

BY CHRISTINA GREVE

DAY 4 | COMPOSITIONS



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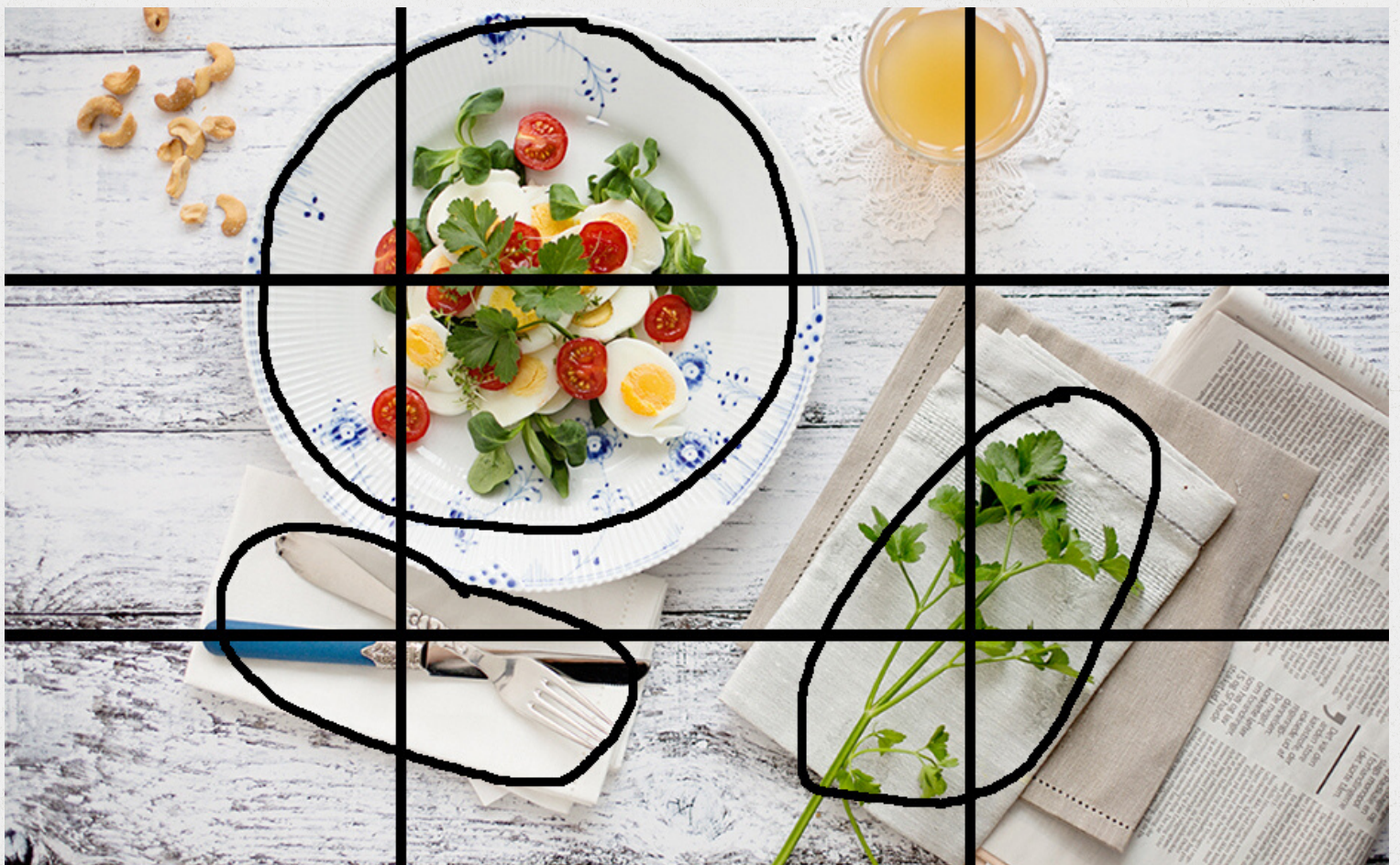
THE ART OF COMPOSING YOUR PHOTOS

Composition is how you creatively compose, organize and frame your image in order to communicate mood, atmosphere and style. We have already talked about how important light and storytelling is. But composition is truly the element that can add that "wow" feeling to your photos.

Composition can be hard to learn. It takes a lot of experimenting and observation. For some people composition comes naturally and then there's those of us that have to practice. The good news is; everyone can learn it.

To be honest, I think learning composition is a never ending game. I'm still exploring that side of photography almost daily. So in this lesson I will just show you some simple + easy compositions you can start practicing right now.





RULE OF THIRDS - THE GRID

The Rule of Thirds is a type of off-center composition where important elements of a photograph are placed along a 3×3 grid, which equally divides the image into nine parts. For many photographers, this type of composition is a basic way to give structure to photographs and make them more appealing. With the rule of thirds, photographers envision four lines across their photographs which also creates four intersecting points.

The important elements within a frame should be placed at the intersection points of these lines, as shown in the above diagram. And when photographing objects with straight lines (like a table or horizon), use the straight lines and place the objects along one of the four lines. To use the rule of thirds, start by imagining a 3×3 grid (or use the one that is built into your camera) and place your subjects along the lines and intersections points.



THE RULE OF ONE

The rule of one is all about having ONE main object and then placing that main object in the middle of the image. You keep it simple in order to achieve a strong image with a simplistic composition. This strategy will ensure that your object "pop" and stands out.

Your object doesn't have to be right in the middle of the frame - but almost. You can play with placing it a little towards the lower part of the frame or the upper part of the frame - or maybe move it a little to the side. And you can also have the centerpiece moving partly out of the frame for a strong close-up composition.

When using the "the rule of one" composition technique you are still allowed to use other items and props to compose your scene and tell your story. You can use as many items as you like, but make sure to place any "extras" in such a way that it looks like the centerpiece is taking up most of the frame.



THE RULE OF 3

The rule of three is the next level. Using an uneven number like 3 can make magic in any composition. Odd numbers of elements create balance and harmony, while even numbers compete with one another and weaken the impact of the image.

You can either pick three identical items like I did in the photo with the muffins or you can use three different objects like I did in the table scene above to the right. What's important is that the three pieces have a connection, in this case it's a cake, a plate and a milk jar. Place the three items so they create an imaginary triangle or place them in a straight or curvy line. You can use the same technique with five objects. For example, if you photograph oranges you can pick four oranges but then cut one of them into two pieces. That gives five objects and at the same time you show how juicy the orange is when it is cut open.



RULE OF ONE



RULE OF THREE



RULE OF THREE



RULE OF ONE

FILL THE FRAME

Another classical composition is to fill the frame with food or flowers - or almost fill the frame. It's allowed to add a bit of negative (empty) space for balance. To do this simply place the food/flowers so they fill the frame either completely or almost completely. You can let some of the food/flowers move in and out of the frame to create interests.

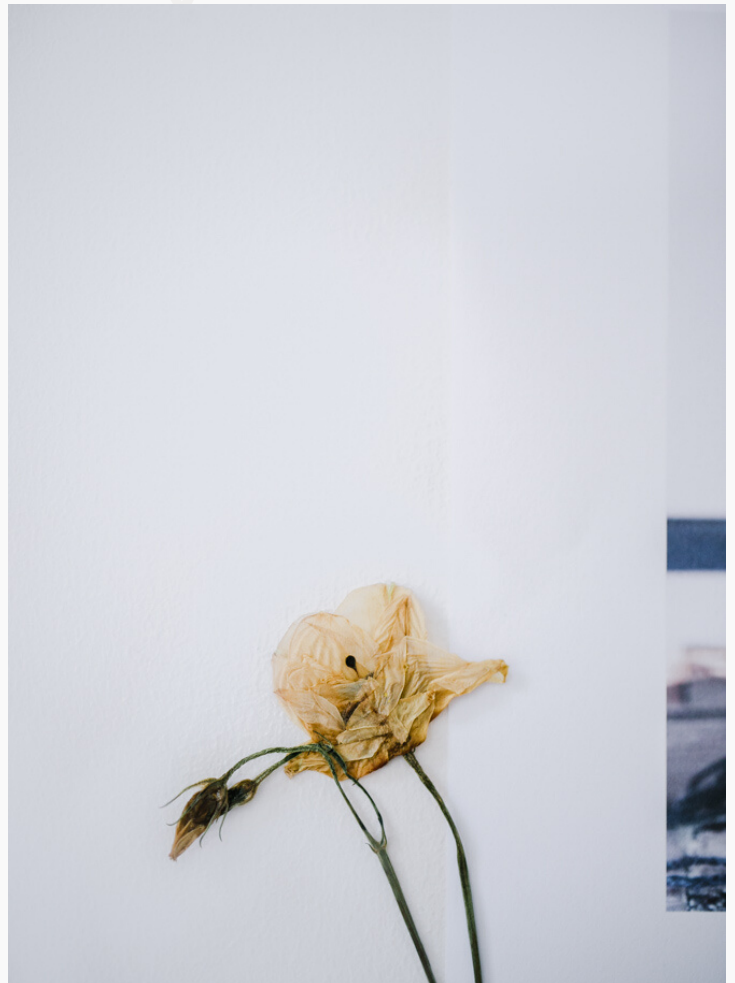
This is the perfect way to tell the story about your ingredients. Filling the frame with fresh produce or ingredients does not make room for much styling though, but you can always play with the background. Use a rustic background with patina or an old newspaper and play with light and shadows to create depth.



NEGATIVE SPACE

I'm such a HUGE fan of negative space in food photography! Negative space is really just empty space - a place for the eyes to rest. I find that photos with plenty of negative space is often the photos I end up loving the most. They are just so pleasing and calming to look at. Of course, this is a matter of taste and style, but it's always a good idea to play with negative space and see what comes out of it.

Negative space, doesn't have to be white space. It can simply just be space with nothing in it. It also draws more attention to the food/flowers and makes your main object pop out of the frame. Negative space is an active visual tool to use when working with styling and composition. As I just mentioned it will give the eye a place to rest, but it will also help strengthen the focus on your story and/or object.





MOVING IN AND OUT OF THE FRAME

I like to imagine that the food/plates/props are sneaking into the frame. Somehow that makes the composition appear more natural, almost like a random snapshot. It helps with the storytelling as well. The viewer will be able to imagine the rest using the minds eye - even though, they only see parts of the setting and not the whole scenery.

If you look closely at my images, you will begin to see a pattern of food, flowers and props sneaking into the photo. Like in the image above, the food is sneaking in from the top of the frame, leaving a lot of negative (un-used) space, which helps the eye to rest.

This type of composition are also great if you want to add text to your images. Because you can create a lot of empty space to write the name of a recipe. Perfect for promoting recipes on your blog, Instagram or for cook book covers.



EMPTY SPACE



MOVING IN/OUT



MOVING IN/OUT



EMPTY SPACE



TAKE ACTION

Are you ready to test and practice your composition strategies? I promise you it will be a lot of fun! Take it one step at a time and practice just one composition strategy at a time. Keep it simple so you don't overwhelm yourself.

Playing with compositions are a creative process involving a lot of trail and error. But the more you practice the sooner it will start to come natural to you.

Remember, it's not about creating the perfect photo, it's about learning, playing and experimenting until you find something you like. Enjoy!



Christina Greve is a Lifestyle Photographer, Stylist, Empowerment Coach and Holistic therapist. She provides tools, education and inspiration designed to help multi-passionate women, artists and creative souls find direction, push through self-doubt + make a living doing what they LOVE.

Her work has been featured in numerous magazines, blogs and books worldwide. After a decade of working with psychology, Christina's passion for photography evolved into a full-time photography and coaching business.

Today she runs a thriving + fast-growing international empire specializing in professional online training, motivating and engaging female photographers, designers, bloggers, makers and creatives. She has coached thousands of fabulous women from more than 40+ countries.

With her Podcast "The Empowered Creative," her popular Instagram posts, and quickly sold-out workshops, Christina has become the go-to person for many creatives seeking like-minded sisterhood, real support and heartfelt encouragement.

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