



Capturing Delicious

Taking your food photography to the next level

A presentation by Susan Voisin



FatFree Vegan Kitchen

Sinlessly Delicious

WELCOME TO MY KITCHEN!



I'm Susan Voisin, and I love good food. Join me as I create delicious dishes made with whole foods and without added oil. Find out more on my FAQ's page. And be sure to follow me on Facebook.

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Zucchini "Noodles" with Sesame-Peanut Sauce

by SUSAN VOISIN on APRIL 19, 2013

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STAY POSTED LIKE A BLOGGER.

BLOGGERS DISH THE INSIDE SCOOP ON FAMILY CRUISING.

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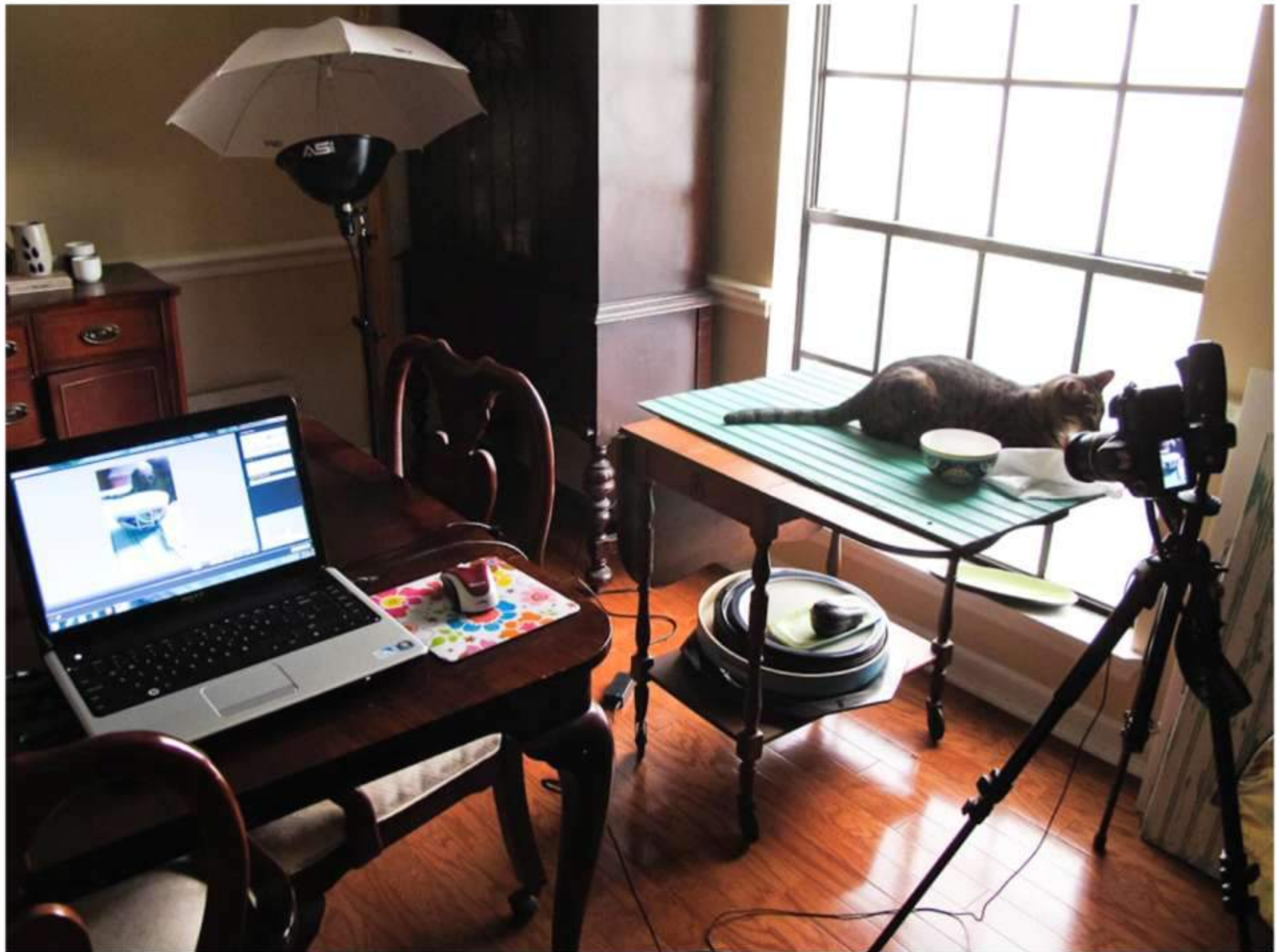
CRUISE LIKE A NORWEGIAN

Setting Up Your Home Studio

My Studio

- Window with lots of diffused light (I covered windows with Gila Window Film from Home Depot)
- Easily Moveable Table: I use a drop-leaf tea cart from antique store with wheels so it's easy to adjust position
- Dinnerware nearby
- Backgrounds and fabrics to use on tabletop
- Food styling supplies
- Reflectors (simple white foam-core will do)
- Camera, tripod, and remote shutter release
- Artificial lighting: Umbrella stand with one full-spectrum compact florescent bulb
- Computer, optional







Tip: Paneling kits from Home Depot make great backgrounds. Each \$10 kit makes two 2x3 “table tops,” and you can paint the back for an additional two looks. Other sources of backgrounds include floor tiles and old fence boards.

Food Styling Kit

Q-tips
Tweezers
Water in spray bottle
HandiTak or Wacky Tacky
Foam pieces, to lift foods and plates
Chopsticks
Toothpicks
Drinking Straw



Before You Shoot: Food Styling and Presentation

- Select your dishes and set up your “scene” before you take the first ingredient out of the fridge.
- Undercook vegetables slightly to keep their color.
- White dishes are usually best, but for really ugly, brown foods, consider using colorful dishes to add interest. Beware of clashing with the food.
- Layer textures, but don’t go crazy. 2 or 3 textures per scene. Simple folds of a napkin can add texture and interest.
 - Wood, fabric, tile, marble, granite, paper, metal

Setting up your scene beforehand allows you to have your props ready and your camera angle adjusted so that you can get your food into the shot while it still looks its best. This is particularly important with vegetables, which will continue to cook after you take them off the heat and will lose crispness and color quickly.

In this shot, I was worried that the simple kale dish I was shooting would be drab, so I chose a vibrant bowl and background to offset it.





The red in the bowl's pattern complements the red peppers in the dish. The white napkin provides a little relief from all the color in the tabletop.

- Choose props based on the mood you want to evoke as well as to complement the colors and textures of the food. Set a scene. Tell a story.
- Plate to fit--avoid lots of empty space unless you'll be adding text.
- Clear the background. Make sure that everything you see through your lens is something that adds to the photo.
- Out of focus dishes, utensils, in the background add depth, but don't let background props overshadow main subject.
- Always take away one "prop" and try your shot without it.



- Eye-catching dish to distract from brown food
- Multiple textures--wood, fabric, metal--add interest
- Light from the side adds reflective highlights
- Props add to feel of dish—rustic, homespun for this etoufee.
- Garnish adds hint of color.
- Rotated view, rather than direct head-on, makes the photo feel less static and boxy. Also notice the “rule of thirds” focus.
- Light from the side adds highlights.

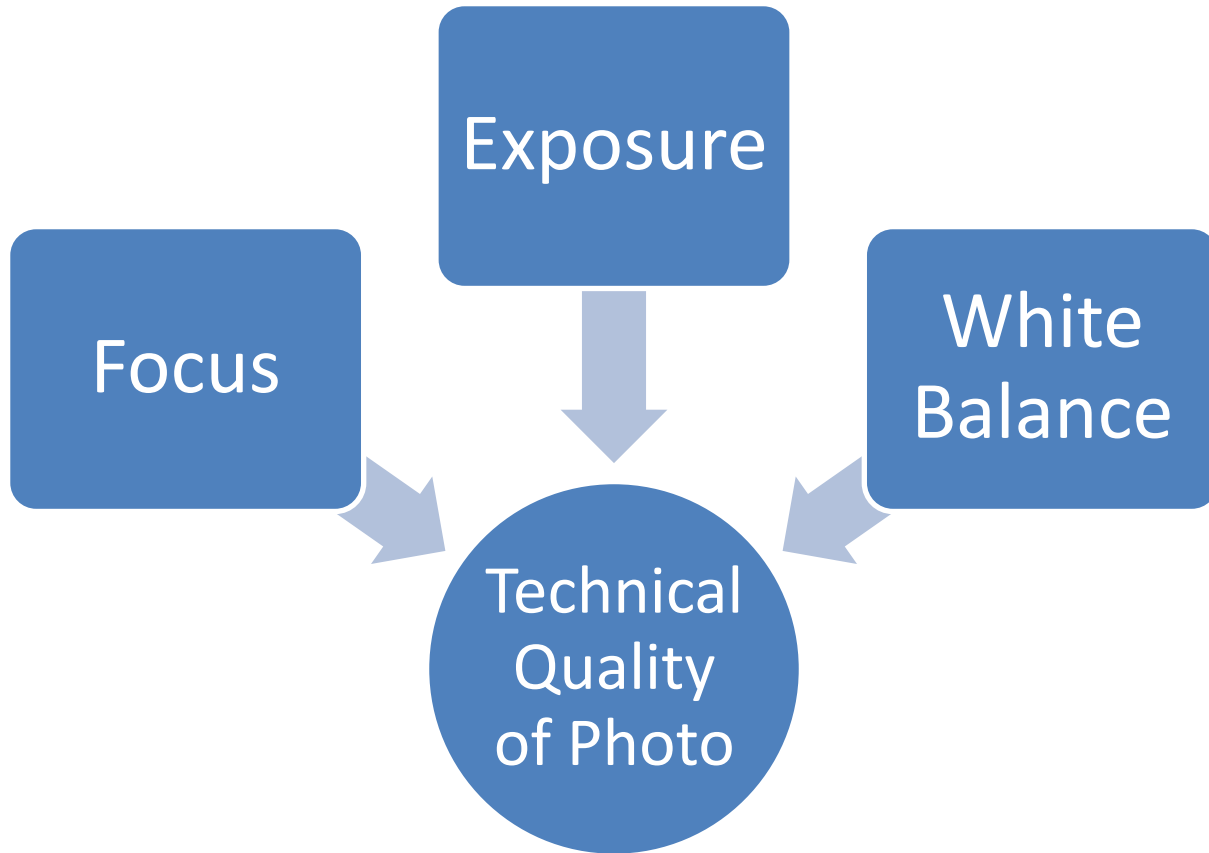
Don't let the background distract from the subject.



Vary your angle.



Taking the Photo



Focus

Decide on what part of the photo will be your “hero”—the star of the photo—and make sure it is in sharp focus.

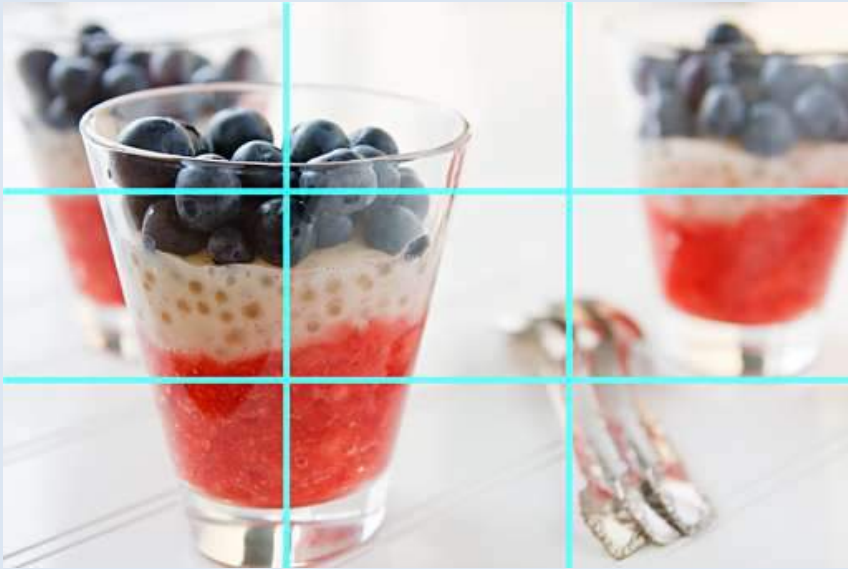
➤ Choose an area of importance—such as a main ingredient—or the most attractive part, such as a garnish

➤ Make sure that your focal point has some contrast—light and dark areas.

Most cameras can't focus properly on all white or all black objects.

➤ Food photos usually look better if the focus is near the front of the photo, though there are exceptions. Don't make the viewer's eye hunt for the focal point.

Rule of Thirds



Common Causes of Unsharp Photos:

Camera Shake

- Problem: You're hand-holding your camera and the shutter speed is too slow.
- Solution: Put your camera on a tripod; or raise the ISO so that your shutter speed increases; or open your aperture.
- General rule of thumb: the shutter speed should never be slower than $1/\text{focal length of lens}$ for hand-held shots. So for a 50mm lens, shutter speed must be faster than $1/50$.

Your Aperture is Too Wide

- Problem: A very wide aperture (low f-stop) creates shallow depth of field and not enough of photo is in focus.
- Solution: Move away from your subject. The further away you are, the more of your subject will be in focus. Or, if you're using a tripod, choose a smaller aperture.

The Wrong Thing is in Focus

- Something's in focus, but it's not what you intended.
- Solution: Make sure **you** are selecting the focal point, not your camera. Check your manual to find out how you can turn off auto-focusing and choose your own focal point.

Apertures (f/stops)



f/2.8 1/250 sec.



f/4.5 1/100 sec.



f/7.1 1/50 sec.



f/11 1/20 sec.

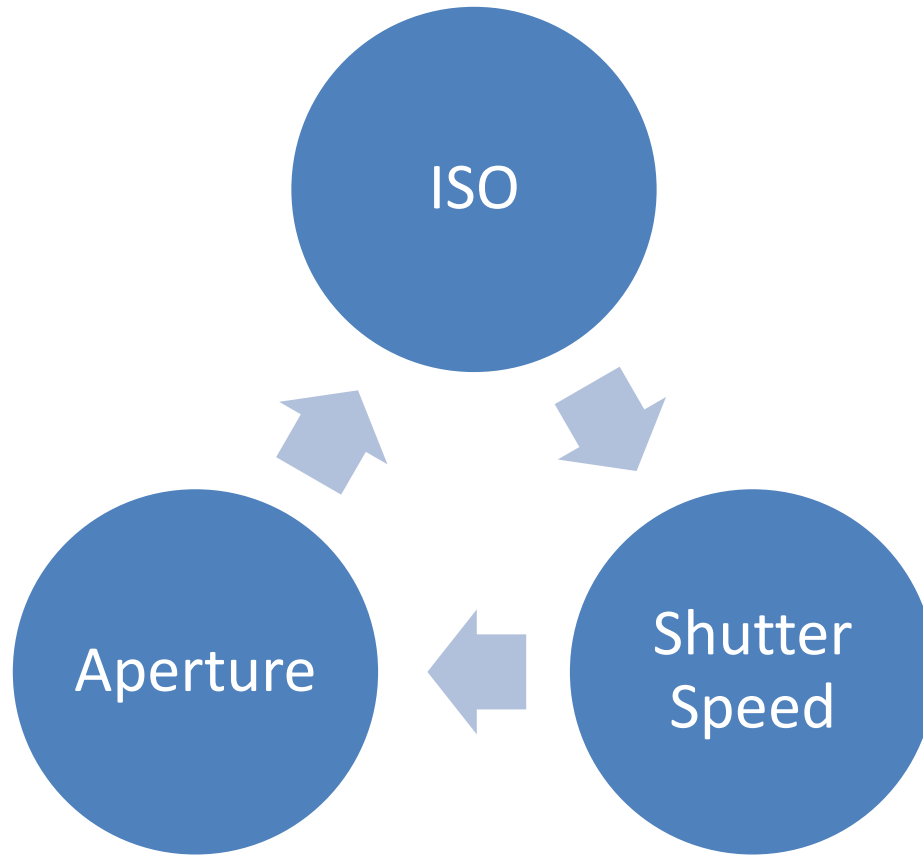


f/18 1/8 sec.



f/32 1/2 sec.

Exposure



Camera Modes

AV = Aperture Priority. Allows you to set the F/stop (aperture) and the camera chooses the correct shutter speed. Allows you to quickly change the depth of field by changing only the aperture.

C1, C2, C3: User Settings. If your camera has these, use them! You set your camera to the settings you use most, and save them as a Custom Setting. For instance, my C1 custom mode is set to **AV, f/stop 4, ISO 100, Auto White Balance, and Evaluative Metering**. If I change any of those values while I'm shooting, the camera defaults to the saved values when I turn the camera off and on again. So I always start a photo session with the settings I use most often, which saves a lot of time.



You affect a photo's exposure not just by manipulating your camera's settings but also by controlling the light.

In fact, how you use your light is probably the single most important factor in food photography.

Things to consider:

Location of the light source

Diffusion of the light

Need for fill light

Color of light

Front Light



Side Light



Back Light





Backlit with white cards at front. ISO 1600. 100mm. f5. 1/160 sec.

Diffusion and Direction of Light



Outside: Diffuse Light

Inside: Directional Light from Side



White Balance

White balance is how your camera “sees” and adjusts to different colors of light.

Every source of light has a different “temperature” or color. Our eyes adjust to this so that we rarely notice that the light bulb in a lamp casts a yellow light or on a bright sunny day the light is, in fact, more blue.

If your photos have an unwanted yellow or blue cast, the problem is with the white balance.

The auto white balance setting on most cameras will give you good results, and if you’re shooting in RAW, white balance can be corrected in post-processing.

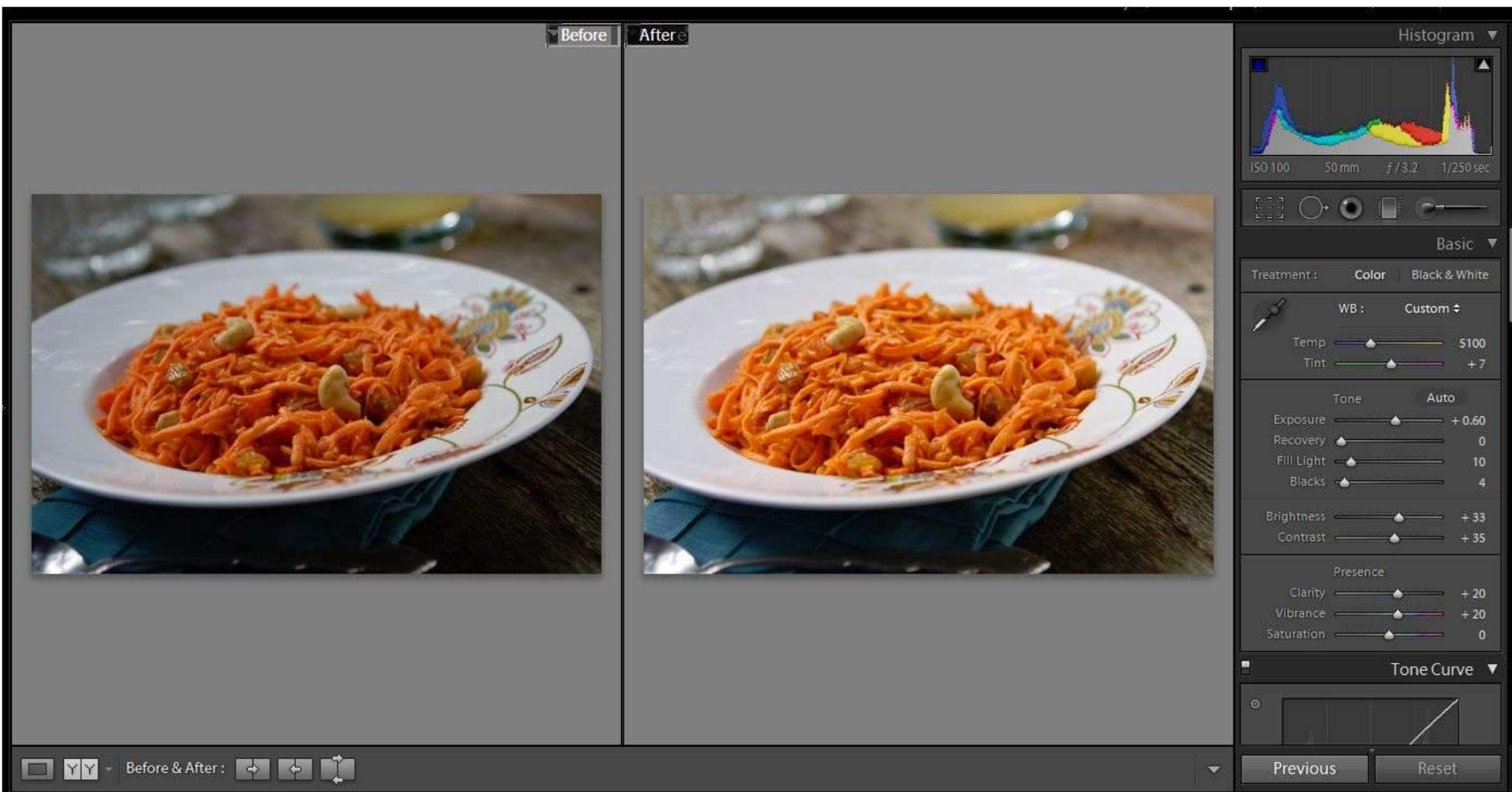
To get the best results, try not to mix light sources (such as using an overhead light and window light).

Light from bulb over stove
and florescent kitchen lights →



Back/side light from window →





If necessary, most minor problems with white balance can be fixed with software. Shooting in RAW mode gives you the most control when post-processing.

Post Processing

Using Photo Editing Software such as Lightroom or Photoshop

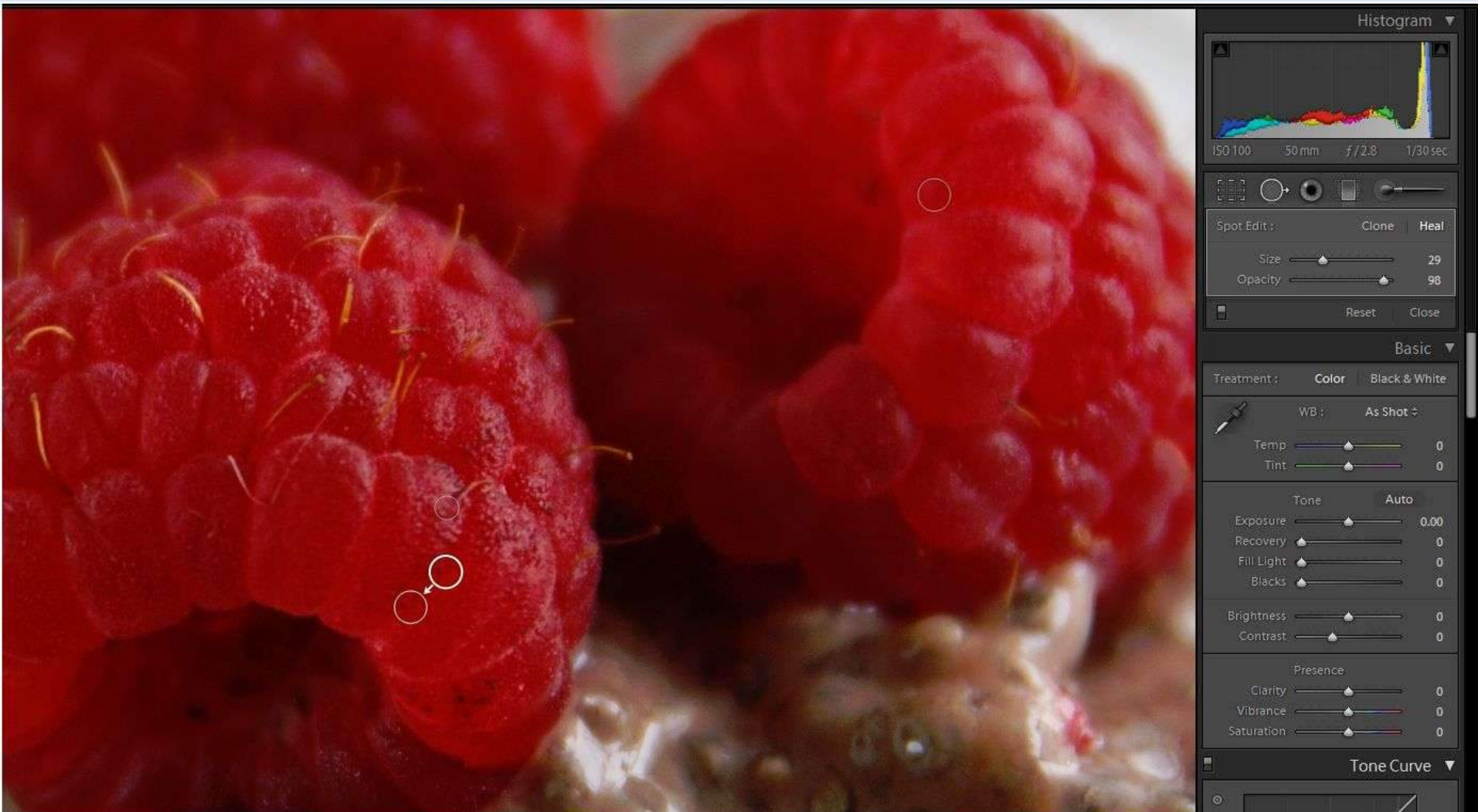
- Adjust exposure. Food photos often need brightening.
- Adjust white balance.
- Increase contrast (will also increase saturation). In Lightroom, use the contrast slider or Point Curve. **Photos that look dull or hazy need increased contrast.**
- “Clone” or “heal” to remove any specks, splatters, hairs, etc.
- Crop, if necessary
- Resize
- Sharpen: Always sharpen after resizing. Photoshop is better than Lightroom for this because you can see the effect sharpening will have on your saved photo.

Straight out of camera:

After editing:



Spot Removal in Lightroom



Exposure and White Balance



Color calibration and adjustment panel showing a histogram and various sliders.

R 69.4 G 67.0 B 61.0 %

Basic ▾

Treatment: **Color** Black & White

WB: Custom ▾

Temp 4950
Tint -1

Tone Auto

Exposure +0.51
Recovery 0
Fill Light 2
Blacks 5

Brightness +50
Contrast +40

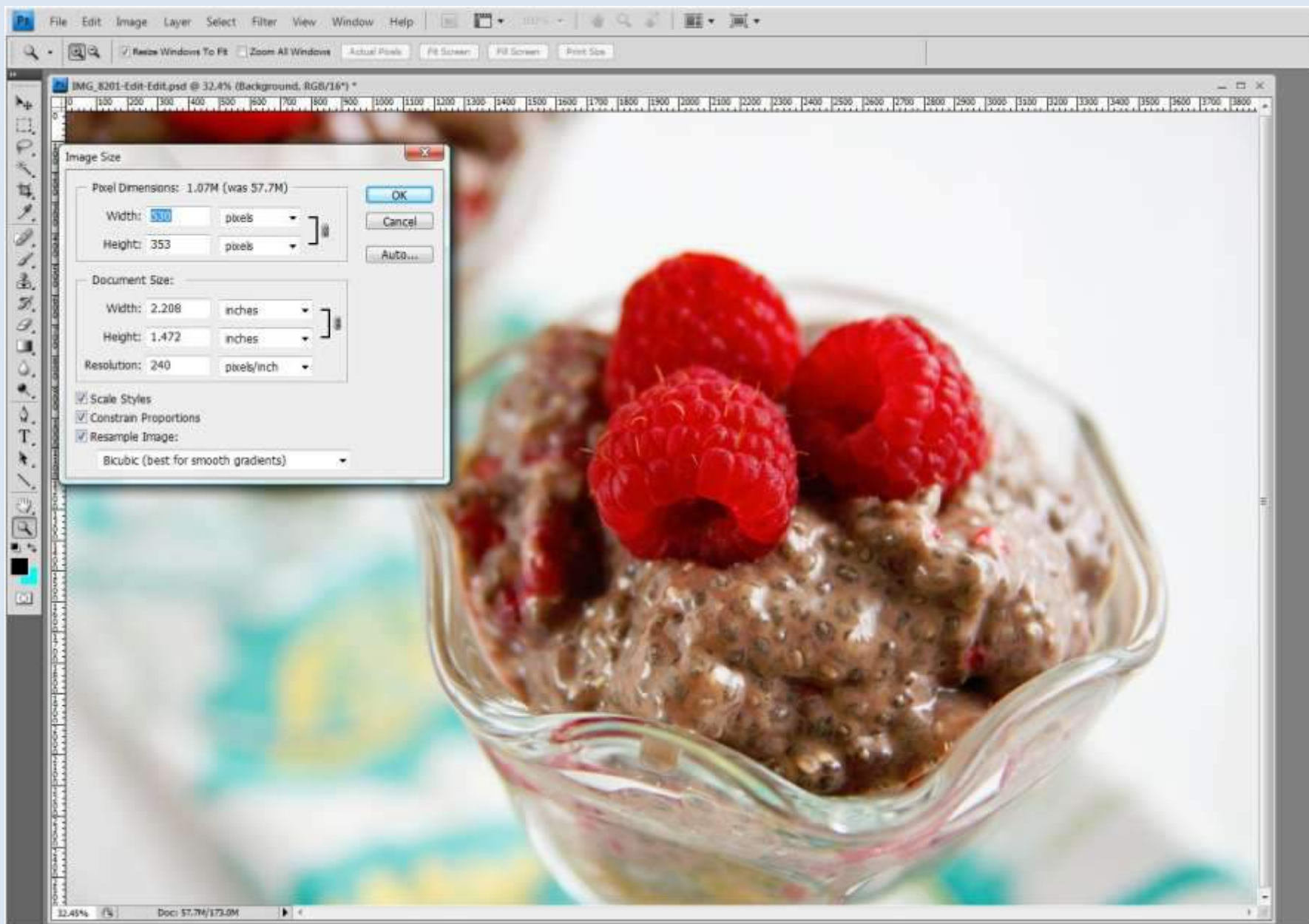
Presence

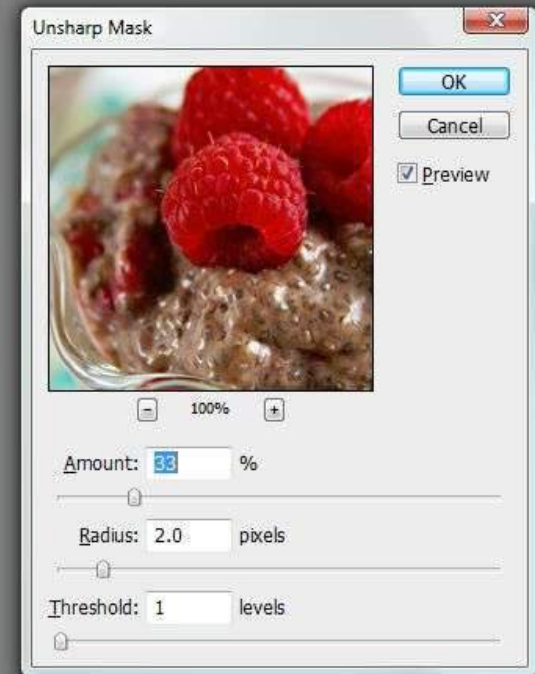
Clarity +20
Vibrance +20
Saturation 0

Tone Curve ▾

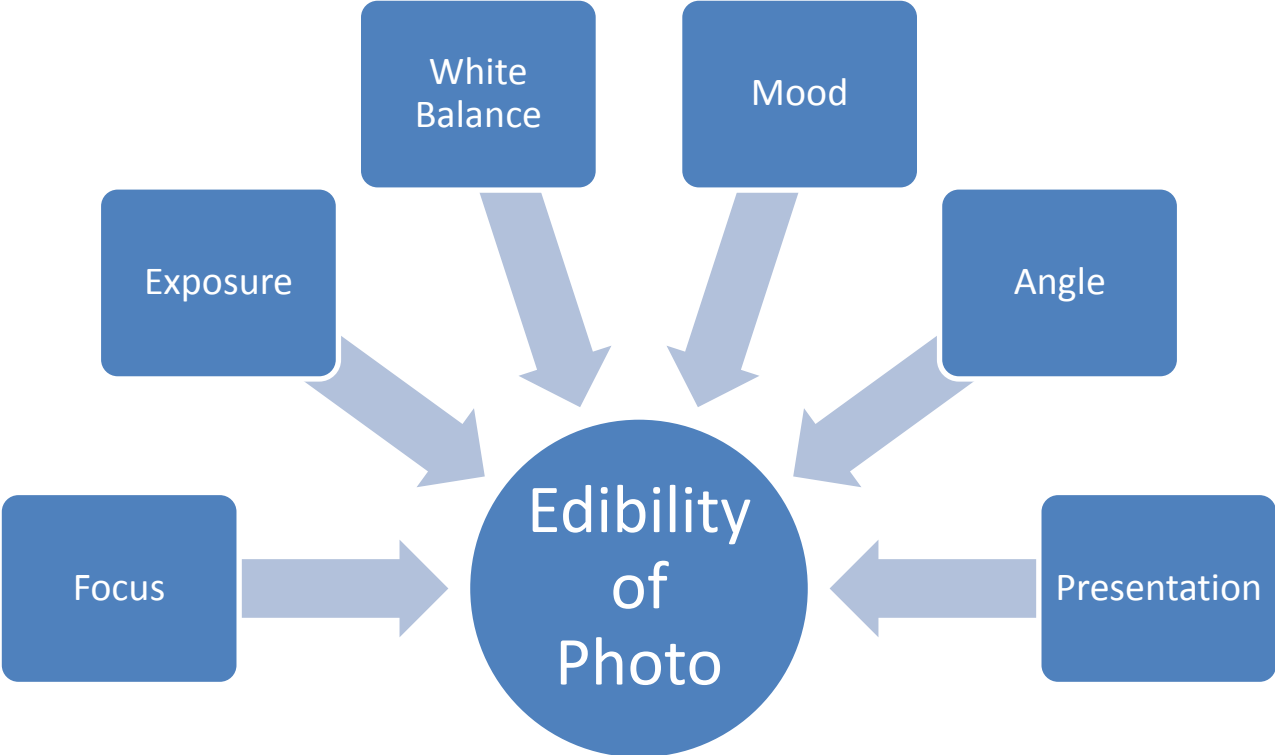
Previous Reset

Always re-size your images.





Always sharpen after re-sizing.
Then save for web.



Resources

Photography Tips:

- Huge list of tutorials: <http://jenncuisine.com/resources/tutorial-collection/>
- Creative Live, <http://www.creativelive.com/>: Free on-line photography classes.
- Taylor Takes a Taste: <http://taylortakesataste.com/food-photography-tips-tricks-and-tutorials/>
- Food Pixels Food Photography Blog: <http://www.foodpixels.com/blog>
- *Plate to Pixel*, Helene Dujardin, 2011

Software:

- Lightroom, www.adobe.com, \$149
- Photoshop Elements, www.adobe.com, \$99
- Photoshop, www.adobe.com, \$699
- Picasa, <http://picasa.google.com/>, free
- GIMP, <http://www.gimp.org/>, free

This presentation is online at <http://fatfreevegan.com/food-photography.pdf>