

# Culinary

## Entrepreneurs

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A magazine for the food, hospitality  
and tourism entrepreneurs by



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designers

Food stylists

Food  
photographer

*Creative studio*

**Food  
artistry**  
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India's sugar artists are getting international recognition. A specialist in royal icing, Prachi Dhabal Deb has achieved world records.

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Espacio Crudo, a visual studio specialises in both editorial and commercial image production for food, preparing ingredients in a visually appealing way.

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A Food Stylist who prepares food for advertising photographs and videos, Oscar Sanz is the creative force behind some of the mouthwatering images of burgers seen in advertising campaigns of fast food chains such as McDonalds and Burger King.

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Antara Boruah believes that food styling and photography bring a brand's identity to life through visuals, whether it's for packaging, social media, or advertising.

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# Editorial

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Visual arts and design play a vital role in the food industry, enhancing product appeal, marketing impact, and overall brand perception. From food styling, decoration, and plating to presentation, photography, and graphic design, artistic skills significantly influence consumer choices.

One standout edible art form is cake design and decoration. Today's consumers increasingly seek elaborate, multi-layered, and three-dimensional creations, complete with intricate edible decorations. The demand for thematic cakes—tailored to celebrations, venues, or personal tastes—continues to grow. Our cover story, written by a sugar artist, features cake designers who work across diverse mediums, from classic royal icing to the creation of hyper-realistic cakes.

A home economist and food stylist shares insights into the art and technique behind making a burger look irresistibly good. We also speak with a design studio that collaborates with food companies on branding and packaging projects.



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# Sculpting Sugar Dreams

Dhvani Hindocha

“

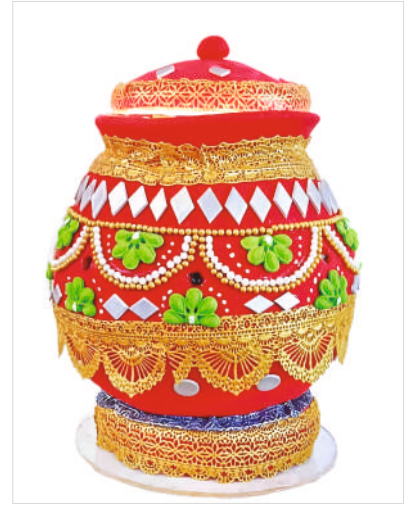
From unusual flavours and healthy options to jaw-dropping designs, the cake entrepreneurs of India are blazing new trails in the bakery industry. For this article, sugar artist and cake designer Dhvani Hindocha discusses her favourite cake designers.







Fondant icing by Dhvani Hindocha, Sugar Diorama



Artistically decorated cakes designed for specific themes or celebratory events are a booming niche in India's cake industry driven by consumer lifestyles and the rapidly increasing culture of celebrations and events.

Some of the Indian and International cake decorators and sugar artists I admire are Prachi Dhabal Deb, Diya Pal, Joan Estabillo, Silvia Mancini, Kabilova and Denis Zuev. Their work in terms of thoughtful designs and intricacy fascinate and inspire me. My aunt, Mrudula Hindocha who started Meena's Cakes in a small place like Porbandar inspired me to become a cake artist.





Prachi Dhabal Deb

**P**rachi Dhabal Deb is an internationally awarded cake artist based in Pune. Her specialty is royal icing artistry. She holds three world records from the World Book of Records, London, and has been honoured at prestigious platforms like Oxford University and the UK Parliament. She is also the Head Judge for Cakeology and the

Indian Cake Awards and serves as an advisory board member for awards and publications.

She explains, “I have always been deeply drawn to fine art and architecture, and royal icing became the perfect bridge between these passions and the world of cakes. I was fascinated by its potential—not just as a

decorative element, but as a sculptural, expressive medium. It allowed me to bring my visions to life with precision and elegance. My shift from a corporate job to this artistic journey was driven purely by the joy of creation, and royal icing gave me the language to express that joy in the most intricate way possible”.

One of her earliest international recognitions was receiving the Royal Icing Award at the Cake Masters Magazine Awards in Birmingham in 2019. “This honour truly fuelled my passion for intricate artistry,” she states, “Being awarded at Oxford University and felicitated at the UK Parliament by British MP Bob Blackman are moments that felt nothing short of surreal — a celebration not just of my work, but of the art form itself (This was the first time a cake artist was felicitated at the world-renowned Oxford University). At home, being recognised by the Governor of Maharashtra and receiving recognition at the iconic Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi, presented





by our Union Minister Mr. Nitin Gadkari, were deeply emotional moments of pride. Additionally, being featured in several prestigious global lists and appearing on television shows has helped amplify the reach of my craft and connect with a larger audience”.

She says royal icing, particularly in its traditional European form, was once considered a niche in India. But over the years, there's been a growing awareness and appreciation—especially when it's adapted to Indian aesthetics and stories. “However, there's still a long way to go in educating clients

and aspiring artists about the depth, strength, and versatility of this medium. I see it as a beautiful challenge—to continue pushing boundaries, conducting demos, and showcasing how royal icing can be both modern and timeless, delicate yet strong”

She says the exponential growth of the cake industry in the last few decades, and the booming niche of designer cake is a transition that has been nothing short of extraordinary. “From basic birthday cakes to elaborate showpieces and experiential



creations, the cake industry has truly evolved into an art form. I remember struggling to source tools and ingredients a decade ago when most had to be imported but now made-in-India products are

doing exceptionally well in the industry globally. Social media has played a huge role in inspiring new talent and educating audiences. We now see fusion techniques, cultural storytelling, and even

sustainability coming into play. It's a vibrant, ever-evolving space—and I'm proud to be part of a movement that is not just about baking but about art, emotion, and identity".

**D**iya Pal, an award-winning cake artist is a prominent figure in the world of hyper-realistic cake art. She's celebrated for her innovative edible textures and ability to replicate real-life objects with astonishing precision.

"I love carving, creating realistic textures, and painting to bring a cake to life. It's a form of still life art in edible form. I find handcrafting real-life objects out of cake very therapeutic. Achieving a level of realism where people can't tell whether it's real or cake is incredibly rewarding — and addictive!", she says, "I pursued this career full-time three years ago when I decided to focus on what I love. Currently, I create realistic cake reels for brand collaborations and use my social media channels to share cake decorating tips and realistic cake



tutorials to help fellow bakers".

She is incredibly proud of winning a Gold at Cake International for her Indian platter cake. "It was meaningful because I tried to showcase my roots through that piece, and I was humbled that it

was so well received," she smiles, "Another proud moment was seeing my progress at Cake International: the first time I entered years ago, I received a Merit. Earning a Gold later on was a testament to my growth, persistence, and self-belief. In 2024, one of my videos was





selected among the Top 100 videos showcased on ITV - an incredibly proud moment, especially considering that a few years ago, I didn't even know how to film. Being selected as one of the Top 100 Elite Women by Womenpreneur for Women's Day was also exciting".

She has collaborated with reputable brands like Nike, PayPal,



Skoda, etc. "The cake industry has seen incredible growth over the past few decades, driven by the rise of social media, evolving customer expectations, and a growing appreciation for edible art. Cakes have transformed from simple desserts into highly personalized, artistic centrepieces that tell a story," she says, Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have given artists a global stage to showcase their creativity, pushing innovation in techniques, designs, and trends. There's also been a shift toward valuing craftsmanship, originality, and storytelling in cakes".

She says that increased access to tutorials, online classes, and global communities has made advanced cake decorating skills more accessible, allowing more people to enter and elevate the industry. "Looking ahead, I believe the line between traditional art and edible art will continue to blur, and the demand for hyper-realistic, experiential cakes will only grow".



# THE FOOD DESIGN STUDIO

**"Espacio Crudo" literally means "raw space" or "raw place" in English.**

Paola Sanchez, co-founder and Creative Director of Espacio Crudo, a visual studio specializing in both editorial and commercial image production for food, talks to Anil Mulchandani about her work that often revolves around showcasing raw, fresh ingredients and preparing them in a visually appealing way.







## Tell us about yourselves?

I am designer, a pâtissière and the art director of Espacio Crudo, a design studio based in Bogotá-Colombia that I co-founded with Andres Caicedo and Natalia Londoño. We are based in Bogotá.

We are a creative visual studio. Purposely small. Focused in creating visual content around food and products. The visual world is our playground: photography, video and editorial pieces. We create images as a way

of telling stories, usually around a topic we want to talk about. These visual stories are crafted in our studio where we build sets, style food and curate props to be recorded or photographed. Every job is a journey being taken extremely personally.

In our work we have understood that playing with images also includes re-arranging them into new narratives. We create autonomous publications in collaboration with a growing number of artists and friends. As a creative studio, we offer visual consultancy as well. We

help you to explore the best ways to transform your ideas into something you can see.

Occasionally, Espacio Crudo also curates food related spaces and ephemeral table installations. It's always a pleasure to experiment.



Good Sam



Devotion

## What inspired you to start a food design and photography studio?

**O**ur lives have always revolved around food. We live in a country with immense diversity in both ingredients and culinary traditions — and yet, much of it remains unknown, even within our own borders. This has driven us to capture our culture and customs through images.

What initially inspired us was the simple desire to create beautiful things — just like that!

We felt the need to make something different. We had come from jobs that were “cool” on the

surface, but the creative process was quite limited, over time we started feeling stuck. We have restless, curious minds, and we needed a space where we could truly explore ideas, experiment, and express ourselves visually. That’s what led us to start photographing food — but in ways that moved beyond the traditional contexts we saw around us.

## Did you face any challenges in the initial days of starting the visual design firm?

Well — like many creative ventures, we started from zero. In the beginning, we didn’t have any clients, so we became our own. We invented personal visual projects

with no brief, no external validation — just the drive to create and show what we could do. That body of work became our portfolio, and little by little, it got us noticed.

We kept our day jobs until we had enough clients to begin making a living from the studio. That meant working with very tight schedules and deadlines — so we had to be extremely organized and consistent to make it work.

We often say we “faked it” — but in truth, we simply trusted our ability to figure things out. We said yes to many projects we had no idea how to execute at first. If a shoot needed a studio, we found one. If it needed a lens we didn’t own, we borrowed or rented it. What we lacked in resources, we made up for with commitment. Our goal



Breathe



was always to deliver work that exceeded expectations — to give clients more than they thought possible. That mindset opened many doors.

## Which have been your most exciting projects, shoots and campaigns? Why are they noteworthy?

Our last Starbucks campaign was one of the most exciting projects. It was the first time we were commissioned to develop a global campaign. That meant our work would be seen everywhere, from Japan to Colombia. It truly felt like a dream come true.

When you start out in the creative industry, you always hope your work will one day transcend the boundaries of your own country — and this project was exactly that. It was a huge milestone for us, not just professionally, but also emotionally. It showed us how far we've come and reminded us that our ideas can travel.

It was also a huge learning experience in collaboration. We

worked with a wide range of teams — animation, copywriting, production, and the advertising agency — and the challenge was to blend all of these visions while staying true to our own. That process of co-creation made the result even stronger. We weren't just following a brief — we were actively shaping it, contributing our voice to something that felt cohesive, creative, and exciting. Another project that stood out was our collaboration with Colombina, a brand that's been part of our lives since we were kids. It was meaningful not just because of the scale, but because "it was that brand! we all know it! a dream client!". We were commissioned to design six modular wallpaper patterns for their markets across,



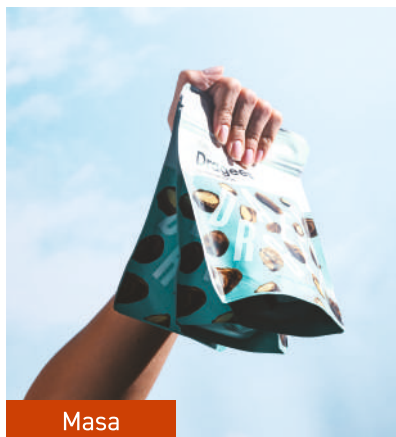
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using their best-selling products as visual elements. It was a design challenge, not just a visual one — and it pushed us to think beyond photography and into how our work can impact a physical space and improve their customer experiences.

## What distinguishes you vis a vis other visual arts companies in the food space?

What sets us apart is the integration of three key areas working together under the same roof — photography, design, and food styling. We are a team of designers, chefs and photographers. We have everything you need to create a food visual, and we also have the good vibe and the skills. This blend allows us to bring a cohesive and complementary vision to every project.

Each of us focuses on our own area of expertise, and we approach every project from that perspective. But, because we work so closely together, we ensure that everything we do aligns with the bigger picture. We're not



Masa

disconnected in our work — we work and collaborate as a team.

Our studio as a space is fully equipped for food photography, with everything you need to produce the perfect shot, all in one place. This gives us the flexibility to push visual boundaries and experiment with new ideas without the limitations of outsourcing or external dependencies.

We intentionally keep our team small because we value the personal touch we bring to each project. We are a boutique studio, not a production company. Every project is tailor-made, and we approach it with deep dedication and care. We don't just follow a brief — we immerse ourselves in it, finding what's unique and special about the client that approaches us. Our goal is to uncover what makes each project stand out and communicate it in the best way

possible. We take our work seriously, but always with a sense of fun, because we genuinely enjoy what we do.

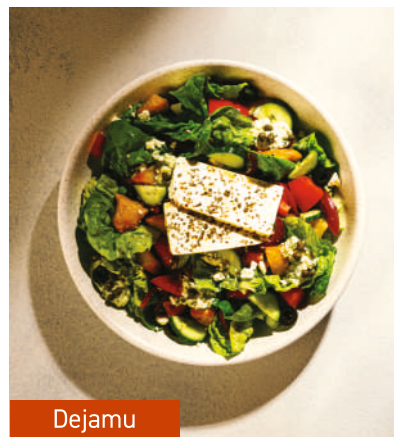
### 5. Any trends you see or foresee in food related visual arts?

Food is trendy; it always has been. Right now, we're seeing food featured in fashion, jewelry, and accessories campaigns and shoots. It's the perfect fashion prop. But that doesn't mean it hasn't been trendy before. There's always something related to food that people use, cook, or want to showcase.

Additionally, in a time when many things we see on screen can easily be created using digital tools, for us, food represents a sense of naturalness and authenticity. It celebrates the perfect imperfection, which is also a pattern we've observed. We're moving away from the really pretty fruit, the perfect plate, or the perfectly set table.

## What are your upcoming projects?

In the near future, we're working on a cooking book that will feature real recipes, deeply rooted in our



Dejamu

culture, but with our unique approach and vision. The recipes are tested and absolutely delicious! While it's a cooking book, it's not like anything you've seen before — we've been building this idea for years, and we're really excited to finally bring it to life.

Now, we're more certain than ever that the world is a place to explore, and we want to expand beyond the Western market, reaching places like Asia and the Middle East to share our creative journey.

As for our physical space, we're considering innovating it by transforming it into a more artistic space that allows us to host experiences centered around food — moments shared with friends and potential clients.



# THE MAN BEHIND THE BURGER PHOTOS

A Food Stylist who prepares food for advertising photographs and videos, Oscar Sanz is the creative force behind some of the mouthwatering images of burgers seen in advertising campaigns of fast food chains such as McDonalds and Burger King. Anil Mulchandani discusses with this seasoned food stylist how he transforms fast food into visual masterpieces for photographs and videos.



I come from the creative artistic world. A restorer of monuments in Barcelona, I specialised in making moulds for sculptures, fountains, and other handicrafts.

Years later, I left restoration to become a professional chef. From there, I started teaching cooking courses, creating recipes and writing for cooking magazines. That's how I began to delve into food styling, first for cooking books

and magazines, and gradually for some food companies. Since then, more than fifteen years have passed since I started combining my work as a foodstuff stylist with my other vocation, that of a writer.

In this profession, challenges are constant, and you never stop learning. Obviously, the pressure is much greater in the early years, but you have to trust your abilities. In my case, I have spent my years working with different materials

and textures.

Photographers, filmmakers, clients, etc., value the confidence I convey, the serenity I have in the face of any unexpected event (which is quite common), and, of course, the technique I use when handling food. The aesthetic criteria I use when composing a burger, a salad, or any type of still life has been much appreciated.

The most important thing is to know exactly what the client wants







and understand the brand's style. Every major brand strives for its own signature, and it's essential not to lose sight of it. For example, in my case, I have been working for the last 13 years with both Burger King and McDonald's, two brands with very different styles that everyone recognizes. My job is to never lose sight of that distinctive style.

Regarding placement and setup, I try to be clear about what I'm looking for and reach a consensus with all the departments involved: client, agency, creatives, photographer, director, etc, to ensure alignment. For this, having a good sketch is essential.

Once the product's positioning is

clear, it is essential that all the ingredients are clearly visible and appealing. This means that if the burger has two pickles, they must both be visible. It's pointless to place the mayonnaise in a very aesthetically pleasing way if it hides the rest of the ingredients. From there, it's about placing the ingredients in the most aesthetically pleasing way possible. I like to enhance each ingredient, adding droplets, giving shine and juiciness, whatever is necessary to make the product look as appetizing as possible.

I have worked on several international campaigns. I remember one for Burger King I did with photographer Ale Burset a few years ago, in which a very

peculiar clown was seen eating a Whopper. The result was spectacular, and the campaign won many awards.

I love to travel, and in recent years I have been lucky enough to work in different countries. I'd like to continue doing so, especially for the Asian market. Shooting in India would be a great plan.



# FOOD PHOTOGRAPHER BY PASSION

- Antara Boruah

An alumna of IIT-Powai, Antara Boruah left her corporate career to venture into the food industry—initially uncertain of her path, but certain of her love for food. Today, she is a sought-after food photographer, balancing her creative career with motherhood and being a devoted pet parent.





**A**fter leaving my job, I was sure I wanted to be in the food industry — I just didn't know in what capacity. I began sharing recipes on Facebook and Instagram, and a friend from Bangalore, who worked with a premium FMCG brand, encouraged me to develop recipes for them. That became my first paid project. I clicked the images on my phone and shared them online, and soon after, a fitness brand run by an ex-colleague reached out.

My love for photography started when I was creating recipes and visuals for brands — just trying to make the food look presentable for

their websites and social media. But somewhere in that process, I fell in love. With the way light touched a plate, how textures came alive on camera, and how a simple dish could tell a story. Slowly, my love for food and my obsession with capturing its beauty became one and the same — and that's when I knew this was more than just a task, it was my calling.

One thing led to another, and somewhere along the way, I realized I was falling in love with the photographs even more than the recipes. That's when my journey took a new turn — toward food photography.

But it was only after I moved to

Ahmedabad that things really took shape. Through IFEA meetups and food trials, I connected with the industry. Some incredible restaurateurs gave me a chance to showcase my work. Encouraged by local restaurateurs and supported by the IFEA network, my work began gaining recognition.

## Visual Storytelling

I feel most at home when working on brand storytelling. There's something deeply satisfying about bringing a brand's identity to life through visuals, whether it's for packaging, social media, or advertising. I love creating a narrative that's visually compelling and true to the brand's







core message.

I believe in respecting the food. Understanding its texture, how light interacts with it, and how best to highlight its natural beauty are all key. Simple styling, thoughtful props, and paying attention to color balance make a huge difference in elevating the dish visually.

I start by thinking about the emotion I want the viewer to feel — whether it's warmth, nostalgia, or indulgence. Then, I build the shot around that emotion using light, composition, and props that brings the narrative to life. For me, every image is a chance to tell a beautiful story.

I have had many fulfilling experiences, each special in its

own way. One recent highlight was a Diwali campaign shoot for a sustainable brand, where my team and I managed everything—from ideation and art direction to set styling and post-production—delivering the entire project in just two days. The client reached out after Diwali to thank us personally, sharing that the campaign had significantly boosted their sales, which was incredibly rewarding. Another unforgettable project was a week-long experience of food photography at the heritage hotels of Gondal that offered a deep dive into the region's rich culinary heritage. Each dish came with its own story, and being immersed in that culture, while experiencing true royal hospitality, made it all the more memorable.



And then there are shoots for brands I've long admired—those moments where professional growth meets personal joy. They are a reminder of how far I've come and how passionate I remain about the work I do.

## Team Work

A successful food shoot often involves a team of individuals with specialized skills for styling, photography, videography, assistance, props, models, editors, etc. Collaboration thrives on clear communication and a shared vision. I always involve my team members early in the process, making sure everyone understands the required deliverables and "why" behind the shoot. When everyone feels connected to the idea, it's much easier to bring that vision to life.



## My Forte

My journey in the food industry actually began as a recipe developer, not just behind the lens. This hands-on experience with cooking has given me a deep understanding of how food behaves, how it reacts to heat, light, plating, and time.

That intuitive knowledge is something many photographers don't bring to the table, and it really helps me capture food in its most appetizing and honest form.

Another key aspect of my work is that I do both the photography and the food styling myself. In food

photography, styling isn't just a support function—it's an integral part of the final visual. Being both the photographer and the stylist allows me to seamlessly merge technical precision with creative vision. It also removes the extra layer of coordination that usually comes with hiring a separate

stylist, making the process smoother and faster for my clients.

## Inspiration

I absolutely admire Abhishek Khanna—his work is a masterclass in clean aesthetics, gorgeous lighting, and styling that feels effortless yet intentional. He's a true perfectionist, and it shows in every frame. On the international front, I love following Dennis Prescott, Skyler

Burt, and Linda Snieder. Each of them brings such a unique style to the table—whether it's Dennis's bold, vibrant storytelling, Skyler's moody, cinematic frames, or Linda's soft, minimal elegance. Their work never fails to inspire me!

## Tips for upcoming food photographers

Master the fundamentals, but don't be afraid to break the rules once you understand them. The journey is unique to each person, so focus on developing your own style and let your passion guide you. Your authenticity is your biggest asset.



# THE CULINARY CREATIVE PROFESSIONAL



**Barney Pau is a London-based culinary artist, writer, and creative whose work explores the intersections of food, art, and social commentary.**

**He focusses on food futures, queering consumption, and using foraging and fermenting as forms of social resistance.**

**He speaks to Anil Mulchandani about his 'edible tablescape' that challenge conventional dining norms.**



## What made you decide to enter the culinary profession?

My entry into food came after I studied a BA in Graphic Design from Central Saint Martins. I had been working in production, but was disheartened by the waste in the industry, and wanted to find a line of work through which I could affect sustainable change. I had always been interested in food, so I decided to retrain as a chef and worked in kitchens for a couple of years. I then returned to study an MA in Art and Ecology from Goldsmiths University, with a focus on food as my art medium. As such, design and art were my

## Why do you focus on sustainability, foraging and fermenting?

My interest in sustainability came through learning that changing my diet to plant-based was one of the most impactful ways to reduce environmental impact. From a personal choice, this soon spooled into my work life, as I retrained as a vegan chef. Though I don't advertise my food as such, the undercurrent of sustainability has remained important to me, as I make sure to source locally and sustainably where possible, and cook solely plant-based. The foraging came from a childhood

spent in the Catalan Pyrenees, where every autumn we would go out mushroom gathering. My parents are avid gardeners and know a lot about both wild and cultivated plants, so I naturally picked up this passion, as did my brothers. The fermentation I feel is more of a personal thing, as I see my identity as a queer person reflected in the ways microbes work food.

## Which have been your most exciting projects in food artistry?

Among the most exciting projects I have worked, are those which



challenge my conceptualisation. I thrive off a complex brief, so when I'm tasked with making a landscape edible, or developing a food installation in response to a magazine or perfume, I get especially excited. What I love the most, is working with other creatives to create truly unique and nuanced food-based experiences such as Beneath the Pavements, the Marshes, an art commission where I interpreted a nature reserve into a menu, for which an architect then designed a table; or my dinner for DAZED magazine, where the menu was developed in response to their latest DRAMA issue.

## How do you balance your diverse skills?

With so many different interests and directions of research, I have learned over time that less is often more. People will never know what you do as well as you, so it's about giving them a flavour of your work that they can understand. Rather than communicating everything I'm researching, I'll

focus on one area and use my different areas of expertise in different areas to communicate that idea. Another side of this is that, as people will often not be as invested in your work as you are, you can use creative license to twist a more interesting tale. My work is about storytelling, and though it's based around trying to communicate tangible truths, it's far more effective when I can play around with the concept to make my messages more palatable—quite literally.

## Did you face any challenges in starting out as food creative professional? If yes, how did you overcome them?

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## What are your thoughts on promoting food futures?

With so many different interests and directions of research, I have learned over time that less is often more. People will never know what you do as well as you, so it's about giving them a flavour of your work that they can understand. Rather than communicating everything I'm researching, I'll focus on one area and use my different areas of expertise in different areas to communicate that idea. Another side of this is that, as people will often not be as invested in your work as you are, you can use creative license to twist a more interesting tale. My work is about storytelling, and



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