

plate the next morning so I can take a picture," she says. "The light in my kitchen is terrible!"

Phillips and McAuley agree that their science background is connected to their interest in food and cooking. McAuley, who recently wrote about making ice cream with liquid nitrogen, says, "I'd say there's definitely a link ... especially if you look at doing experiments, and knowing how to keep controls if you have a recipe that's not working, and not change every single variable in it all at once and then wonder why your cookies still didn't turn out."

For Phillips, learning the technical side of blogging was the most difficult. "I'm a terrible blogger!" she says, laughing. "It took me a long time to figure out the HTML." Computer savvy aside, blogs can cause some confusion among friends and family. "A lot of family members, they say, 'You have a what? What's a blog?' Well, it's just a website. Go check it out! Go read it!" Phillips says.

But blogs are more than that. Blogs become part of a social network that reaches across the world. Programs like Blogger and LiveJournal have built-in systems for readers' comments, encouraging a dialogue that sometimes extends off the blog into e-mail or in-person friendships. "There are different ways to have little food blog neighborhoods," McAuley says.

"It's a real international community." Phillips has readers from around the world, many of whom have been following her blog since the beginning. "You really start to make friends in your blog," she says. "There are people that I talk to every day who live in Italy."

These days, blogs have clear potential for morphing into something else — bloggers Julie Powell, Belle du Jour and Ana Marie Cox (aka Wonkette) are among those who have turned their online writing into book deals. But neither Phillips nor McAuley is sitting around waiting for a publisher to call. "The book idea? You'll make money somehow and be famous and somebody will offer you a cookbook deal? I entertain that [idea], but I think it's a lot of work," McAuley says. Phillips says she's thought about the possibilities as well, especially since she started blogging at a time when she was struggling with grad school. "At the same time," she says, "it terrifies me because I don't want to try to make it into a career and end up tired of it or hating cooking."

For now, hating cooking doesn't seem to be a looming problem for either blogger. As Phillips wrote in June, "Over the last year, comfort has become getting into my kitchen, banging some pans around, and making something to eat."

And then, of course, writing about it. ★

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