

Gary M. Herndon Jr.

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the data locally to be sent to your Internet Provider for an address on the Web. If you have questions about the Web, or are unfamiliar with the language above, please contact me and I will help all I can.



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