

Fruitful Collaboration

For Shruti Jain, founder of vegetarian food blog The Leaf Bowl, visual presentation is a fundamental part of experiencing a meal. In an exclusive feature for Verve, she photographs a collection of six inviting fruit-based dishes, capturing the richness of their natural colours in her trademark minimal style

TEXT BY TINA DASTUR

One of the most polarising topics in the culinary world is that of taste versus presentation. And no one understands the importance of carefully balancing both aspects better than food blogger Shruti Jain of The Leaf Bowl.

The New Delhi-based graduate in graphic design started her blog only last year, but proudly labels herself a 'food artist' today, and rightly so. Her own one-woman army, Jain not only cooks the drool-worthy dishes that brighten up her social media pages, she even styles, composes and photographs them. A quick scroll through her Instagram profile is enough to tell you that she's a stickler for the 'less is

more' philosophy. Simple and spartan in appeal, her frames adopt a cool colour palette, focus on only the most basic elements and are illuminated entirely by natural light.

In this photoessay, she embraces the familiarity of fruits. "Basic ingredients that disappear into the final product yet give flavour are indispensable to good cooking. The beauty of fruits lies in their versatility and ability to transform even the simplest of dishes into a great meal. Their bright tones and varying flavours are perfect for recipes that range from pies and cakes to salads, cocktails and savoury dishes, too," she expands.

DISH: POACHED PEARS
ELEMENTS: POACHED PEARS,
CREAM, SPICED SUGAR SYRUP





DISH: POUND CAKE WITH POMEGRANATE DRIZZLE
ELEMENTS: POUND CAKE, POMEGRANATE DRIZZLE, POMEGRANATE PEEL





DISH: APPLE JUICE
ELEMENTS: RED GRAPES, CANARY
MELON (USED AS PROPS)



DISH: MELON ORANGE COOLER
ELEMENTS: MELON ORANGE
COOLER, CUT FRUITS



DISH: ORANGE, GRAPEFRUIT AND KALE SALAD
ELEMENTS: GRAPEFRUIT, ORANGE, GREEN MANDARIN, KALE, POMEGRANATE SEEDS, ORANGE PEEL

Excerpts from an interview....

“Food has always been an integral part of who I am. I work as a graphic designer, but also consider myself a food artist because I love everything related to food. I have a knack for food styling and photography, but the foundation was laid during my time at the National Institute of Fashion Technology, New Delhi. To further understand the art and science of cooking, I did a diploma course in French patisserie from the Academy of Pastry Arts, Gurugram. My main aim with The Leaf Bowl is to merge my expertise in graphic design with my love for food and create something beautiful.”

“Nature is my constant source of inspiration. The concept always centres on simplicity and growing with nature.”

“My aesthetic is minimal and organic, focusing on only that which is essential to the frame. I enjoy working with cooler shades – whites, greys, blues and greens. I have only recently started playing around with bright and pastel hues. My colour palette is always evolving, in the sense that I am always experimenting with new colours for my backgrounds and props.”

“I admire the work of photographers and food stylists such as Sanda Vuckovic Pagaimo, Karen Mordechai, Louie Waller and Marieke Verdenius. Platforms like Instagram and Pinterest do a wonderful job of showcasing the works of people from across the globe...there’s so much to learn, it’s overwhelming! To better my skill set, I also flip through magazines like *Kinfolk* and *Cereal* for inspiration.”

“I believe that we eat with our eyes first. The visual aesthetic of a dish has a strong impact on the overall experience of enjoying a meal. Presenting a dish is an art in itself and can either elevate the experience or have it fall completely flat.”

“Going forward, The Leaf Bowl will aim at specialising in thoughtful imagery and design content for food brands, restaurants, magazines, cookbooks and entrepreneurs. I would love to collaborate with food and design communities and also run workshops in styling and photography, host gatherings and occasionally organise intimate culinary events with like-minded people.”



DISH: BREAKFAST TABLE – BREAD,
MANGO JAM AND FRUITS
ELEMENTS: BREAD, PEARS, RED
GRAPES, MANGO JAM