



Assorted macarons
(Formaggio in the
South End, Boston)

The Food Photography Trend: A Discussion of the Popular Trend and Tips on Taking Great Pictures Laurel Greenfield

It seems that people are more willing than ever to share their lives as a series of photos on the Internet. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram make it easy to share every little detail with our friends and family and even with people we don't know. We share photos of major life events like graduations and engagements alongside photos of friends and the occasional cute pet photos.

One trend that has recently gained momentum is the sharing of food photos. Our newsfeeds are bombarded everyday with everything from photos of homemade waffles to colorful rows of sushi. A quick search for "food" on Instagram or Pinterest will leave you with millions of posts and pictures to sift through and drool over. With one click you can find photos of sticky cinnamon buns overflowing with

icing alongside pictures of gooey macaroni and cheese among other delicious looking dishes.

According to RJMetrics, an eCommerce analytics company, "Food is the fastest growing and most viral category on Pinterest." There are even apps and websites designed strictly for sharing food photos and experiences. Foodspotting for example is an app, which allows users to search out the very best of a certain dish in their area based on what others have shared, while foodgawker.com has thousands of photos and recipes compiled from food blogs and websites inviting site visitors to "feed your eyes."

Flickr, a photo sharing website has a "food photography club" where artists and food photo enthusiasts can discuss the latest trends in food photography. Discussions

range from lighting to various types of camera lenses.

So, why has food become such a popular photography subject with the masses? To put it simply, as Boston-based food and lifestyle photographer Heath Robbins says, “Food is life ... It connects all of our senses together ... and connects people, connecting friends, and moments in time.” Food is something everyone can relate to. Each of us has had at least one unforgettable experience with food and many of us associate specific dishes with certain family members or vivid memories. Seeing photos of our favorite childhood foods can transport us just as easily as seeing the dish in person.

People take photos of their food not only for themselves, but also to share with others. “The ability to go out and get a nicely pre-

sented meal has become more obtainable,” says Gian-Patrick Maggio, sous chef at Russell House Tavern, “Which in hand makes people want to photograph it as a remembrance ... and also kind of showing off to friends.” There are always new restaurants to try and sharing photos of your experiences is a new way to share where you have eaten.

Not everyone is a fan of taking photos of food at restaurants however. According to the Huffington Post, several New York City restaurants have banned customers from taking photos of their food to post to social media. Faith Salie of CBS Sunday Morning says sharing photos from restaurants can seem “Less like sharing and more like bragging. If you really want to share your meal, make one.” She continued, “Our moments, like our meals, are meant to be consumed at

(left) Chocolate and creme Brulée ice cream (Movenpick in Manly Beach, Australia)

Cappucino (Black Star Pastry in Sydney, Australia)



their most delicious, not put on hold while they congeal.”

Restaurants often post their own photos to their Facebook and Twitter pages as well. Some restaurants even have designated social media staff members who maintain and add photos to the restaurant’s social networking accounts to ensure the restaurant has a constant online presence. “The danger ... is that everyone thinks they don’t need better pictures for marketing,” says Robbins. “Restaurants are shooting dishes under fluorescent lights... and it’s not appealing enough to draw in new customers.”

The sheer number of food photos available on the Internet and on apps like Instagram can be overwhelming, but those photos can serve as inspiration as well as eye candy. “I love seeing photos of food simply because I can learn and gain new ideas and possible techniques,” says Maggio. You can read a recipe with detailed instructions on how to make the perfect chocolate cake, but

a beautifully composed photo of the finished product is more helpful and much more inspiring than words alone.

If you are looking to improve upon your “foodtography” skills, here are some tips from the pros.

- Your food “should be styled well and it should be clear what the dish is or there will be no interest,” says Robbins. “Look for that one bite that makes your mouth water.”
- The lighting of a photo is also plays a key role in its quality. “Bad lighting, particularly front lit with an on camera flash,” can make for a bad food photo, says Robbins, “It needs to be lit well ... so the ‘flavor’ is believable.” Natural light is the best source according to Phoebe Melnick, director of photography for the Spoon University chapter at BU.
- Another simple rule is to make sure your photo is fully in focus. “You



Almond pastry (Davis Square Farmers Market)



don't need to blur out half of the picture to make it interesting," says Melnick, "don't make it too artsy."

- Vibrant colors and contrast in the foods you choose can really help

draw in the viewer. "From a chef's perspective, the best way to have a good food photo is ... having something on the plate that really pops," says Maggio.

(top left) Gluten free vanilla cupcake (Babycakes NYC in New York City)

(top right) Pear tart, rhubarb tart, Persian love cake, and ginger cake (Brickfield's Bakery in Sydney, Australia)



(bottom) Salmon cream cheese and dill on gluten free toast (Olive Green's Café in Sydney, Australia)



(top left) Shakshuka, a Middle Eastern dish of eggs poached in a spicy tomato sauce served with house-made pita bread (Sofra Bakery and Cafe in Cambridge)



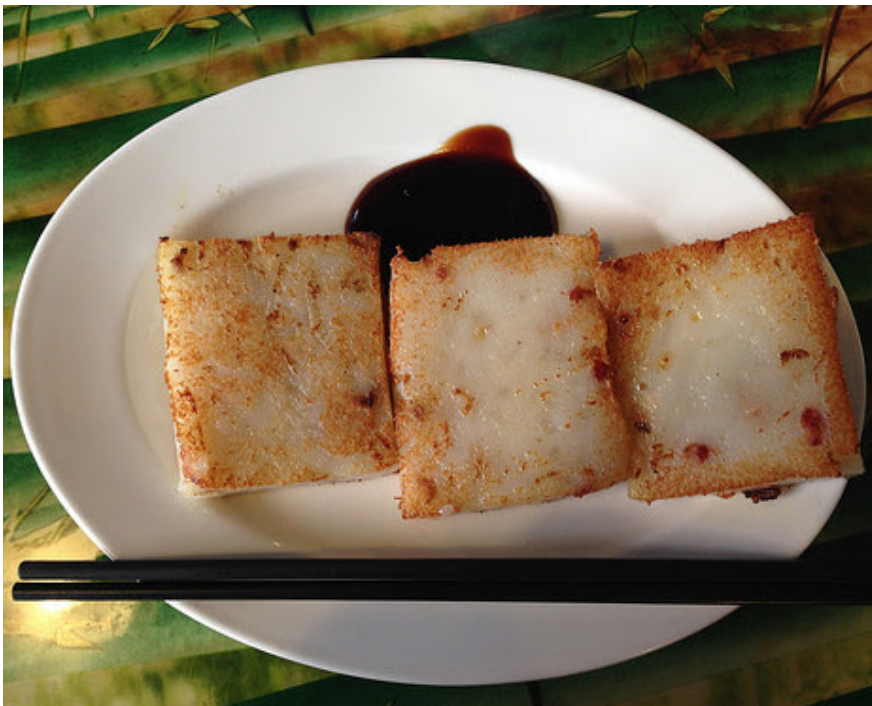
(top right) Fried brussel sprouts (Namu Gaii in San Francisco)

- Understanding food and cooking also help when trying to take a great photo. “Study food first ... Learn to cook,” says Robbins. “If you can’t cook or really understand food you won’t be a great food shooter.” You do not need culinary school degree to take a great picture, but experimentation and playing with different

styles and techniques can add depth to your knowledge of food.

- Be aware of your dinner guests while taking photos in restaurants. Snapping a quick picture is fine as long as the restaurant does not have a no photo policies. “Don’t stand on any chairs and don’t make other people wait too long,” says Melnick. “If their food is getting cold you need to stop!”

Great food photos evoke memories and tell stories. Excellent food is meant to be savored in the moment, but a great food photo can add another element to the experience, turning the ephemeral experience of a meal into a tangible memento that you can savor and share over and over again.



Pan fried Daikon cakes studded with pork and served with plum sauce (Bubor Cha Cha in Chinatown, Boston)



Assorted tomatoes
(Coolidge Corner
Farmers Market)

“Generally speaking, food is a ‘happy’ thing,” says Maggio, “and seeing a delicious piece of food brings a smile or a happy memory to

you. At the end of the day how can you not like food?” ■



Laurel Greenfield is a senior in the School of Hospitality Administration. After graduation, she will follow her passion for food by beginning her graduate in studies in Gastronomy. She is the copy editor of the BU chapter of Spoon University. Laurel is also a painter, with food being her primary subject.