

How To Shoot Your Food

The sustainable and politically correct way to preserve your memories

We've all been there – some more frequently than others. We're out to dinner or breakfast or lunch or we just cooked something special, and the food is so beautiful that we want to save the memory, or at least Instagram it out to our friends... but is it really as easy as take aim and shoot?

Compare your iPhone, Instagram, Pinterest and Facebook photos of food and people, to those in all your favorite professional publications, and I think you'll agree – not all of us have what is required to take a picture worth a 1000 words.

As a food writer and blogger, and as a part of the GotToBeNC Competition Dining Series team, a big part of what I do on almost a daily basis is to photograph my food. And as a culinary professional I, of course, want my photos to look as “pretty as a picture” and “good enough to eat” to do justice and pay homage to the chef whose talents I will later recreate for my readers in prose and photographic portrayal.

Several years ago, before I actually worked for Competition Dining, I was invited to attend the series of dinners as the official blogger for the Charlotte regional competition. I sat next to **Peter Taylor**, Charlotte based photographer, in attendance as a media guest. The room was dimly lit for dinner – perfect for creating atmosphere – terrible for taking a photo. “May I give you a tip?” Peter asked as he saw me attempting to get blog worthy shots of each course. “Ask a friend to use their smart phone to shine a light on your plate at a slight angle, and it will give you much better light for the photo.” Brilliant, simply brilliant – and a great way to use the flashlight app, I might add.

I've never forgotten Peter's tip, and it has served me well. So I thought I'd reach out to a few other local photographers and see what kind of light they might be able to shine on the subject of shooting your food.

From photographer **Critsey Rowe** – Critsey agrees with Peter – it's all about the light. “My best advice for getting a great photo of your delicious dinner would be to look for the best light! Lighting is key in

making your food pictures look appetizing. Window light usually works best, but any type of light will do even if it is from the nearest table lamp. If you are having a romantic dinner in candlelight, you may need a little extra boost of light, and usually the phone flash is not the best option. If you are dining with someone, you can have them hold their constant

the background – sometimes we are so excited about the subject matter, we might forget to look.

“Be aware of the background,” says Mandy. “Nothing is worse than having a fantastic photo with a lot of clutter in the background. Look around before you shoot!”

Visit MandyFrenchPhotography.com to see her work or follow Mandy French Photography on Facebook.

Charlotte Living photographer **Gerin Choiniere** suggests that we don't even give the background a chance. Gerin says, “I think everything looks better close up when you are shooting food. When you look at the real thing, you have three of your five senses, responding... you see it, your smell it, and you can taste it. In a photograph you have to roll all of those three senses into one – focus on the food and what makes your mouth water.”

You can reach Gerin at segerin@mac.com or by visiting his website at gerinchoinierephotographer.com.

And finally **Joel Andrew Tracey** of Asterisk Creative in Charlotte concurs with his colleagues that lighting is everything, saying “Find a great light source to light up your food like natural light by a window or a brighter constant light.” Joel says to avoid using your phone flash as it washes everything out, and the pic will look unnatural. “If I am in a dimly lit restaurant and am trying to capture a beautiful plate of food, sometimes I have a friend shine a light on the food so that I can snap a pic.” There you go again, kudos to the guy or gal that developed the

Flashlight app – our Instagram posts are all the better for it!

Joel also suggests that we try to “Tell a story – avoid taking shots of just a plate. There is more to the experience that just a plate of food, like the location, the accompanied glass of wine, etc. Capturing the linen, silverware, table and napkins will help balance out the vibrant colors of the food and keep from every photo looking the same.”

Contact Joel@asteriskcreative.com or follow on Facebook at Joel Andrew Tracey.



light from their phone toward your dish for some extra illumination without overpowering the mood.”

Follow Critsey at [Critsey Rowe Photography on Facebook](http://CritseyRowePhotography.com) or on her website at CritseyRowe.com.

Photographer **Mandy French** says to pay attention to angles. “Always look for different angles from which to take your pictures. Straight shots are good, but can you angle your camera to create a more dynamic perspective? We rarely look at the world straight on, so adjust your photography view to reflect the same.” And Mandy's second tip is about what is in