

# Food Photography 101

**Digital photography has changed how images are captured, but the basics remain the same: a great product, a talented photo team and a creative concept.**

## Bob Skalkowski

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*During Bob Skalkowski's career he has produced images for a wide variety of clients. Food photography has always been a large part of his portfolio.*

When you're trying to sell something you often need a good hook. In our visually overstimulated world that can be a challenge, but it's a necessity when it comes to marketing a product. If you watch people in a coffee shop, at the doctor's office or waiting for a train, and they are browsing through a magazine or newspaper, they usually just page through whatever they have in hand. As they do, most pages just get a glance, but when they see an interesting graphic or photograph that they can relate to, they will linger to perhaps read some of the copy. Whether they continue to examine the ad or article depends on the copy, but they may not have even given it a second look if it were not for the photo-

graph to draw their attention. Such is the power and the importance of a good image.

Of course, everyone else is trying to get the attention of those same viewers and all of their friends and family members. We are bombarded with images everywhere, from free-standing inserts (FSIs), which are sometimes called "blow-ins" because of the way they are inserted into a magazine, to TV images that interrupt our favorite shows where a grandma is touting the wonderful advantages of some new cooking oil. All in all, the competition can be fierce and only the best food photography that can relate to a certain target audience draws the most attention.

## A TYPICAL FOOD PHOTOGRAPH

Of course, there is nothing like a typical food photograph, but there are a number of similar basics in every one. The process, as with most successful ventures, starts with careful planning. A client may have a food product that, after much experimentation and review by focus groups, is refined so it's appealing and tastes good. But to whom? Who is most likely to purchase the product and how will he or she use it? A food item or confectionery that appeals to a child may not appeal to an adult for a number of obvious reasons. This must be taken into account when planning the look of the image. In other words, the photograph must attract its intended target audience (Figure 1).

Issues about the target audience, photography style, props, food styling and the food product itself are brought to the table during the very important preproduction meeting, which should be considered a prerequisite. ➤

### Targeting the Audience

#### Food items appealing to children



#### Food items appealing to adults



Figure 1