

STILL LIFE

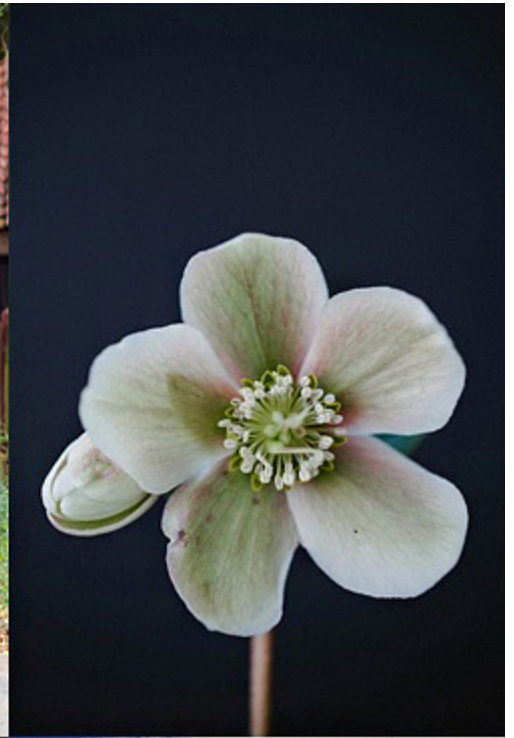
— AND FOOD —

Photography

FREE GUIDE

WWW.CHRISTINAGREVE.COM

01.



I believe that a beautiful photograph tells a story and give a sense of atmosphere. By giving thoughts to styling and mood in a photo, you can create a strong visual image - one that evokes emotions and memories. All elements in the picture are essential. The props, the light, the colors, the shadows and the editing are all working towards conveying a particular sense of meaning and atmosphere.

In this guide, I share my best tips on how to style and create beautiful photos so that you can tell your story - your way. What camera or lens you use are not that important. It's not the equipment that makes the photo it's YOU. Always emphasized creativity and storytelling over photography gear.

02.



03.



Before You Start; Plan Your Visual Story

Before you start, it's helpful to have some kind of idea. Ideas can come from everywhere, from a picture you see in a magazine, from a beautiful plate or prop you find on the flea market, from colorful fruits in the grocery shop, or from inspiration you find on Pinterest or Instagram.

Create a mini mood board with inspiration to help you be as accurate as possible about the style and story you're going for. Consider everything from mood, colors, theme, story, style, tone and props.

As soon as you get an idea, investigate how you can execute that idea. Which accessories will fit in and what kind of light will suit your plans? What type of background do you need? Imagine that you are the editor of an editorial magazine and your job is to create a small series of images that all are connected but different - together they tell a beautiful story using your best ideas.

Also consider, if there's a new skill you would like to practice. Do you want your photos to be sharper, darker, brighter, more colorful or more simplistic?

04.



Shoot In Soft Flattering Light

There's no doubt that light has the biggest impact on your photo. You can have the best camera, the best plates/props/styling, but if the light is harsh, you will not be able to get the best result. You don't need to invest in lots of studio equipment to get great images. The very best lighting is actually free, and it's coming through your windows every day. I tend to use a small corner of my living room, as much as I use my studio. A little table, next to a window, is all you really need!

When using natural lighting, never place your food/props in a sunbeam. Direct sunlight tends to cast a yellow tone which is not very flattering for food and still life photos. Also, direct sunlight creates harsh shadows. You want soft, diffused light. In my opinion, the "safest" set up is side-lighting coming from a nearby window or door. If a sunbeam hits your set-up simply move further away from the light into the room until the light is even and soft.

Always turn off all artificial light to avoid a yellow tone to your photos. Set your camera white balance to AUTO and adjust the final white balance adjustments in Photoshop or Lightroom.

LIGHTING FOR
STILL LIFE & FOOD
PHOTOGRAPHY



Tips For Working With Natural Light

- Shoot in the middle of the day or early afternoon when the light is at its best.
- Position your subject close to a window, or outside in light shadow.
- Avoid strong sunlight as it gives very harsh shadows.
- Use white curtains or a diffuser to block intense sunlight. If you don't have a white curtain, you can temporarily hang white fabric using tape, which works well.
- Use a reflector or a white board or a foam/cardboard to reflect light back at your subject.
- Identify areas in your house that would work for shooting in great light. For instance, my living room works because it has big windows. It's great, but sometimes in the morning the light is too harsh.
- NEVER use an on camera flash.

06.



07.



Consider the WOW-factor of your image

One of the biggest mistakes I see photographers make is taking too many pictures fast without stopping to think. I know sometimes you need to work quickly to capture a precise moment, but with food and still life, you have time to stop for a moment, step back and study what you are doing. Look at the composition, the light, the exposure, the setup, etc. Is there anything you can do to improve it.

Be mindful, slow down and allow for small changes and adjustments. If ever in doubt always keep it simple. Always consider the wow-factor of your image and make sure the main subject gets the attention it deserves. Remove all clutter that does not support your main subject. You can save yourself a lot of time and errors by taking the time to investigate the image you just made and think of ways to make it better. Often you can finish with a few amazing shots instead of many that are not so good, which you will later spend time deleting. Ask yourself: what is the most important object of this scene I'm creating and how can I emphasize that?



Make Style Decisions

Every decision that you make when you take a photo is a style choice. Narrow your style, and you'll begin to see a pattern in the way you work.

Making those style decisions is what separates you as an artist and not just a person with a camera. Examples of style decisions can be to choose whether to make the image in color, black and white, or sepia. It can be the choice of image format; is it a square or a horizontal? Do you shoot with digital or with iPhone only? Do you shoot mostly macro or do you always zoom out to get as much as possible in the frame?

Is your picture timeless or more of a modern style? What about the type of light you choose? Are your images bright and colorful or dark and mysterious? What is the message you are sending to the viewer?

When you answer those questions, it will be with your creative voice. You will be much closer to finding your own personal style. Use mood boards to help you find your voice and style and then practice that form until you get the results you're after.

09.



10.



Style With Complementing Props

Collecting props has become one of my most addictive habits. I love to visit flea markets, small vintage shops, and Ebay, to find things to use in my photographs. I tend to look for beautiful, old, vintage props; cutlery, plates, trays, cutting boards, napkins, tea-towels, coffee cups, and scissors are my favorites. But occasionally I also find modern kitchen supplies that will fit into my collection.

Props are everywhere, so keep your eyes open! Sometimes, just walking through a new environment can give you great ideas. Take a stroll through the dollar store and see what is for sale. Don't forget to incorporate more of the items you already own. We all have a lot of stuff in our closets, our lofts, and our garages, right?

You don't need a BIG collection. You can simply start with what you have and then add to your collection little by little as you find one-of-a-kind pieces that you adore. This can be a fun process to enjoy, no need to rush it. Make sure the props are complimenting the style and mood you're going for.

11.



Choose The Right Background & Surface

One of the most important and underestimated props for still life and food photography are surfaces and backgrounds. Often what will take a good picture to really great is the clever use of the right environment. Surfaces and backgrounds add to the story telling, they create atmosphere and set the style + mood.

Using the right background can often result in the photo needing less styling to make it interesting. So if you find it challenging to style with props, start using interesting backgrounds and surfaces. The best way to get started is by investigating what you already have available in your home.

The key is to look for clean clutter free backgrounds like a bare wall and surfaces with texture, patina and a matte finish.

12.



Suggestions For Background & Surface

- Kitchen counters or dining tables
- The floor
- Old tables
- Garden tables
- Windows
- A bench
- Old doors with patina
- Tea towels
- Table cloth
- Cardboards
- Colorful paper from an art shop
- A white/black reflector or board (v-flats)
- Vinyl prints
- Trays and cutting boards

13.



Styling Still Life & Food Pictures

I love to style. It is so much fun—and a great way to be creative. There are NO real rules to styling. There are design guidelines. However, that might be helpful for you to consider as you begin to play with still life, product or food photography. The best food photos tell a story. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways, whether it be extra food ingredients, plates, cups or silverware. These elements can add vitality and connection to your food photos. The key to successful styling is to plan before you begin the shoot. (This is where Mood boards can be a big help).

One key element to styling and design, is the use of different textures. Textures are used to create a mood or an interesting contrast in your images. You can do this by using textured objects like paper, fabric, metal, sand, stone, concrete, marble, linen, iron, paper, porcelain, glass, silver, yarn, plastic, lace, feathers, ribbon, buttons, silk and nature elements, just to name a few. Consider which types of textures will fit your scene and theme. Once you become more aware of how textures enhance or distract from your subject, it will become easier to know what your photograph needs. Aim to mix two or four different kinds of these textured objects to create a stylish image.

14.



Styling With A Color Palette

Personally, I always style my images around a color theme that inspires me. When you style a photo with color tones from the same “color family” it can add balance, calmness, and sophistication. Styling with “tone-in-tone” is pleasing to look at, simply because it is calming to the eye.

After deciding my background, I start to find props that match both the surface as well as the food I’m photographing. I find that when I style my photos within the same color range, it becomes much easier to match a series of pictures.

Complementary colors like green/red and yellow/purple also provide a bit of drama because they are such a bold combination. If you photograph food in strong, vivid colors, keep it simple and use props that will not take too much attention – you risk that it will be too confusing to look at and that the viewer’s eye can rest anywhere.

15.

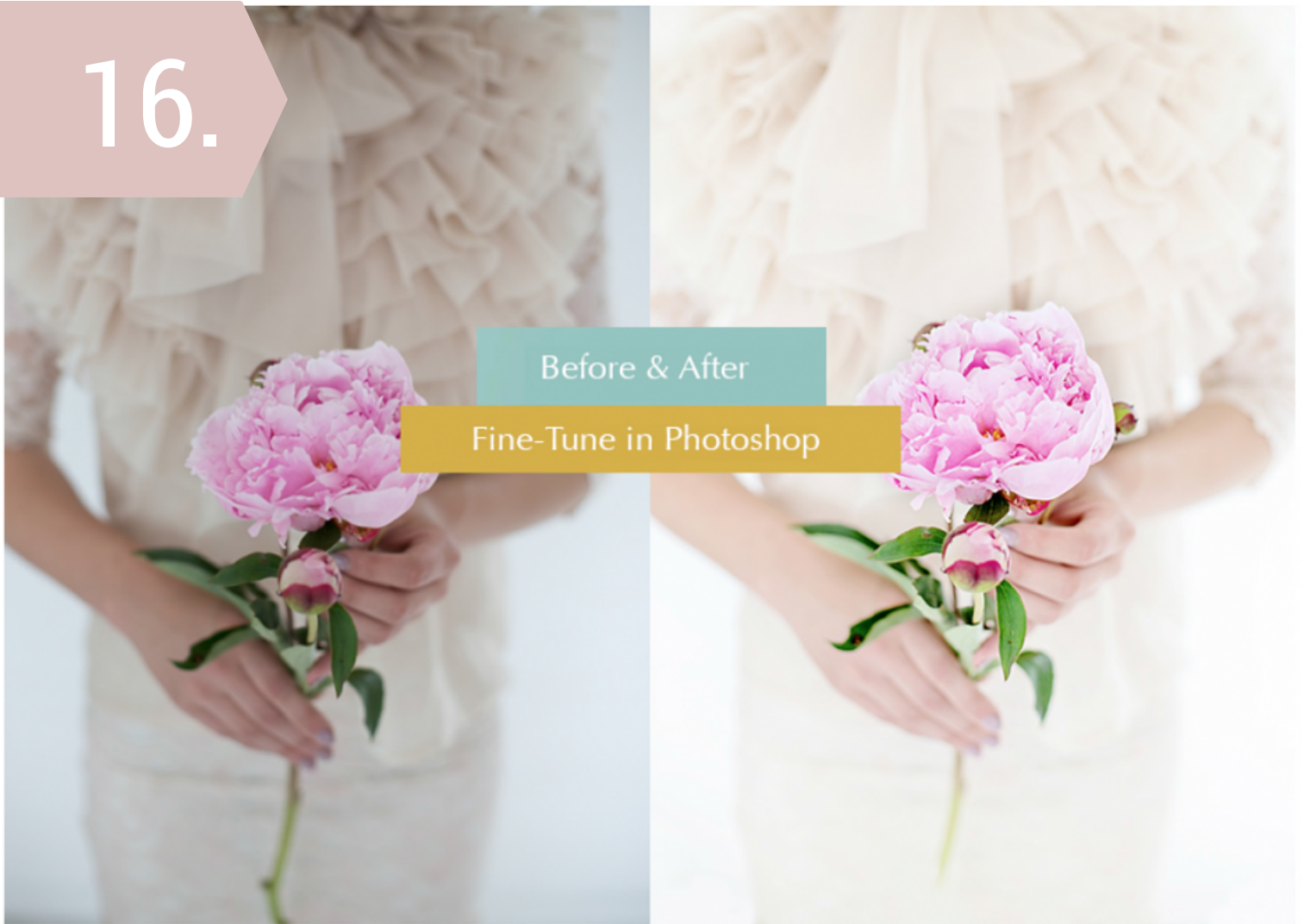


Composition For Still Life & Food Pictures

Right after light and exposure, the composition is the foundation of any beautiful photo. Expensive camera equipment means nothing if your composition isn't on point. The composition can communicate mood and atmosphere and draw viewers in. Getting the composition right takes a lot of experimenting and observation. Start by keeping your scene and styling simple, include negative space and for camera angles go for either straight down or straight-on, as you see in my examples on this page. Experiment with props "moving in and out of the frame" or simply place one subject right in the center of the frame and have nothing else in the frame. Take notes on what works, and you'll soon master compositions.



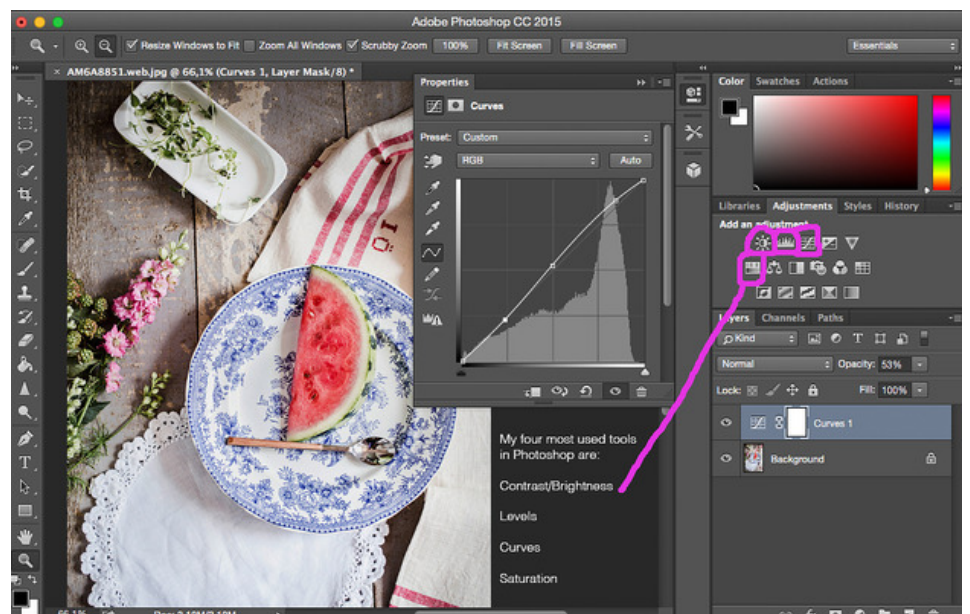
16.



Editing: Fine-Tune Your Photos

Editing can turn good photos into great photos, but no amount of editing can turn a crappy photo into a good photo. Carefully select only your best photos from a shoot and edit those. If I take 20 pictures of a styled scene, I will delete almost all of them - only keeping the 3-5 best photos. Then I upload them into Lightroom or Photoshop and make some simple adjustments.

I rarely use Presets and Actions. I like to use simple tools like white-balance, color adjustment, levels, contrast, curves, and saturation. I believe that the more simple the editing, the more timeless and classic the look of the photo.



17.



Curate Your Work Carefully

One of the biggest secrets to standing out in the world of photography with a fabulous portfolio is to curate your photos. To "curate" means to handpick only your very best work - just like they do in a professional gallery when presenting an exhibition. When you curate your work, you not only select your best photos you also pick photos that will look beautiful when put together.

When you're just starting out I don't want you to stress about this too much, simply keep it in the back of your mind as you learn photography and improve your skills. It's not about being critical of your work, it's about making a collection of pictures that you are proud of and which shows who you are. All great photographers take crappy photos in almost every shoot they do, but they are always VERY particular about their style and which photos to show their audience in the end.

18.



Turn-Off The Critical Inner Voice

In other words, don't overthink it. Switch off the part of your brain that observes what you're doing. This is your self-consciousness, your ego, your "self-sabotaging voice." If you constantly are giving yourself critique, let it go by kindly bringing your mind back to your creative project. Be in the moment, here and now, with your project. This can be a real challenge if you're used to constantly second-guessing everything you do, but it's so important to keep going. There's no point in being hard on yourself. Nothing good will come from it! Remind yourself that you are creative for FUN and out of love for your craft - you are not doing it to impress anyone!

The more you allow yourself to focus on experimenting, testing and trying new things, the faster you'll learn. Think of yourself more as a detective, than a photographer. You are investigating what works, and what doesn't work. That's all. If and when something magical comes out of it, that's just an extra bonus. Even when your photos don't turn out as you've hoped for, you learned something new and valuable. And that's progress. You are one step closer to being a better photographer. Be proud and celebrate!

19.





About Christina

I'm Christina, a Lifestyle Photographer, Creative Coach and Life Design Mentor located in Denmark. After a decade of working with psychology, I decided to follow my dream and start a professional photography business.

Today I'm combining years of experience in psychology with my journey in becoming a professional photographer. Through my training and mentoring, I've coached thousands of fabulous women from more than 40+ countries.

My incredible adventure in the world of photography began back in 2009. I started photographing women. Later my passion developed into lifestyle photography, with a strong desire to experiment with flowers, food, interior and still life.

When I'm not busy with photography, you can find me walking along the wide sandy beaches in the North of Denmark with my two French Bulldogs, enjoying a delicious meal with loved ones, practicing yoga, or planning a road-trip.

A few times a year I host my popular online photography workshop. This workshop is my "baby." I love to teach and see my students take their photography skills to the next level. I would love for you to join us! Please see my website for further workshop details.

Much Love,

Christina Greve

21.



Like This?

I've only just scratched the surface.



Read more about
the workshop and
secure your seat on
my website:
christinagreve.com

JOIN MY NEXT ONLINE WORKSHOP TO LEARN MUCH, MUCH MORE!

In my exclusive power-packed ONLINE PHOTOGRAPHY workshop, I provide you with professional in-depth training designed entirely to help you succeed with your photography!

- Access to in-depth lessons about lifestyle photography (including food, floral, still life, nature, interior, and travel photography).
- Step-by-step Photoshop and Lightroom video tutorials
- Study anywhere in the world, from any device.
- Creative assignments to help you explore your new skills and create stunning pictures.
- Access to the private STUDENTS ONLY forum on Facebook.

The workshop is perfect for you if:

- You are a female photographer, who wish to discover all the exciting aspects of capturing beautiful lifestyle photos.
- You dream of a career in photography, and now you're ready to take your photography to the next level. (All levels are welcome).
- You are a blogger, online boutique owner, web designer, graphic designer, stylist, foodie, jewel artist, florist or similar, and wish to capture beautiful photos for your business or blog.

