



Food styling and photography tips with Sneh Roy

Ingredients

Method

NEFF, the creators of quality home appliances are on the hunt for Australia's 50 Best Home Cooks. People who love to cook and experiment with fresh ingredients to create a spectacular dish that could be a family favourite or a party stopper. There are \$25,000 worth of prizes up for grabs. You can find out more about the competition and enter it here:

<https://theneffkitchen.com.au/50besthomecooks/>

All you have to do is create your favourite home cooked meal, take a photograph and upload it by following instruction on the competition page. A great dish needs a great photo. To assist you in taking a competition worthy photograph, I have some easy but very useful tips for styling and photographing your recipes.

1. Light source And Setting Up A Scene

Always shoot in natural light. Find your primary light source and make sure it is a window where the light streams in gently. Avoid shooting in harsh sunlight. The best times to shoot are early in the morning or a couple of hours before sunset in the evening. Set up your scene on a tabletop or photography surface for a top down shot. For an angled shot, position your table against a plain wall or prop up a photography surface if you don't have a wall.

2. Composition

Imagine that your shooting area is divided into a 3X3 grid consisting of two vertical and two horizontal lines. Place your subject at any of the four intersecting points or in the top or bottom third of the screen. This is the rule of thirds. When shooting square and rectangle objects like trays and platters, make sure that they are positioned diagonally.



3. Colours

Choose neutral coloured ceramics/plates/pots (white, black, grey, duck egg blue, beige) to shoot your food in. Make sure they have a matt finish to avoid light flares and glares. Use satin finish cutlery to avoid your reflection in the shot. Use colour to create mood and evoke seasons. Use white and light neutral colours for spring and summer dishes and earthy dark neutral colours for autumn and winter dishes.



4. Minimalism & Relevance (Food is hero)

Keep prop usage to a minimum. Avoid using more than 3-4 props in addition to your hero plate. Make sure the props you are using are relevant to the scene and tell a story about the dish being served. For eg, a pasta dish can have a vintage cheese grater and a block of cheese next to it with a napkin. A peach ice cream can have a couple of slices of peach or a whole fresh peach with a rustic knife and an ice cream scoop next to it. A stir fry noodle dish can be photographed in the wok itself with a metal turner for a prop.



5. Scale & Focus

Always ensure that your hero dish is the largest in scale and size compared to all the other props being used in the scene. This draws the eye to the hero dish instantly.



6. Framing & Cropping

When you are photographing a mezze dish or canapes with many different elements, it is a great idea to frame your dish by pulling all ingredients within a tray or big plate or serving board or even on a cut piece of baking paper/newspaper. This helps calm the busy nature of the photo. Framing is also a good technique to use when the food and the surface are very similar in colour. Using a frame between the food and surface, breaks up the seamlessness and makes the food pop. It is a great idea to crop your serving plate, especially if it is too big or busy or identical to another plate.





7. Styling with Garnishes

When a dish is very simple like a beige porridge or a creamy white yoghurt, style with garnishes. Use cut fruit in interesting shapes, micro herbs, edible flowers, nuts and seeds and textural ingredients to add interest. Look to the ingredient list of the recipe for inspiration.



8. Planning And Prep

When you plan your dish, try to visualize the final result. If you are baking a pie, try to picture what you want it to look like and how you will serve it. Whether you want to photograph it in a white pie dish (in which case you will have to find an interesting looking pie dish and ensure that the top is baked to perfection) or whether you want to serve it on a wooden serving board (in which case you might want to make four individual pies that can be removed from the baking dishes and served on a platter).

9. Smartphone Basics

When shooting on a smartphone, keep hands steady by tucking your elbows into your waist. Use both hands to take the shot. Do not use flash. Make sure you are wearing white or black (neutrals) to ensure that you don't cast a coloured shadow on the food or plates. Top down works best for bowls and platters that hold soups, smoothies, roasts. Cakes, drinks, desserts in glasses work best at an angle.



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Notes
