



#Foodstagram

1m

Picture-perfect FOOD

BY MIKHAILA CROWIE

Food now has a good side. Recently a group of us had lunch, and as our meals arrived, we immediately whipped out our phones and snapped away with the intention of uploading our photos to Instagram. We spent time finding the best filter for the image and hashtags to document this experience: #food #yum; all before tucking into our meal.



Later, I opened my Instagram, browsed #food and was greeted by a feast of delicious cakes, perfect salads and the most delectable foods imaginable. My stomach growled as I kept scrolling and began to wonder when we became so obsessed with Instagramming our food?

INTRODUCING 'FOODSTAGRAMMING'

Walk into any restaurant today and you'll spot people taking pictures of their coffee or sandwiches. The term is called 'foodstagramming' and social media experts warn that it won't slow down anytime soon. On the app, food pictures are soaring with pizza and sushi being the top instagrammed food globally. So why are the rest of my followers so interested in the burger I posted on Instagram? Do they approve of what I'm eating? Well, actress and singer Hilary Duff posted a picture of a fried egg and it received loads of 'likes'; what does that tell you?

Why do people 'like' certain things more than others on social media? I've posted a badly exposed picture of a waffle and ice-cream and this image received more likes than any of my family pictures.

THE KINGS AND QUEENS OF FOODSTAGRAMMING

Love them or hate them, the millennial generation own social media and they make up 77% of Instagram users. They want visuals, not text, and Instagram is perfect for this. It's their beautiful visual world. What better way of showing the world how on-trend you are than posting an aesthetically pleasing image of a pineapple or perfectly lit salad. Foodstagramming is a phenomenon. It's a way of bragging about where and what we eat. This digital food revolution has given birth to accounts dedicated to cuisine and providing recipe information, and blogs offering advice on how to capture the perfect foodstagram.

SO WITH FOODSTAGRAMMING ON THE RISE, WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR RESTAURANTS?

In the US, some restaurants have banned the use of flash photography while others have banned pictures of food altogether. Why? They say it ruins the experience. Momofuku, a two Michelin star New York restaurant, has banned picture taking completely. The ban was instated once the owner saw how distracted and uncomfortable other diners were when a phone was whipped out to take pictures. One can sympathise with him. Imagine after a long week, you're heading out to grab a drink and a bite to eat with friends; your food arrives and you're just about to tuck in when one of your friends stops you. Going as far as standing on a chair, your friend proceeds to take an aerial shot of all the food on the table before you are allowed to start eating. It's enough to make you lose personality, right?

WHAT IS SOUTH AFRICA'S STANCE ON THIS?

It is divided but not enough to instate a ban. However, there is some noted annoyance. Acclaimed South African chef Reuben Riffels, has not banned food photography at his restaurants, but has a definite issue with people documenting their food without eating or interacting with guests. Other restaurant owners just hope that diners will post flattering images of their food, and thus attracting new visitors.

ANY PUBLICITY IS GOOD PUBLICITY

On many occasions, I have tried a restaurant based on foodstagram posts. If the pasta in my feed looked delicious, you would definitely spot me there at some point. Believe it or not, this is how many people are selecting their next restaurant outing, and this is why many South African restaurants are hesitant on banning foodstagramming.

Foodstagramming may be irritating and distracting for some, but it is real and here to stay. Don't forget these words by French philosopher, Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, "Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are".

