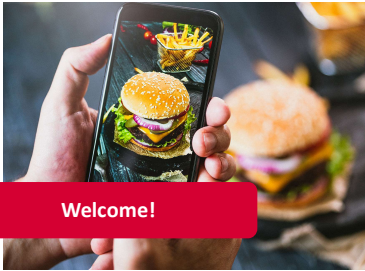


RestaurantOwner.com Webinar Series

Photos That Attract Guests & Strengthen Restaurant Operations



Welcome!



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Presenter



Jason Hershey
Video Production Manager



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Photos That Attract Guests & Strengthen Restaurant Operations

How restaurant owners and managers can use photography to attract guests and support operations

- Building the Foundation
- Shape Guest Decisions and Set Expectations with Photos
- Get the Photos You Need with a Simple Approach
- Supporting Training and Daily Operations with Photos
- Practical Tools





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Building the Foundation

- Focus & Subject
- Composition
- Lighting
- Timing
- Staging
- How to be intentional

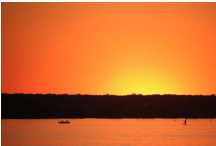




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What Makes a Great Photo?

- Why does an image work?
- Why do you like it?
- Where does your eye go first?
- What emotion does it create?



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Focus and Your Subject

Make Your Subject Stand Out

- Make sure your subject is in focus. What is your subject?
 - Are you shooting a landscape?
 - Everything in the frame may be the subject.
 - Make sure it's all in focus.
 - Maybe you're doing a portrait in the same area.
 - The background might distract from your subject.
 - Blur the background so eyes stay on the person.
- Portrait Quick Tips:
 - Use lens blur or portrait mode to separate your subject from the background
 - Make sure that at least one eye is in focus

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Focus and Your Subject

Make Your Subject Stand Out



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Composition

How to Guide the viewer’s eye

• Rule of Thirds



• Leading Lines



• Framing



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Composition: Rule of Thirds

This is a basic composition principle in photography, video, and art that helps create more balanced and interesting images

- The eye tends to be drawn to these areas, especially where the lines intersect
- Best Practices:
 - Place horizon lines along one of the horizontal thirds
 - In portraits, put the subject's eyes along the top third.
 - Especially engaging when you place the eye at an intersection
 - Be creative with the grids. Our brains like things in threes.
 - In the third image, the grid lines are splitting the image into thirds



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Composition: **Leading Lines**

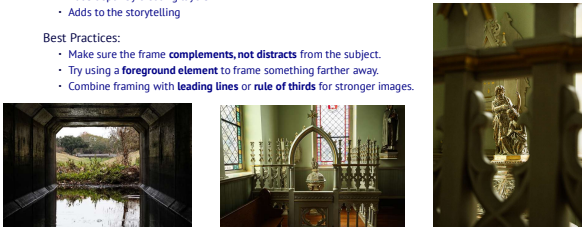
- Visual elements in a photo that guide the viewer's eye toward the main subject or through the scene.
- Leading Lines "point" to the subject
- They create depth and perspective
 - They add movement and flow
 - Makes images more dynamic
- Best Practices:
- Place lines so they lead to a subject—not away from it.
 - Lines that start at the bottom or edges of the frame naturally guide the viewer in.
 - Combine with the rule of thirds for even stronger compositions.



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Composition: **Framing**

- Use elements **within the scene** to **surround** or **"frame"** your subject, drawing attention to it and adding depth and focus
- Framing focuses attention on the subject. Sounds simple, but it can do a lot
- Provides a sense of context
 - Adds depth by creating layers
 - Adds to the storytelling
- Best Practices:
- Make sure the frame **complements, not distracts** from the subject.
 - Try using a **foreground element** to frame something farther away.
 - Combine framing with **leading lines** or **rule of thirds** for stronger images.



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Composition: **The Guidelines**

- Guidelines are not rules. Don't be afraid to bend or break them!
- This is art, be creative
- Breaking the rules can cause strong feelings or tell a story
- Trust your gut. Sometimes there's a vibe to a shot you can't quantify



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Lighting: One of the Most Powerful Tools

Lighting is one of the most powerful tools in photography.

What Lighting Does:

- **Sets the mood:** Harsh light is intense or dramatic. Soft light is calm or intimate.
- **Highlights the subject:** Brightness pulls the viewer's eye.
- **Shapes depth and texture:** Shadows and highlights define form.
- **Tells a story:** Warm vs cool tones, harsh vs soft shadows all carry emotion.

Types of Lighting:

- **Natural light:** Sunlight, window light, skylight.
- **Artificial light:** Lamps, flash, studio lights, phone screens.
- **Hard light:** Sharp shadows, high contrast (direct noon sun).
- **Soft light:** Gentle shadows, low contrast (cloudy days, diffused window light).



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Using Light

Key Lighting Techniques:

- **Front lighting:** Light hits subject head-on. Even exposure, minimal shadow.
- **Side lighting:** Light from the side. Adds depth, texture, and drama.
- **Backlighting:** Light from behind the subject. Creates silhouettes or glow effects.
- **Rembrandt Lighting:** Classic 45° lighting with a triangle of light on the shadowed cheek.
- **Split Lighting:** One side lit, one side in shadow. Bold, dramatic portraits.

Tips for Better Lighting:

- Pay attention to lighting throughout your day.
- Use shadows intentionally, not just as a byproduct.
- Position your subject relative to the light source to control mood and look.

The difference lighting can make:
<https://www.diyphotography.net/portrait-lighting-cheat-sheet-card/>

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Timing: Capturing the Moment

Sometimes, the difference between a great photo and one you delete happens within the blink of an eye.

- Being ready makes the difference.
- Anticipate vs. react
- Patience pays off: Wait for the right moment
- Use burst mode or even live photos on a phone



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Be Intentional

- Ask: Why am I taking this photo? What do I want to share? Will others be able to tell?
- Use your tools: Composition, Light, Timing
 - Staging: Remove distractions, reposition elements, or yourself. Take time!
 - Dedicate time to take photos. Take lots of them
 - Review your photos.

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Shape Guest Decisions and Set
Expectations with Photos

- Visual Trust-Building
- The Guest Journey in Images
- Storytelling for Different Business Goals
- Behind-the-Scenes as Credibility
- What Not to Show



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Visual Trust-Building

Photos answer guest questions before they step out the door

- What is the restaurant's atmosphere?
- What can they expect from the food?
- What is the level of hospitality?

To earn trust, photos and reality MUST match

- Show what guests will actually get
 - Plating and colors should match reality
 - Don't use extreme angles to embellish or hide portion sizes
 - Be careful with filters



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The Guest Journey in Images

Break the experience into visual chapters

- Arrival and exterior
- Greeter stand and being seated
- Dining room atmosphere
- Service moments
- Food presentation

This also helps plan efficient photo shoots

- Having your shots planned out will save time
- You will be much less likely to miss shots

Don't forget about takeout and delivery!

- Where to park?
- What entrance to use?
- Where do they go?
- Show-off your hospitality as guests' pick up their food

Scene: Overhead

Scene: Arrival and Seating

Scene: Greeter Stand

Scene: Dining Room Atmosphere

Scene: Service Moments

Scene: Food Presentation

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The Guest Journey - Arrival and Exterior

- **Prep the exterior**
 - No trash in parking lot
 - Clean windows and doors
 - Turn on lights
- **Clear signage and entrance**
- **Parking entrance from the street**
- **Patio/outdoor seating**
- **Day and night photos if relevant**
 - If the exterior changes at night, capture both

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The Guest Journey - Dining Room Atmosphere

Prep and stage

- Cleanliness and declutter
- Table setup
- Adjust lighting
- Seating types, spacing

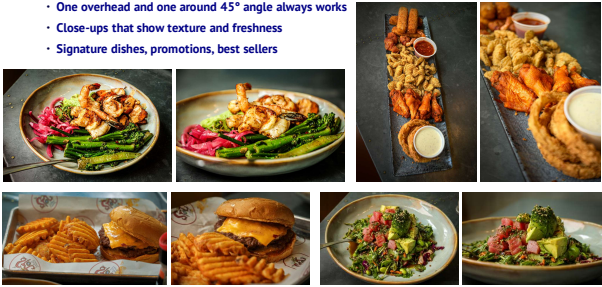
Walk talent through shots

- Let them know what to expect
- Let them know what you want from them
 - Explain reactions, energy levels, etc.

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The Guest Journey - Food Presentation

- True portion size and plateware
- One overhead and one around 45° angle always works
- Close-ups that show texture and freshness
- Signature dishes, promotions, best sellers



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Storytelling for Different Goals

Hiring

- Team energy, leadership in action, pride

Marketing

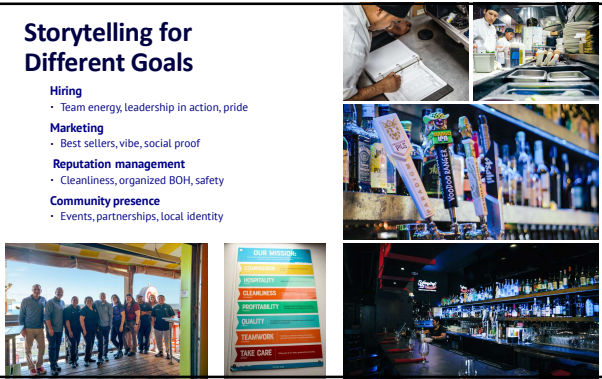
- Best sellers, vibe, social proof

Reputation management

- Cleanliness, organized BOH, safety

Community presence

- Events, partnerships, local identity



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Behind-the-Scenes as Credibility

- Let them see some of the process and prep
- Clean stations and labeled storage
- Show off craftsmanship and artistry



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What NOT to Do

Misleading food photography

- Pictures must reflect reality

Inconsistent styles across platforms

- Don't confuse your brand and style

Don't show...

- Clutter and mess
- Large amounts of waste
- Health code violations



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Get the Photos You Need with a Simple Approach

- The Core Shots Every Restaurant Needs
- Reference Shots and Creative Shots
- Lighting Made Simple
- Angles and Basic Composition
- Shooting Food, Space, Staff, and Guests

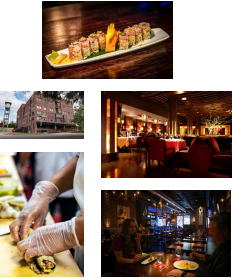




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The Core Shot List

- One menu item reference photo
- One exterior photo
- One dining room photo
- One staff action photo
- One guest friendly moment



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Reference Shots and Creative Shots

Reference shot: clear, accurate, well lit

- What the guest will see in person
- Always capture the reference shot first

Creative shot: angled, close-up, or stylized

- Emphasize key elements of the dish
- Highlight your restaurant's personality



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Lighting Made Simple

- Use natural light from a window when possible
- Angle the shot so light hits subject at a 45° angle
 - Rule-of-thumb for well-lit shot with contrasting shadows for depth and texture
- Avoid mixing daylight with warm bulbs
 - Can skew color accuracy
- Step back if window light is too harsh
- If shadows are too dark, use a light bounce
 - Reflects the main light into the darker areas of subject



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Angles and Basic Composition

- Angles that always work:
 - Overhead for clarity
 - 45° for depth and texture
 - Close-ups to feature signature items of the dish
- Composition basics:
 - Center the subject or use Rule of Thirds
 - Straighten table edges and horizons
 - Leave breathing room around the subject
 - Remove distractions and clutter



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Food Photos

- Reference shots:
 - Overhead for bowls, pizzas, flat plates
 - 45° for most entrées
 - Food-level for burgers, sandwiches, stacked items
- Creative ideas:
 - Close-up texture shots
 - Dramatic side lighting
 - Ingredient elements placed around the plate
 - A single utensil or hand entering the frame



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Space Photos – Exterior and Interior

Exterior Photo

- Shoot during daylight or dusk
 - Turn lights on if shooting at dusk
- Reference angles:
 - Natural viewpoint (not too high, not too low)
 - Step back to show signage, entrance, and parking
 - Keep the area clean and clear
- Creative ideas:
 - Reflections
 - Symmetry
 - Interesting details

Interior Photo

- Reference angles:
 - Natural viewpoint (slightly above table height)
 - Corner-to-corner wide shot
 - Step back to show layout and flow
- Creative ideas:
 - Symmetrical framing
 - Reflections in windows or mirrors
 - Close-ups of décor, textures, or architectural details

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Staff and Action Photos

- Reference shots :
 - 45° angles, natural eye-level, or from torso
 - Slight angle instead of straight on
 - Keep background simple and clean
 - Capture hands, tools, or motion
 - Take multiple quick frames to catch the best moment
- Creative ideas:
 - Over-the-shoulder plating
 - Table level shots enhance action (FOH and BOH)
 - Pouring, shaking, garnishing
 - Steam, flames, or movement if safe



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Guest Moments Without Awkwardness

- Reference shots :
 - Shoot from behind
 - Over-the-shoulder framing
 - Action shots focused on table and dishes
 - Use foreground elements for depth
- Creative ideas:
 - Cheers or clinking glasses
 - Sharing dishes
 - A server presenting the plate



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The Photo Checklist

One Menu Item Reference Photo

- Use window light at 45° angle
- Shoot overhead or 45° for most dishes
- Shoot food level for burgers, sandwiches, or stacked items
- Straighten plate and remove clutter
- Show true colors and portion size
- Optional creative shot: close-up textures, side lighting, ingredient elements

One Exterior Photo

- Shoot during daylight or dusk
- Natural viewpoint (not too high, not too low)
- Step back to show signage, entrance, and parking
- Keep the area clean and clear
- Optional creative shot: reflections, symmetry, interesting architectural details

One Dining Room Photo

- Use natural viewpoint: slightly above table height
- Step back to show layout, flow, and atmosphere
- Turn lights on and declutter tables
- Shoot corner-to-corner for depth
- Straighten lines (tables, counters, walls)
- Optional creative shot: décor close-ups, textures, warm lighting details

One Staff Action Photo

- Capture real movement: plating, pouring, greeting, preparing
- Shoot at a slight angle rather than straight on
- Take multiple quick frames to catch the best moment
- Keep background simple and clean
- Optional creative shot: over-the-shoulder plating, motion blur that shows energy

One Guest-Friendly Moment

- Shoot from behind or over the shoulder
- Capture sharing, serving, pouring, or presenting
- Include foreground (glasses, plates) to add depth
- Keep guest faces optional unless permission is given
- Optional creative shot: cheers, dish presentation, ambient table moments

Upload to the Shared Folder

- Label by date and shot type
- Keep weekly submissions consistent

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Supporting Training and Daily Operations

- Clear Standards Across Every Shift
- Onboarding, Coaching, and Clear Feedback
- Visual Standards and Documenting Systems
- How to Shoot Photos for Training and Operations





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Clear Standards Across Every Shift

- Reduce verbal overload for new hires
- Show exactly what "correct" looks like
- Use photos to guide coaching and course-correcting
- Make feedback more objective and less personal
- Help team members see the difference between "almost" and "correct"



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Onboarding, Training, and Coaching

Faster onboarding and clearer coaching with photos

- Reduce verbal overload for new hires
- Show exactly what "correct" looks like
- Use photos to guide coaching and course-correcting
- Make feedback more objective and less personal
- Help team members see the difference between "almost" and "correct"





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Visual Standards and Documenting Systems

Use photos to document standards and systems

- Plate presentation and garnish standards
- Station setup expectations
- Storage, labeling, and cleaning standards
- Visual SOPs for repeatable tasks
- Reduce long text instructions and guesswork





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How to Shoot Photos for Training & Operations

- Prioritize clarity over mood
- Show exactly what "correct" looks like
- Bright, even lighting
- Straight-on angles for accuracy
- Sharp focus
- Zoom out when full context is helpful
- Avoid dramatic shadows or effects



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Practical Tools

- Beginner and Pro Editing Tools
- Learning Resources
- What's Next





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Beginner-Level Tools

- Snapseed – Powerful, free editing with intuitive controls.
- Lightroom Mobile (Free version) – Great for exposure, color, and presets.
- Canva – Easy for creating social media visuals with text and layout.
- Google Photos / Apple Photos – Basic editing built into your phone.

Pro-Level Tools

- Adobe Lightroom – Industry standard for editing and organizing.
- Adobe Photoshop – Advanced retouching and creative control.
- GIMP – Free, open-source alternative to Photoshop.
- Darktable – Free, open-source Lightroom alternative for RAW editing and photo workflow.

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Learn & Grow

Learning Resources:

- Photo Class 2025 – A guided learning experience to build your skills throughout the year.
- Skillshare / Udemy – Affordable courses on photography and editing.
- Adobe Learn – Free tutorials for Lightroom and Photoshop.
- YouTube Channels – Search for beginner photography tutorials.

Growth:

- Start taking pictures. Lots of them.
- Focus on developing one aspect at a time.
 - Rule of thirds, lighting, and capturing emotion
- Be intentional and have fun

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What’s Next? Shooting in Manual

Manual mode gives you full creative control.

Three key settings work together:

- Aperture: how much light enters (and how blurry the background is)
- Shutter Speed: how long light hits the sensor (affects motion blur)
- ISO: how sensitive your camera is to light (affects brightness and grain)

Watch this short video: "[How to Shoot in Manual...GET OFF AUTO MODE!](#)"

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Photos That Attract Guests and Strengthen Restaurant Operations

How restaurant owners and managers can use photography to attract guests and support operations
Jason Hershey, Video Production Manager, RestaurantOwner.com

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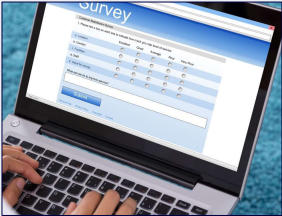


Questions?
We're Ready to Answer!



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Share Your Feedback Today



Just 4 quick
questions!



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Upcoming Webinar

March 26, 2025

RO Quick-fire Q&A:
Rapid-fire Answers, Fresh Features
& New Content

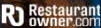


Kelli Laube
Hospitality Trainer



Patricia Estevez Luque
Client Success Manager





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Thanks for attending!!





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