

One of the main things our chefs talk to us about is getting the best photographs of their dishes. We know that first impressions count and the first sight of a dish is what can tempt you to investigate a chef's full offering.

As time progresses and you grow your customer base you can consider investing in a camera and editing suite for your laptop, perhaps you'll bring in a professional food photographer, but our advice when getting started is this - the best camera to use is the one you have!

It is also important to remember that the internet is your friend. You don't have to reinvent the wheel (nor the food photography genre). There are plenty of amazing examples online of food photography to draw inspiration from. Search '*best food photography*' and '*best food photographer*' and start to search through for different ways of styling, new inspiration on how to use props, what angles to consider and where your light source should be. Visual blogs like Pinterest and Tumblr can help you create an online resource for images you find will help you show off your dishes best.

Do not be put off by what you see online - these are professionals who make their living by photographing food, not by cooking food - and instead keep an open mind as to what you can achieve in your own kitchen.

The following tips should be considered and tested - over time you will work out what works best for you and what shows your food off in the most attractive way

Use Negative Space

Give the viewer some room to breathe, i.e. don't zoom in all the way, let there be some negative space in the picture.

Experiment With Different Heights

Experiment with height and creating different levels.

Use a cutting board to raise up some of your scene. Place something on a cake stand or use glasses in different heights. Adding height can create a natural frame that you can work off, especially if shooting straight on or at different angles

You don't even have to go higher, placing things on a wrinkled kitchen towel create texture and breaks things up by creating visual differences or layers.

Consider Shooting on The Floor

Consider even your own floor as long as it is nice and clean, you can use your wood floor (or any other surface floor) as a background or backdrop to some really great pictures

Find The Your Dishes Biggest Strength

To help me when I am going to shoot it's crucial to ask myself what is the biggest strength of that dish or food?

Is it the freshness, the texture, the colour, the shape? And, very important too, what kind of feeling does that food bring - can be comfort, freshness, cosiness, satisfaction.

Decide On Your Angle Before You Begin Styling

Use a dummy and decide on an angle *before* you start styling.

It can be easy to set up the food and style it just to find out that the angle is not right. Having to change it - and then do all the styling again - wastes time and effort.

Think Layers & Texture

Aim to have about 3 layers of texture in your photos, like a napkin, cutlery, herbs, spices or ingredients.

Things that are in the dish look great when layered into the photo.

Use Stand In Food

Set up with a stand-in. Get the lighting and composition sorted by marking the plate with blocks, swap the blocks for your dish and shoot as fast as you can.

Voila, freshest food – shot fast.

Put your main subject in the middle

People tend to perceive whatever object is in the middle of a food photograph as being the star of the show. When plating great food, it's best to start in the middle with the main dish and work your way out, adding sides or garnish, in order to ensure symmetrical food plating.

Use A White Sheet In The Window

Using a white sheet in the window was one of the best purchases I ever made. The light is always amazing

Use One Main Light Source Until You've Mastered Lighting

Whether you're using natural light or studio lights, start with one main light.

Food photography is a natural subject, so usually, the aim is to try and keep things looking natural. There's only one sun in nature, so one main light just makes sense. This light sets the atmosphere for your shot.

If it is low, it might feel like early morning or late afternoon – higher up is brighter and less atmospheric. Once you have set the main light you can build up the shot with fill-in light.

Always Side, Back or Top Light

Always back, side or top light. Don't have the light source coming from the same angle or direction as the camera.

Props Should Compliment Your Food

The food is your hero, so don't overthink the styling. As in everything – less is more.

Use the most beautiful ingredients you can get. Beautiful food guarantees a beautiful picture. Props should only compliment the food

Colour is Important

Food photography is all about colour, even when the dish itself does not have a powerful one. You can add further colour with your selection of props and surfaces.

Simple = most effective

The HomeMeal top tip: Don't over complicate your shot! Keep it simple. *Simple = most effective!*

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