

3.

Photography and Art Work

How to produce good pictures

How to use pictures effectively

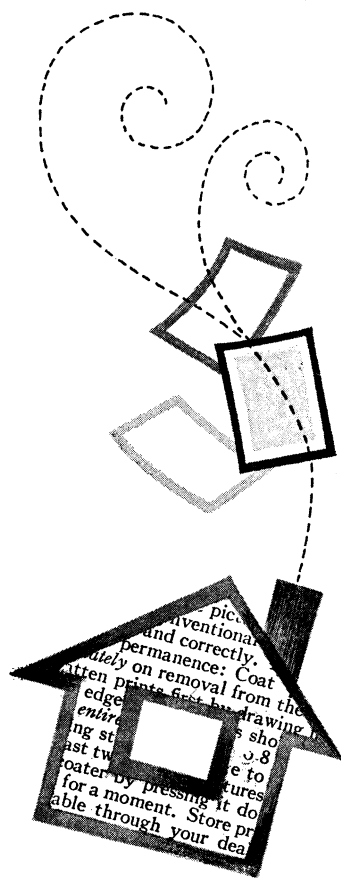
EVERY HOME ECONOMIST today is concerned with pictures.

Business home economists are called on to plan and set up photographs or to supply ideas for art work for a variety of uses: labels and hang-tags; booklets and leaflets; articles and releases; film-strips and posters; store displays and television commercials. Home economists in extension service find it necessary to plan and often produce illustrations for bulletins and circulars and other uses.

Home economists in various fields — television, teaching, business, extension, and the like — find pictures an ever-present aid in explaining and dramatizing important homemaking information and techniques.

This chapter, then, begins with the planning and production of photographs for specific uses, then proceeds with suggestions for using photographs and art to best advantage.

*Pictures are windows
in walls of words. With
them it is possible to open
up new vistas for homemakers.*



When Your Job Is To Produce Photographs**COLOR NOTE**

Black-and-white photography is not really black and white. It is gray against gray! Visualize each item as it will appear without color — in light or dark or medium gray. A simple rule is to put dark-colored objects on lighter background, and vice versa. Beware, however, of too sharp contrast.

Working as you do — or will — in a picture-minded world, your job (especially if you are a home economist in business) is almost certain to include setting up photographs. Whether you are new in the field or an experienced “pro,” you soon find that every one of those photographs poses not one but several problems. Question is: How do you tackle them? Where and how do you start in planning a photograph?

Let’s go back to the R/C Recipe for Effective Communications, and see how it applies here.

STEP 1. ANALYZE THE PROBLEM

Whether you are to photograph a cake or a casserole, a coat for a child, or a corner of a kitchen, start by asking yourself, “*What do I want this picture to say? What important idea do I want to put across?*” Remember, there must be a basic reason behind every picture. Unless you can figure out what that reason is, there’s no point in your doing the photograph!

DETAILS SHOW UP

Every detail counts in photography. If there are wrinkles in the background material, or if the paint is peeling, those defects will be apparent in the finished picture.

Let’s consider food photos first, for two reasons: (1) There are many more home economists involved in photographing food than in getting pictures of fashions, home equipment, room arrangements, or other subjects. (2) The points brought out about planning and setting up food arrangements apply basically to the photographing of other subjects. Special notes about special problems will be found in the marginal notes that appear in this chapter.

You’re to photograph a cake, for example. First, determine your basic idea. Do you want to say, “Look at the texture of this cake — isn’t it perfect?” Or, “See this brand new idea for a birthday cake.” Or, “This is an easy way to cover that frosting with chopped walnuts.”

Once you have settled that all-important question, you are ready to approach other problems that enter into the planning. Your thinking may run something like this: If that cake is to show texture, the problem will be how best to show the cut cake or a slice of it. If it is to suggest a new idea for a birthday cake, the problem will be not only to think up the new idea, but to get some birthday excitement into the picture. If the aim is to show using chopped walnuts on the cake, it may need to be an action shot. If the cake photograph is to go on a package of cake mix, it must say, "Wonderful cake," and nothing else. For a magazine advertisement, it must tell the product story at a glance.

Reasoning out those problems in advance helps one define the job, which in turn makes the job itself much easier.

STEP 2. VISUALIZE YOUR PHOTOGRAPH IN FINISHED FORM

Early in your planning, get a mental image of how that photograph is going to look when it's finished. Is it to be in color or black-and-white? Will it occupy a full page in a good-sized booklet, or be reduced to small space in a leaflet? Will it be reproduced on smooth paper stock or on newsprint? Do you see it as a vertical shot or a horizontal one?

As the planning progresses you may change your concept a number of times, or have it changed for you. Even so, it is good to "see" that preliminary picture in your mind's eye. By doing so the photograph becomes a reality, and you see ways to improve it with strong additions and fresh ideas. But you will also see new problems popping up!

If the picture is to be a black-and-white, one problem will be to determine what colors to use

BEWARE!

Avoid putting dark accessories at the back of a food photograph. Dark objects tend to draw the eyes back, rather than to focus them on the center of interest. Frequently the faint shadow of a leaf is more effective than the dark leaf itself.

WHAT SIZE?

Glossy prints 5" x 7" or 8" x 10" are best for publicity purposes . . . When sending a photo of a person or persons, be sure to supply complete name or names. If you are asked for a photograph of yourself to be used in publicity, never be guilty of sending a glamour one.

POSTERS

Every poster should present a central idea, and be readable across a classroom—about 30 feet.

in backgrounds, dishes, and foods. If it is to be a full page in color, as in a magazine, you'll probably need more items or a more dramatic composition than if the photograph were to be in black-and-white and reduced to small space. (The marginal notes that appear here, together with the chapter, "Food Photogenics," suggest a number of problems that often face home economists together with possible solutions.)

The important thing is to have an advance mental image of the finished photograph, and then work around the problems of details as they arise.

STEP 3. FIGURE WAYS TO DRAMATIZE

Next step in working on a photographic plan is to figure out what you can do to lift the photo out of the ordinary and inject excitement into it. That is, dramatize it. Getting in this dramatic impact is largely the responsibility of the home economist working together with photographer and art director.

How do you make a photograph dramatic? This is an often asked question that may be answered in any or all of these ways:

By conceiving a fresh new idea or getting a new twist into an old one . . . By selecting props and accessories (if that is your responsibility) which heighten style and appetite appeal . . . By using sizable objects for the major points of interest. And always, always, by seeing to it that every picture has one — and only one — center of interest!

ABOUT BACKGROUNDS

Background in a photograph must be exactly that. It should never be more obvious or obtrusive than the item being photographed.

As a home economist-stylist, you must step up the importance, the "flair," of whatever is important to the picture. In a food picture, this means giving height to flatness, shape to the shapeless, color to the colorless, as discussed in the chapter, "Food Photogenics." (See page 177.)



FOOD CLOSE-UPS USED EDITORIALY

This is an example of the realistic type of food photograph which many home economists must prepare for use editorially in booklets, books, filmstrips, and magazines. For such use, a photograph — whether in color or not — serves several purposes. Almost always it attracts attention to and “sells” a recipe, rather than a specific food product. Often, as here, it plays up some interesting serving idea. Sometimes, as here, it suggests other food items that might complete the menu. *Suggestion:* Turn now to page 24 and compare the treatment of the casserole in that advertising photo with this editorial one.

Photograph courtesy of Better Homes and Gardens.



PROBLEMS IN ROOM PHOTOGRAPHY

According to photographers who specialize in architectural details, every room photograph should show something of the ceiling and the floor, in addition to wall area, without over-emphasizing the floor. In both these pictures, blank floor space has been minimized by placing furniture down in the foreground.

Photographs courtesy of Better Homes and Gardens.

DETAILS

Note how the rusty-red of the chairs gives color depth to the photograph above. Without it, the various tints, textures and details would tend to fall apart in so complicated a composition. Photo at right was simpler to compose because there are fewer elements. Observe how the figures in each photograph help to bring the scene to life; give it mobility. See, too, how the suspended lights help to break up wall areas while adding a special note of interest.

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IMPORTANCE OF ANGLE

In photographing a piece of furniture or equipment, the angle from which the picture is taken is important. Here the photographer has shot across one corner of the custom-built sink to bring the center of interest down into the right-hand corner of picture. By so doing he has (1) played up the piece of equipment; (2) taken full advantage of the colorful paneled wall beyond; (3) succeeded in breaking up the expanse of floor. With it all he has managed to give the impression that there is more to the kitchen than meets the eye.

Photograph courtesy of Better Homes and Gardens.



PRODUCT PROMOTION. This is a black and white reproduction of a four-color photograph used in the booklet, "Glamour Ways With Cottage Cheese." The idea: serving cottage cheese for breakfast — hence the breakfast table setup. Tablecloth was a sunny yellow; napkin, sky blue. Cup and saucer were a deeper gray-blue, matching the blue of the white-rimmed plate. Note how these shades come through in tones of gray; note the sparkle of white.

Photograph courtesy of Dairy Council of California. Elmer Moss, Photographer.



PRODUCT PUBLICITY. Aim of the home economist in this photograph was to suggest a new and natural use for a whipped cream topping — one that would play up the product to good advantage. Since the photo was to be part of a summer promotion, the answer was a cool coffee gelatin designed to double as dessert and *demitasse*, with hand demonstrating the product in use. Note how thumb is placed to obscure the brand name on can.

Photograph courtesy of Avoset Company, makers of Qwip dessert topping. Elmer Moss, Photographer.



FOOD CLOSE-UPS IN ADVERTISING

A photograph used to illustrate a recipe in a food advertisement must display the product to best advantage. That can be difficult when the food is difficult to recognize in cooked form. Here the product is cream style corn; the recipe, a Frankfurter Corn Bake. Note those tiny kernels brought up so carefully to the surface before baking. Frankfurter slices, catsup, and parsley break up the broad surface. Simple white dishes call attention to color and texture of food.

Photograph courtesy California Packing Corporation — Del Monte Brand Foods.



PHOTOGRAPHING FOOD OUT OF DOORS

When subject matter fits logically into the situation, and when weather conditions are favorable, interesting results can be obtained in photographing foods out of doors. So many factors enter in that much experimentation can be done. This photograph was shot in direct sunlight against the blue of a lake in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. Photographers of this picture, and of the one opposite as well, were Frank and Dorothy Williams.

Photograph courtesy California Packing Corporation — Del Monte Brand Foods.



PHOTOGRAPH OF AN IDEA

Here a recipe-idea has been reduced to a practically self-explanatory photo plus simple yet clear directions. "Don't even take the slices out of the can," says the caption. "Just pour off liquid and replace with lime gelatin (made with half the water in package directions). Chill until set. Run a little hot water on can sides and bottom to loosen. Then cut bottom from can and use to punch mold out." To emphasize the product still further, there's the pineapple-shaped platter in an Hawaiian setting.

Photograph courtesy of Dole Corporation.

STEP 4. ORGANIZE YOUR PLAN OF WORK

Once your photograph is firmed in your mind, you are ready to organize your plan of work, starting, probably, with props and accessories. Next (if it is to be a food photograph) comes trying out the chosen recipe to fit the props, and marketing for the picture. In doing this organizing, keep in mind this fact: Regardless of how exactly you may plan, the picture may undergo changes under the camera. Be prepared for everything.

This means taking not one cake or pie or loaf of nut bread to the studio, but three or four of them. Something may go wrong in the cutting, or the art director or photographer may decide on a new approach. Make sure you have a liberal assortment of background materials; a variety of plates in different sizes and shapes and/or cake stands of varying heights. For a salad photograph never stop with one or two heads of lettuce, but take several of several varieties so the photographer can select just the type and tone of leaf that is needed. If you're using flowers, take along a number of kinds and colors. (In general, flowers of sharp design and sparse foliage work better than small flowers with heavy foliage. That is why marguerites appear so often in pictures.)

It is a strange sight to see the home economist on her way to the studio with car or taxicab filled to capacity with bags and bundles, baskets and boxes. But if, along with her load, she carries a generous amount of patience and enthusiasm, the photographing day is likely to go smoothly.

STEP 5. SYNCHRONIZE YOUR IDEAS WITH THOSE OF OTHERS

When you are working "on your own" with a photographer to produce a picture, you have one set of responsibilities, he another. The more you

WHEN YOU SHOP FOR PROPS

Consider how the photograph is to be used. If it is to reach readers of newspapers or general magazines, select dishes and silver and utensils of general appeal and availability. In a magazine that stresses new ideas, look for new items. . . In a booklet or a book, keep to the conservative.

Beware of bold patterns in dishes — they compete with food. Same is true of bold wallpapers in a how-to-do-it furniture arrangement.

SHOW-HOW AND ACTION SHOTS

In posing hand pictures, plan to have the hand, or hands, serve as arrow or arrows directing attention to the most important item or operation.

In a how-to-do-it photograph, keep to one operation or idea. Avoid trying to get across too much in any one picture.

STYLE NOTE

Since skirt lengths date a photograph or drawing, it's a good idea to avoid them whenever possible. Same is true of exaggerated hairdos and fads in accessories.

synchronize your thinking with his, the better the results.

Your job is to explain to the photographer just what idea you want to put across. Show him what is to go into the picture, as you see it. Set out the props to discuss with him. Consult with him as to the degree of brownness for the roast, the height of the cake, the choice of the servers. Let him set up the picture as he visualizes it, rather than insist on composing it yourself. Then study that preliminary composition through the ground glass of the camera. If you have a recommendation for improving the arrangement or lighting, offer it, and give reasons why. But keep an open-minded point of view. Remember, a good photograph is not an accident. It is a work of art on which you and the photographer collaborate. The more smoothly you work together, the better the finished picture.

Suppose a home economist is working in an area where no good commercial photographer is available. Should she try to take photographs herself?

Rarely. If she is a far-better-than-usual amateur photographer, and if in her work she needs slides or black-and-white pictures of rooms or furniture arrangements or the like to show on a screen, she may find it advantageous to do some on her own. (See marginal notes on photographing rooms.)

Should she try to photograph food setups? Probably not, except experimentally as a hobby, or as a pictorial record of her work. Good food photography is highly complicated, requiring specialized and expensive equipment and endless care and patience with details — plus years of training on the part of the photographer.

The home economist working alone (or with an inexperienced photographer) is almost sure to find difficulty with several factors: Unless a setup is lighted just right, from sides and back as well as

front, dark shadows show up where they are not wanted, and objects flatten out, losing all their "modeling" — their three-dimensional quality. Unless the camera is focused properly, vertical lines (such as candles, water glasses, and other tall objects) come out far from vertical in the picture. Unless the camera angle is just right, strange things happen to a lovingly planned composition.

What is the answer if you are faced with that unusual problem? Take a course in photography. Then find an eager-to-cooperate photographer and work with him until, together, you produce the kind of pictures that are demanded in a highly competitive picture world.

Notes on Using Photographs and Photographic Reproductions

Whenever a photograph is used to highlight a point (as in a speech or platform demonstration or in the classroom) it should, if possible, be projected onto a screen so that all can see and study it. It is distracting to pass pictures from student to student in a lesson period. It is disconcerting when a lecturer holds up a picture that is not clearly visible from the back of the room. It is annoying when a televised photograph is held at an angle that obscures the principal point of the picture.

In selecting photographs for screen projection (including television screens), be truly selective. Make sure that every picture gets across just one pertinent point; leave the picture on the screen long enough to transfer that point to the minds of the viewers. This means that every photograph so used should (1) be simply composed with no unnecessary frills or accessories; (2) have no distracting background, no accessories that might focus the attention on them, rather than on the idea; and (3) be free from shadows that look like holes when enlarged on the screen.

SEWING TECHNIQUES

To photograph a point in cutting, use small-figured material on a plain cutting surface. This makes the idea come through well.

To show stitching, use heavier-than-usual thread, larger-than-usual stitches. If sensible, show the stitches on plain cloth rather than on figured.

Use as little background as possible. Put all the emphasis on the point you wish to get across.

ROOM PHOTOGRAPHY

Avoid straight-on shots. Work from an angle.

Avoid big expanses of bare floor or walls.

Suggest that there's more to the room than shows. This can be done by getting in just part of a chair or table.

Let there be a fire in the fireplace. Otherwise it will look empty. A newspaper, lighted just before the shooting, will give a quick blaze.

Look out for pictures on walls. Study them carefully in the camera. Think twice before you show a mirror!

**WHEN YOU WRITE
CAPTIONS . . .**

Point up what is significant. Try to inject an idea that has not been covered in the accompanying text. When writing captions for how-to-do action shots, begin with the verb that describes that specific action.

CAPTION SETTING

When a photographic reproduction is more than 6 inches wide, caption is usually set in a block at one side, rather than strung the width of the picture. . . . When caption appears under a narrower illustration it often extends the full width of the picture. How many lines? Block captions can contain more lines than wide-set ones. One line of caption under a picture is likely to look like fringe. More than 5 lines, unless set in narrow measure, are hard to read.

Pictures and other visuals used on bulletin boards and in static displays call for ingenuity and fresh thinking on the part of the teacher.

Familiar examples: Running a string from a point of interest in the picture into the margin where the point is explained. Tacking up pictures that show how to serve or eat unusual foods — *artichokes*, for instance. Featuring a menu from a gourmet restaurant, and, at the sides, translating what the French terms mean — *ragout of lamb*, for example.

Unusual example: The home economics teacher who, upon learning that Johnny Somebody was the top-of-the-juke box singer of the moment, wrote to said Johnny (in care of a television station that had featured him as a guest star). In her letter she asked if he would have his publicity studio do a photograph of himself eating a substantial breakfast, complete with glass of milk. Johnny followed through, sent the photograph with a personal autograph to the girls at Horace Mann High. Needless to say, it was the bulletin board high-spot of the year!

What About Art Work?

Instead of photographs, you or the art director or some other executive may decide to use drawings. Now your problem becomes a slightly different one.

In planning a photograph you are dealing with known quantities. You know that the cake you set before the camera will come out much as you see it there — though it may not look as high as it really is. In picturing a cake in a drawing, however, you are dealing with unknown quantities. The artist is certain to inject some of his own personality into the finished art. The art director is sure to project his ideas. Here, again, the thing to do is to synchronize your thinking with that of others concerned.

In working directly with any commercial artist, these recommendations usually obtain good results.

1. Take time to define the job to him or her. Think twice, however, before you say flatly, "This is what I want done." Instead give the artist a mental picture of the problems involved, and see what he may evolve from them.

2. Show him the amount of copy that must be used. If feasible, give him a carbon of what you have written.

3. Figure out in advance whether there is some special technique which may be difficult for him to understand, some utensil or piece of equipment with which he is not familiar. If so, be prepared with "scrap" (i.e., clippings of illustrations) that show such details. If no scrap is to be found, you may need to make up a cake for him to study, or pose your own hands to show him how the homemaker would naturally hold the spoon or pour the batter.

4. Send him to his studio with a feeling of enthusiasm for the job and an understanding of what is to be done. Make him know that you have confidence in him.

5. But always, always, ask him to bring in a penciled rough of the sketches before he puts them into final form. He will not object to making necessary changes on the roughs. But, like all of us, he is disturbed at doing finished things over.

6. Remember that the artist, like you, wants to be proud of the finished job. Cooperate with him to bring that about.

As stated in Chapter 1, pictures play a big part in modern communications. The big thing to remember is that every picture must have one center of interest. That center of interest corresponds to the topic sentence in a piece of writing. In the next chapter that matter of the topic sentence will be discussed in detail.

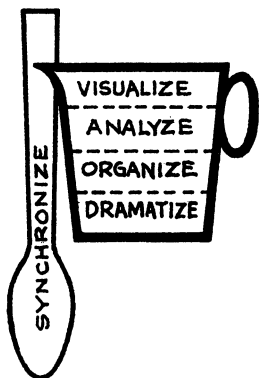
TO ATTACH A CAPTION

When a photograph goes out with manuscript or release, include a caption for it. If the caption is long, type it on letter-size paper and key it to the photo by numbers or letters. If it is only a few lines long, type it on a half-sheet and attach it to the lower edge of photo with rubber cement or gummed tape.

Photographs for editorial or school use should be free from brand names.

MAILING PHOTOGRAPHS

Be extremely careful in mailing photos. Use plenty of stiff cardboard. Mark the envelope, "PHOTOS. DO NOT BEND." Never use paper clips on photographs or on manuscript enclosed with photographs. Never write on the back of a photograph with hard pencil or ball-point pen. If you must write at all, use wax crayon or soft pencil, and don't bear down.



Magazine readership surveys show that the lower left hand quarter of a full-page food photograph is a highly important spot. Hence is is a good place for some highly important item.

THE PICTURE AHEAD

One important thing to keep in mind is that in both art and photography, techniques are constantly changing, and that you, the home economist, must change with them. This can be interesting because it permits you to share in the creating of a new approach. At the same time it presents you with additional problems and responsibilities.

Take the current experiments in photographing foods out of doors, for example. Whether it is done for the sake of an unusual setting (as suggested in the photograph on page 25) or to provide a specific lighting effect, you may face all sorts of minor difficulties, such as having the wind blow the lettuce off the salad or bees buzz the flowers! But these are relatively unimportant. In every photograph your big job is to make certain that the food idea itself is both interesting and practical from the homemakers' point of view.

IT'S YOUR TURN

Authors' Note: Turn back to the color plates of food advertising on pages 24, 25, and 26. With the permission of the companies concerned, each of these has been cut down to fit the page size of this book. Such "cropping" is, in itself, an art and one that the home economist will do well to study. You may like to turn now, too, to Chapter 21, "Food Photogenics," page 177. You'll note it is a "working" chapter, with items arranged alphabetically for easy reference when a problem in arranging some food for photographing comes up.