

FREE Lessons on How to be a Food Critic

Learn the essence of how to be a food critic!

In 3 fun, simple lessons via email, you will learn the fundamentals of how to live your dream of being a food critic!

by

BeAFoodCritic.com

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How to be a Food Critic

Lesson 1

Stop thinking about it, start doing!

Are you dreaming of a new career? Tired of the same old grind at a job that provides little reward? Do you think you have what it takes to be a food journalist? A fantastic food critic?

Good for you! One thing is for sure – if you don't give it a shot, you won't realize your dream!

The life of a food critic is exciting *and* rewarding – you experience food in a way you never thought possible, you'll travel (you don't have to, but you may be interested in sampling cuisine in different parts of the country or world), and you'll write about all of your culinary experiences.

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What can be better than that?

So, how can you find your way into the food critic arena?
You love to eat, but do you really have what it takes to jump in
feet first?

Of course you do!

So, how do you take that giant leap of faith?

Start reading. Head to the library and raid the shelves on the
culinary arts. Keep in mind that by doing these Food Critic
Lessons, you're already on a new path, and that you're already
starting your new career! Read everything you can get your hands
on – read about different restaurants, learn the difference between
'bistro' food and 'mom and pop' food, learn what constitutes
'fine dining.' Learn about the many food organizations for chefs,
restaurateurs and the standards set forth for culinary excellence.

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Above all, hone your writing skills. Pay close attention to this tip, because one thing is certain . . . if you aren't a good writer (that doesn't mean an 'experienced' writer), then you may want to begin by taking a few journalism refresher courses. Just as 'a good writer' doesn't necessarily mean an 'experienced' writer, 'taking a refresher course' doesn't mean you have to go back to college or begin a journalism college career. The internet brings education into your living room or office, and you don't have to leave the security of your own home. When you think about it, the internet provides just about everything you need to know – the only thing missing is experience.

Let's tackle the food-writing component of your career first. (Did I just hear an audible groan? Did I hear 'a tone'?) Maybe you weren't the best student in school when it came to writing essays and creative short stories – will your grade of a 'C' impact your ability to become a great food critic? Absolutely not. That said, if you fall into the category of being a 'so-so' writer, then you'll need to practice, practice, practice. After that, you'll need to practice some more.

Tips on how to Write a Food Review

Firstly, I'll assume that you're not a professional freelance writer, as well as assume that you've never written a food review before. Some of what I'm going to teach you may seem ridiculously obvious; however, you'll be surprised at what you take for granted when you sit down to eat a palate-tantalizing entrée. So bear with me, and get ready to become a food critic!

Imagine you have entered a restaurant...now...take your seat at the table. What's the first thing you notice? Does the table setting look inviting, or does it appear as if it were thrown together by a server who was ready to go home three hours ago to watch TV? Is the silverware clean? Are the plates clean? If there are glasses on the table, do they have water spots? You'll answer the above questions faster than you can blink your eye.

It's all about the first impression.

Yay! It's time to dig in! Let's pretend you ordered Roasted Chicken with Rosemary and Garlic, a salad with Sweet Balsamic

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Vinaigrette, and Sautéed Asparagus. Does your meal look appetizing? Do you get that little sensation of salivating as your server places your meal in front of you? Do you want to dive in face first?

As you feast your eyes on your plate, let your sense of smell take over – does it smell enticing? Are you transported to your grandma’s kitchen as she prepares a luscious Sunday family dinner?

Now for the big moment . . . the first bite! Let the food rest on your tongue and be aware of the spices that explode in your mouth. Does the food dance in your mouth and come alive with flavor? Or, does it lack salt and proper seasonings? Do you want to take a second bite? As you taste every item on your plate, be aware of what it feels like in your mouth and what it tastes like in your mouth. Is the bite silky or rough? And, above all, be able to assess how much you like it. Don’t rush – take your time and enjoy every bit of your meal.

Fast forward.

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You're done! Now it's time to write your first food review!

It's always a good idea to get your ideas down on paper, without waiting too long after the end of your meal. I don't know about you, but I have a tendency to forget a few things as time goes on!

Before you write your article, cruise around the Internet for a couple of minutes and read several food reviews to get a sense of style, how to describe food, and the overall experience of a meal. When you do this, you'll have a good sense about how to start your review — sometimes the first sentence is the hardest to write.

Here's an example of the first couple of sentences of a recent restaurant review in the New York Times:

SEAN BROCK is a Virginia boy who attended the Johnson & Wales cooking school on this beautiful, historic peninsula where the Civil War began, moved around the South in apprenticeship, and in 2006 returned as the executive chef at McCrady's, the

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city's oldest restaurant. Late last year, a marsh fire of publicity that continues to roar, he opened a large and lavishly appointed new one, Husk, devoted to the excellence and promise of Southern ingredients.¹

What do you think? Does the first paragraph of this review make you want to read more? Most important, does the first paragraph make you want to eat at the restaurant? Maybe yes, maybe no.

Now it's your turn! Set the stage for your review, i.e. give a little history (just make it up), and start writing! Don't give a second thought about whether your writing is good or bad at this point. The targeted focus of the exercise is to get your thoughts on paper. Don't write, for right now, any more than three or four sentences. And, don't worry about how long it's taking you to write that first sentence! Who cares how long it takes you? The more pressure you heap on yourself, the less relaxed your writing is going to be . . .

¹ New York Times, February 8, 2011, Sam Sifton, *A Southern Chef Doesn't Stray Far*.

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After you write the first paragraph, review it, but don't start picking it to pieces – yet. Walk away. Go do something else and come back to your review in a couple of hours. I'll bet you'll feel differently about what you wrote! Is it as good as you thought when you first put your fingers to the computer keyboard (somehow, that doesn't sound as good as 'pen to paper' – what a sign of the times!) If you think you can write it better, with more flow and style, then give it a second shot. And a third shot. Maybe a fourth shot. At some point, 'it is what it is' and you'll have to be satisfied with what you wrote.

Writing with style is one of the most difficult aspects of writing – but, after you try it several times, your own tone and voice will start to emerge, and you'll begin to believe you *really are a food critic!*

Always remember to have friends or family read and critique your reviews. Their comments will represent your general reader, and they will let you know what works with your writing, and what doesn't work. Don't forget to park your ego at the door!

Exercise 1

You just ate breakfast at the Blue Sky Café in your town. You know the owners, but not well. You ate:

The Blue Sky Cafe Breakfast Special

Three Cheese Omelet

Gourmet Pork and Fennel Sausages

Organic Sourdough Toast

Cup of Coffee

Your Assignment:

Write a 600-word food review. After you write it, walk away and then go back to it. Make any necessary revisions. Walk away. Go back and finalize your review.

Did it get better after you wrote it the second and third time?

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Congratulations! You did it!

(Look out in your email inbox for your next lesson – lessons are sent every 2 days to give you time to digest the information provided).