

Lights, Camera, Style

How to make your dish look picture perfect

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Ever wonder how to make your food look aesthetically pleasing to the eye? Have you ever tried to make your food look presentable to family and friends? Well, look no further. Food stylist and culinary creative director Charlotte Omnès shares her insight on how to create a picture perfect presentation that's worthy of taking a bite.

Q What is a food stylist?

A The way I usually describe it is we're [the] hair and makeup for food. When the food comes in the door, very much like a model, they don't look camera ready. What food stylists do is make it [the food] look absolutely beautiful for the camera.

Q What type of background do you need to become a food stylist?

A People come from a lot of different backgrounds. Generally, a culinary background, a photography background, some sort of design or advertising. The culinary background is the strongest.

Q What tips and tricks do you recommend for those who want to make their food look presentable for seasonal gatherings?

A Make things bountiful and not teeny tiny. Always think about ways you can sprinkle accompanying herbs on things [to give] some texture. Layering things [the food] and stacking are ways that can make for a beautiful presentation. Another way is how you actually put together your presentation. If you have centerpieces or tiers, different platters [that works]. It's about layering textures with your props and with your food. If I was putting out a Thanksgiving presentation, I would make sure that I've thought about ways to make sure that I have things to decorate around the bird. I think about the different dishes that I'm going to bake things in, that are going to be both serving and be beautiful presentations. If you have a plain white tablecloth with plain white dishes on it, it's kind of boring. If you start to decorate things and put things in that are supporting

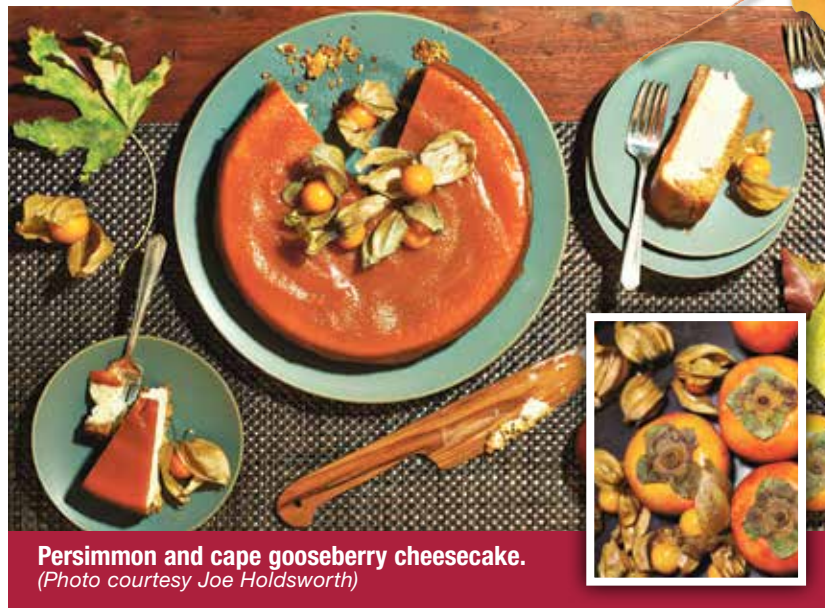
either ingredients or décor it starts to become cute. For instance, putting out a cutting board and setting things on top of the cutting board that can add some texture to your presentation. As far as plating the food goes, be sure that what you're plating [showcases] different layering and textures. For instance, sauces can be decoratively put on the plate. Things layered on top of that and smaller things sprinkled on top [can] add a lot of texture. I'm going to be thinking about different colors.

Q How can people create the best visual for the fall season in a presentation?

A Pull together things you have. They could be decorative elements, which can add more texture and layering [as well as using] objects. When

you're in front of it, your eyes are attracted to lots of different textures and layers and colors. It's a different thing when you're filming it [the food] or photographing. When you're setting a plate in front of someone or setting a table, it's nice to have other elements on the table that play into seasonally or what you're cooking. It makes sense to have candles on the table because that's a warm comforting thing. Break out your candle sticks and candle holders and go wild with it. If you look around your house, you'll probably find a lot of things. Even going outside and gathering some sticks. My advice on doing any centerpieces is put it in your garage for a few days so the bugs leave. Seasonally, I go out and find things. Even doing some tablescaping and putting some objects such as pinecones and leaves. Those things that bring in that pop of fall. Those

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A trip to the store for Food Stylist Charlotte Omnès and Photographer Joe Holdsworth turns out both delicious fall recipes & inspiring imagery.
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Persimmon and cape gooseberry cheesecake.
(Photo courtesy Joe Holdsworth)



Pan seared salmon with romanesco broccoli & pomegranate seeds, purée of celery root, salsaify, sunchokes and potato. (Photo courtesy Joe Holdsworth)

elements can really help a table. If you're clever you can work with what you've got. You don't have to go and buy a whole bunch of stuff. Finding things and being creative with what you already have is way more fun.

Q What brands have you worked with?

A Some of my clients include Starbucks, Kroger, Food Network. I have a recurring client, Saffron Road. I have been working with them since the inception of their business, about 10 years. I have some newer clients such as General Mills and [G.H. Mumm] champagne.

Q Do you have any final words?

A Here's the key to food styling. It's perfectly imperfect. That

really is the key to being a good food stylist. You know when it looks too manipulated and when it looks perfectly imperfect. It is about composition. You see shots where it kind of looks like something accidentally happened. That's the trick of the photographer and the food stylist and the prop stylist. They've made you think that it accidentally came together beautifully in that composition, but they've spent probably an hour or two making it that way.

Charlotte Omnès is a freelance food stylist and culinary creative director based in New York City. To learn more about Omnès and the services she provides, visit www.charlotteomnes.com/#home