

# FOOD STYLING

*-minimal & budget  
friendly props*



When you're starting out as a food photographer, buying props can be totally overwhelming. Which ones do you need? Are there certain props that are better than others?

Are there ways to shoot food photos with minimal props? Which color props should you get? Let's get down to it!



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# FIND YOUR STYLE

## CREATE A MOOD BOARD

Based off your goals & what sort of photographer you want to be, create a mood board. Put together a bunch of photos you keep finding yourself coming back to & have really inspired you.

Are they bright? Dark? Bold? Moody? Colorful? Excessive with props or minimal styling? You need to know what you want to create before you go to create it.

If all your photos in your mood board are super modern/contemporary & minimal looking, then you probably won't need vintage flatware or a rustic wood background board. You might need something more like a marble slab & matte gold flatware, etc.



## LESS IS MORE

So many times I think I need all these things in a photo but then I end up losing the focus of the image. Like what am I even supposed to be looking at?

Of course there are those gorgeous flatlays that have so many things in the image but is that your goal or is your goal to style these muffins to look appetizing? Always remember your goals, can't say it enough.

Negative space in an image can be very beneficial, it allows the viewer to focus more on the main subject.





# USING NEUTRALS

I always see new food photographers use props with brighter colors & different patterns. Now it's totally possible to create a gorgeous image using these BUT if you're on a budget or you want to keep your prop collection minimal, it only makes sense to go with something neutral. Invest in a new \$5-10 linen that will be a little more versatile.

## GET CREATIVE

Use what you already have & utilize your editing skills – in the top image on this page, I didn't have a plain white tablecloth so I used a pale green bed sheet. You can't even tell, can you? I just used the adjustment brush in Lightroom to decrease the saturation of the green & increase the white.

Sometimes white may be boring but white marble with grey streaks may intrigue you. Can you imagine this photo of the muffins with a plain white board? It would be a lot less interesting, in my opinion. This marble slab is actually just an accent table that sits in my living room, not a prop I bought for photography.



# INCORPORATING COLOR

## SOFTER TONES

I prefer whites, beiges & greys for most of my props because that's just my style. However, you can certainly invest in pinks & blues if you love color, but to allow the main subject (food) to speak for itself, try something like a blush linen instead of hot pink. This will be a little more versatile for you as a photographer & also not distract from the focus of the image.



## FOOD

Using colorful foods – if you're making a lemon cake, it could look kind of boring when you photograph it but try including some fresh lemons in the photos to give it some life. Then you can use the lemon for dinner & nothing goes to waste. Same goes with any fruit or vegetable, make use of what you can.



## FRESH BLOOMS

Another cheap, colorful prop that's minimal & versatile is fresh blooms! Greenery or flowers, whatever you like. You can literally get these anywhere. Whether they're on clearance, you have some in your front yard, or you went to a wedding & people are taking the centerpieces home, etc. Keep your work in mind & make use of what you can without spending a fortune.

## EDITING

Like I edited the green OUT of my image, you can also edit it INTO your image. Using the adjustment brush, play around with the tones & temperatures. You can change a grey background to have a blue hue that pairs well with the lemon cake. I normally stick to neutral backgrounds but sometimes with a lack of color, photos can look almost greyscale so I'll leave a little blue tint in the background.

# REPURPOSING & SHOPPING AROUND

## DIY

Things don't seem too expensive at first but they sure do add up. If you want some nice background boards, maybe \$50-100 isn't so bad, but you want a small variety...well do you have \$300 for that? I made 2 reversible boards (four sides total) for less than \$50 & it only took me a few hours. (I have a blog post for them under the 'resources' tab on my blog).

Or maybe you don't have \$100 to drop on that set of matte gold flatware but you do have a set of old flatware at home that you don't use anymore. Well you could get some food safe spray paint for like \$5-10. Wouldn't use this to serve guests but it'll do sitting in a photo. Or clean up an old cake stand with a new coat of paint? Get creative!

## TAKE YOUR TIME SHOPPING

Soooo many times I thought I NEEDED something & then hated how it looked every time I used it in photos. I.e. I LOVE how @frostingandfettucine shoots on her pink boards, she makes it look gorgeous. So when I started making my boards, I knew I needed to make a pink one. & guess what? I have zero successful pink board photoshoots...I just don't like it. Even though I love how she does it, it just doesn't work for me. It doesn't paint the picture that I want my viewers to see. Thank goodness I made these boards for super cheap instead of spending \$75+ on a custom professional board, & now I can repaint them any time too.

Sur La Table sells a set of these AMAZING speckled, dip dyed mugs for like \$50. I really wanted them but I just couldn't justify needing to spend that much money on two mugs so I kept shopping around until I came across an almost identical set for ¼ the price...& now I think I even like mine better!

Always check thrift stores, online, grandmas house, YOUR OWN HOUSE for props you think you need. You'll be surprised what you find. & remember, sometimes less is more.





