





FOOD PHOTOS & STYLING

Make fabulous food
photos with your
camera and smartphone

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Lannoo

THE SECRET OF LIGHT

**IS IN ITS
SHADOW.**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

008

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIS BOOK	9
ABOUT ME	10
ABOUT FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY AND FOOD STYLING	12

016

1 INSPIRATION

MOODBOARDS	18
What is a moodboard?	19
Putting together a mood board	20

026

2 PHOTOGRAPHY

TECHNIQUE	28
THE CAMERA	29
APERTURE – SHUTTER SPEED – ISO	36
What is a well-exposed photo?	36
Aperture	38
Shutter speed	40
ISO	42
Lenses	42

COMPOSITION

Perspective	54
Depth	50
Framing	61

THE LIGHT

White balance – colour temperature	69
Flashlight	74
Continuous light	74
Daylight	76
Manipulating light	78

CONTENTS

Learning to look	88
The story	90

094

3 ANALYSING PHOTOS

PHOTO SERIES	94
MAKING A SELECTION	98
EDITING YOUR PHOTOS	100
What adjustments do i need to make?	105
Exporting	108
Sense and nonsense of filters and presets	110
PRINTING PHOTOS	112
SHARING PHOTOS	114
STORING PHOTOS	115
Cheat sheet – The set	116

122

4 FOOD STYLING

WHAT IS FOOD STYLING?	123
THE BASIS OF FOOD STYLING	126
Toolkit	127
Preparing dishes	134
Recipes	138
More is better	138
Plating	139
Colour	140
Texture	140
Three is not a crowd	141
A serving or a dish?	142
Overstyling	146
PROPS	148
Background	148
Exercise – producing your own backgrounds	152
Props	158
Colour	165
Texture	168
Layers	170
Shape	171
Size	172
Where to find it	174
Exercise: treasures in the attic	176
Cheat sheet – The perfect food photo	178

182

5 CASES

By way of conclusion	206
Thank yous	207

INTRODUCTION



ABOUT THIS BOOK

You're stirring your pots and you think: this looks really delicious. You want to quickly take a picture of it, but the result you had in your head turns out completely different in the photo!

That's the hard thing about food photography. Smells, flavours and even sounds ensure that a dish comes across as delicious. But with a photo you have to be able to capture all those stimuli with just one of the five senses: sight.

This book will help you use a photo to get your audience excited about eating your dish, trying your recipe, buying your products or liking your post. We look more deeply at which elements make a good photo, provides some techniques for fashioning your own visual language and discusses extensively what food styling is and how you can style quickly. Because not everyone has plenty of time to fiddle with that one leaf of lettuce until it's perfect.

The book is based on my vision of food photography. With this she wants you to taste her love for photographing food. This book is written for beginners and advanced learners. You don't have to master all the elements at once. Think of it as a buffet, where you start with a little bit of each. Once you've digested that, you can come back for more, until you've tasted everything ...

ABOUT ME

I am passionate about photography. I often don't think about it, but I photograph with my eyes. My camera is no more than my medium to share the result with others.

That was not always the case. Freshly graduated from photography college, I saw no money in a life as a professional photographer. So I went on to study graphic design. I got my diploma, looked for work and got bored to death in our small apartment in Ledeborg, until I picked up my camera again and captured my boyfriend's culinary creations in the kitchen.

French Beans, the blog I started ten years ago, caught on immediately. Back then, food photography was not nearly as popular and Instagram was not yet on the map. After a quiet period which saw me glued to a screen with InDesign and Illustrator and with life as a self-employed beckoning, I said goodbye to my job as a graphic designer.

At the time I started as a food photographer, my dream was to run my own professional photo studio. In 2017 we fell in love with an old farmhouse in the Flemish Ardennes and decided to renovate the barn into a photo studio. The studio is now my home base for food photography and food styling.

My passion for food and drink is reflected both on set and in my everyday life. Whether it's trying out new restaurants, travelling or collecting beautiful cookbooks.

As a photographer working with food, I find the collaboration with food stylists, videographers, graphic designers, set builders and many other talented people inspiring because food photography isn't a one-man job.



ABOUT FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY AND FOOD STYLING

Food is certainly not the easiest subject to photograph. Ten years ago, nobody saw food photography as a vocation. Food photographers were old men in dark studios (no offence, gentlemen) and food stylists were chefs or home makers. The profession certainly did not have the prestige it has today.

Since then digitization, with Instagram in the lead, has made food photography immensely popular. Place a poor photo of your delicious creations onto the web today and you'll get bad looks. Lost ten followers. Twenty percent fewer likes. The pressure is increasing.

Instagram and reality are not always one and the same. What I post are often things I'm proud of, situations that surprise me, moments I'm grateful for. As a result, I realize that my job can often seem like roses and moonshine. In fact, it's very often hard work, but I really enjoy doing it and can talk about it very passionately.

People are amazed when I say that my fridge contains ten kilograms of pot roast to be shown in a commercial for a mere 0.1 of a second.

Or when I spend four hours in the car to fetch a plate I need in that particular colour for the photo shoot. As a food stylist I've been referred to as a magician. Self-praise stinks, you might think, but then I point to my styling kit that opens up like a magic box. You're allowed to peep inside, but not to touch. For that reason I always bring extra croquettes to the set. Even before they're photographed, the crew has already run off with half a bag.



Taking a photo for a customer and seeing it appear online or printed in large format on an exhibition stand makes me happy. Helping people to present their product better and more beautifully, so that it really shows its superiority to the consumer, that's what it's all about for me.

And now to work!





INSPIRATION

01





Everything starts with an idea. To create anything you need inspiration. That might be a photo from a cooking magazine, but it could just as well be a scene from everyday life. To put it somewhat simplistically: inspiration can lead to a 'theme' around which you work, or else start from something you're convinced of.

Inspiration can come suddenly, but can also develop gradually. I'm quite forgetful and always regret when I don't remember the name of a photographer or a book. For this reason I write everything down as soon as possible. Images I come across online go on Pinterest. I take photos of magazines that I find worth keeping or go looking for the photographer.

Among my favourite magazines are *Gourmet Traveller*, *Delicious* and *Bon Appétit*.

You can also learn a lot from painting. So step into a museum and look at the composition, colour, the light that the painter used.

An image lingers on your retina. It develops further in your head. The more images are added, the more they will stick together. Like oil drops on a water surface, they connect up to form something new. That's what inspiration is to me. The next step is to translate that image in your head into a photo.

MOOD BOARDS



Before starting a photo shoot, take a moment to look for inspiration. The online offering is enormous. But there's also a lot to be found in printed matter. If you're going to photograph a goat's cheese salad, google 'salad goat's cheese photography' on Google Images.

When you start shooting later, leave the search results tab open. This way you can quickly take a look while you're on the job.

Save the images in a folder on your computer or on a Pinterest board. You can also print them and paste them together. Or create a collage with a program like Adobe Spark, Canva or InDesign.

WHAT IS A MOOD BOARD?



A mood board is a collection of images that together create an impression, represent an atmosphere, evoke a mood ... In short, a mood board shows you at a glance what any number of words cannot describe.

In addition to a general mood board, you can also create specific mood boards per recipe, theme or season, etc. It's a tool that can help us choose props. For example, a winter shoot of a delicious hearty stew can be supported by the use of wood structures, dark linen, soft textures. In that case, we put together a mood board with warm colours: dark red napkins, chocolate brown table linen, dark cork table mats, red wine, etc. In this way you get an idea of what your images can look like.

PUTTING TOGETHER A MOOD BOARD

ATMOSPHERE

An atmosphere can be rustic, urban, warm, rich in colour, natural, modern, as you want. An atmosphere is created through the use of materials, colours, textures and light.

USE OF COLOUR

The colour of the background and the props you use will in some cases largely determine how you use colour in the photo. If you like lighter photos, white and light-tinted props will be more suitable for you.

Bright, multi-coloured props attract attention. If you know what you're doing, you can create great compositions with them.





TEXTURES AND PATTERNS

Patterns such as flowers, lozenges and dots have the same effect. Many times they provide a vintage look. You can combine patterns and textures. Mismatching can also be fun.

COMBINING PHOTOS

Don't be afraid to cut out an element that appeals to you from a photo. It's often the combination of elements and photos that creates an overall impression.

Certain interior elements, a piece of clothing or type of location can also be part of your mood board. For example, combine a very modern table and chairs with a business outfit if you're going to photograph business lunches. The same business lunch tells a completely different story on a picnic bench by the water.