

Perfecting food photography for social media

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Key Takeaways

- Research shows that including well-shot food pics can increase sales of a menu item by up to 30%.
- While your food should be the focus of the shot, styling your shot can push its aesthetic value up.
- Either shoot low or directly above, about 10-40 degrees from the table or overhead for a flat lay look.
- Well-lit food photographs can elevate the mundane into something beautiful.
- The tighter the shot the better the outcome.

'People eat with their eyes', if you've heard that before, you know it means that the taste of food is greatly influenced by how it looks. This is why good photography is a must when it comes to your menu. Besides, research shows that including well-shot food pics can increase sales of a menu item by up to 30%.

Good photography involves an understanding of what it takes to compose an appealing image and the confidence to execute your vision.

Hop on to Instagram and Pinterest to see how popular food is as a subject. Anyone with a smartphone can take professional-quality photos and post them for the world to see. This is why there is no excuse for badly lit, lazy food pics in any social media promotions for your Café.

Here's a list of what you can do to up your photography skills and present picture-perfect food pics to your online visitors and walk-in customers.

Start by Styling

While your food should be the focus of the shot, styling your shot can push its aesthetic value up. Surround your main dish with props such as napkins, raw ingredients, crockery, and table decorations such as flowers, or a cup of coffee or a pot of tea, if applicable. This way your photography will tell a story and not just show your food.

A key thing to remember is to ensure your eye can move easily across the frame of the shot. You can achieve this by balancing your props on different sides of the focal point of your photograph.



Get perspective

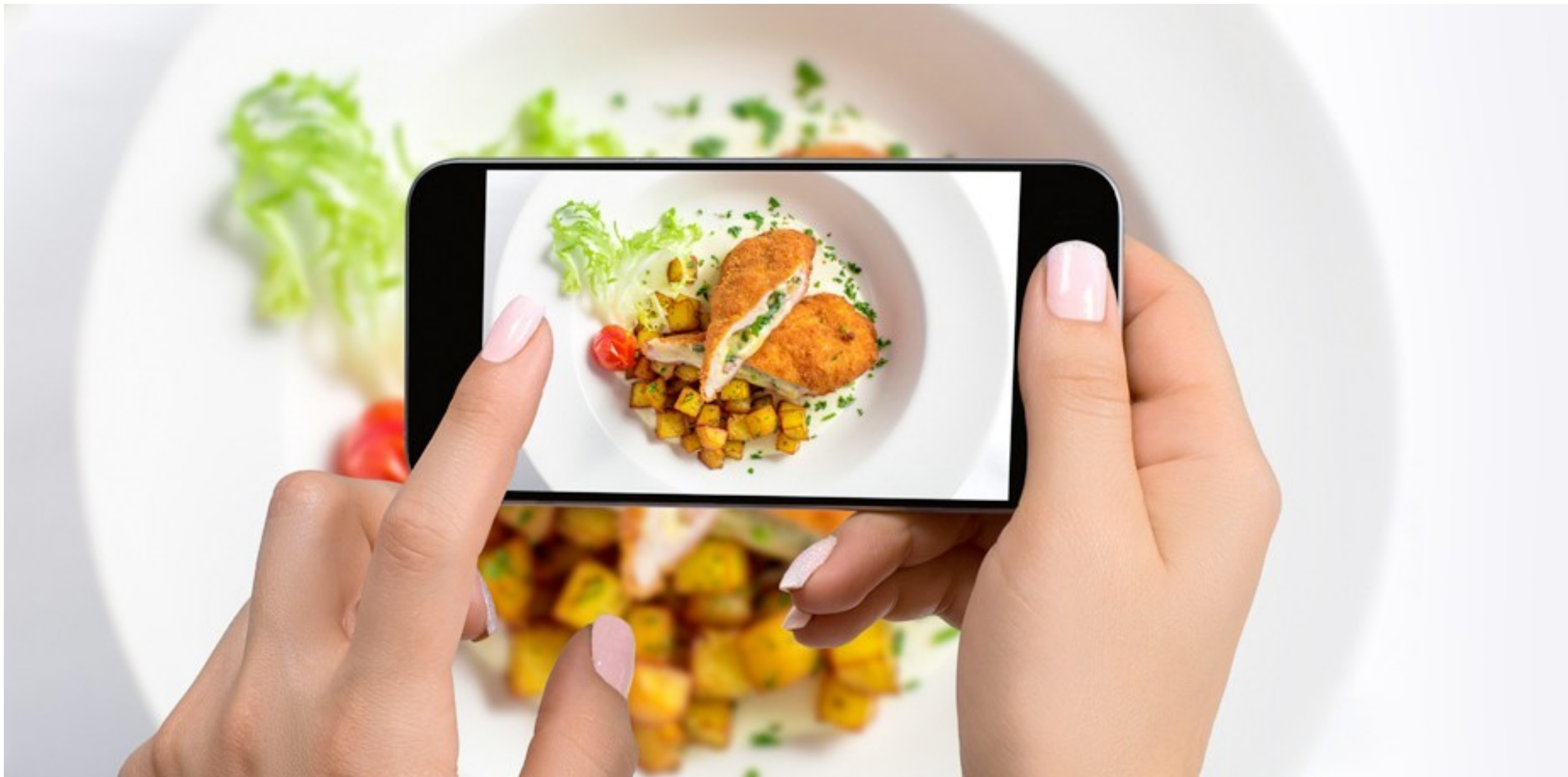
There are two basic angles for food shots - either shoot low or directly above, about 10-40 degrees from the table or overhead for a flat lay look. It all depends on what you are shooting. The subject of your photography determines which angle you decide to use.

If you plan on taking a picture of a table full of food, a top-down shot would be the best photography option to get everything in the frame while avoiding background distractions. But if you're taking a picture of a multi-layered drink, a dish with many ingredients, or a single plate, a close-up or side shot is better. It would make your photography look delicious.

Light it right

There is no doubt that a well-lit food photograph can elevate the mundane into something beautiful. However, most Cafés don't have access to professional lighting equipment, so we recommend using only natural light. Find a place near a window, or even outside in a courtyard that is well lit without being in direct sunlight. Keep in mind that different times of the day will also affect the light.

Avoid using your camera's built-in flash. There's nothing that kills good photography like flash does - it creates harsh reflections, adds unnatural hues and shadows to your photos that are difficult to edit out, and tends to flatten an image and make it dull. Photography without flash is what you should aim for - besides you wouldn't want flash when the light is just right.



Get up close

Always remember, that food is the hero of your photo. You are here to shoot food and nothing else. Not the background or the props, though they help enhance your photograph.

When it comes to food photography, the tighter the shot the better the outcome. So, don't be afraid to crop into an image you've taken to get a more detailed depiction of the food. You will need to crop images to square for your Instagram feed, so keep this in mind when you are taking your shot.



Use a trusty tripod

They might be a bit clunky to carry around, but using a tripod has heaps of advantages. It lets you choose the optimum position for your camera; adapt the styling once the shot is locked in; improves the sharpness of the image; and increases the odds of getting a cleaner shot.

There are plenty of options available for you to choose from. Since your subject is food, you would want to look for the smaller tripods that you could prop up on your table.

Less is more

Understated is usually better - from lighting to plating, less is always better. The best light for food photography is light that won't be noticed. The key is to make it as natural as possible. That's one of the reasons why window light works.

The same goes for composition aka what you put into a shot. The more you clutter it, the less focus on the food you want to draw attention to. Find a balance here. While props enhance a photograph, too much can draw attention away from the food.



Perfect it in post-processing

There are countless photo editing apps available. You can also use standard editing features in the photo app that comes with your camera. These apps help enhance the vibrancy of an image, blur the background (depth of field) and apply filters and frames so you can create a style that is unique to your Café.

Spend some time experimenting with different styles and effects until you can confidently repeat the kind of shots you like. Good food photography as well as in-action shots of your staff can really boost your social media engagement. Keep in mind that story-telling photography is key to get attention. And when done well it can draw more customers to your Café.

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