

TABLE SETTING WITH STRONG LIGHT



GOAL

Create a photograph of a table setting under strong lighting conditions.

SUMMARY

Photographers are more inclined to use soft light and tend to avoid lights that can be harsh, especially midday sunlight. The truth is that if you learn to embrace harsh light and work your way around using it for creative photography, you do not have to always wait for the specific opportunity when the light is soft and gorgeous.



In this project we are focused on photographing a table setting that is illuminated with strong light. Strong light is very bright light that is highly directional and casts strong shadows. For example, light from the sun around midday is strong light. Choose a table setting such as your work table, coffee table, study table, dining table, bedside table, etc. or even an outdoor one like a garden table. Truth be told, there is no good light or bad light. Harsh light is equally effective and most of the time needed in order to tell a story, especially in documentary and environmental photography. As photographers we need to learn to use the available light to create powerful images.



Photo via Tyler Nix



Photo by m0851

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

1. ANGLE OF LIGHT



First thing to take care of is the direction of light and the angle from which you will be shooting. Look around, preferably through the viewfinder to see which angle of light works best for the set up you are photographing.

2. SHADOWS



Make sure that your shadow does not interfere with the scene. If you think there is an area that is under dark shadow and you need some light in there, use a reflector.

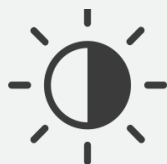
3. COMPOSITION



Use light and shadow combination to frame or compose the scene.

For example, place the main subject in the light and use the shadows to frame the subject.

5. EXPOSURE



It is always advisable to expose for highlights or brightest areas under strong light. You can always bring out some details from shadow areas while post processing, provided you shoot raw.

4. REFLECTIONS



If you have glassware in the table setting and you are dealing with unwanted reflections that may ruin the shot, use a polarising filter to eliminate or reduce reflections.

6. PERSPECTIVE

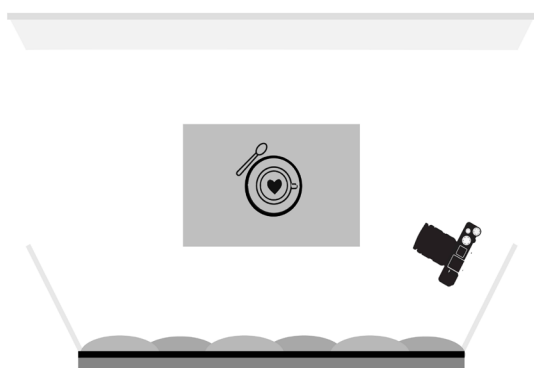


Try various perspectives of the table set up and see what works, for example at the level of the table, about 30 to 45 degrees angle, etc. You could even get to a higher perspective using a chair.

LIGHTING SETUPS:

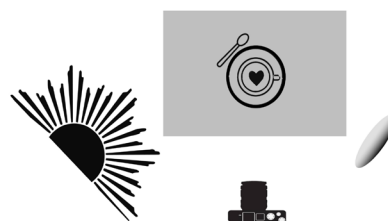
You can shoot a table setting with strong light either indoors and outdoors. You will use only natural light (midday sun) and a reflector to modify light if needed.

1.



- Natural light (indoors)

2.



- Natural light and reflector (outdoors)

ADDITIONAL TIPS AND TRICKS:

1. CREATIVITY



Photo by FotoRieth

Get closer and use colorful drinks or glassware on the table to create abstract or semi-abstract photographs. Watch out for light and shadows through glass as these can look very interesting. Use the surrounding elements like plants, shrubs, etc. to frame the table setting. They will make the entire setting more lively!

3. DAPPLED LIGHT



Photo by Kelly Sikkema

If you are shooting outdoors then you may have interesting dappled light falling through the canopies. When shooting indoors, you can have the same effect from light falling through netted curtains or blinds. Make use of this to create interesting patterns and mood in the frame but make sure the main element in the setting is in the bright area.

2. BRACKETING



Photo by Gunnar Ridderstrom

Table setting is like still life photography. You can bracket a few exposures and then combine them in post processing to get a good dynamic range in the image. If you are happy with dramatic images, you can stick to single exposures.

4. VARIETY



Photo by Karolina Bobek

Shoot using various focal lengths. Each one will give you a different view and perspective of the table setting. Take a few closeup shots as well. Also, make sure the colors of the elements, table and surroundings complement each other. Add a human element to some shots, for example a hand picking up or arranging something, to tell a story!

CAMERA SETTINGS:



Wide Aperture (more light)

Narrow Aperture (less light)

- Depending on how you want the final image to be, you need to set the aperture values. We are photographing a table setting here and so we will need some depth of field to keep various elements on the table in focus. You can start with f/5.6 and narrow or widen the aperture.

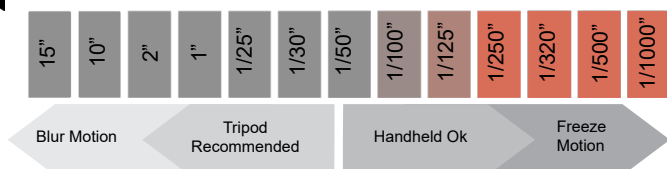
100 ··· 200 ··· 400 ··· 640 ··· 800 ··· 1600 ··· 3200

Lower

LIGHT SENSITIVITY

Higher

- You have a lot of light to work with when shooting under strong light, so set your camera to the lowest iso possible.



- With the help of light meter, set the shutter speed to the desired value. There may be times when the fastest shutter speed may produce overexposed images because the light is very bright. In these situations, narrow down the aperture to get the desired exposure. Feel free to use a tripod for photographing a table setting. This way you are free to creatively compose the shot!



Photos by Annie Spratt
and Nick Bondarev

ADDITIONAL TIPS:

1.

Shoot in manual mode. Depending on the light, choose a white balance preset in your camera. If you are unsure, use auto white balance and then adjust it in post processing.

2.

If you are photographing the table setting where a bright area of the table has the focal element and other areas seem to remain in shadows, you can make use of spot metering or centre weighted metering depending on the space the bright area covers.

EDITING:

Once you have completed the shooting, import the images into your post processing application. Crop and straighten the image to get the desired composition.

1. Adjust white balance if you did not get it right in the camera.



2. Make use of lens correction tools to correct lens distortions if any, especially with wide angle shots. Make basic adjustments to exposure, contrast, whites, blacks, highlights, shadows. Increase the vibrance if the image lacks pop in colors.



3. You may need to increase the sharpness and clarity if there are textures and details that need a bit of enhancement.



Photo by Karolina Grabowska



POST YOUR RESULTS [ON THE FORUM!](#)

