

SALONI KUKREJA

FOOD BLOGGING

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ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Saloni Kukreja is the founder of the jaw-dropping Instagram handle “Food Of Mumbai” which is all about food and travel. Saloni’s love for exploring new cuisine, culture and experimenting with fresh ingredients has gained her immense appreciation across various social media platforms.

Though Instagram proved to be a launchpad for Saloni, she has now successfully expanded ‘Food of Mumbai’ over Twitter, Snapchat, Facebook and Wordpress as well. Her blog has a plethora of cuisines and restaurants which attracts a broad audience of food-lovers. She aims to promote a healthier lifestyle by constantly discovering nutritious food and beverages while cutting down on food which contains unnecessary fat and sugar. She plans her path to fitness by exploring foods that are local, high on nutrition and are organic. Along with taking “Food of Mumbai” to newer heights, Saloni has also undertaken several social entrepreneurship projects under the organisation ‘Enactus’.

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OVERVIEW OF FOOD BLOGGING

Do you love food? Do you like trying out new recipes? If your answer is yes, then, a food blog may be right up your alley.



What is Food Blogging?

Food blogging is primarily a culmination of a gourmet interest in food along with a keen interest in Instagram and YouTube blogging. There are a few things to consider before starting a food blog. These include preparing and capturing food in the form of photos and videos. If you are hoping to make money through your Food Blog, then, you will need a clean, professional and minimalistic Instagram feed. People (i.e. followers and potential clients) will then look up to you as an expert. You need to have a clear goal in mind for your blog. It will help you decide the right content to be posted and will prevent you from appearing scattered or disorganized to your viewers and followers.

Types of Food Bloggers

The Cooking and Posting Bloggers

These bloggers cook extensively, post their cooking stories and super appetizing pictures along with a story in their blog posts. The blog could be an Instagram blog that documents highly experimental food or deal with authentic recipes.



The Restaurant Reviewers

These bloggers review restaurants for the quality of its food, service, ambience and pricing. They provide a detailed explanation of their review. They also explain their motivation behind visiting a certain place and are considered credible for their legitimate and unbiased reviews.

The Super Niche Blogs

These bloggers catalogue a very niche subject within food. Gluten-Free blogs, Bake blogs, Vegan blogs etc. will come under this category. Their blogs have a collection of recipes that chronicles the food they eat and their lifestyle choices.



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SKILLS REQUIRED TO BECOME A FOOD BLOGGER

Learn about various other ingredients such as storytelling, the skill of networking and creativity that come together to create a rather appetizing blog through this lesson.



The Art of Storytelling

Food blogs are more than just food on a plate. Food Blogging involves storytelling through the lens of food. Discover your unique style of storytelling by curating the story behind what you cook or review. Are you preparing soup from a recipe that was passed down from your grandmother? Sharing the family history and rituals behind a recipe would be a unique way to draw readers into your experience. Starting a food blog is just like learning how to cook. It is exciting, messy, challenging and yet, very satisfying. In one case, Saloni Kukreja visited “Canon Pav Bhaji” and penned down the story behind the restaurant’s origin and growth in her blog.

Consistency

In an over-saturated sphere such as food blogging, consistency is the key. It is mandatory to update your blog frequently with new products, recipes and reviews to keep your readers engaged. The blogs which are regularly updated are also given a higher rank on search engines, thereby increasing the chances of potential readers finding them. Do not be discouraged about low reach or followers at the very onset of your blogging journey. If you create high-quality posts with pictures and tried-and-true recipes, your viewership will increase gradually.



Uniqueness

What does it take to be a great blogger? It is important to not do what everyone else is doing. There are too many blogs out there that cause a clutter in the blogosphere. You need to find ways to stand apart from the crowd.

This can be achieved through altering the aesthetics or the style of photography. For instance, when Saloni created a video of a smoothie bowl, she structured her content in such a way that the ingredients required for preparation were minimal. Even the way you structure your content can help you stand out as a food blogger.

Love for Food

Bloggers who have an insatiable appetite and love for food, attract visitors who need inspiration. Your passion for blogging should be evident in everything and anything you do. Your viewers should be convinced that you will work tirelessly to provide them with the ultimate food experience. Find out what the other food bloggers around the world are doing. Keep yourself updated about the upcoming food festivals and new restaurants in your city. Saloni started food blogging as a result of her undying obsession with food. She looks at ingredients and thinks of all possible combinations and recipes that can be created with them.



Creativity

You need to push yourself to be creative. However, it is easy to fall into the comparison trap and feel alienated at the thought of not doing enough. At this point, the critic in you will get over to your creative side. As a part of your content creation strategy, it is important to remember what brings people to your blog. What kind of recipe does your audience want? Is it a simple recipe or a one with a twist in flavour? Find out the latest trends regarding photography and videography. Creativity is also found in the form of lighting, style and composition.

Networking Skills

Networking is crucial to one's blogging success. Talk to professional photographers who can help you with stunning pictures. Network with chefs and restaurant owners and feature their upcoming events and food festivals. Network with food stylists who can help you in styling the food. Your ability to connect with other fellow bloggers is the key to your growth. Great content is created when bloggers collaborate with each other.



03

DEVELOP THE REQUIRED SKILLS

The art of food appreciation is extremely critical in your journey as a food blogger. Learn how to upgrade your food appreciation skills, content writing skills, photography skills and culinary skills.



Content Writing Skills

The only way to build a food blog that attracts a large number of visitors is to provide valuable content to your audience. The material should be unique, engaging and helpful. It is therefore essential to be a good writer if you want to become a great food blogger. Read cookbooks and write every single day to hone your writing skills. It is imperative to write short and crisp captions for your Instagram posts that convey a clear message.

Photography & Editing Skills

Food photography is an essential component of food blogging. It is imperative to have a clean and pleasant quality image for your blogs. A great picture has an excellent composition, concept and high-quality editing. Buy a point and shoot camera, invest in a tripod to keep your camera steady, use natural light and edit your photos to lighten dark areas and brighten colours. You can begin with free editing software and can later upgrade to the paid versions. You can attend workshops or ask a skilled friend to teach you photography. Starting out, Saloni did not know how to use a DSLR camera. She learnt the technical aspects of photography by going through tutorials on Youtube.



Culinary Skills

Culinary Skill is all about being inquisitive about food. It is the core of food blogging. You need to research about food, talk to people in the food industry, observe the recipe creation to hone your culinary skills. Saloni did not go to a high-end culinary school, but this did not stop her from experimenting in the kitchen. It is messy in the beginning, but eventually, everything will fall into place. For instance, Saloni loved red-velvet cake but failed to get the recipe right every time she tried to bake one. But, when she got it right in her 11th trial, it was well worth the effort. Learn about ingredients and talk to chefs. You can participate in culinary workshops or take cooking courses online. Do not be scared to experiment with food.

Food Appreciation

Food Appreciation might seem like a slightly odd skill to include, but it is as important as the other points. You need to understand the complexity behind each dish and not merely eat it. It can be done by going to a large number of restaurants and following their various ingredients. Even though it is a time-consuming affair, it is worth realising the difference between elements that are sourced from different places. In the long run, you will understand the difference between what constitutes good and bad food. Saloni tried a lot of macaroons from various restaurants to understand the difference between them. She researched about it, experimented with the recipes to realize and appreciate the taste of a “good macaroon.”



Social Media Skills

It is important to learn social media skills. You should first familiarise yourself with the three major social networking platforms, namely, Facebook, Instagram & Twitter. You will then learn about audience demographics and behaviour which is unique to each platform. You need to promote your posts to get more likes and followers. Hone your social media skills by reading blogs dedicated to social media marketing.



04

HOW TO GET STARTED WITH FOOD BLOGGING?

In this lesson, you will learn about developing your personality, carving a niche for yourself, the importance of hashtags and so on.



Find your blogger personality

The essential step in becoming a food blogger is to identify yourself and your preferences. It is about finding your style and voice. You need to take your readers on a journey and make them feel as if they are with you. You need to discover your “blogger personality” and stay true to it. If you love vegan food, then write about it. If you like desserts, then, center your blog around that.

Getting a Blog name

Depending on the nature of your Instagram account, you can determine your blog name. If you are planning to create a brand out of it, then, the name has to be a professional one. However, if you are planning to build a food blog for fun, then, the name can be a whimsical one.

Choose Your Niche

You need to carve your niche and narrow down your focus to set it apart from the other food blogs. You need to figure out the type of food you love the most. Then, spend time learning more about it. Remember, you do not need to be an expert if you wish to be a food blogger.

Don't be afraid to follow people

Do not be afraid to put your food Instagram out there. Follow relevant food accounts and chefs or restaurants that inspire you. Over time, they will come to know of your existence in the blogosphere.

**Do not over-filter**

Just let the natural picture of food do the talking. Do not post pictures that have awkward lighting or are blurry. Do not over filter your pictures and ruin its natural essence.

Cheat Content

Cheat Content gets a lot of engagement on social media, especially on Instagram. This may include cutting a hot lava chocolate cake or funny cat videos. You should post such videos occasionally to keep your audience interested.

Hashtags

Hashtags are crucial for engagement on Instagram. Customize hashtags and ask people to use it. Remember, you should add all the famous and relevant hashtags to your photos. Do not shy away from tagging your favorite restaurants, fellow bloggers and other food pages to get a chance of being featured on their Instagram page.

Captions

Well-written and witty captions are crucial to food blogging. You should be able to create food puns easily. These will appeal to both old and new followers and can put a smile on their face. If you are putting up a recipe on Instagram, then, you need to structure it in a readable fashion.

**Quality over quantity**

Instagrammers want high-quality pictures and not an abundance of them. You should plan your posts well in advance. You should remember to curate your feed in such a manner that it looks aesthetically pleasing to your visitors.



05

CONTENT IDEAS FOR YOUR BLOG

What should you post on your Instagram blog to keep the audience engaged? What does it take to keep your followers constantly wanting to see more of your posts? Read this lesson to find the answer.



Lists

Everyone loves a comprehensive list. The rule of thumb for creating such videos is to stay seasonal and tropical. For instance, you can create a list of juices to beat the summer heat. You can make a list of 5 best restaurants in Mumbai or 6 festive recipes that can be made with strawberries. You can ask your subscribers to mention their favourites in the comment section. Thus, it works as an engaging piece of content.

Single Recipe

Single recipe videos are shared immensely on Facebook and Youtube. Saloni created the “Nutella Mug Recipe” in one minute using the least number of ingredients. If you want to build a personal connection with your audience, consider getting in front of the camera. If you are camera shy, then consider filming a close up of your hands and add a sweet voice over.

Techniques

Many food bloggers are scared to cook because they are unaware of the proper food techniques. Therefore, start with basic cooking techniques such as frosting cupcakes, deveining shrimps, making a roux or blanching asparagus. Once you are confident about creating recipes, then, link it back to your technique videos through annotations & cards.



Grocery Haul

It is a favourite genre among food bloggers because it attracts a large number of subscribers. You need to set the camera on a tripod and unbox grocery items bought from the marketplace. Such videos receive a lot of engagement in the form of likes and comments. The bloggers talk about the pricing, ingredients and the recipes that they intend to cook.

What is In My Fridge

In this genre, you can tour shelves of your refrigerator with your camera and explain what you have at your disposal to cook that week. You can also share as to how you organize your fridge and store vegetables and meat. You can add a pantry tour if you want to create a longer video. If you have a noisy refrigerator, then, turn it off to prevent the background noise from ruining your sound recording.

What I Eat In a Day

"What I Eat in a Day" is a genre that focusses on a full day of eating. You can share your everyday diet with your viewers. If you are on a keto diet, then, you can showcase keto-specific recipes and the ingredients sources. People are just fascinated about what others eat. Therefore, you do not have to wait for an exclusive dining event to explore this genre. Simple, home-cooked meals are enough to get your subscribers' attention.



Local Discoveries

Create content that will appeal to travelers visiting your area. You can share recipes, unique to your local market or feature a list of the must-visit restaurants. Your focus should be on how your city makes a great destination for food lovers. For example, Saloni visited a restaurant called “Ashok Vada Pav” in Worli and learnt the story behind their recipes and showcased this in her blog.



06

BUILD YOUR ONLINE COMMUNITY

In this lesson, you will learn further about the importance of Instagram stories, giveaways and cross-platform promotions.





Be Responsive

If you do not reply to the comments on your picture or video, then your followers may perceive you as “rude” and “indifferent”. You should take out time to respond to direct messages and comments that you receive. It will help you build an engaged community of loyal people. You need to exhibit pro-activeness in acknowledging and valuing the efforts of your followers.

Instagram Live & Stories

You should pay attention to Instagram Live before it is too late. Users can ask questions and you can answer in real time. Instagram Live provides a two-way communication between you and your audience. It helps build authenticity and trust. You can go live on Instagram when you are at a restaurant. In this way, you can make your followers a part of your experience.

Instagram Stories can help you exhibit your creativity and post content, different from your normal posts. You can play with filters, text, stickers and create unique content such as a 15 second video clip, boomerangs etc. Saloni highlights behind-the-scenes of her blogs and quick fix recipes to keep her audience engaged.



Create Good Videos

Make sure that the videos you upload on Instagram or Youtube end on a memorable note. You need to create videos in such a manner that it leaves an everlasting impression on your viewers. Ask your viewers for honest feedback. It will help you in creating better content. This will also make your viewers know that you appreciate their viewership. Create a Standard Banner and "subscribe" annotations for all videos. It is important to make sure that your viewers are satisfied and they keep coming back for more.

Giveaways and Contests

Everyone loves giveaways and contests. Offer your followers or subscribers an incentive for their engagement with your channel. Giveaways also help in attracting new followers. Everyone admires the idea of getting something free, and you must make use of this opportunity. A giveaway is in fact, a free and viral promotion of your brand. It can be in the form of restaurant vouchers or even free food. For a grand contest, you can ask users to follow you on your social media accounts, tag their friends and complete a challenge.

For instance, Saloni collaborated with "The Irish House" on Christmas Eve. The brand decided to give her followers vouchers for a Christmas brunch that they were hosting. People had to follow the Instagram handle of "The Irish House", tag their friends and complete a challenge. The brand got its exposure, Saloni's Instagram handle had a high reach and the audience got an incentive at the same time.



Cross-platform promotion

Discoverability is necessary if you are trying to establish your food blog. It takes effort, time and a long-term commitment. In this age of social media, being active on multiple social platforms is a prerequisite for being alive. If you upload a video on Instagram, share it on Twitter for cross-platform promotion. When Saloni wants to leverage traction on Twitter, she asks her followers on Instagram to participate in a Twitter contest.



07

IS FOOD BLOGGING A VIABLE CAREER

The mention of brands and giveaways might have made you wonder about sponsorships associated with food blogging.

This lesson focuses more on this topic, affiliate marketing and the potential earnings you can make out of this, as a career.



Create Sponsored Posts

You can create original sponsored posts for brands and engage with your followers. Such posts involve captions with specialised branded hashtags. It is essential that the brands you promote through your Instagram are a good fit for your personal image. Find brands that are constantly in hunt for influencers.

Becoming an Affiliate

An affiliate makes a sale for the partner brand in exchange for a commission. Affiliate Marketing is done using unique promo codes or links to ensure that clicks convert into sales. Since Instagram does not allow links anywhere other than the bio, you should only focus on one product at any given time. You can create promo codes and share it on your Instagram posts.

How much can you earn?

If you are a newbie, then you can expect to earn Rs 2000- 4000 per post and close to Rs. 15,000/- a month. When you have gained a moderate fan base, you can easily earn up to Rs. 5,000-10,000 per post which in turn makes your monthly income somewhere close to Rs. 40,000 depending on the number of your posts. When you have a very large following on Instagram, you can make anywhere between Rs 10,000- 20,000 per post. The total amount one can expect is around Rs. 60,000 a month.



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