

SIDE LIT PIECE OF FOOD

GOAL



Create a photograph of food using side lighting.

SUMMARY

Food photography is a creative genre in photography where the photographer needs to capture the photograph in a way that evokes a feeling of hunger and makes the viewer want to eat it. Presenting food itself is an art where so much goes into arranging the items and in the same way, photographing food so it looks delicious is very important.



In order to create captivating images of food, one should use the right lighting techniques and composition to make the food photograph stand out. You need to make sure you use soft light from the right direction and a good understanding of light will help you create delicious food photographs. One such lighting method is side lighting, which is one of the most appealing ways to photograph food.



Photo by Shamia Casiano



Photo by Rajesh TP

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

1. FRESHNESS



Always photograph freshly cooked or prepared food in order to photograph it in its full body and delicious look.

2. COLORS



Look for popping colours or colours with contrast put together in order to add contrast and pop in your food photography.

3. STYLING



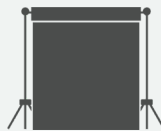
Learn simple styling like adding other elements around the food being photographed, to complement the main food that you are photographing.

4. MOOD



Look for simple and neat tables or table cloths to add the right mood to the food photograph.

5. BACKGROUND



For bright food photos look for light and bright coloured backgrounds and for moody or dark photographs, you can use dark or black coloured backgrounds.

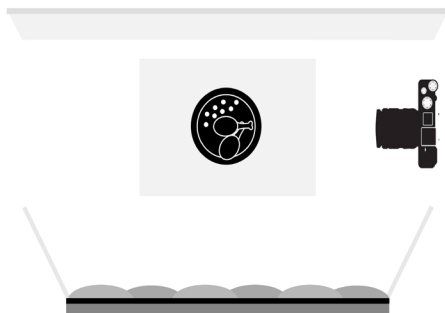
6. PROPS



Make use of beautiful but natural props like flowers and leaves to add to the composition of the food photograph.

LIGHTING SETUPS:

You can use natural light. If you see that there are dark shadows that are quite harsh and distracting, you can fill these shadows using a reflector on the opposite side to the light source. Use white reflectors so you get soft white light to fill the shadows.



- Natural light



SETUP FOR SIDE LIT FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY:

1. NATURAL LIGHT



Photo by Karthik Reddy

In this project our focus is on photographing a side lit piece of food. The direction and quality will affect the way the food photograph looks. In order to side light your food you can use either natural light or artificial light although natural light is the best option if that is available.

3. PROPER ANGLES



Photo by Eaters Collective

Position your food close to a window or a door that will act as a soft light source or use diffused artificial light and these can be positioned at an angle of 45 degrees to the camera. You do not need to stick to this value - try different angles like 50 or 60 degrees and use the one that suits your taste and the photograph. Although food is lit from the side, you can photograph it from various angles and perspectives. Try photographing from the side, at an angle or top down.

2. DIFFUSION



Photo by Juan Jose Valencia Antia

Make sure you use soft diffused light. For instance, use soft morning or evening light (indirect light) or soft light on an overcast day which is the best as it produces soft shadows and rich tones. Depending on the intensity of light, you will need to use a tripod if the light is a bit low.

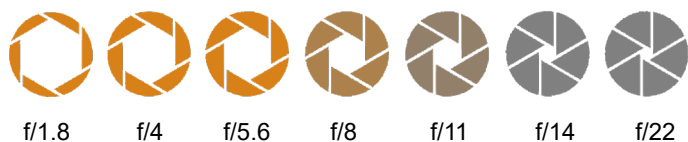
4. GOOD COMPOSITION



Photo by Valeria Boltneva

Look for interesting lines, patterns and curves in the food and the utensils itself or around the food in the complementary objects and use them as a compositional tool. This will help with creating appealing food photographs. You can also do minimal composition with colourful food and striking backgrounds. Do not crowd the frame as it can look chaotic and take away attention from the main food which will be the subject in the photograph.

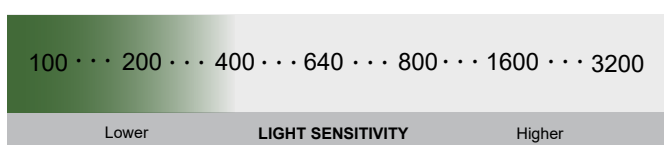
CAMERA SETTINGS:



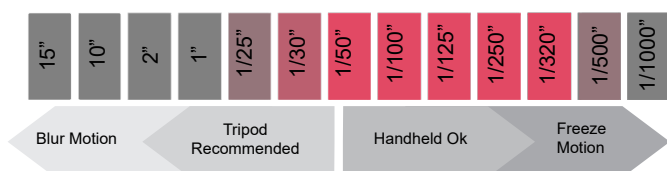
Wide Aperture (more light)

Narrow Aperture (less light)

- Focus on the main subject or part of the food to have sharp photographs. Use wider aperture values like f/1.8 to f/2.8 if you want to bring attention to a part of the food and use slightly narrow apertures like f/3.5 to f/6.3 if you are looking to have more of the food in focus.



- Use the lowest iso possible in order to avoid noise and to create neat images.



- If hand holding the camera, use shutter speed greater than (1/focal length) taking into account the crop factor. This will help eliminate blur due to camera shake. It is good to stay above 1/250 sec if possible. Put the camera on a tripod if the light is low and depending on the aperture value and iso, choose the shutter speed for correct exposure. Turn off image stabilisation when the camera is on the tripod.



Photos by Pixabay
and Joseph Gonzalez

ADDITIONAL TIPS:

1.

Choose the right white balance preset on the camera depending on the type of light you are using. If you are unsure, you can shoot using auto white balance and then make adjustments while post processing. Make sure to shoot raw.

2.

If you are looking for moody images where only the subject needs to be lit and other areas a bit dark, then try spot metering so the camera can expose for the food and keep other areas slightly dark.

EDITING:

Once you have done shooting, import the food photos to your favourite post processing application.

1. Adjust the white balance if necessary and crop the image to get the desired composition.



2. Make adjustments to exposure, contrast, highlights, shadows, black and whites. Food photographs will not require too much clarity or sharpening, but if you are photographing food like biscuits or similar food, you can slightly work with the clarity slider and sharpening tools if necessary.



3. Increase the vibrance if you think that the food photograph looks dull without a colour pop.



Photo by Christopher Paul



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