

10 TIPS TO TAKE YOUR FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY TO THE NEXT LEVEL

by Ale Graf

PILONCILLO & VAINILLA



ABOUT ME

- I'm **Alejandra**. Ale
- My food blog in Spanish is **Piloncillo&Vainilla** and **BrownSugar&Vanilla** in English.
- I'm Mexican.
- I am a self taught food photographer but I have a Major in Arts.
- I have a Professional Plant based Certification
- Spanish is my first language.



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WHAT WE ARE GOING TO TALK ABOUT.

Throughout the whole workshop let's have a conversation.
Please add your thoughts, ask your questions and let me know if you don't understand.
This is about you, about us learning new things.

Part one:

- Walk you through my thought process
- 20-30 min.
- Give you ten tips to take your food photography to the next level

Part two:

- Hands on experience.
- I'll style with you, walk around and answer questions.

Let's start...



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CONCEPT OF A PICTURE

- A picture is a moment in time.
- If it is a portrait...
- If it's a landscape..
- If it's lifestyle...
- AND in food photography...Just by looking at a picture, we can tell if it is winter, summer, spring or fall.
 - We can describe a moment in time in someone's life: if it is a romantic dinner, if the individual is in a very cold place, if it is raining or hot weather...
 - We can tell if he or she is eating alone or with friends or with family.
 - We can understand the culture, the place, and even the country where the picture is taken.

A PICTURE TELL US...



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A PICTURE TELL US...



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A PICTURE TELL US...



<http://www.cannellevanille.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/EDOC0350.jpg>



http://www.cannellevanille.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Aran.Jenn_8997.jpg





WHAT DOES A FOOD PICTURE MAKE US FEEL?

- A food picture has the power to awaken our five senses.
 - just by looking at it you can imagine how the dish **smells**
 - you can **see** the texture and imagine how it **feels**
 - you can **savor** it
 - and in some action shots, you can even imagine how it **sounds**
 - just by **looking** at it, you can feel hungry, which by the way, is a great compliment.



WHAT DOES A FOOD PICTURE MAKE US FEEL?



Andrew Scrivani:<http://cdn.lightgallery.net/4bd5ebfe834a6/images/0G8A0735-3.jpg>



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Because a picture communicates a lot more information than just food, ingredients or a recipe...

A picture tells a story.



So... with this in mind.

**Here are my 10 tips to take
your food photography to the
next level.**

10 TIPS

TIP 1: Your Story

- What do we want to communicate, what is your story.
- **What is the story behind that picture.**
- Is it a moment, is it an ingredient in a recipe? Is it the country's most famous dish?
- Is it summer, is it winter,...?

TIP 2: What's your mood?

- Do I want a moody picture, do I want a light and airy picture?
- How am I going to transmit what I want?
- What do I need to get there.



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10 TIPS

TIP 3: YOUR HERO

- Find your **hero**.
- A **hero** is the star of the picture.
- It is the most important element of the image.
- If the recipe is about burritos
... the burrito is the hero.



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10 TIPS

Finding your hero:

- Find **beautiful** ingredients.
- When you start with something beautiful, you finish with a beautiful picture.
- A good tip is to **protect your heroes** when buying, when storing, and when shooting.
- Find and shoot ingredients that you like and **love** because at the end, you will capture that.
- You'll be impressed that sometimes, just by looking at a picture, we can even know **the mood** of the photographer.



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FINDING YOUR HERO





10 TIPS

TIP 4: PROPS

- Depending on our hero and on what we want to transmit, we have to choose our props.
- Props help us make our **food POP**, make props work for you NOT AGAINST YOU.
- **Backboards:**
 - Blackboards
 - Marble
 - Old trays
 - Cloth
 - Wood
 - Cement
 - Paper
 - Backboards are also useful as backgrounds





- **Never forget that the hero is the food, NOT the plate.**
- What **type of dishes** should I choose: a bowl, plate, a wood board, no plate, cake stand, basket, plastic, etc.
- Does my food have **color** or **does it need color**?
- Does it have a lot of **texture** or can it be on a plate with texture?
- If my hero is a slice of vanilla cake or pancakes, a colorful plate works well.
- If my hero is a salad, I would probably use a white or light dish.



- When choosing the dish for your food, also think of your backboard. **You do not want the dish and backboard competing with each other.**
- The **size** of the dish is really important. It is best to use small plates rather than larger ones.
- I also like to use small silverware.
- The main idea of choosing your plates wisely is to help your **food pop**. Be careful not to get it lost in the design or color of the dish.



Extra props

- Glasses
- Silverware
- Serving silverware
- Extra dishes with salt or toppings
- Glasses with ice, wine, beer, etc.
- Paper, colored paper, parchment paper,
- Flowers, leaves, etc.
- Textiles. Napkins or tablecloths. Ironed or wrinkled; remember the story you want to tell.

NOTE: Check your textiles before shooting: make sure they look good on camera; they look good with the light you are using, and they withstand the heat.

10 TIPS

TIP 5: DRAMA. CREATE DRAMA

- You don't want a flat image, right? Use tip and tricks to make your food mouthwatering. Food styling is like makeup for the food.
- Create height with layers.
- Use elements of design to enhance your hero.
- Some important things:
 - Never open a container in a set.
 - Do most of the styling out of the frame, and protect your set and frame.
 - Use a stand in, a stand in is a very loose translation of your hero.
 - Have a plan.
 - Be clean

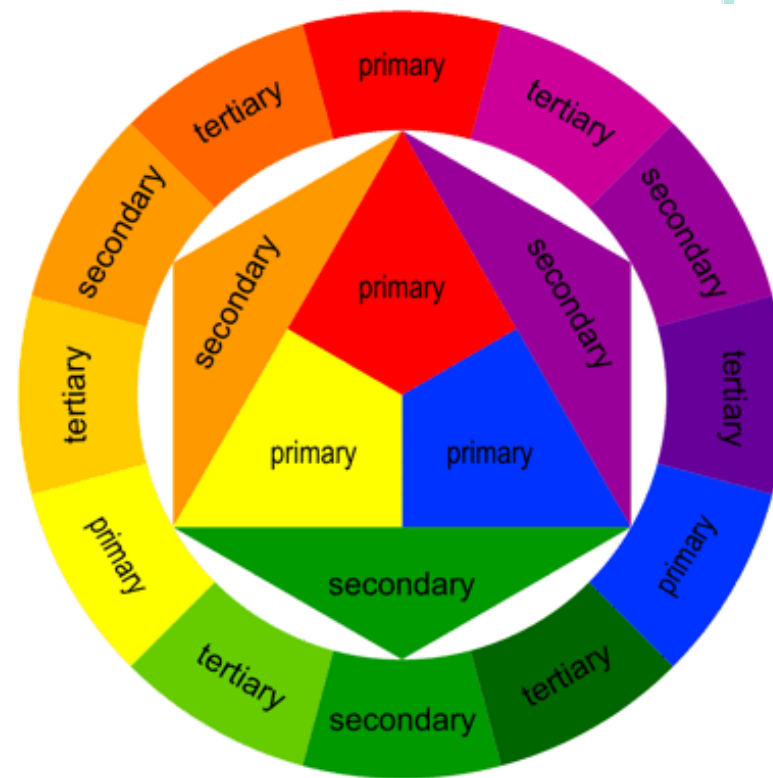


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Color creates a lot of drama

- Blanch vegetables if you want brighter colors.
- When in doubt about the color of the backboard, the plate or the textiles, **use the color wheel.**
- This is how it works:
 - When your food's visual weight tends to go to one color or one side of the wheel tones,
 - a good way to balance it out is to add some elements that have colors from the opposite side of the wheel.
 - Using the opposite colors, even in small elements, can help to liven up a photo and make your hero pop





Height = DRAMA:

- To add bulk to your food:
 - Bowl
 - Smashed potatoes
 - Styrofoam
 - Cotton
 - Marbles
 - Apples
 - Potatoes
 - Paper towels
- For sandwiches, cake, or burgers... cardboard





- Garnish, a touch of green always makes a dish livelier.
- Water down creams and dressings so they run through the food.
- Keep it real, and keep it clean. A few drops on the side or a few crumbs are okay, but keep it clean.
- I like to start with fewer elements in the frame, and then I slowly start adding more. I like simplicity.
- **Always think if that extra element is adding extra value to your picture.** Do not add straws if there is no beverage.
- Use **stand-ins**. Place a napkin, an apple, or something so you can check the light, the composition, and the props. This also helps the food remain fresh and delicious in front of the camera. It makes you win time.





• **Basic food styling TOOL KIT:**

- Tweezers (to move or place small items)
- Spatulas, knives, sharp scissors
- Museum putty and gum (not chewed)
- Brushes and makeup sponges
- Toothpicks and wood skewers to hold food into place.
- Bulb-type dropper
- Spritz bottles
- Steamer
- Griddle
- Alcohol (to clean glass)
- Vegetable glycerine with water to add shine
- Paper towels, Q-Tips, cotton, cardboard
- Dulling spray to avoid weird light reflections or your reflection.
- Lemon juice to prevent browning



Composition

- If it is a well-composed image, you will know immediately which is the most important object in the picture. **HELLO HERO.**
- A good composition guides the eye of the viewer from spot to spot
- **Tips to get a great composition:**
 - Rule of thirds
 - Leave negative space
 - Create drama using angles
 - Back away from your food
 - Use elements of design in your picture: balance, texture, shapes, color, lines, movement, height ,patterns
 - Use triangles to connect the dots



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10 TIPS

TIP 6: KNOW YOUR ANGLES

Angles: 3/4, full front, overhead: **Style depending on the camera angle you would use.**



10 TIPS

TIP 7: ACTION

CREATE ACTION with prep scenes, cheese pulls, hands, steam... REMEMBER THE MOMENT



10 TIPS

TIP 8: YOUR CAMERA

- Start where you are, your starting point will never define you.
- Start with the camera that you have.
- You can create amazing pictures with any camera
- Decide if you want to shoot on raw, JPEG.
- Learn the basics on shooting manual

TIP 9: KNOW YOUR FOOD

- Ask yourself: does it wilt? Does it condense? Will it melt? Will it become soggy?
- When should I add the salad dressing?
- Map your shoot.
- Know your cooking times.
- Decide if it has to be fully cooked or par cooked for the shoot.



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10 TIPS

TIP 10: FOLLOW YOUR INSTINCT

Follow your instinct, **tap into your own story.**

- Study
- Do not copy, be creative and original
- Get inspired... but develop your own eye
- Practice
- Learn to see, challenge yourself to walk around OBSERVING
- Be patience
- There is no right or wrong
- YOU are the one that decides

Remember that, as a story (YOUR food picture) has a beginning, a middle, and an end.

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And always remember that

“Your eyes are your lens; your heart is your shutter,” Diane & Tod from “White on Rice”

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thanks



 mind  body  soul