



Food photography

International cultural knowledge – Photography

- 1 Look at the pictures of food used to advertise products. What do you think the photographer needed to do to the food to make it look good enough for an advertisement?



- 2 Read the article on food photography and check what photographers sometimes do to ...

- 1 soup:
- 2 chicken:
- 3 bread and pastries:

- 3 Read the article again and decide whether the statements are true (T), false (F) or not mentioned (NM).

- 1 In the third paragraph we are given advice on how to create and present a tasty bowl of soup.
- 2 It is in our nature to judge a food's value by how it looks.
- 3 Advertisers exploit our desire for success.
- 4 The older methods used by food photographers to fake the appearance of food are now no longer used.
- 5 Newer methods are not as time-consuming as those used in the past.
- 6 The writer believes that people's expectations will continue to influence food photography.

- 4 Use the context to work out the meanings of these words and phrases.

- 1 mouth-wateringly (paragraph 1)
- 2 monitored (paragraph 1)
- 3 call for (paragraph 1)
- 4 charred (paragraph 1)
- 5 appetising (paragraph 2)
- 6 repertoire (paragraph 4)
- 7 overall (paragraph 6)
- 8 variables (paragraph 6)
- 9 predominate (paragraph 7)
- 10 edible (paragraph 7)

- 5 Do you think it's right that advertisers are allowed to use tricks such as those mentioned in the article when photographing food? Why?/Why not?

Pour your soup.

Add some washing-up liquid ...

1 I'm sure you've seen pictures of perfectly golden chickens that are mouth-wateringly plump and juicy in food magazines. Have they been cooked for hours in an expensive oven at certain temperatures for set amounts of time, carefully monitored to ensure even colouring, and then photographed swiftly before they lose their shape? In all probability, no! They may well have been injected with boiling water or mashed potato mixture to make them look nice and smooth, then painted with wood stain or varnish that you might normally use in the garden to give them the right colour. A barbecued chicken recipe, however, might call for a blow torch to singe the edges slightly to get a charred effect.

2 Why not try nail varnish or oil to give that juicy just-cooked look to meat? And if you want to make bread and pastries look more appetising, just judiciously apply shoe polish! Perhaps more sesame seeds are needed on a bread roll? Well, use glue to attach just the right amount. Grapes sprayed with deodorant look fresh and ready to eat and cereal is often presented with cream in the bowl because it's heavier than milk.

3 What about the bowls of soup that look as if they've just been poured from the pan into the dish with a few bubbles at the surface? All done with washing-up liquid that has been added and then blown into bubbles with a straw!

4 It may sound ridiculous, but these are just a few of the tricks in the repertoire of a food stylist when they are preparing dishes for a food photographer. Natural, freshly cooked food is not particularly photogenic! Chickens go floppy a few moments after coming out of the oven – not good for the cover of a magazine.

5 What we see on the plate is all-important because we judge our food mainly by its appearance. People also want to be able to create something that looks amazing – not the usual boring dishes that they cook day in, day out. Well-photographed food increases their motivation to try and replicate a particularly delicious-looking recipe.

6 It's a much more expensive business than you'd imagine. Not only do you have to source the food and get it styled and photographed, the setting and props need to be right for the desired overall effect. You might need to shoot a plate of scones under a shady tree on a summer's day, in which case you'd need a matching tea set and set of cutlery, with napkins, a suitable cloth on the table, etc. That's without considering all the variables, like any unwelcome insects, how long the sun will be in a certain position in the sky, the wind direction, and so on.

7 Although these techniques still predominate, some food stylists are encouraging more natural presentations of freshly-cooked food, which can be achieved by, for example, setting up the shot and then inserting the food at the last minute before photographing it. It takes time and a lot of patience on the part of all involved. But at least we know that we are looking at a real, edible item of food! And one advantage of doing this is that it ends up actually being eaten by somebody instead of being thrown away!