

Food Writing Boot Camp

This is a sample syllabus. Actual course topics and assignments may vary by instructor and class.

Week 1

Overview and food news story: Food writing research and reporting techniques. Brief history of the genre. Different types of food writing.

Assignment: Write a news-related story (500 words) or solution to food-related mystery (500 words).

Week 2

Food trend stories: How much specialized food knowledge do you need? Discussion of mediums for food reporting. Specialized research techniques. Which venues are easiest to break into. Food-related trends.

Assignment: Write a food-related trend story (400 words).

Week 3

Profile: Finding sources. Tips for interviewing everyone from celebrity chefs to diners to farmers. Writing about characters in the food world.

Assignment: Write a profile of a food personality (500 words).

Week 4

Recipe-based food writing and editing: How to write or rewrite recipes for publication. How to write a pitch letter an editor can't turn down. Samples of pitch letters. Networking opportunities.

Assignment: Write a recipe-based story (500 words plus 1 or 2 recipes) and draft a pitch letter.

Week 5

The restaurant review: Techniques, tips, and ethical considerations. How to use and develop your palate as your best research tool. What are the different types of way to cover a restaurant? Managing deadlines and subject content crossover—how many ways can you spin one story? The mechanics of a good pitch letter.

Assignment: Write a restaurant review (500 words).

Week 6

Personal essay: Because food conjures up so many memories and emotions, just about every food magazine publishes personal pieces. Unusual venues for food writing—and how to spot them.

Assignment: Write a personal essay (500-750 words) and a list of possible venues for your food-related writing.

Week 7

The food feature: How to write features on a variety of culinary subjects, including how-to, culture, and travel pieces. Using food to tell great stories. How we discover a place through its culinary customs.

Assignment: Write a culture, travel or holiday-food feature (750-1000 words).

Week 8

Single subject/opinion piece: Writing about a food item with a historical or cultural significance. Tips for self-editing. How to write objective, personal, and humor-driven pieces.

Assignment: Short feature on a single food item (700 words). Students may submit a pitch letter.

