



*deliciously  
coloured*

COLOUR THEORY IN  
FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY

(SAMPLE VERSION)

BY MARIANNE HAGGSTROM - DELICIOUSLY CAPTURED





# deliciously coloured

COLOUR THEORY IN FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY

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# colour is where the story starts

Deliciously Coloured

Have you asked yourself what exactly captivates and visually inspires you in a food image? What creates that heartwarming feeling inside of you the moment you open a new cookbook or a food magazine? I personally fall in love with an image which feels effortless, inviting and is full of airiness and natural balance. My creativeness is powered by simplicity and I want the colour harmony to tell the same story.

Our imagination is driven and inspired by colour, the harmonies and the mood they deliver. Inspiration is the trigger that sparks our creativeness. To me food photography is about creating a compelling story of our food scene. With every image we are trying to invite the viewer into our scene, to make them feel at ease in the story we are trying to tell by creating an aesthetically pleasing atmosphere. Understanding basic colour psychology and perfect colour harmonies will allow your food photography, your creativeness and imagination to come to life. We as food photographers use simple compositional techniques as well as the right colour harmonies to create an inspiring and inviting food imagery. All of our knowledge of creating fascinating imagery comes down to the colours we use and composition we apply. The journey I wish to take you is to learn about which colour which allows you to tell your story better and stronger.



Little bit about me - My name is Marianne, I'm a Finn in London and a photographer behind Deliciously Captured and Marianne Haggstrom Photography. My love for beautifully composed images and design in every aspect has allowed me to create my own bright and airy photography brand. I wanted to create the "Deliciously" series to allow you to splash statement colour harmonies and drizzle superb compositional techniques into your visual storytelling which would allow you to create your delicious food images. This is a sample of my "Deliciously Coloured" ebook where I wish to share my fascination about colour theory in food photography. Hopefully you will enjoy it. I would love to hear your feedback. Lets start the journey.

Love, *Marianne*



*fyi - i love eggs ... to eat and to photograph*





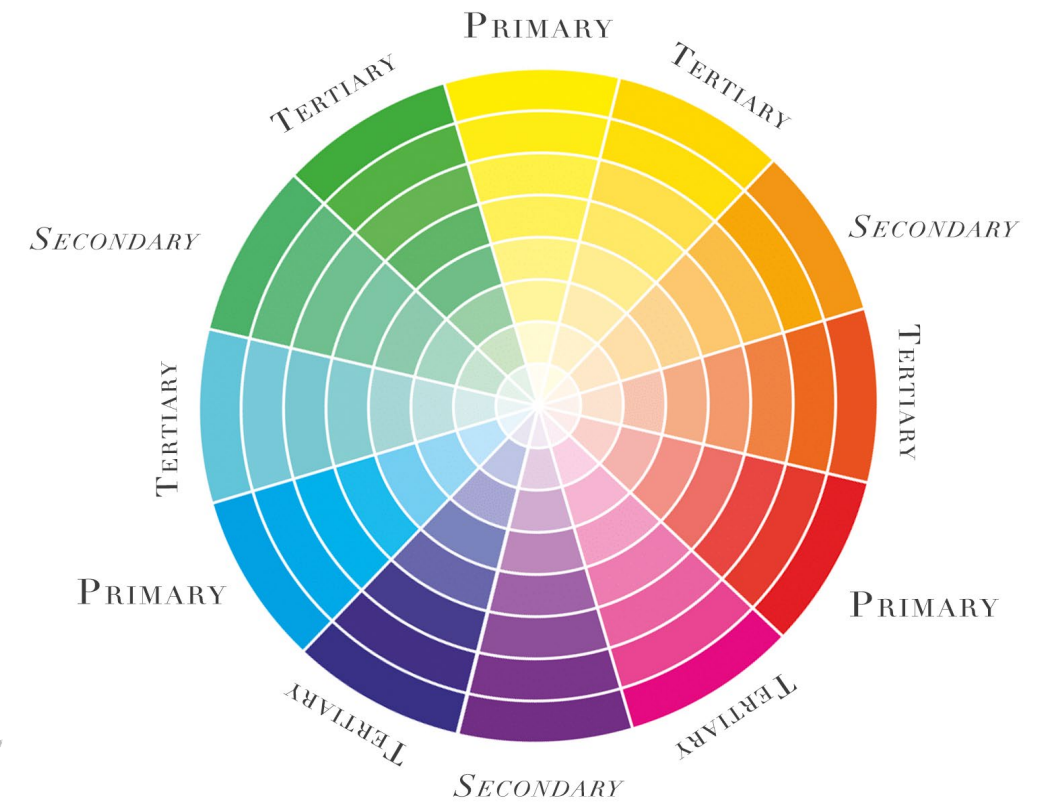
# True power of colour

Colour has the power to create balance and enhance your image, it will allow your food hero to stand out and as mentioned - tell a stronger visual story. Colour and appeal in food goes hand in hand - fresher colour equals a more appetising image. Just think of an ingredient past it's peak of freshness, wilting away, an avocado getting browner vs a fresh one - colour in food photography matters, think about what props or backdrops you use, what colour your food hero will be and what you will combine it with. You can have the most amazing dish and styling but if the colours you've chosen do not support your story - the image will feel uninspiring.

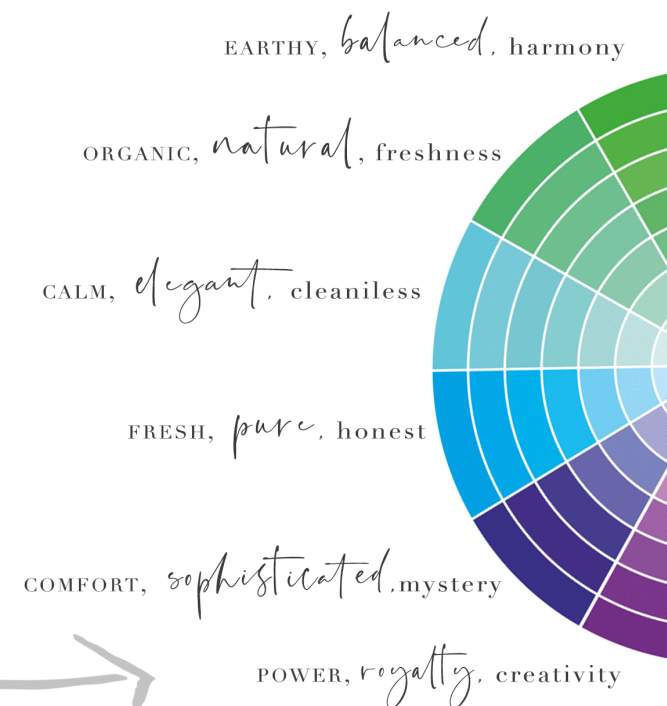
Lets start the journey to understand the basics of colour theory. I want to start with the colour wheel. The colour wheel is a visual demonstration showing the relationship of primary, secondary and tertiary colours, organized in hues.

As displayed - the colour wheel consists of 12 hues - three primary colours (Red, Yellow and Blue), these are the colours which cannot be created by mixing any other colours. Three secondary colours (Green, Orange and Purple) are created by mixing the primary colours.

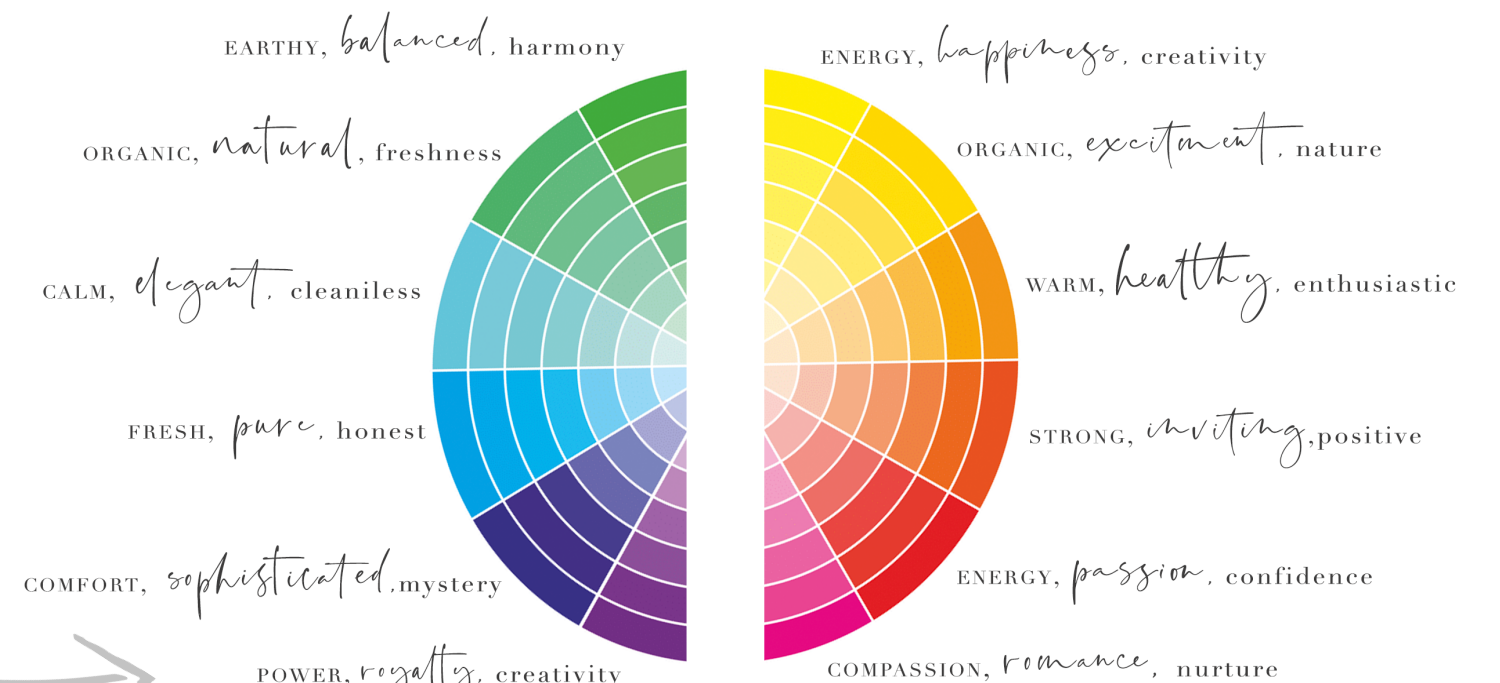
And finally six tertiary colours (colour between primary and secondary, such as blue-green, red-orange etc.) are created by mixing a primary and a secondary colour. By splitting the colour wheel in half you will get your warm and cool colours. By mixing in achromatic colours - white, black or grey you will get different Tint (mixing white), Shade (mixing black) or Tone (mixing grey). All the colours have their own meanings and feelings they evoke. I have collected some of these which will help you when designing your moodboard for your next food capture. Think about the mood and the atmosphere with the message you want to deliver.



## COOL colours



## WARM colours





# warm and cool colours

Every image we view has a natural visual balance. The colour combinations we choose, the dark and light, the warm and cool and the harmonies have an impact on the visual balance as well. Visual balance often refers to the balance the items in your image creates, the visual weight needs to be distributed evenly to make the image easy to view and enjoyable. Lets review the image of the blueberry topped cheesecake slices - using the complementary colour scheme. The image feels calm, very feminine and romantic - thanks to the soft pastel tones and the light and airy lighting and backdrop. When we add lighter pastel tones into our image it will naturally delivers softer, more at ease, image. The image contains both cool and warm colours which brings in comforting elements of warm colours and freshness of cool colours.



Composing an image with cooler tones in mind will tell a story of calmness, crispiness and elegance. Cool colours have a sense of air in them, a freshness that delivers a very healthy message in an image. Blue is a colour of cleanliness and calm, while other cool colours such as green brings an organic and fresh feel to an image and while violet brings mystery and sophistication especially when combined with moodier scene.

Capturing images which contain warmer tones delivers a totally different message to cooler colours. Warm colours create an image of comfort, energy and nurturing. Warm colours such as yellow, orange and red are very appetising colours.

*note*

Photographing food on cool colour backdrops will make the food look and feel fresher. Combining the perfect balance of warm and cool will allow you to deliver balanced and enjoyable image.



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# colour harmonies

Colour harmonies refer to colour combinations which are universally aesthetic and most appealing to the eye, by creating the right amount of contrast. Simply put - colours that look good together, complement and create harmony. By using the right colour harmony in your visual storytelling you will evoke the desired mood in the viewer with the greatest impact and create visually balanced image. In this sample version I look into the following colour schemes :



Complementary



Analogous



Monochromatic



Split-Complimentary

## analysis - autumn soup of comfort

Creating seasonal images is all about the colour. Every season has their signature colours and here is a display of all things autumnal. Warming and comforting analogous colour harmony makes the viewer feel welcomed, at ease and cozy. There is something so very nostalgic and homely about analogous orange and yellow hues - the most appetising colours on the colour wheel.



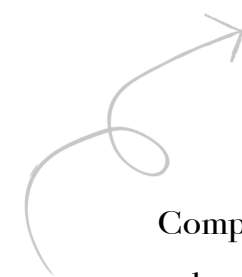


# our simple favourites

While admiring images by talented food photographers we can easily see that these two harmonies are the big favourites. The message these colour schemes deliver is cohesive, strong and very well balanced. They have a subtle wow factor when it comes to the dominant hues.

Planning your image starts with your main colour as it is the hero you have chosen. This will dictate the mood and colour space or perhaps the seasonal theme and feel you're about to create.

Lets dive into our colour harmonies and see how to create a stronger image with your chosen



## complementary



Complementary colours are two colour opposites of each other on the colour wheel. These colours are high in contrast and have a greater impact. They are energetic but have a natural balance due to containing one warm and one cool colour. Use two colours in their full saturation so as not to mute the story your are telling.



## monochromatic



Monochromatic colour schemes are the most popular in food photography. It has a softness of the lighter tint and richness of the darker shades. It has a serene and subtle impact on an image. Monochromatic means using one main hue of your chosen colour and then using different tints, shades and tones of that colour.



# our adventurous harmonies

There are colour schemes that are adventurous and brave, but at the same time harmonious and less aggressive. Analogous and split-complementary are exactly that. They are strong visual storytellers with freshness and creativeness like no other.



## analogous

Analogous colours are three colours side by side on the colour wheel. These are the colours most often found in nature hence they create a very organic and balanced image. They have the natural contrast of colours and richness that flows through the image. Analogous colour schemes contains one primary, one secondary and one tertiary - making it a very pleasing colour combination.



## split-complementary

Split-complementary is made out of three colours - one dominant and then two colours either side of the complement. This scheme is very easy on the eye and somewhat softer than the complementary.

*tip*

What makes your image to stand out? It is a well balanced capture, not only your composition and object placements and the lighting you use but the colour harmonies you have chosen. The mood and colour temperature together with the colour scheme will be the elements that deliver the message and story you want to tell. Study your subject and think about your supporting colours. Simplicity may tell a stronger story than you think.



# capturing creativeness

- THUSHARA KAMBIL -

@MINION\_N\_ME



@MINION\_N\_ME

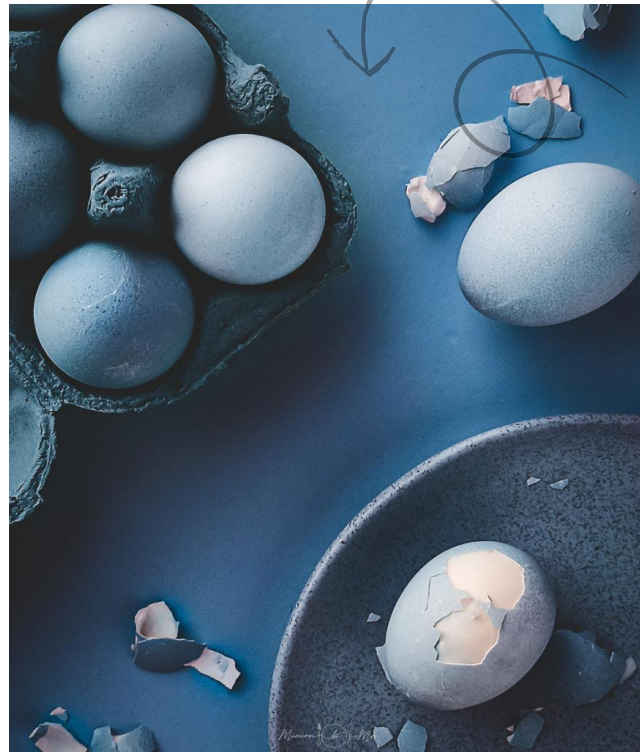
I wanted to add an image analysis of the talented Thushara who is the creative soul behind @minion\_n\_me. Thushara kindly joined to co-host the IG collaboration #DeliciouslyColoured with me during February. Her inspiring work through @ourfoodtabletales and #compositioncollab gives the taste of her statement images, with bold and cohesive colour harmonies. Her inspiration can come from simple ingredients and her creativeness is produced by how light and shadow bring out the different shades, tones, shapes and textures in a subject. I admire her amazing artistic eye and fabulous composition and styling. Every image she creates has a strong balance and that WOW factor we all search and aim for.

*analysis* I wanted to analyse these two stunning shots by Thushara. Both of these images fall into the monochromatic colour scheme - they are impressive and harmonious. Both are created in a different colour temperature space - we have an image delivering a message of

history, comfort and mystery while the other creates a scene of freshness and purity.

Cool blue egg image will have a significant calming and relaxing impact on the viewer. It is not only harmonious in composition but playing around with the different tints of blue creates a serene atmosphere.

While the warm colour space image filled with different shades of orange has a massively comforting feel to it. The colour tells a story of history and wisdom. Strong darks, hints of violet, subtle tones bring a message of luxury.





# how to tell your stronger story

Our imagination will run wild when we are inspired, motivated and happy in the space we live. I have always loved the technical side of executing an image - ISO, aperture, shutter speed, focal length, light - this was all portrait photography - how to make a perfect child or newborn image.

But I also had a love for cookbooks, food magazines and food imagery and I realised there is more to create a perfectly balanced image. I found colour, texture, implied movement, physical movement, story telling, visualisation of your food story through textured backdrops, props,.... antique knives and forks, napkins ..... goodness - list is endless... But soon I realised that if the colour is off - your image is too.

My passion for learning guided me to colour as a starting point. I know a lot of people will disagree with me thinking that composition will surely come first? To me perfect colour harmony could save badly composed image.

This is the reason for choosing this subject for my first "Deliciously" ebook. Do not get me wrong - composition will elevate your colour story and add some magic to your image and that is why - "Deliciously Coloured" will be followed by.....

Love, *Marianne*

*analysis* eggs and avocado on toast? Yes please! My happiness on a plate - and the perfect analogous colour harmony. It is nature telling you that green, yellow and orange are the most organic, energetic and happy colour combo. Analogous colour harmony is something we see in nature often and that is making this image feel so natural, at easy, serene and well balanced. Colours next to each other on the colour wheel will always deliver harmonious images, regardless of the colours. Trust the wheel - it will work. But always - trust yourself, be yourself!



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