

FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY AND STYLING

AUGUST 2023

Marisel DE LA CRUZ

ILLUMINATED EXPRESSED CITRUS OIL

The magic of
light, time, and
natural oils

PHOTOS AND
RECIPES

WELCOME



The photo above, and the images on page 4 are evidence of my profound love of food and the movement of a restaurant.

This image was taken very quickly as I did not want to hold up the food from getting to its hungry table. This was the vision of the chef-owner in regards to how she wanted the food to look in photos as well.

I captured this image with a slower shutter speed to give it some cinematic movement, another important bit of direction mentioned in our initial meeting over a cup of cafecito. Being in a restaurant brings back all the memories of being a pastry chef in the BOH (without the smoking habit). And I am in love with every moment of it.

Please enjoy this little zine, 2 years in the making. The rest of the seasons will be available, hopefully in the same format, every so often to keep you up to date on the new work coming out of this company of mine.

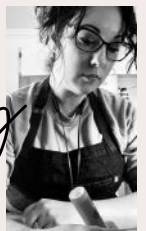
Also, I must let you in on a little secret. That whiskey...on the cover?

It's soy sauce and water. Personally I'm a lover of Suntory Hibiki Japanese Whisky, but not while I work. Capturing the cover image in my studio was a personal triumph and it also made use of a gorgeous glass I picked up for \$1.99 at Goodwill.

To further shatter the illusion for you, It took me about 15 tries, a *lemon* of an orange, 2 lemons, and a hasty manicure that graced only one hand. To get the perfect placement, I had to spend several minutes in a deep, very unsexy lunge. Good thing the image itself turned out very pretty IMO.

With gratitude,

Mariel De La Cruz



Summer

This is a collection of my recent work as a photographer and food stylist.

04

Hospitality: Tal Palo, Los Altos, CA

06

Vanilla: a Love Story

Simple product photography rarely needs more than the product. Especially with some strategic styling, light, and all the vanilla specks in Nielsen Massey vanilla bean paste.

07

Recipe: Brown Butter Coffee Cake

Paying homage to where I began with this coffee cake. The first of the images to come from my studio and the inspiration for this zine.

09

Food Styling for World Market

An entire crew, each doing what they do, and me as a part of that as a food stylist. A gig for the books.

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Client Spotlight: Mealime

A recipe app that has become integrated with a major grocery store to supply its customers with meal plans and grocery lists.

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CONTACT



Everything Bagel Goat Cheese

Recipe

Sauté 1/2 a minced shallot in 1 teaspoon of oil over medium heat until slightly softened and set aside.

In a mixing bowl combine a 4oz package of goat cheese, 2 teaspoons each of minced chives and fresh dill, and two tablespoons of "Everything Bagel" spice. Add 1/4 teaspoon of crushed red pepper flakes and a teaspoon of water to thin. Mix thoroughly with the cooled shallots and serve on toast.



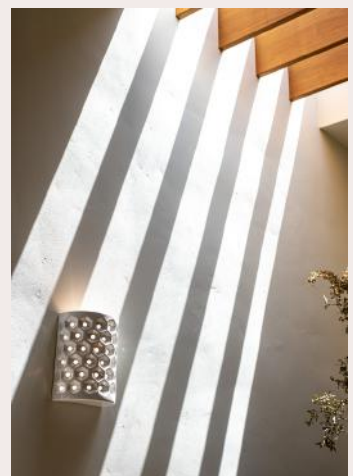
04 Hospitality

Tal Palo, Los Altos, CA

Self-proclaimed “dark and moody” proprietor Adriana Porter built a family restaurant with her husband, kids and mom, @chefgloriet by their side. A place where the menu is always changing and is much like when you’ve come home from school and ask “what’s to eat?”

The food is exceptional yet familiar with “chilakillers” and salads on the menu regularly. With the local farmers market just outside, the chefs shop for their menu from local farmers, making the menu focused on our micro-seasons in the South Bay.

It was very important to the owner that the food images did not look too polished and had a cinematic feel to them, as if we would be living a day in the life--journalistic as opposed to the classic restaurant shoot.





05 Hospitality

The Prospect, Hollywood

Each room of this old Hollywood hotel is decorated with its own set of vivid colors and patterns. Named after the icons of the silver screen, each room has its own distinct character as well.

If what you seek is a quiet, out of the way boutique hotel with charm, a gorgeous and relaxing courtyard, The Prospect is just perfect. During my research phase of this project I fell in love with The Prospect's red door, and green and purple lobby, and was completely enchanted by the outdoor fireplace, the enormous MINI bar in the guestrooms, and morning pastries.

Each stay comes with a guest pass to the NeueHouse co-working space, which deserves a little article of its own. 10/10 recommend.



06 VANILLA: A LOVE STORY

Often, “vanilla” describes something plain or unexceptional. But have you ever sliced a fresh vanilla pod open to see the thousands of little pearls of vanilla emerge? Have you ever scraped them out and taken in their sweet, sexy aroma? I use vanilla beans with abandon and savor the nuances between the different varieties. Vanilla bean is a luxury I can’t live without.

Over the years I’ve tested different vanilla bean pastes and always come back to the brand I used in my restaurant kitchens. Nielsen Massey blends beautifully into every application and can be tasted through even the darkest chocolate. It will transform your boring “vanilla” into something very sweet and sexy.

PRODUCT PHOTOGRAPHY



Brown Butter Coffee Cake

Ingredients:

2 sticks unsalted butter, browned
1 1/2 tsp. vanilla paste
(see instructions)

For the coffee cake

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon Kosher salt
¼ cup granulated sugar
½ cup light brown sugar
¼ cup whole milk
2 large eggs, room temperature
8 ounces plain whole milk yogurt

For the streusel

¾ cup light brown sugar
¾ cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
4 tablespoons reserved brown butter

For the topping

½ cup powdered sugar, sifted
1 tablespoon milk

Instructions

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line an 8-inch square metal pan with parchment paper leaving 2 inch "wings" hanging over and spray with non-stick cooking spray.

Brown the butter:

In a medium slightly deep stainless skillet set over medium heat melt the butter. Swirling the pan occasionally, continue to cook the butter. It should become foamy with audible cracking and popping noises. Once the crackling stops continue to swirl the pan until the butter develops a nutty aroma and brown bits start to form at the bottom. Once the bits are amber in color, about 2 to 3 minutes after the popping stops, remove from heat and pour into a medium mixing bowl along with 1 1/2 tsp of Nielsen Massey vanilla paste and let cool.

Make the streusel:

Separate 4 tablespoons of the cooled brown butter and add it to a small bowl. Combine the streusel ingredients with a fork until the texture resembles wet sand.

Make the cake:

In a large bowl, stir together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and sugars. Pour in the butter, eggs, vanilla, milk and yogurt. Gently stir with a spatula just until combined. Spoon half of the batter into the prepared pan. Sprinkle with half of the streusel. Spread the remaining batter over the streusel, then sprinkle with the remaining streusel. Bake for 40 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool for 15 minutes and carefully pull on the parchment paper wings to remove from the pan.

Make the topping:

In a small bowl combine the sugar and milk until a thick and pourable icing forms. Drizzle over the warm cake. Cut into squares and serve.



Photography and Props
by Nicole Morrison

"Elevated Pasta Salad Trend"

Food Styling



This shoot was the highlight of the year. From the people involved to the subject matter, it was a such a great gig. I focused solely on food styling, and though there is a school of thought that feels a photographer should photograph and a stylist should style, I simply can't stop doing both. A career in food spanning over a decade is not something I can easily let go of. Take the chef out of the kitchen but cant take the kitchen out of the chef kind of deal.

The entire crew made this job incredibly easy, even with a lack of kitchen space to actually grill in. But the magic of food styling is to make it look effortless, and to make it look tasty enough to want to reach in and grab a bite.

For World Market

"Summer Sauces"

10 Prosciutto e Melone

Not only does 'prosciutto e melone' sound incredibly cool rolling off the tongue, the colors of the Tuscan melon with its orange flesh and bright green inner rind, also make it the most effortlessly cool and classic Summer treats.

Served along side some Pinot Grigio, on a patio or underneath the shade of a tree, the sweet and salty simplicity will remind you of the saying, "Dolce far Niente" - The sweetness of doing nothing.



Barbiecore Summer



Grated
rainbow
radishes give
the hot pink
hue of pure
opulence

Food and Prop stylist Madge McCulloch's brilliance in the kitchen got us the hue we needed for our Queer Oppulence Party concept. With this being the Summer of Barbie, having a hot pink shrimp cocktail app was also very fitting. Photographed at Rule and Level Studio in Berkeley, CA

Parmesan-Corn Fritters with Spinach, Avocado and Roasted Pepper Salad

Mealime has been my client since the beginning of 2022. I have created numerous images for this company, photographing recipes created by their talented chefs. These recipes also appear on the Albertson's store website in addition to the Mealime app.



Fresh AF



Personal Projects

Taking time to enjoy the process of creating an image is so important to keep my creative energy up. And while no one asked for this photo, taking it reminded me of summers spent in the backyard, sipping tequila with friends.

Always Blanco, always with lime.
These are the stories I love to tell.

Thank You



San Jose, CA

Mariel is a food photographer and stylist with a chef's heart, spending years in restaurant kitchens as a pastry chef. Fast forward through a decade of cooking, recipe development, menu writing, food writing, baking, blogging, decorating cakes, and teaching, photography is where she landed by happenstance in corporate culinary at Apple, Inc. Her style is bright, colorful, inviting and evocative.

She has been trusted by companies like Albertsons, SeriousEats, Umami Foods, Peet's Coffee, Mina Restaurant Group and World Market to deliver high-quality images and styled food.

Mariel is available for freelance work remotely, or on set in the Bay Area, Wine Country, as well as Southern California and the Pacific Northwest.

