

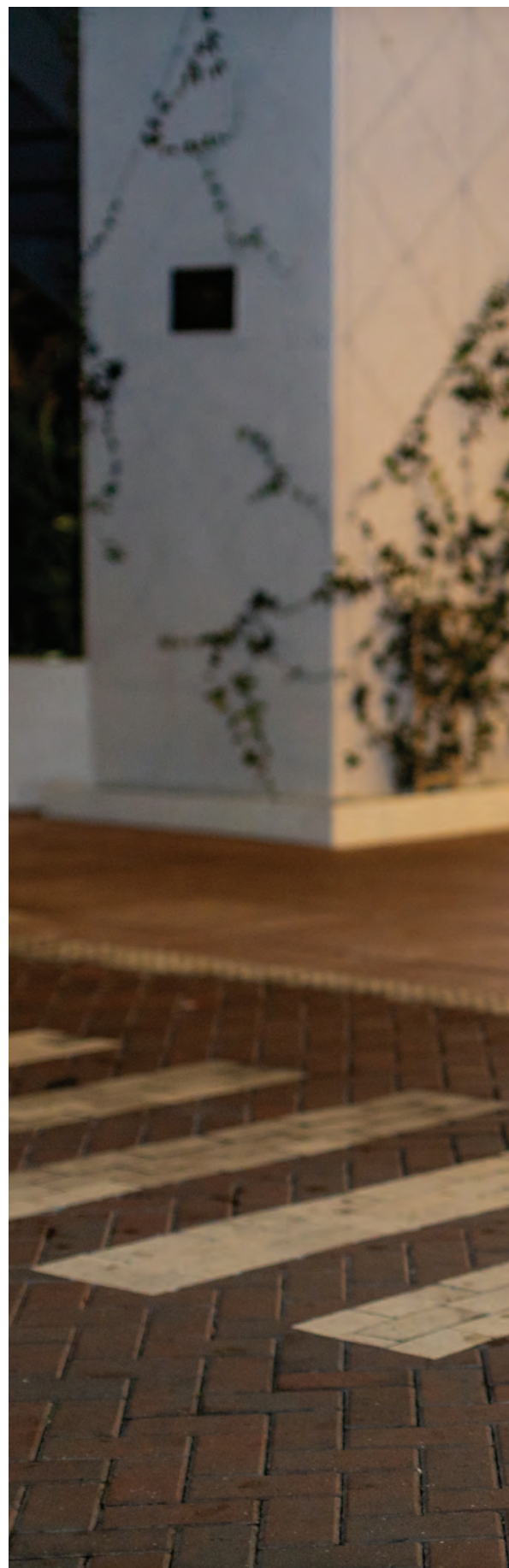
In Conversation With SHAINA WIZOV

Call her an influencer, blogger, foodie, or writer—Shaina Wizov dishes on South Florida’s food scene.

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BY MARITZA COSANO
PHOTOS: ADDIEL PERERA

Shaina Wizov loves food. But more than anything, she loves writing about food. Her fascinating affair with food started very young when she visited her bubbe [grandma] in Boca Raton and discovered the pleasures of fine dining. Back in her hometown of New Jersey, she studied journalism at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, but she never thought her love of food would turn into a full-time food writing career.

With “Take a Bite Out of Boca and Beyond,” Wizov has taken thousands of food enthusiasts on a tantalizing culinary journey, and they are raising their praises for her very authentic food blog. And because South Florida represents a melting pot of cultures, which means you can enjoy any cuisine within its three-county areas—Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach—she is at the crossroads of a hodge-podge of entertainment, dining, and drinking, complete





with hidden gems, highly lauded hotspots, and everything in between. As a food writer in this state's sunniest and perhaps prettiest side, it couldn't get any hotter than that!

Watching Wizov in action, tasting the best dishes and drinks, and talking to the people around her is like watching the girl next door banter with friends. She's warm, chatty, poised, and fun, all the while sharing solid information—where to go, what to taste, what to see as you explore the vibrant food scene in South Florida.

When you read her blog, you participate in the real foodie experience. She writes about food and restaurants, covering many topics, from favorite food festivals coming to our area to recipes to articles about the latest food trends. When you listen to her podcast, "Take a Bite Out of Florida," you get swept up in her girl talk and joyful energy.

In this exclusive interview, our cover girl is here to tell you about how she got into food writing, makes money as a blogger, and some of her best food fares from Boca to Palm Beach and beyond.

You were born in New Jersey and moved to Florida in 2011 when you started your blog. What attracted you to Florida?

I've been coming to Boca my whole life. My maternal grandmother and her sister live in Boca. In 2010, after graduating

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I'M NOT A CRITIC. I'M NOT HERE TO BASH ANYONE. EVERYTHING THAT I DO IS TO MARKET AND TO PROMOTE. IT'S ALL POSITIVE.

Shaina

from Rutgers University, I moved here. I was 22 then, and I saw many people went to high school outside of Atlantic City, where I grew up, were married with kids and working in the casinos. I was like, I've got to get out of here. I want something else for myself. So, that's when I decided to move to Florida with my bubbe. Moving here was the best decision that I could have made. I'm so happy here!

What was your trajectory when you studied journalism at Rutgers University?

I wanted to be in TV production and do entertainment news, so I interned with The Insider and Entertainment Tonight. I was always writing and was published by a local magazine called New Jersey Lifestyle in 2009. When I moved down here, I started the blog just for fun, to give me something to do while job searching.

What led you to write about food?

I started writing about restaurants and some recipe blogs with little backstories. I went to quite a few blogger's conferences in Miami, Orlando, and Chicago, and they were all very food recipe blogger-type focused. As it happened, I made many great connections and learned much about blogging and how social media works. It was 2011, so social media was still relatively new, and blogging was becoming a thing. People were actually making careers out of this. I learned how to create a blog, write recipes, and about photography. One of my most significant memories growing up was eating with my bubbe. And I never wanted to go to a restaurant that we had back home. I always wanted to see and taste something new.

You probably understood the thrill of going to a restaurant back then.

Yes! Even though I didn't realize it then, I had this sense of supporting local restaurants and unique places



when you travel, areas that aren't the same as where you're at home. So, I liked that aspect. And when I started the blog, it was the natural place to go with it. In my blog, I talked about the restaurants I was going to with my grandmother, the recipes we cooked together at home, and the stories behind those.

Blog writing is different from article writing. How did you find your tone and style as you began your blog, drawing from your journalistic techniques?

I've kept it very casual and conversational but also very professional. How I speak in real life is how I write on my blog.

When did you realize that people were following your blog?

I started getting invited to different events and restaurants. People began to recognize me as someone who had some influence. I also got involved in various food and wine events and made friends in the industry.

Once I realized that people knew who I was and invited me, I was like, this is cool. One restaurant owner at the time approached me and told me he'd seen me in the restaurant and just wanted to say hello and introduce himself. He ended up inviting me to a couple of wine dinners. And that was when I was like, okay, this could go somewhere. It is more than just a hobby.



Shaina Wizov is a regular diner at Deck 84 in downtown Delray Beach, as she enjoys their casual waterfront dining.

How does a food blogger make a profit in this industry?

Every influencer or blogger has a way of making money with the strategies and services they offer. What is interesting about this career is that there's no one-size-fits-all. It took a long time before I

made any profit. In the beginning, it's a lot of just people sending you free products and tickets or inviting you to this or that. And that's wonderful as a way to grow your brand, audience, and reach. There are a lot of websites online that act as liaisons between brands and bloggers. You can go on there



Wizov makes herself at home at Amar Mediterranean Bistro in Delray Beach. Their homemade pita bread baked fresh in their wood-burning oven is simply delicious.

as a blogger, see the available opportunities and apply. So, I signed up for quite a few of those websites and started to get paid campaigns.

What kind of campaigns?

I was creating recipes with a

product or a blog. One of my first big-name promotional campaigns was for Lipton Tea. Then, I did some for Stony Field Yogurt and Dunking Donuts. But my focus has been local. I'm going on almost twelve years of having this blog. So now, I partner with local businesses in a variety of

ways. Sometimes, it's a monthly partnership where I get paid on a retainer for a certain amount of blog posts, social media posts, and stories. I am basically acting like a brand ambassador. I also enjoy hosting events.

What is it about hosting events for businesses that you enjoy?

My favorite way to partner with local businesses is hosting a wine tasting, wine dinner, or happy hour. I've partnered with The Ray Hotel in Delray Beach, just steps from where I live. I love this hotel. Just last night, I did a wine tasting, and it was a sold-out event. We're planning to do a whole series of them. I've also done things outside of food, like with wellness. I've done little 'Spa Girls Nights' at local spas, where we bring wine and charcuterie. I did a brunch event with a bar class, and then afterward, everyone went into the hotel's restaurant for drinks and brunch.

You also started a Podcast in May called "Take a Bite Out of Florida."

Yes. I'm looking forward to shooting episodes on location at restaurants. It's also another way of allowing brands to market to my audience.

What's a typical day for you as a blogger?

I go to the gym every morning. I must balance all the food and wine with fitness. And I do various



Whenever Wizow visits West Palm Beach, one of her go-to restaurants is Kapow Noodle Bar. In her opinion, it is the best Asian food in town!

workouts, cardio, strength training, and bar class. I've been switching it up this month. I've been a member of the Purlife Fitness Center for about eight years. I love that gym. All my friends go there. But every once in a while, your body needs a change. So, I decided to go to Orange Theory for a time.

After gym time, I typically come home, make breakfast, get on the computer, answer emails, and do daily posts on my Instagram. If I did an event or a dinner the night before, I'd generally post those stories the following day. I don't post in real time for many reasons,

mainly for safety. And I want to avoid sitting on my phone and working on the stories because it's time-consuming. Every day is different.

I'm sure you've got several favorite restaurants, but name a couple in Delray Beach, where you live, and one in my city, West Palm Beach.

I love Amer and Deck 84 in Delray and Kapow in West Palm Beach! I love their food as I'm gluten-free and dairy-free. I have several dietary restrictions, which dictate where and what I eat. Kapow is

good at making things gluten-free, and the food is just fantastic.

What do your followers learn from your blog?

I'm a big advocate for giving people the resources they need to know how to order. I like highlighting restaurants with gluten-free and dairy-free options. So that's a big part of my writing. And I am giving people options for date night, girls night, family dinners, or where you can go if you're organizing a private party, dinner, or event.

Wizov enjoys visiting Clematis Street, the heart of West Palm Beach.



What do people write to you about?

I get emails and direct messages on Instagram and Facebook from people asking for suggestions if they have family coming into town. Where should they go for lunch? What's friendly? What's gluten-free friendly? What's kid-friendly? I only post a little kids' content. I don't have kids, so typically, I will send them to some of the mom bloggers that I am very good friends with. Overall, I have a very positive response from my audience. I get stopped on the street and say, "Oh, my God, you're that girl from Take a Bite out of Boca!" And that makes my day.

It happened at Whole Foods once with my cashier, which I thought was cool. It happened in the airport at PBI recently. I put my face out there in my posts, and I'm pretty recognizable with my short hair.

People recognize me, and it's cool that they feel comfortable enough to come and say hello. That says a lot about me and the way I put myself out there.

Find her online at
takeabiteoutofboca.com
or on her social media @
[takeabiteoutofboca](https://www.instagram.com/takeabiteoutofboca)