

~~“Tomi Björck told a critic to fuck off”. They made a cover story about it and the story went all the way to Sweden where BW Restaurants also has one restaurant. I got away with the whole thing with little attention, even though I at first was afraid there would be paparazzis hiding in the bushes.~~

~~At first Björck said that these things come and go, but later, probably under a pressure of a few women's magazines that he was co-operating with, he made a public apology where he said they always take the reviews seriously and was sorry for the bad and embarrassing choice of words. In the apology he invited me for a dinner to Bronda and said he would have liked to hear more about what were wrong with the dishes. A couple of weeks later as the apology reached me, I just answered that his apology sounded sincere. (2015)~~

5. Recipes

5.1. How to write a recipe

Writing a recipe might sound easy but actually it's a whole lot of work. And the work comes from the fact that the recipe has to work. You really have to be sure that the person who will try it, will succeed with it. In order to be certain about that, the recipe needs to be developed to its perfection. Developing a recipe actually is the most demanding part of the whole process. You need patience and time. Here is how Dianne Jacob describes the process in her book *Will Write For Food*:

You might think recipe writing is linear, where you create a seafood pasta dish, write the recipe, and send it to a friend to see if she can recreate it accurately. It sounds simple enough. But that's not how it

works. Let's say you taste the pasta dish and decide it could use improvement, maybe some parsley and lemon juice. You add "1/4 cup parsley" and "1 tablespoon lemon juice" to the ingredients list and make the pasta again. Now it tastes better, but still needs more zing. You revise the ingredients list one more, this time changing it to "2 tablespoons lemon juice" and "2 tablespoons capers". You make the pasta again.

(...) "Three is not the magic number of times to make a dish. What if you realized, upon tasting the third version of pasta dish, you should have kept the lemon juice to one tablespoon instead of two. Should you make the pasta again, just to be certain? The best recipe writers would say yes. (2015, p. 203)

Even as many as five tests will not be enough - maybe not even ten.

Managing Culinary Director of *Serious Eats*, and author of the James Beard Award-nominated column *The Food Lab*, J. Kenji López-Alt wanted to find the perfect chocolate chip cookie recipe. Not an easy task. In his demonstrative article *The Science of the Best Chocolate Chip Cookies* he opens the process of developing a recipe in detail:

For the past few months, I've had chocolate chip cookies on the brain. I wake up in the middle of the night with a fresh idea, a new test to run, only to discover that my 10 pound flour bin has been emptied for the third time. Did I really use it all up that fast? I'd put on my coat and walk out in the cold New York winter night, my sandals leaving tracks in the snow as I wander the neighborhood, an addict searching for a convenience store that will sell me flour at 3 in the morning.

I'm talking chocolate cookies that are barely crisp around the edges with a buttery, toffee-like crunch. You see, I've never been able to get a chocolate chip cookie exactly the way I like. I'm talking chocolate cookies that are barely crisp around the edges with a buttery, toffee-like crunch that transitions into a chewy, moist center that bends like caramel, rich with butter and big pockets of melted chocolate. Cookies

with crackly, craggy tops and the complex aroma of butterscotch. And of course, that elusive perfect balance between sweet and salty.

Some have come close, but none have quite hit the mark. And the bigger problem? I was never sure what to change in order to get what I want. Cookies are fickle and the advice out there is conflicting. Does more sugar make for crisper cookies? What about brown versus white? Does it matter how I incorporate the chocolate chips or whether the flour is blended in or folded? How about the butter: cold, warm, or melted?

So many questions to ask and answers to explore! I made it my goal to test each and every element from ingredients to cooking process, leaving no chocolate chip unturned in my quest for the best. 32 pounds of flour, over 100 individual tests, and 1,536 cookies later, I had my answers. (López-Alt, 2013)

So this is what developing a recipe can be like. A person who has a long experience with writing a recipe, good knowledge of ingredients and the proportions, usually can make it with a few testing times. Chef and cookbook author Pipsa Hurmerinta tells that she usually start concretely with making the dish with that idea she had in the first hand. After that she will google similar dishes and see how it's been approached elsewhere. Then she'll write the base for a recipe and make it again. Sometimes she nails it on the first time, sometimes she need to modify it – and sometimes it just won't come together and then she'll dump the idea. Usually she'll test the dish about two times. If it seems tricky, she'll ask her mother or sister to test it (Hurmerinta 2014).

Reliability is something that you don't want to lose. A magazine that is based on recipes need to be sure that the recipes really work, so the recipes are usually tested two or three times. One of these testing times is usually the time when they are prepared for the picture. Some magazines use trainees from culinary schools or reader groups to test their recipes.

Besides the headline, you need to have an introduction. The idea of ingress, a *headnote*, is to raise the interest. Let's take chocolate brownies for example. Everybody knows brownies; this flat, baked dessert square, a cross between a cake and a soft cookie in texture that comes in a variety of forms. Depending on its density, it may be either fudgy or cake and may include nuts, icing, chocolate chips, or other ingredients. Typically eaten by hand, often accompanied by milk or coffee (Wikipedia 2015a).

You know what I mean. Many people know the recipe by heart, so why would you read another brownie recipe? You will, if the headnote interests you or raises feelings. But there must be something else than just the title.

The approach can for example historical, like this:

“You could hear her laughing in the kitchen. Everyone could, her laughter was so loud that even the hotel guests in the lobby turned around. It was year 1893, a prominent Chicago socialite, Bertha Palmer, whose husband owned the Palmer House Hotel there, had asked a pastry chef for a dessert suitable for ladies attending the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition. She had requested a confection smaller than a piece of cake, though still retaining cake-like characteristics, easily eaten from boxed lunches. And the laughter? Well, the chef had executed the task so well that Bertha couldn't stop hugging him. Brownie crumbs were flying from her mouth, as she couldn't stop laughing either – it was divine and she was thrilled. This is how the chocolate brownies were born.”

Or the ingress can be a personal one, like here:

“The rusty voice of Klaus Meine was flowing into my ears, the smoke machine had just puffed a new load of smoke in the dance floor. Just enough to hide the insecure hands fumbling in the dance partners back. Klaus was singing about *Wind of Change*, the elementary school disco had just reached the point where people try to find somebody to paw as it was the last dance. And I sighed satisfied. Not because I was in the dance floor, but because I was

leaning on the canteen desk and I just have had the first bite of brownie in my life. It was love at the first bite.”

Or your headnote can be just really simple and informative, like this:

“A brownie is the most popular pastry in Finland. Every year, three million brownies are being sold in supermarkets; you can find it from birthday parties, school canteens, nursing homes and fine dining restaurants. It’s a classic that just doesn’t go out of fashion.”

Okay, I just made up those numbers, but you’ll get the idea. When you have the recipe, the headline and the introduction done, it’s time to start to write the actual recipe. Here are a few tips that I’ve gathered as a result of my interviews:

- Always list the ingredients in the same order as they are used in the recipe. Always.
- Be specific. If you write apples, tell what kind of apples.
- It is easier to tell the measurements for ingredients before anything has been done with them. So it’s better to state the amounts as “three middle-sized carrots” or “300 grams of carrots” than “4,5 dl/350 g of grated carrot”.
- If your recipe requires some special preparations, special instruments that you don’t maybe find in every kitchen (like steamer) or ingredients that are difficult to find (for example some exotic spices), warn about these in the beginning.
- Don’t use terms that your mother wouldn’t recognize.
- Give tips, about how to variate your recipe and in what kind of situations they are perfect. And with what they it could be served.
- If the recipe is not yours, say it. Recipes don’t have copyrights (unless it’s considered as an artwork), but it is a rule to give credit to the original author.

Here is what food writer Monica Bhide says about giving credits in her food writing classes:

As with any writing, be very careful about copying anything. There are no true original recipes so if you are worried about that, don't be. What you need to be careful of is not to take someone's signature recipe, change two things and call it your own. That is called an adapted or derivative recipe and needs to be credited as such.

(...) A good rule of thumb for a basic recipe is to change at least 3 to 4 ingredients, and add your unique touches to the recipe. (2015)

And the most important thing in writing a recipe is clarity. It's almost impossible to be too clear. A reader must understand the recipe at the first time s/he reads it, to have a vision about how the dish is made. If it seems too complicated, most of the people will drop it. Bhide presented a good example in her food writing class:

Be careful about using words like blanch, sautee, simmer, sweat - instead give clear visual clues and directions on how to achieve the desired outcome. If you are writing directions to say, boil an egg, you could say as this person did in a letter to London's *Daily Telegraph*, "If you boil an egg while singing all five verses and chorus of the hymn 'Onward Christian Soldiers,' it will be cooked perfectly when you come to Amen." Or be specific about bringing the water to a boil, the number of minutes to let the eggs sit, etc. (2015)

When you write the recipes precisely, they will take more space, but that would still be better, though, than taking the risk that the reader would be lost with the recipe. Editor in chief Sanna Maskulin says that for the writers in *Glorian Ruoka & Viini*, it's very important that the first-timer will nail it as well:

You cannot write, "cook until it's done". You need to write, "cook for ten minutes until it's done". This way the recipes will be longer, but every step of a recipe need to be opened. It's the only way to guarantee that it will work and the dish will succeed. (2015)

And as in any food writing, you need to have a reason for your story – why is it important? If it's, let's say, an apple pie recipe, how is it different from all the other apple pie recipes in the world or why is it important to publish this recipe just now? To whom are you writing this recipe and why should s/he be interested in it? Why is it worthy of attention, why is it better than other similar recipes?

5.2. Food photography

People taking pictures of their food is nowadays such a typical sight that it's already something you don't pay that much attention to anymore. Yes, my mother is doing it as well. Some find it comic, but for me it's like taking a picture of anything – a memory of a place or time. But it also reveals how important the outlook of food is. I also believe that Instagram has made restaurants and cafés to put more effort into the visual part of dishes – as they know these will be photographed. Just recently a cook in a small kebab stall said to me while giving me my order: “Guten Appetit – but first you take a picture of it!”

But of course the way food looks has always been important. If it's appealing, you want to have it or do it. And this is why photos are such a vital part of the recipes. Also if you are planning to have a food blog, you need to have good pictures. That is how the first impression of a blog is made and the pictures need to be so good that they'll make the visitor to want to read the text as well.

A Finnish food photographer Sami Repo told me he has noticed that more visual food stories are now appreciated in food magazines as well as photographer originated food stories. It depends on the skills of the photographer but when dealing with top food photographers, the whole story might be made based on a photo.

Normally a food photo is made so that first the editor contacts the photographer and he will do the shooting with help of the person who has written the recipe or/and with a help of an art director or a food stylist. It all depends on the budget as well. Repo says that in Finland there usually is no budget for the food stylist. And sometimes the photographer might work totally on his own.

A photographer Silvio Knezevic, who is one of the two food photographers for *ZEITmagazin* food section *Wochenmarkt* tells that he often cook the dishes himself. Before studying photography he was working as a chef for several years. For Knezevic the process starts as he goes buying the ingredients for the picture on the market. If he sees one or some ingredients from the recipe that look very interesting (e.g. lemons with leafs) he might make the picture from the preparations step of the dish. Or he might decide to show the completed dish. “Then I / we start cooking and preparing the set, which means choosing the underground, the props and setting up the light. Then I’ll start taking the pictures,” Knezevic describes (2015).

And how to make the food look good? Repo says that there haven’t been any tricks made to food in decades, it might have happened in 60’s, 70’s, 80’s or 90’s – but not anymore. All the food is edible. Knezevic agrees:

No, we never use stuff like hairspray. The food itself looks already great, why destroying it with chemistry? In the past most of the food photographers were still life photographers who were seeking perfection. But the perfection of a T-bone steak or bean is its imperfection. It will never look like a light bulb, but they tried with hairspray, color and wire. In my studio there are only different brushes on the set, which you can moisten the stuff that dries out. (2015)

So there are no tricks, but Knezevic says to make the food look better some fresh herbs, good salt and grounded pepper on top always look good – “But not on creme brulee!” (2015)

Storytelling in food photos is a phenomenon that has been trending. “Yes, they want stories. Couple years ago even more, but it’s still there. Urban city, earthy things, design and own vision – these are the trends now,” says Repo. Also Knezevic is talking about storytelling:

I also think that nowadays the food pictures have more of a narrative, especially the props. It shall look very cosy and vintage. You could think that most food bloggers are flea market traders (or living in their grandparents house). But I hope this trend has its peak right now and I think that it’s going in two directions. First, more in a subtle, ingenious narrative way of showing food, and on the other way a very reduced, sharp graphic look. But you can’t tell, nowadays all looks and trends co-exist; we lack a zeitgeist. (2015)

For me it seems that taking pictures of food is the zeitgeist of today, but Repo thinks it has it peak and it’s calming down:

Few years ago there was the fear that there won’t be that much work for food photographers anymore, but professionals are professionals – the ones who really are. The “amateurs” have shaken things a bit as stepping into our territory, but I see it as a good thing. (2015)

So does Knezevic: “I think it’s great that many people deal with cooking and eating. They should only photograph it less, it tastes better when it’s hot.” (2015)

~~6. Appearance~~

~~Food journalism can be mainly found in food magazines, newspapers and online. There are also some radio programs, food related radio stories and a lot of food related documentaries, and TV shows, but in this guide the focus is~~