

Food Photography



Career Considerations

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Food Photography, Description

Food photography is a still life photography genre used to create attractive still life photographs of food. It is a specialization of commercial photography, the products of which are used in advertisements, magazines, packaging, menus or cookbooks. Professional food photography is a collaborative effort, usually involving an art director, a photographer, a food stylist, a prop stylist and their assistants.

A food photographer often marries a culinary background with a strong photographic background.

Food Photography, Salary Information

The following figures are taken directly from the United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics. Unfortunately, the Bureau does not have a unique category for food photographers. Most food photographers are self-employed, making it difficult to derive those figures. The figures you see represent the salaries of photographers as a whole. Data is available, however, by industry profile.

National Employment and Mean Wage Estimates for Photographers, May 2016

 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

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Occupational Employment Statistics

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Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2016

27-4021 Photographers

Photograph people, landscapes, merchandise, or other subjects, using digital or film cameras and equipment. May develop negatives or use computer software to produce finished images and prints. Includes scientific photographers, aerial photographers, and photojournalists.

[National estimates for this occupation](#)
[Industry profile for this occupation](#)
[Geographic profile for this occupation](#)

National estimates for this occupation: Top

Employment estimate and mean wage estimates for this occupation:

Employment (1)	Employment RSE (3)	Mean hourly wage	Mean annual wage (2)	Wage RSE (3)
48,660	2.3 %	\$20.50	\$42,640	1.8 %

Percentile wage estimates for this occupation:

Percentile	10%	25%	50% (Median)	75%	90%
Hourly Wage	\$9.19	\$11.29	\$16.38	\$25.10	\$36.65
Annual Wage (2)	\$19,110	\$23,480	\$34,070	\$52,220	\$76,220

<https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes274021.htm#nat>

Industry Profile for Photographers

Industries with the highest published employment and wages for this occupation are provided. For a list of all industries with employment in this occupation, see the [Create Customized Tables](#) function.

Industries with the highest levels of employment in this occupation:

Industry	Employment (1)	Percent of industry employment	Hourly mean wage	Annual mean wage (2)
Other Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	28,460	4.20	\$18.59	\$38,660
Radio and Television Broadcasting	3,510	1.60	\$23.67	\$49,230
Newspaper, Periodical, Book, and Directory Publishers	3,120	0.82	\$22.44	\$46,670
Motion Picture and Video Industries	1,470	0.35	\$33.35	\$69,370
Electronic Shopping and Mail-Order Houses	1,130	0.31	\$21.44	\$44,600

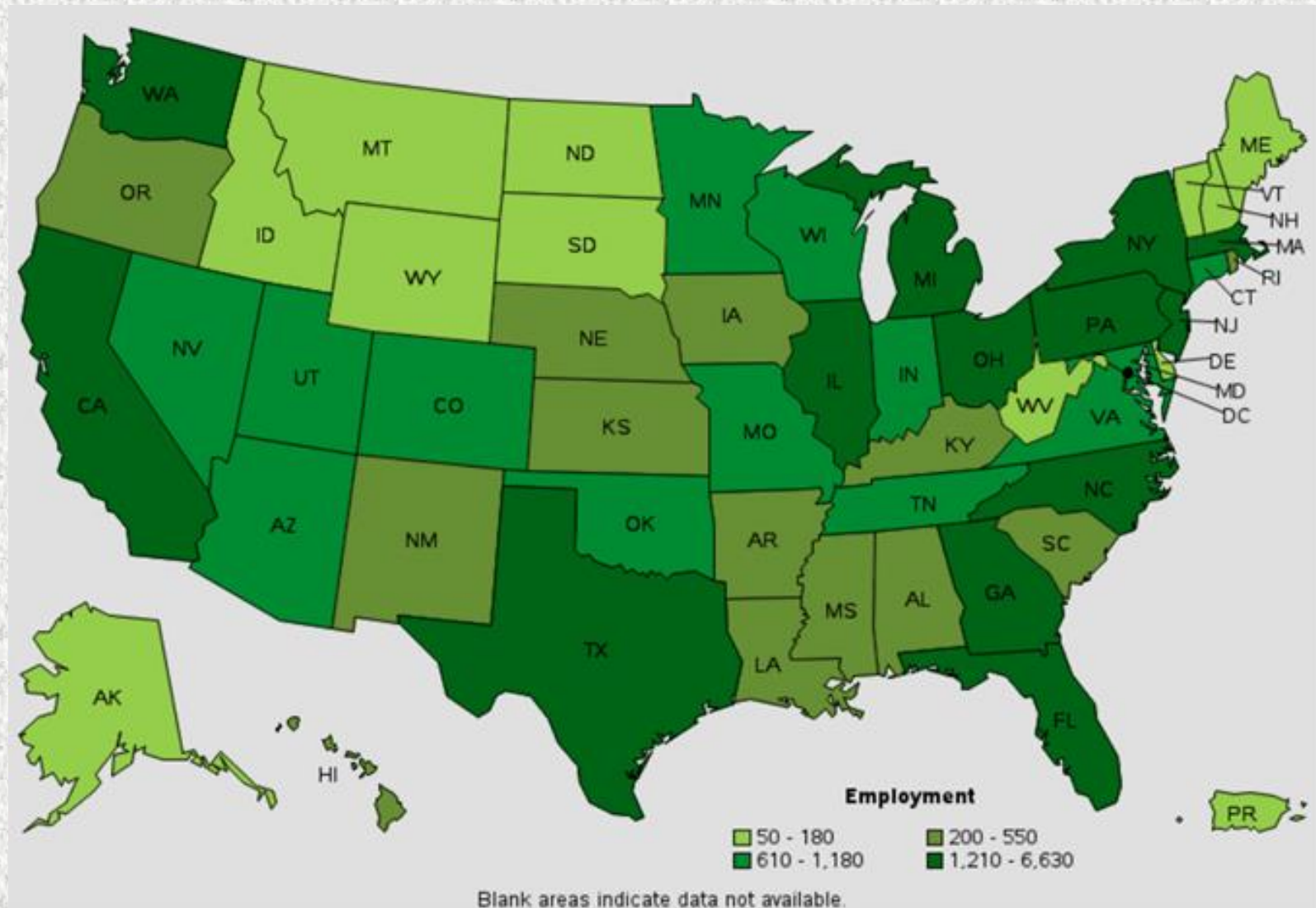
Industries with the highest concentration of employment in this occupation:

Industry	Employment (1)	Percent of industry employment	Hourly mean wage	Annual mean wage (2)
Other Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	28,460	4.20	\$18.59	\$38,660
Radio and Television Broadcasting	3,510	1.60	\$23.67	\$49,230
Independent Artists, Writers, and Performers	530	0.98	\$25.40	\$52,830
Newspaper, Periodical, Book, and Directory Publishers	3,120	0.82	\$22.44	\$46,670
Motion Picture and Video Industries	1,470	0.35	\$33.35	\$69,370

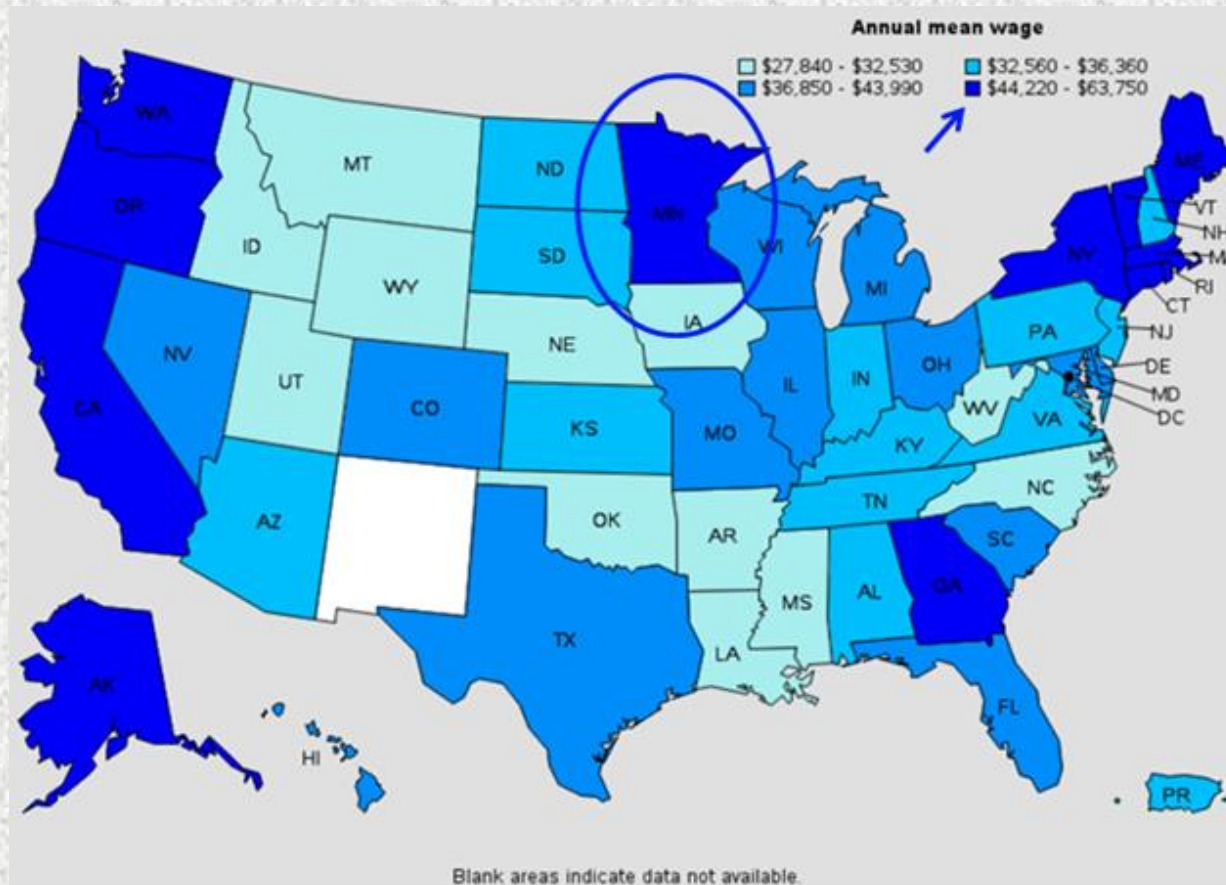
Top paying industries for this occupation:

Industry	Employment (1)	Percent of industry employment	Hourly mean wage	Annual mean wage (2)
Motion Picture and Video Industries	1,470	0.35	\$33.35	\$69,370
Printing and Related Support Activities	80	0.02	\$29.86	\$62,110
Scientific Research and Development Services	140	0.02	\$29.57	\$61,500
Local Government (OES Designation)	260	(7)	\$28.60	\$59,490
Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services	100	0.01	\$28.09	\$58,430

Employment Comparison for Photographers by State, May 2016



Annual Mean Wage of Photographers by State, May 2016



Note that Minnesota ranks among the states paying the highest photographer wages (although it doesn't make the top five list.)

State	Employment (1)	Employment per thousand jobs	Location quotient (9)	Hourly mean wage	Annual mean wage (2)
District of Columbia	180	0.25	0.73	\$30.65	\$63,750
New York	3,830	0.42	1.21	\$29.58	\$61,530
Massachusetts	1,210	0.35	1.01	\$28.91	\$60,130
California	6,630	0.41	1.20	\$24.56	\$51,080
Connecticut	610	0.36	1.05	\$22.65	\$47,100

Salary Data, Other Sources

According to Indeed.com, the average annual salary for food photographers is \$42,000. The rates charged are determined by the photographer's level of experience and expertise. The average hourly rate for new food photographers may range from \$120 to \$250, depending on location and type of assignment.

Effect of Experience on Salary

A food photographer with ten years of experience might expect a 15 – 25% increase in salary as shown below.

Experience Affects Photographer Salaries	
Late-Career	▲ 25%
Experienced	▲ 15%
Mid-Career	▲ 1%
National Average	\$40,000
Entry-Level	▼ 15%

Food Photography, Skill Set

Food photographers should be creative and detail oriented. They should be experienced in the use of digital cameras, printing, and computer editing software. A knowledge of business and marketing as well as good interpersonal skills can help them succeed in the field.

Seven Skills to Master

Skill # 1 – Understanding Composition

Skill # 2 – Understanding Light

Skill # 3 – Telling a Story

Skill # 4 – Setting the Scene

Skill # 5 – Choosing and Using Props

Skill # 6 – Styling the Food

Skill # 7 – Post Processing

Food Photography, Working Conditions

A food photographer:

- Typically works within his own studio or a client's studio
- Occasionally does photo shoots at alternate location
- Deals sometimes with stressful client deadlines
- Strives for perfectionism until he gets a photo just right

Food Photography, Tricks of the Trade

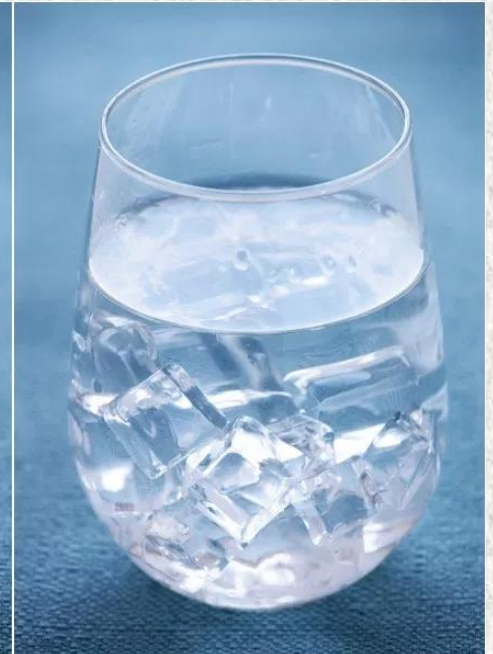
If the food photographer functions as his own food stylist, he may employ an arsenal of tools not normally associated with food to masterfully deceive his audience. A food lover might be repulsed if he knew what he was actually looking at in a photo.

Due to the perishable nature of food, the food photographer sometimes uses fake replacements for real food. For example:

- Acrylic cubes in place of ice cubes
- Mashed potatoes or lard in place of ice cream
- Glycerin in place of water drops on a beer bottle
- Elmer's glue in place of milk to avoid sogginess

He uses various substances to enhance appearance, such as:

- Hair spray on half-cooked green beans to make them moist and shiny
- Shaving cream instead of whipped cream to better hold a desired shape
- Super glue to mend the tears on a turkey's skin, then a mixture of inedible substances to paint on the turkey to give it a roasted look





<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljvS4v2JVWo>



<https://petapixel.com/2016/03/24/photos-show-secret-tricks-food-photography/>

Food Photography, History and Trends

Until 30 years ago, food photos were documentary, serving as cooking guides and portraying recipe results.

New trends began to develop early in the '90s in Australia and Britain.

- Pictures became crafted.
- Interest increased in styling, atmosphere, and color.
- Props became important elements.

A recent trend in food photography is 'Gorgeous grey,' which developed around 2015.

- Grey is used in all its shades and variations.
- Raw natural surfaces like slate, stone and wood are used.
- Rough, bold surfaces enhance the appearance of food and make it appear delicate and graceful.
- See examples of this trend in the next slides.





<http://bojongourmet.com/2017/11/gluten-free-maple-pumpkin-pudding-chomeur/>











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