

INTERNET

Mercedes rolls out recipes in “Meals on Wheels” video series

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Mercedes-Benz Marco Polo

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

German automaker Mercedes-Benz is turning its V-Class Marco Polo into a countryside-rambling mobile kitchen for the brand’s new “Meals on Wheels” video series.

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The video series will follow chef Louis Tikaram as he traverses different locales and cooks a meal in Mercedes’ vehicle with the help of a local guest – in this case, Verena Niepoort of the Niepoort family vineyard will help Mr. Tikaram pair a wine with his “rancho” stew. In addition to advertising Mercedes’ spacious vehicle, the videos will also enhance and diversify the automaker’s brand, striking a chord with viewers by selling an experience rather than just an automobile.

“Fine cooking and wine are part of the luxury lifestyle that Mercedes-Benz embodies,” said Jim Gentleman, senior vice president of account management and strategy, SK+G, Las Vegas. “The Meals on Wheels video for the Marco Polo camper van is an example of branded content that brings the Mercedes-Benz credo to life. This kind of approach feels more like an authentic story than it does a traditional ad – something the audience is more likely to remember.”

Meals on wheels

Mr. Tikaram is a chef in Los Angeles but hails from Fiji and was taught to cook by his grandmother, who had roots in Fiji, India and China. It is therefore not a surprise that he is a versatile cook, and in the first video, which takes place in the Douro Valley of Northeast Portugal, he proves it by making the regional rancho stew.

Meaty, seasoned with paprika and heavy on chickpeas, Mr. Tikaram and Ms. Niepoort pair it with a red wine for an appetizing-looking result.

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/uM13UD4Bc6Q>

Mercedes-Benz TV: Meals on Wheels: Cooking in the Marco Polo

Although the video begins with Mr. Tikaram discussing his love for food and then spends time at the Niepoort family vineyard, plugs for the Mercedes Marco Polo come frequently. After the two cook the dish in the roomy vehicle, Ms. Niepoort says that they will have to eat in it too on account of the rain.

“I prefer to eat in here,” says Mr. Tikaram. “It’s so comfortable, it smells good, it’s warm.” The two toast as an aerial camera pans across the cliff, displaying only the car and the beautiful countryside.



Taken from "Meals on Wheels: Cooking in the Marco Polo"

At the end of the video, a prompt to “Find out more!” appears in the top right of the video. Clicking it directs the viewer to the Meals on Wheels page of Mercedes’ Web site, which contains several paragraphs about the chef, region, food and wine, but culminates with a section entitled “A perfect dinner in the Marco Polo.”

“I would never have thought that the Marco Polo has so much space for cooking,” Ms. Niepoort said in a statement.



Mr. Tikaram and Ms. Niepoort prepare a meal in Mercedes Marco Polo

Mr. Tikaram concurs, saying, “The workmanship is high quality and the equipment is practical: in addition to the gas stove, the tap and the fridge are a real help when cooking fresh meals. And combined with the delicious aroma of food coming from a camper van and not from a big kitchen, it is almost a little surreal. A brilliant experience.”

The takeaway is not only that a car with enough space for cooking a nice meal and eating will have plenty of room for a whole family taking a road trip, but that the Marco Polo is a vehicle that can host experiences. Ending an article in this fashion when the reader is already on Mercedes’ Web site may spur sales.



Mr. Tikaram and a Mercedes Marco Polo

Additionally, the recipe is only displayed briefly in the video. It is easier to view from Mercedes’ Web site, which also makes it more likely for viewers to go in search of the content.

Pairing up

As data continues to show that younger consumers value brands that provide experiences, other automakers are also attempting to tie their brand to experience and lifestyle.

Earlier this month, German automaker BMW continued its push for cultural prestige when it announced that it will sponsor the Pure & Crafted Festival, a two-day indoor/outdoor event set to take place at Postbahnhof in Berlin.

The inaugural festival presented by motorcycle brand BMW-Motorrad, which will take

place later this month, is being billed as a mix of rock music, motorcycle culture and New Heritage lifestyle. The lineup consists largely of newer rock acts and the festival also contains an urban scene marketplace, making the Pure & Crafted Festival a good place for BMW to reach a new market ([see story](#)).

Mercedes is not the only automaker to strike a partnership with a chef.

In May, Italian automaker Maserati married “slow food” with “fast cars” in a new partnership with Michelin-star chef Massimo Bottura.

Maserati’s partnership with Mr. Bottura was described by the automaker as “[uniting] the excellence of the Trident marque with the acclaimed gastronomic virtuosity” represented by the chef’s work and his restaurant Osteria Francescana. Selecting a brand partner that is outside the traditional wheelhouse of an automaker showed that Maserati has interests beyond automobiles and common associations such as racing ([see story](#)).

Mercedes-Benz's "Meals on Wheels" is just the latest instance of an automaker selling their vehicles as part of a larger luxury experience.

"By showcasing the cooking of chef Louis Tikaram amidst the picturesque Portugal countryside, Mercedes-Benz is selling both a product (a spacious van where a meal can both be cooked and enjoyed) and a lifestyle (enjoying the finer things in life)," Mr. Gentleman said.

Final Take

Forrest Cardamenis, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/QRqpqsg4i9o>

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