



## TRICKS OF THE TRADE:

**Food Stylist**

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The first lesson most kids learn about the difference between art and reality comes from food. You see a delicious looking meal on the box, but what comes out of the microwave is a far cry from what lured you into purchasing it in the first place. The person behind this lesson is a food stylist. We recently spoke with one of the premiere stylists working in the industry today to find out his secrets on getting the most out of your photographs.



**1. Before tricks, before everything else, make love to the food.**

With his background as a chef, our food stylist has a true passion for food. When putting together his creations, he will follow the recipes to the exact letter. If it calls for salt and pepper, he will put them in, even if they will not be seen in the photograph. "What tastes good," he says, "looks good."

**2. Stay true to the product and approach perfection with realistic means.**

The average person on the street, if he knows anything about food styling at all, will usually mention something about the supposed tricks of the trade: the ice cream is really Crisco, the milk is glue, everything is made out of plastic. Our expert says there's not much truth to that. Food stylists have a legal obligation to use the exact amount of food the product contains. They sometimes even have to sign affidavits testifying that they've done so. When our stylist shoots an advertisement for ice cream, it is one hundred percent real. To pull this off, one needs to work fast. While he's staying mum about his tricks, he'll say that it's more luck than brain to get that perfect shot.

**While you must stay true to the product, there are ways to enhance what is seen. Which brings us to our next tip:**

**3. Find technical solutions to the problems you face.**

If the advertisement is for chocolate syrup, the syrup must be real, but the ice cream it covers can be fake. And that glue for milk trick? There's a tiny bit of truth to it. When shooting cereal, our

expert puts a Crisco base into the bowl and then places the bits of cereal into it until they are perfectly positioned. Once they are in place, he pours in the milk, or rather, Wildroot, an old-fashioned hair product that looks like milk but won't be absorbed by the cereal.

You'll also have to find solutions to keep your food from perishing. No matter what you put on the set, our expert says, it will die, but there are ways to enhance and prolong the life of the food. Pizzas are kept looking fresh by keeping large steamers on hand. To prevent whipped cream from congealing into cappuccino, put a little gelatin into the coffee to solidify it. To create steam rising off a delicious meal, our expert recommends blowing cigar smoke into a turkey baster and spraying it around the food.

**4. Waste not, want not.** The number of products used for a typical photo shoot differs, but whatever is left over, donate it to a local homeless shelter. Our expert recommends City Harvest, a non-profit organization that collects excess food to give to those in need. Their website can be found at [www.cityharvest.org](http://www.cityharvest.org)

**And lastly...**

**5. Take some pride in your work.** Our contact describes himself as not just a food stylist, but a food artist. He had separate careers as an artist and chef and eventually combined the two. Anyone, he says, can be a food stylist. All it takes are three things: curiosity, passion, and focus.