

MOBILE PHOTOGRAPHY GUIDE

Restaurant

Shoot your own product photos
with just a smartphone.

From the plated hero dish to the candlelit two-top — twenty scenes that book a table tonight, not next Friday.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- **Phone photo basics for total beginners**
Wipe, lock, light — the cheat sheet.
- **Free editing apps that pros actually use**
Snapseed, Lightroom Mobile, VSCO. All free.
- **Cheap gear that triples your photo quality**
Lights under \$40, lenses, props, backdrops.
- **20 scenarios × 3 angles each, drawn**
Eye-level, top-down, low — copy them on set.

PHONE PHOTO BASICS · READ THIS FIRST

10 things pros do that amateurs skip — for stills.

Photos are different from video: every frame counts. One sharp, well-lit still beats a hundred half-baked ones. These ten habits become muscle memory after a couple of shoots.

01 Wipe the lens. Every. Single. Time.

Phones live in pockets. Fingerprints look fine to your eye, terrible in the photo. Microfibre cloth in your apron.

03 Use natural light, kill the ceiling lights.

Window 90° from subject = magazine cover light. Yellow ceiling LEDs poison everything.

05 Get close, but use the 2× lens for objects.

Phone macro under 30 cm distorts. For tight product shots, switch to 2× and stand 50–80 cm back.

07 Use the 2-second self-timer.

Pressing the shutter shakes the phone. Timer + tripod = pin-sharp every time, even at low light.

09 Fill the frame deliberately.

Decide what's the hero. Then put it on a third — never dead-centre unless the composition is symmetrical on purpose.

02 Shoot at the highest resolution.

iPhone: Settings → Camera → Formats → Most Compatible (or Apple ProRAW).

Samsung: Camera → Pro → RAW. JPEG is

04 Tap to focus. Tap-and-hold to lock.

fine for casual; RAW for product photos. iPhone shows yellow box → "AE/AF Lock". Slide the sun icon to fine-tune brightness. Keep it locked between shots.

06 Use a tripod (or stack of books).

Sharpness drops the moment your hand shakes. Brace on a counter, or invest \$25 in a mini-tripod. Game over.

08 Shoot at eye-level of the product.

Hip-height phone snaps look amateur. Get the lens at the same height as the focal point of the subject.

10 Shoot 5 takes minimum.

Tiny shifts in angle change everything. First take is rehearsal, fourth is usually the keeper. Free to retake.

CAMERA SETTINGS

Best photo settings for your phone.

Set these once, forget about them. They turn a snapshot into a product shot — without you doing anything different on set.

iPhone

- **Photo format: Most Compatible (JPEG).**
Settings → Camera → Formats → Most Compatible. Easier to share. Use "High Efficiency" only if storage is tight.
- **Apple ProRAW (Pro models).**
Settings → Camera → Formats → Apple ProRAW & Resolution → ON. Then tap RAW button in the Camera app. Edit-friendly, larger files.
- **Grid + Mirror Front Camera + Level: ON.**
Settings → Camera → Composition → Grid + Mirror Front Camera + Level. Three free upgrades.
- **Live Photos: OFF for product work.**
The yellow icon at the top — tap it OFF. Live photos burn battery and storage. Off for product, on for people.
- **HDR: AUTO.**
Default. Phone decides. Works 95% of the time. Manually disable only when shooting backlit silhouettes.
- **Tap-and-hold to lock AE/AF.**
Yellow box says "AE/AF Lock". Slide the sun icon to fine-tune brightness. Re-lock if you move the camera.

Samsung Galaxy

- **Photo size: highest available (3:4).**
Camera → Settings (gear) → Picture format → JPEG. Picture size: maximum. Use 3:4 for product (more frame to crop later).
- **RAW (Pro mode).**
Camera → MORE → Pro → tap RAW icon. Saves a DNG + JPEG. Edit-friendly, bigger files.
- **Grid + Vertical/Horizontal Guides: ON.**
Camera Settings → Grid lines → 3×3. Settings → Composition → Auto guide. Free upgrades.
- **Scene Optimizer: OFF for product.**
Auto-modes oversaturate food and skin. Camera Settings → Scene Optimizer → OFF for shoots, ON for casual.
- **Pro mode for hard light.**
Camera → MORE → Pro. Manual ISO (100 in daylight, 400 indoors), shutter, white balance. Beats auto when lighting is tricky.
- **Tap-and-hold to lock focus & exposure.**
Yellow circle appears. Slide the sun icon to brighten/darken.

LIGHTING

The cheapest setup that still looks pro.

Lighting is 80% of why pro photos look pro. The good news: you can fake a \$1,000 setup with \$40 of gear and one window. Here's the fastest path.

THE FREE SETUP — WINDOW + WHITE WALL

Place the subject 1 m from a window so the light hits at 90° from the side. Stand a sheet of white foam-core (or a folded white sheet) on the opposite side to bounce light back into the shadows. That's it — same setup magazines use for ten thousand-dollar product shoots, and it costs nothing.

FOUR LIGHTS WORTH KNOWING

LED panel

The product photographer's workhorse. Best for flat-lays, product, B-roll. \$30–60.

Tape parchment paper over the front for instant softbox effect.

Softbox kit

Big, soft, magazine-look. Best for portraits, food, garments. \$40–80.

Get the biggest one you can afford. Bigger softbox = softer light.

Ring light

Even, beauty-friendly. Best for face/portrait/closeup work. \$25–60.

Don't use for products — ring shape reflects in shiny surfaces.

Clip-on phone light

Tiny LED that snaps onto your phone. Best for venues, markets, outdoor. \$15–30.

Use as fill, never as the main light. Cheap clip-ons make skin look plastic.

WHAT TO BUY (AMAZON)

- **Neewer 660 LED Panel** · ~\$45
Adjustable brightness + colour temperature. Bicolour. Search "Neewer 660 LED".
- **Ulanzi VL49 mini LED** · ~\$15
Pocket light. Magnetic. Perfect for top-down product shots. Search "Ulanzi VL49".
- **Westcott Ice Light** · ~\$80 (alt)
Tube light, soft & wraparound. Ideal for jewellery, glass, eyewear.
- **Foldable softbox 24" + LED** · ~\$60
All-in-one starter kit. Search "24 inch softbox LED kit".
- **Free version: a north-facing window.**
North windows are nature's softbox. No direct sun + soft, even light all day.

MOBILE LENSES & ACCESSORIES

The cheap kit that turns a phone into a real camera.

Most of these clip onto your phone, cost less than a dinner, and will outlast three phone upgrades. Buy the right ones up front.

CLIP-ON LENSES (ESSENTIAL)

- **Macro clip-on** · ~\$25
10×–20× zoom. For jewellery, food close-ups, fabric texture, watches. Best one-purchase upgrade. Search "Apexel macro".
- **Wide-angle clip-on** · ~\$25
0.45×–0.6× wide. For interiors, real estate, group shots. Eliminates 'cramped' look in small spaces.
- **Telephoto clip-on** · ~\$30
2× zoom. For phones without a real telephoto. Skip if you have a Pro/Ultra phone.
- **Filter kit (CPL + ND)** · ~\$30
CPL kills glass reflections (shop windows, screens). ND blocks light for outdoor portraits. Search "phone CPL ND filter".

TRIPODS & RIGS

- **Ulanzi MT-08 mini tripod** · ~\$25
Extends to 90 cm. Best \$25 tripod on the market. Use as tabletop or floor stand.
- **Joby GorillaPod Mobile** · ~\$35
Bendy legs wrap around chairs, railings, branches. Most versatile \$35 you'll spend.
- **Top-down tripod arm** · ~\$30
Horizontal extension for flat-lay food and product shots. Search "overhead phone arm".
- **Phone clamp + cold shoe** · ~\$15
Mounts your phone to any standard tripod. Sometimes the only thing missing.

ALSO WORTH HAVING

- **Bluetooth shutter** · ~\$8
Press a button instead of the screen. Eliminates shake. Single-best photography accessory under \$10.
- **Microfibre cloth × 5** · ~\$5
One in your apron, one in your bag, one near the till.
- **Reflector (5-in-1)** · ~\$20
Silver, gold, white, black, diffuser. Folds into a 30 cm disc. Search "5 in 1 reflector 32 inch".

EDITING APPS

Free apps that pros actually use.

Most professional Instagram photographers edit on their phone. The apps below are free or near-free — and they're the ones the pros use, not student-grade alternatives.

FREE — START HERE

- **Snapseed (Google)**
Best free editor on any phone. Selective tool, brushes, healing, perspective. Used by pros for years.
- **Lightroom Mobile**
Free tier covers 95% of needs. Apply presets, sync across devices, RAW editing. Free with an Adobe ID.
- **VSCO (free filters)**
Iconic film-look presets. Free filters are some of the best out there. Skip the paid subscription.
- **Photoshop Express (free)**
Quick fixes, blemish removal, cropping. Free version is plenty for product photos.

WORTH PAYING FOR

- **Lightroom Mobile Premium** · ~\$5/mo
Unlocks all features, syncs presets, auto-cloud backup. Best \$5 in mobile photography.
- **Tezza** · ~\$3/mo
Trendy filters + collage maker. Big with fashion and lifestyle creators.
- **Afterlight** · ~\$3/mo
Beautiful film looks + dust/light leaks. For brands going for a vintage feel.
- **Picsart Pro** · ~\$5/mo
AI background remover, sky replacement, magic effects. Use when you need to fake stock-photo backgrounds.

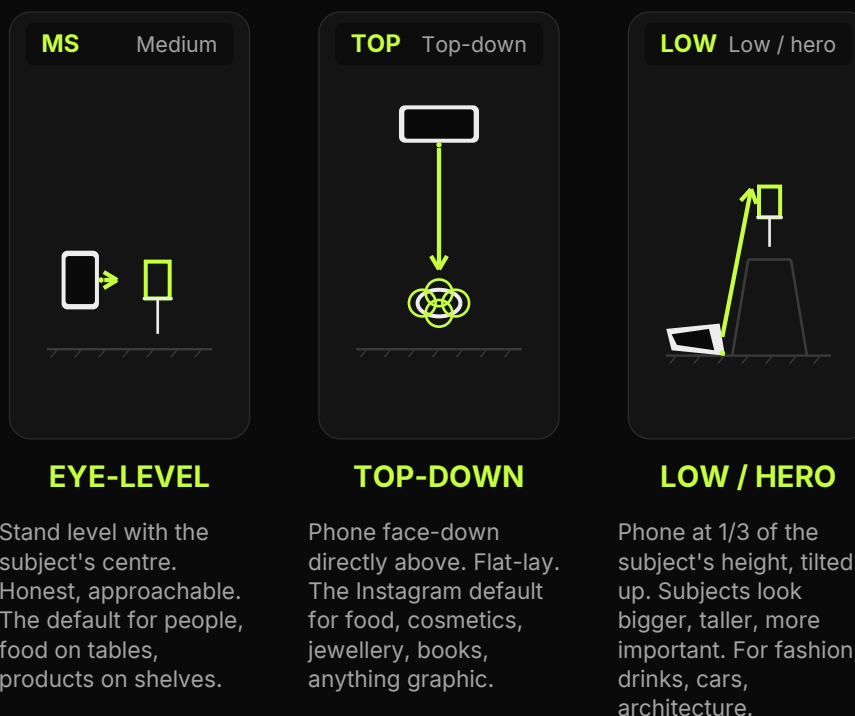
THE 60-SECOND EDIT (SNAPSEED OR LIGHTROOM)

- **01 · Crop & straighten.**
Rule of thirds. Horizon level. Trim distracting edges.
- **02 · Exposure +0.3 to +0.7.**
Lift the whole image one notch. Phones underexpose product shots by default.
- **03 · Shadows up, highlights down.**
Recover detail in dark and bright areas. Photo looks instantly professional.
- **04 · Whites up, blacks down.**
Increases contrast where it matters. Less murky.
- **05 · Vibrance, not saturation.**
Vibrance boosts dull colours. Saturation neon-fries faces.
- **06 · Sharpen +20.**
Adds bite. Phones soften by default. Don't go higher than 30.

COMPOSITION & ANGLES

The three angles that work for almost any product.

Every scenario in this guide uses these three. Memorise them once and you can shoot anything — coffee, jewellery, dogs, furniture. The same three angles. Always.



FIVE COMPOSITION RULES

- **Rule of thirds.**
Put the main subject on a third-line, not in the centre. Phone Camera grid helps you see the lines.
- **Negative space sells.**
Empty space around a product reads as 'expensive'. Crowded frames feel like clutter, not style.
- **Leading lines.**
Counters, shelves, tile edges, road lines — let them point at your subject. Lines lead the eye like an arrow.
- **Frame within a frame.**
Door frames, windows, arches around the subject. Adds depth, focus, and a 'documentary' feel.
- **Odd numbers feel right.**
Three plates, five candles. Three. Always three. Even-number compositions feel symmetrical and boring.

PROPS & BACKDROPS

The styling kit you can buy at the dollar store.

Background and styling decide whether your photo looks 'made for Instagram' or 'taken on the kitchen table'. Most of these cost less than a coffee.

BACKDROPS — WHAT TO BUY

- **Roll of white seamless paper** · ~\$15
53" wide, no-seam, infinite background. Tape to wall, drape over a table. The pro-photo backdrop.
- **Linen tablecloths × 3** · ~\$10 each
White, beige, charcoal. Wrinkle-friendly textures. Drape over anything; instant warm flat-lay surface.
- **PVC tile boards** · ~\$15 each
Marble, oak, slate-print boards. Two boards = floor + wall corner. Cheaper than the real thing.
- **Black foam-core × 3** · ~\$5 each
Black backdrop, light absorber, light blocker. Most-used cheap photo tool.
- **Free version: a clean white wall.**
If your shop has one, you have a backdrop. Photograph against it. Done.

PROPS — DOLLAR-STORE STYLING KIT

- **Linen napkins, kraft paper, twine.**
For food, packaging, gift shots. Natural textures photograph better than glossy plastic.
- **Small dried bouquets / eucalyptus.**
\$5 at any florist. Adds life to flat-lays. Doesn't wilt under hot lights.
- **Wooden trays, marble cheese boards.**
Elevates plate flat-lays. Hides ugly tables. Buy two sizes.
- **Glass jars, ceramic bowls (matte, not glossy).**
Glossy reflects ceiling lights. Matte absorbs them. Always buy matte for photo props.
- **Two acrylic ice cubes.**
\$3 on Amazon. Drinks photograph 10× better. Real ice melts; acrylic doesn't.
- **Black velvet cloth (1 m).**
Background for jewellery and dark products. \$5 at a fabric store. Eats reflections.

PRO TRICKS

The things pros do that you won't read on YouTube.

These are real production secrets — most cost nothing. Use one and you'll see the difference; use all of them and your photos will look like a magazine shot them.

- 01 Wipe the lens before every shot.**
Phones gather oil. Two-second wipe with a cloth between shots is the difference between haze and bite.
- 02 Lock exposure on the brightest important thing.**
Tap-and-hold on the lit subject — not the dark background. Phones try to balance everything; you have to overrule it.
- 03 Use the 2× telephoto for product close-ups.**
Stand 50–80 cm back. The 1× lens distorts close-up; 2× flattens it like a portrait lens.
- 04 Shoot 5+ angles. Pick later.**
Same scene, eye-level, top-down, 45°, low, macro detail. You'll know which is the keeper only when editing.
- 05 Wipe the product, too.**
Lint, fingerprints, flour smudges all photograph 10× more visibly than they look. Wipe the product. Then wipe again.
- 06 Light from 45°, never head-on.**
Side-light reveals texture. Head-on light flattens everything. Move the subject 90° to the window.
- 07 Bounce, don't add lights.**
More light isn't the answer. Bounce existing light into shadows with white card. Cheaper, faster, looks pro.
- 08 Shoot through something.**
A pane of glass, a leafy branch, a stack of books in soft focus in the foreground. Adds depth instantly.
- 09 Shoot one stop underexposed for moody.**
Slide the sun icon down by half a stop. Slightly darker = more cinematic = better Instagram.
- 10 Dirty plates beat clean ones.**
Crumbs, drips, fingerprints in food photos read as 'real'. Spotless = ad. Lived-in = wanted.
- 11 Symmetry only on purpose.**
If a photo isn't deliberately symmetrical, push the subject off-centre. Boring rules: centred subjects feel amateur.
- 12 Steam, mist, droplets.**
Boil a kettle next to a hot drink. Spray a vegetable with water. Visible texture = 10× more clicks.
- 13 White-balance manually for warm scenes.**
Auto white-balance kills the warm light of cafes/bakeries. In Pro mode, set WB to 4500–5500 K to keep the glow.
- 14 Shoot vertical 4:5 — not square.**
Instagram crops 1:1 from feed but shows full 4:5 in posts. 4:5 takes more screen, more attention.
- 15 Crop in post, not on the phone.**
Phone digital zoom = quality loss. Always shoot wider; crop tight in Snapseed/Lightroom later.

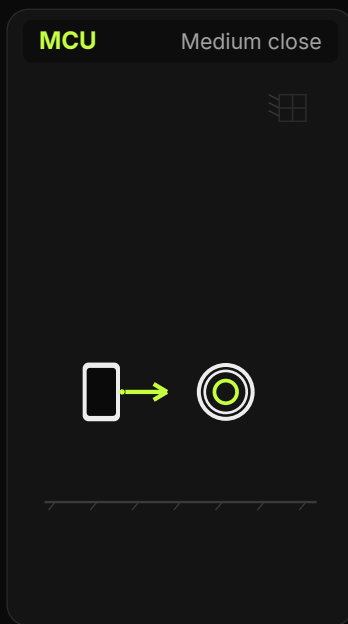
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SCENARIO 01 OF 20

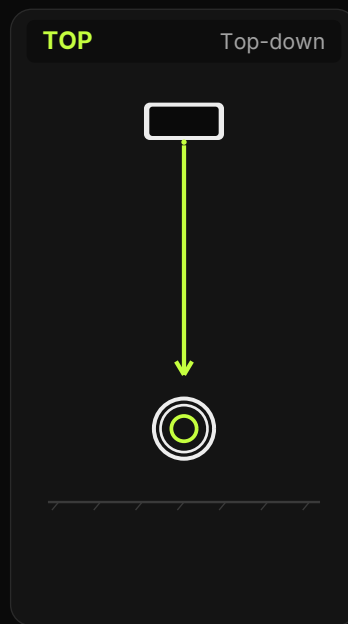
SCENARIO 01

The hero plate

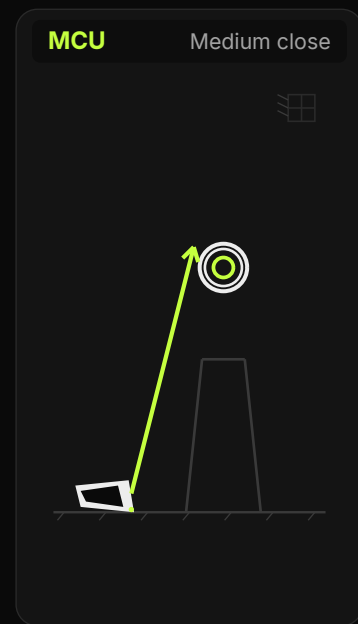
The signature dish at full beauty. The single image that goes on every menu, every poster, every Reel cover.

**EYE-LEVEL**

Phone at plate-rim height, side-on. Capture the dish height + texture.

**TOP-DOWN**

Phone overhead 40 cm above. Centre dish on plate, plate centred in frame.

**LOW HERO**

Phone at table edge tilted up. Plate looms; tablecloth in foreground soft.

STYLING TIP

Wipe the plate edge with a damp cloth before shooting. Sauce smudges look amplified in macro.

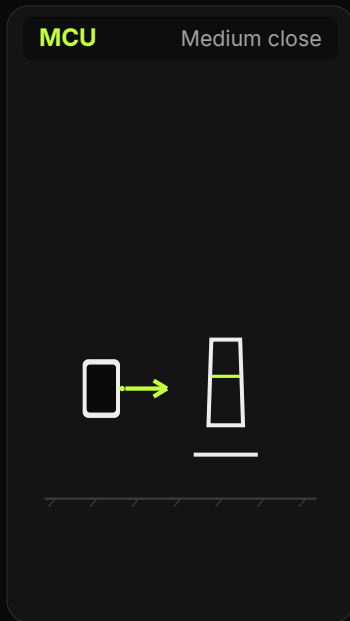
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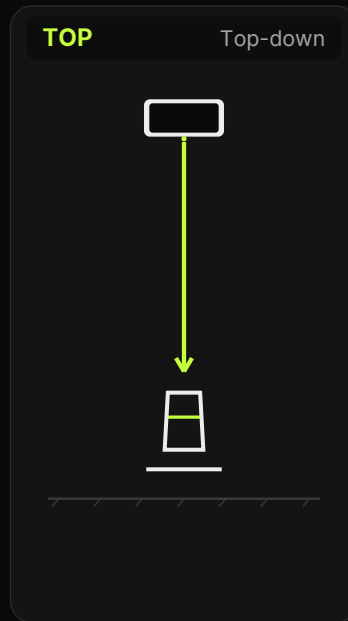
SCENARIO 02

Wine pour

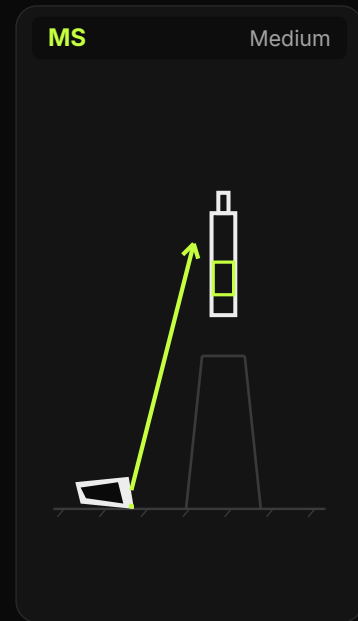
Red wine flowing into a glass — the classic dinner-out shot.

**EYE-LEVEL**

Phone at glass rim. Side-on.
Wine arc visible.

**TOP-DOWN**

Phone above the glass. Capture
the swirl forming in the bowl.

**LOW HERO**

Phone below table. Wine bottle
towers, glass in foreground.

STYLING TIP

Pour onto a black napkin or dark wood. Wine reads as colour against contrast — never against white.

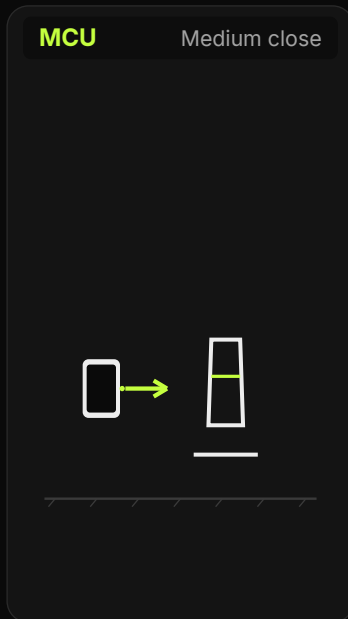
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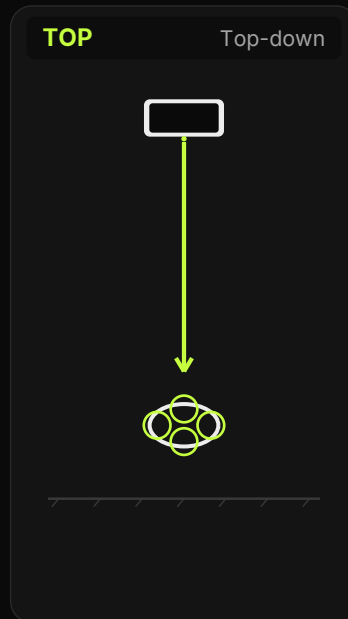
SCENARIO 03

Cheers — clinking glasses

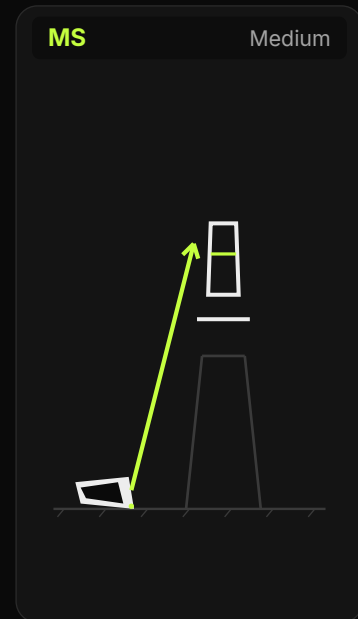
Two glasses meeting mid-air over the table. Joy, captured.

**EYE-LEVEL**

Phone at glass height. Glasses fill mid-frame; faces blurred behind.

**TOP-DOWN**

Phone above the table. Glasses + hands form a small composition.

**LOW HERO**

Phone at table edge. Glasses rim cuts the top third.

STYLING TIP

Real candlelight is amber. Don't auto-correct white balance — keep the warm tones in editing.

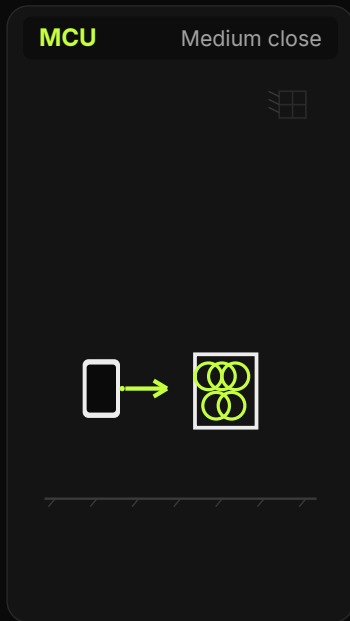
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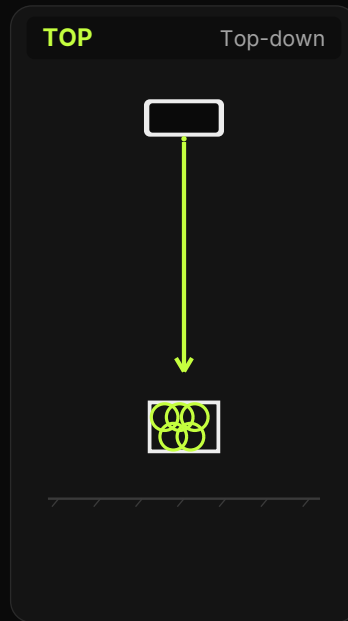
SCENARIO 04

Bread basket steam

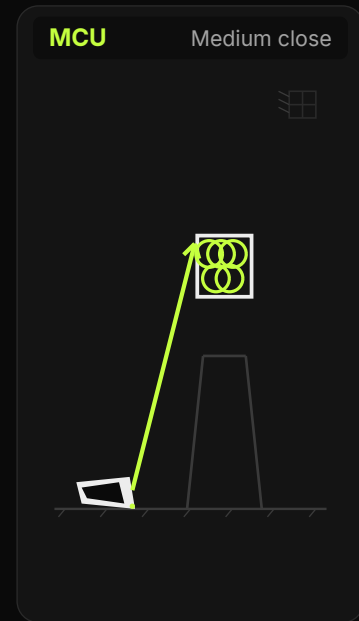
A basket of fresh bread, steam visible above. Free hospitality, photographed.

**EYE-LEVEL**

Side-on, phone at basket rim. Backlight from a window for visible steam.

**TOP-DOWN**

Phone above the basket. Bread torn, butter and salt as side props.

**LOW HERO**

Phone below table edge. Basket looms; ceiling soft above.

STYLING TIP

Reheat the bread for 60 seconds before shooting. Cold bread doesn't steam, however fresh it looks.

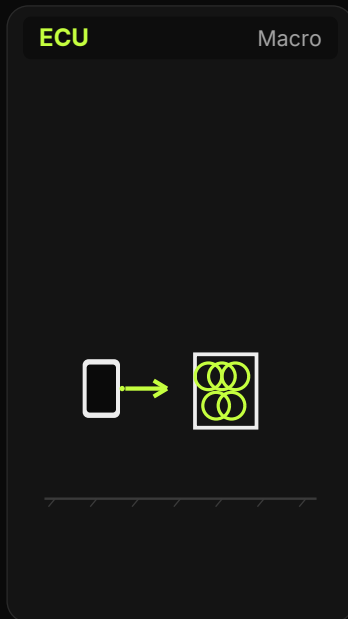
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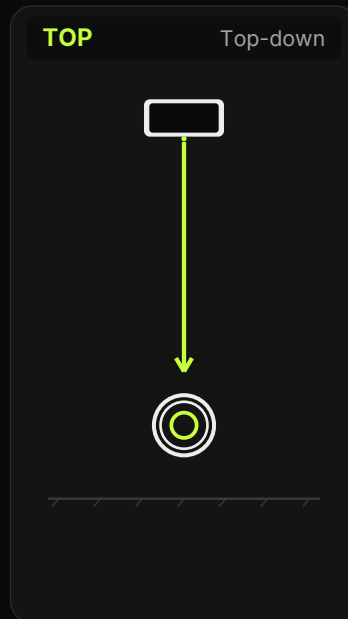
SCENARIO 05

Pasta twirl on fork

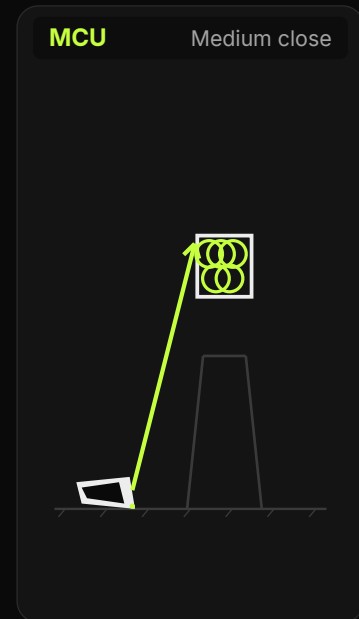
Strands of pasta lifted on a fork — rotate slowly during exposure.

**EYE-LEVEL**

Phone level with the fork. 2× zoom for clean isolation.

**TOP-DOWN**

Phone above. Plate centred, fork lifting from one side.

**LOW HERO**

Phone at table edge, fork rising up into frame. Sauce drips visible.

STYLING TIP

Cook one pasta strand 30 seconds longer; it twirls cleanly without snapping.

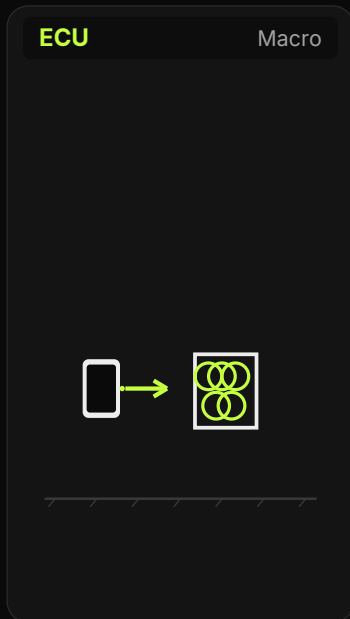
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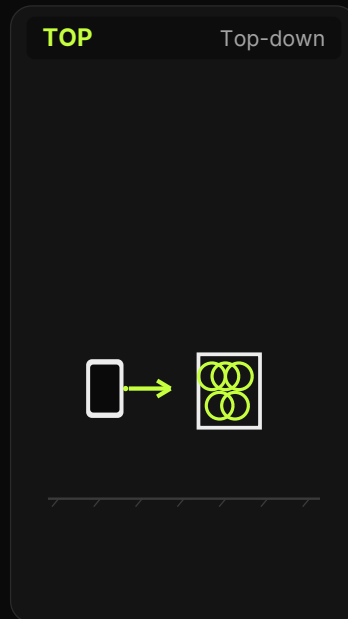
SCENARIO 06

Steak cross-section

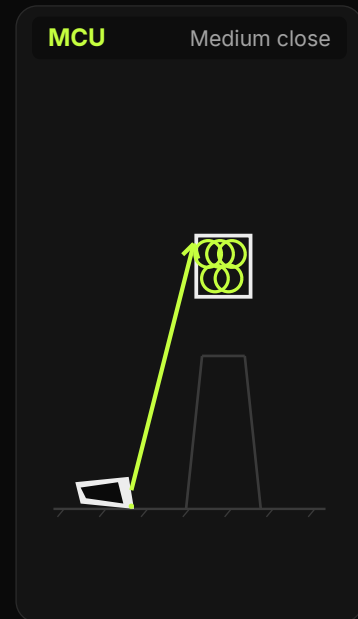
A sliced steak revealing the pink interior. Pure desire.

**EYE-LEVEL**

Phone at plate height. Knife mid-cut.

**TOP-DOWN**

Phone above. Cross-section centred. Sauce around as styling.

**LOW HERO**

Phone below table edge. Steak rises like a mountain in foreground.

STYLING TIP

Use a sharp knife and cut just before shooting. Drag-cuts look like sawing in macro.

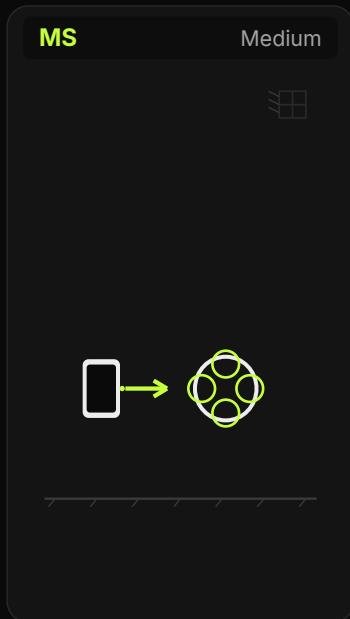
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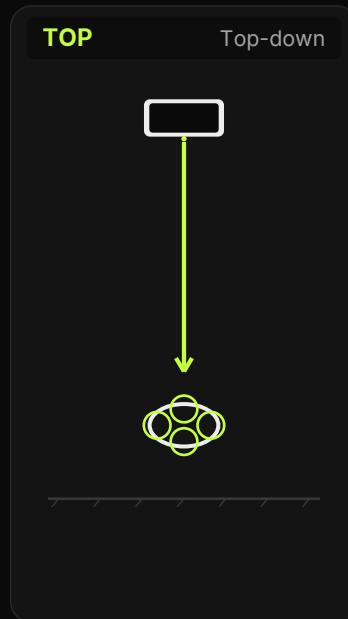
SCENARIO 07

Set table — empty

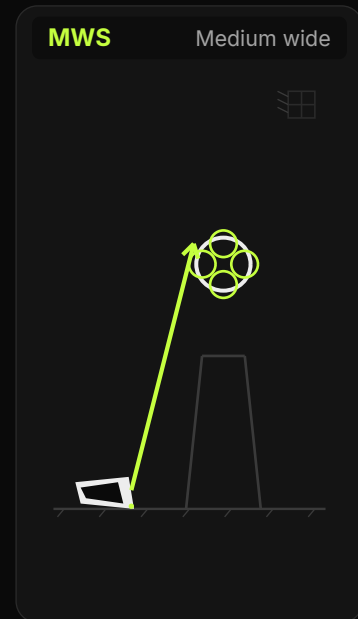
The clean tablecloth, candles unlit, cutlery polished. Anticipation.

**EYE-LEVEL**

Phone at chair-back height. Long perspective down the table.

**TOP-DOWN**

Phone above one place setting. Symmetrical composition: plate, fork, knife, glass.

**LOW HERO**

Phone at table edge. Stemware rises in foreground; far end soft.

STYLING TIP

Set 5 minutes before shooting. Cutlery shifts; flowers wilt; everything degrades fast.

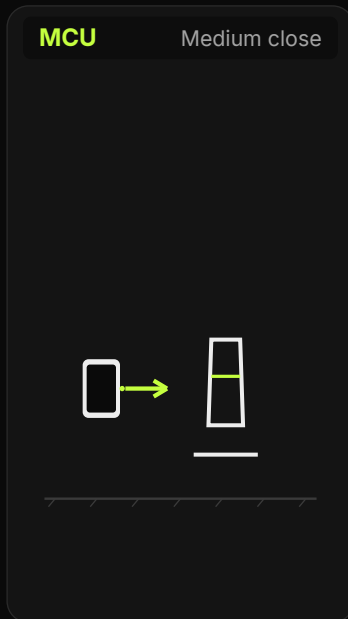
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SCENARIO 08 OF 20

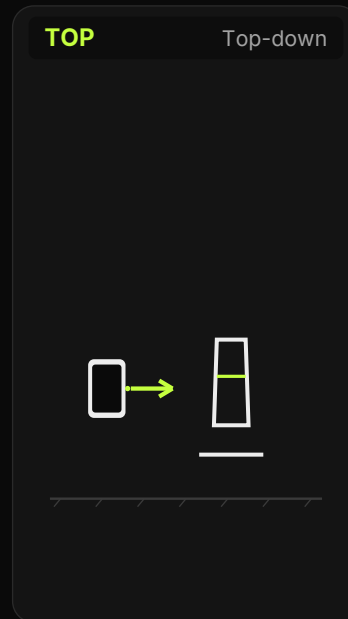
SCENARIO 08

Candle reflection in glass

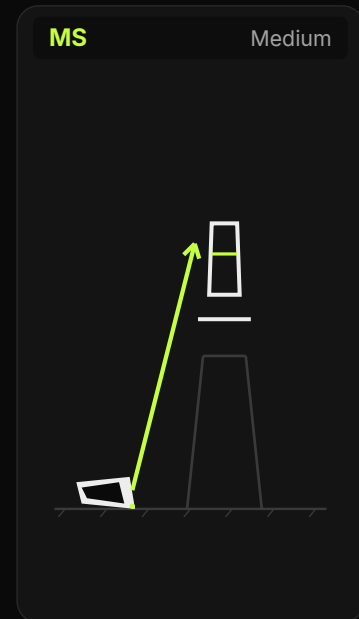
A wine glass with the candle flame reflected in its bowl.

**EYE-LEVEL**

Phone at glass rim. Lock exposure on the candle, not the room.

**TOP-DOWN**

Phone above the glass. Reflection forms a circle on the wine surface.

**LOW HERO**

Phone at table edge. Glass and candle both in frame, glow connecting them.

STYLING TIP

Light the candle at least 60 seconds before shooting — first-flame flickers spoil consistent shots.

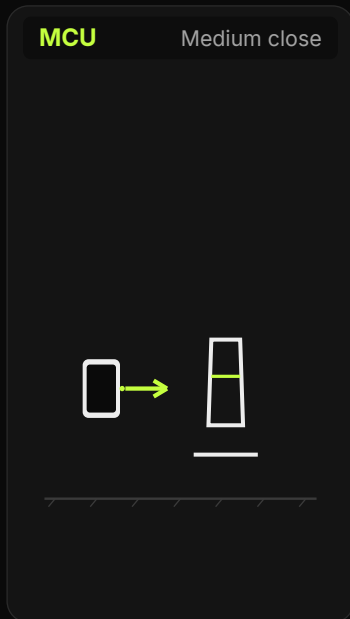
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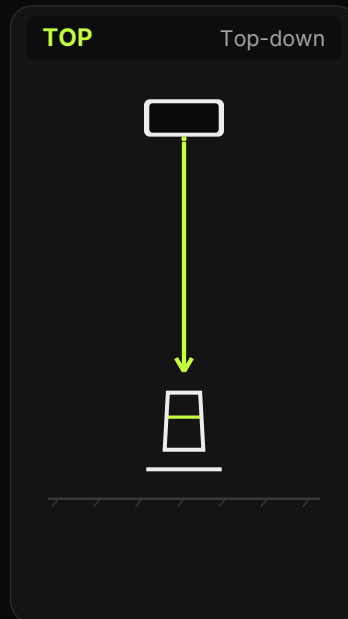
SCENARIO 09

Cocktail with garnish

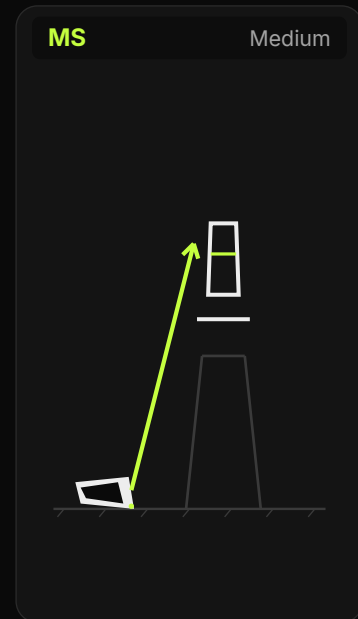
The bartender's signature drink, rim salted, herb on top.

**EYE-LEVEL**

Phone at glass height. Garnish at frame top.

**TOP-DOWN**

Phone above. Capture the garnish floating, ice cubes visible.

**LOW HERO**

Phone below counter. Cocktail towers; bottles soft behind.

STYLING TIP

Mist the glass with water just before shooting. Cold-glass condensation reads as 'fresh'.

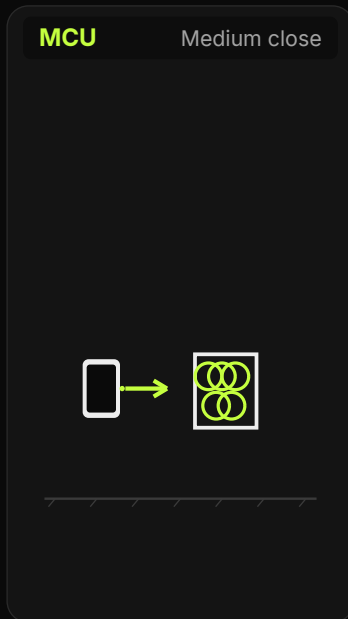
RESTAURANT

SCENARIO 10 OF 20

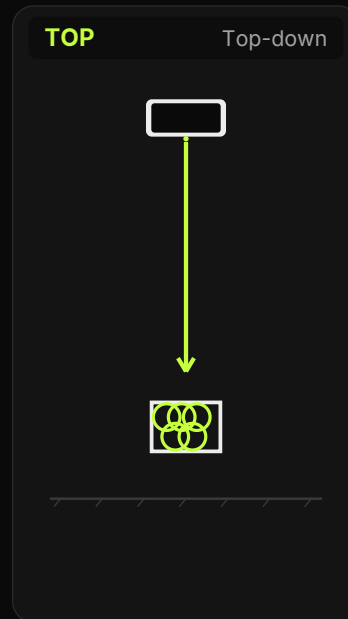
SCENARIO 10

Dessert with candle

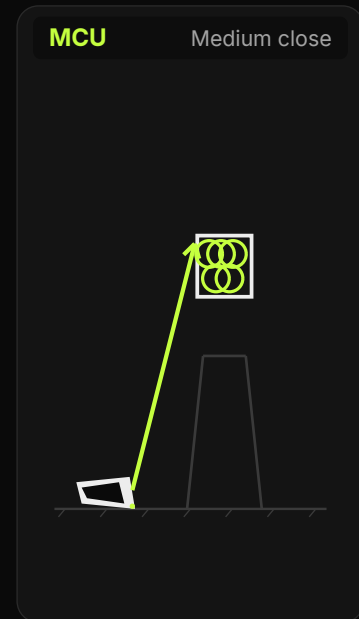
A slice of cake or tart with a single candle. Universal celebration.

**EYE-LEVEL**

Phone at plate height. Slight side angle so the candle reads tall.

**TOP-DOWN**

Phone above. Candle centred, dessert filling the lower frame.

**LOW HERO**

Phone at table edge. Candle silhouette against soft kitchen light behind.

STYLING TIP

Light the candle 5 seconds before pressing the shutter — first-flame fluctuations look unstable.

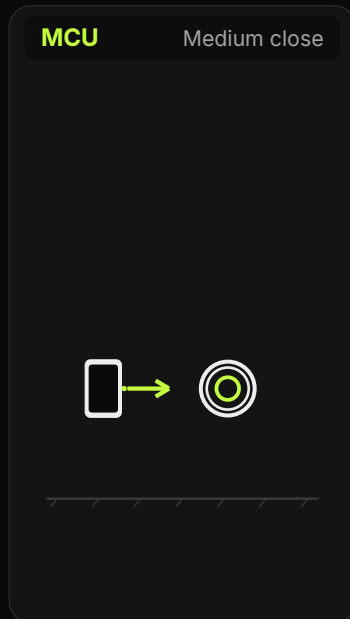
RESTAURANT

SCENARIO 11 OF 20

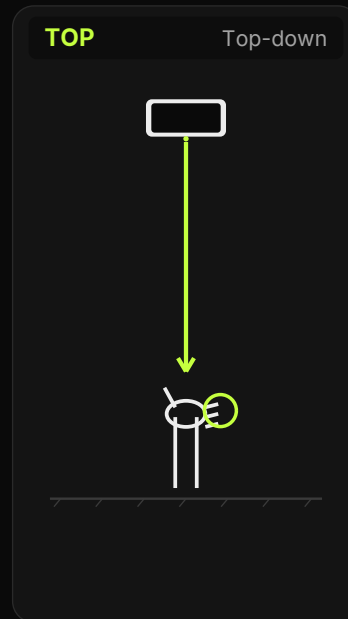
SCENARIO 11

Chef plating

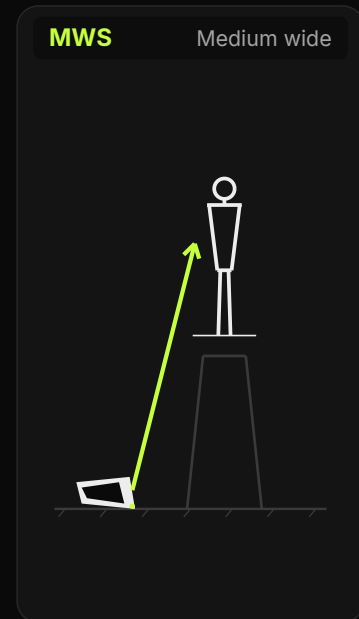
Hands placing the final garnish. The choreography of plating.

**EYE-LEVEL**

OTS, looking down at the plate from over the chef's shoulder.

**TOP-DOWN**

Phone overhead. Two hands, one plate, full composition.

**LOW HERO**

Phone at counter edge. Chef and plate towering, kitchen light behind.

STYLING TIP

Tidy the chef's apron before shooting. Stains photograph 5× more visibly than they look.

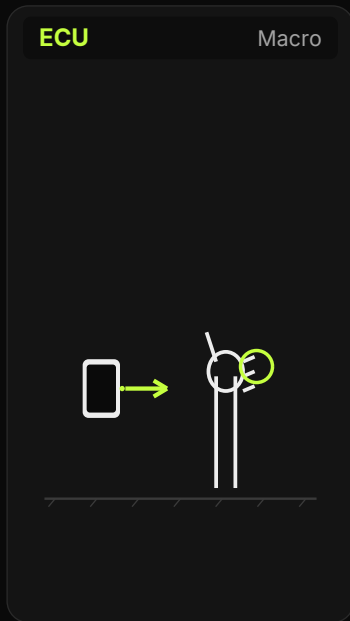
RESTAURANT

SCENARIO 12 OF 20

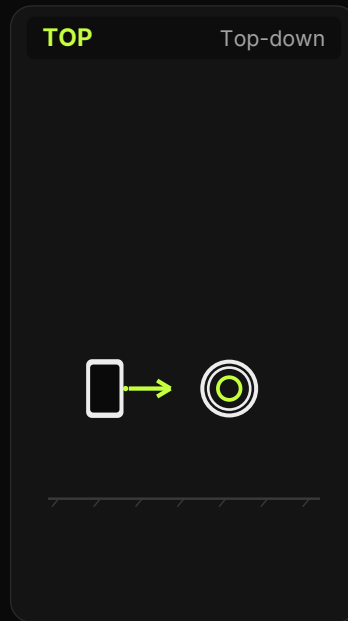
SCENARIO 12

Sauce drizzle

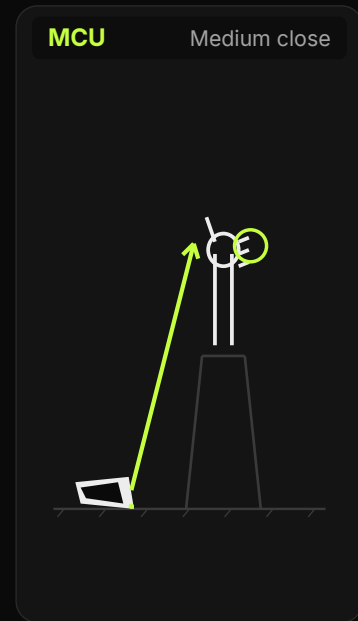
A squeeze bottle pouring sauce in a thread onto a plate.

**EYE-LEVEL**

Phone at plate rim. Sauce stream mid-air.

**TOP-DOWN**

Phone above. Capture the swirl as it forms.

**LOW HERO**

Phone at plate edge tilted up. Bottle dominates foreground.

STYLING TIP

Warm the sauce slightly. Cold sauce clumps; warm ribbons.

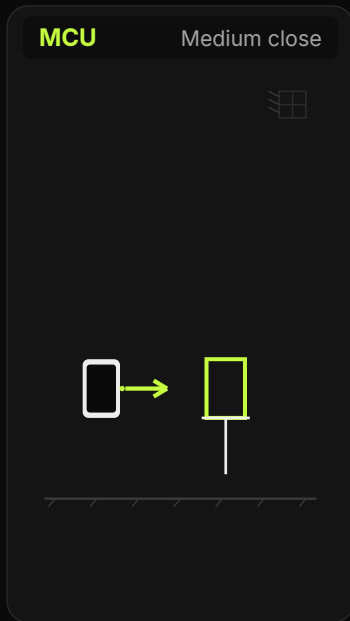
RESTAURANT

SCENARIO 13 OF 20

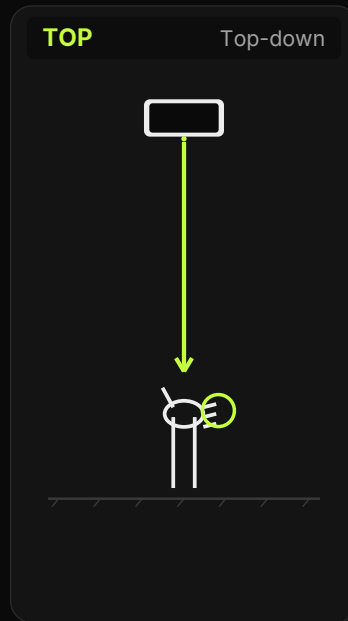
SCENARIO 13

Menu detail

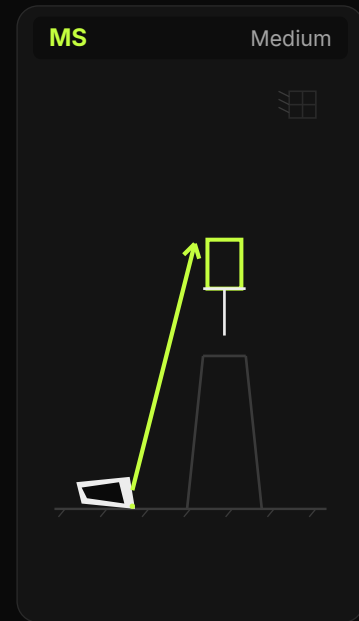
A leather menu, a hand turning the page. Sells the experience.

**EYE-LEVEL**

Phone level with the menu in hand. Slight angle.

**TOP-DOWN**

Phone above. Menu open flat, hands at the corners.

**LOW HERO**

Phone at table edge. Menu held up, soft kitchen behind.

STYLING TIP

Photograph the menu open to your signature dish. Customers will order what they see.

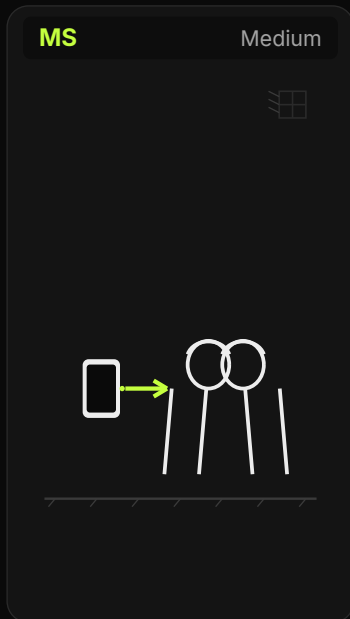
RESTAURANT

SCENARIO 14 OF 20

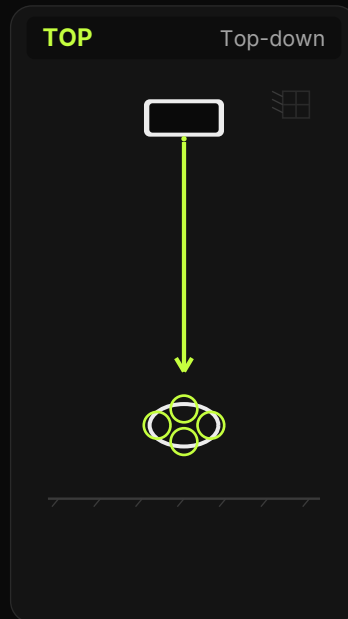
SCENARIO 14

Two-top by the window

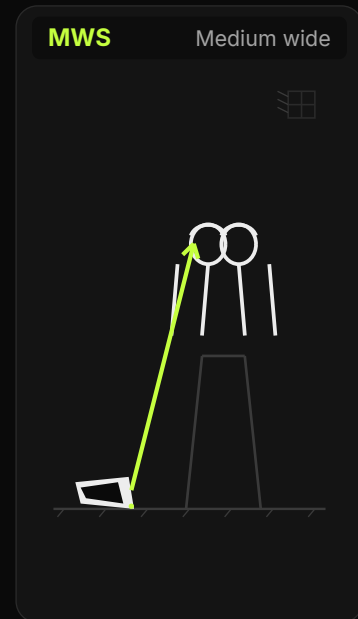
A couple at a candlelit table. The hospitality shot.

**EYE-LEVEL**

Phone at table-edge height. Both subjects + plates in frame.

**TOP-DOWN**

Phone above. Plates dominate; subject hands enter frame.

**LOW HERO**

Phone at floor by table. Subjects loom against window glow.

STYLING TIP

Photograph just after the dishes arrive, before the eating starts. Plates are still pristine.

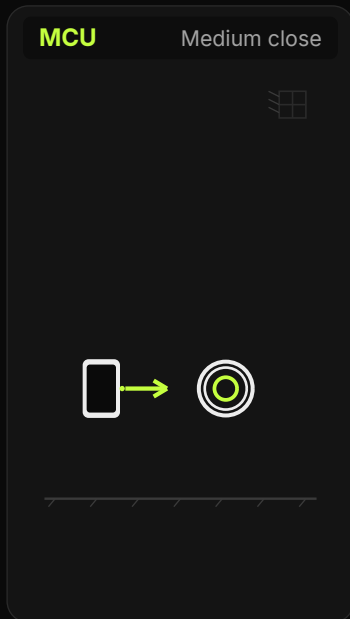
RESTAURANT

SCENARIO 15 OF 20

SCENARIO 15

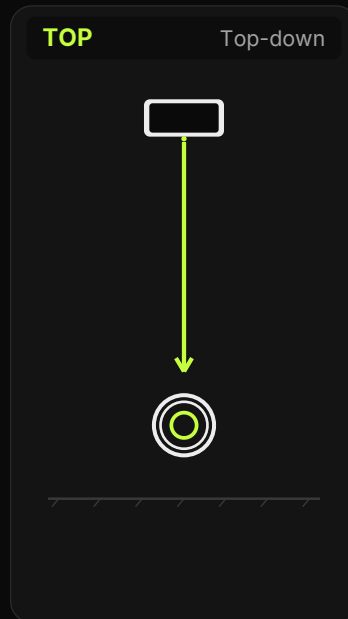
Pizza/pasta delivery to table

The plate hitting the table — anticipation moment.



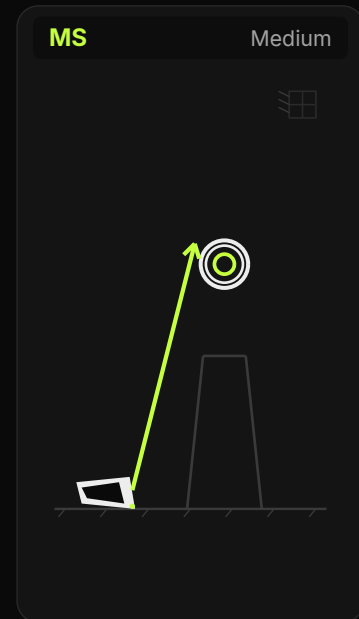
EYE-LEVEL

Phone at table height. Plate in foreground, server's hand entering frame.



TOP-DOWN

Phone above as plate is placed. Hands and plate.



LOW HERO

Phone at table edge. Plate big in frame, server above soft.

STYLING TIP

Have the server walk slowly. Speed reads as careless; slow reads as luxury.

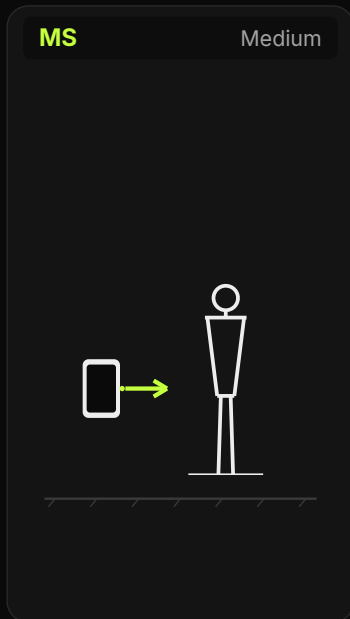
RESTAURANT

SCENARIO 16 OF 20

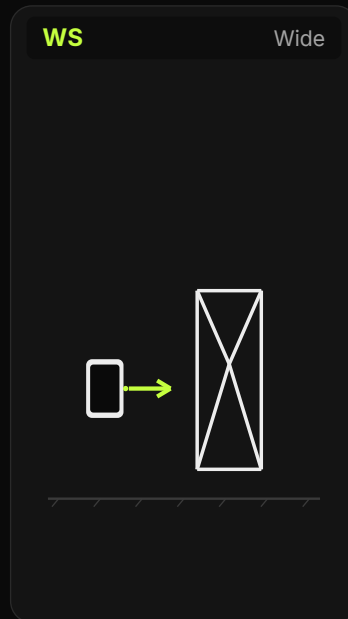
SCENARIO 16

Open kitchen action

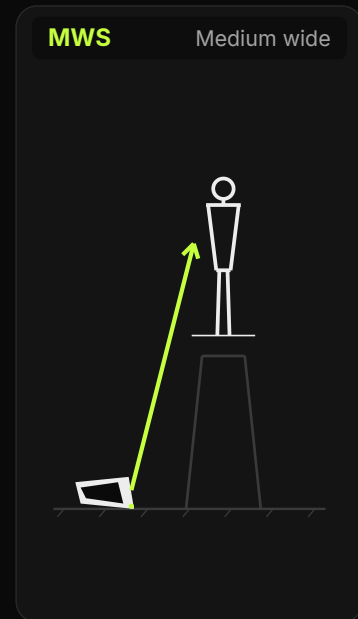
The line cooking — fire, steam, hands. Documentary energy.

**EYE-LEVEL**

Phone at counter height through the pass. Frame two cooks.

**TOP-DOWN**

Skip — use a wide of the line instead.

**LOW HERO**

Phone at counter edge tilted up. Cooks loom; flames in background.

STYLING TIP

Don't pose anyone. Real kitchens are 10× more cinematic than performed ones. Shoot during real service.

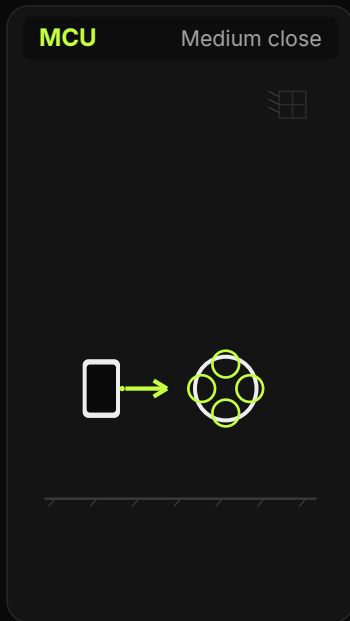
RESTAURANT

SCENARIO 17 OF 20

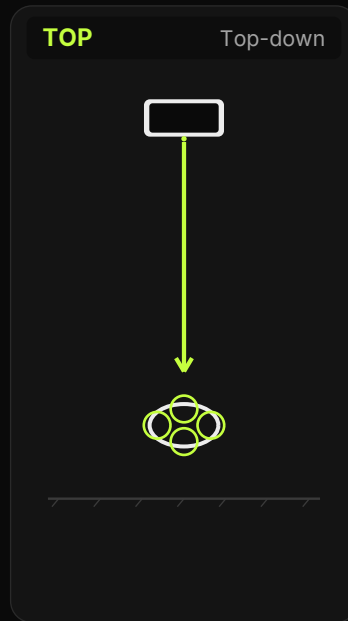
SCENARIO 17

Cheese board

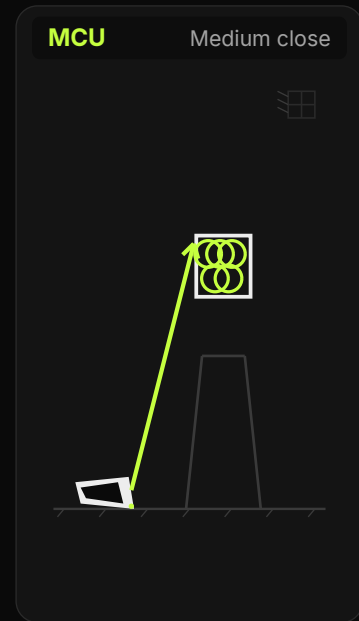
A wooden board of cheeses, fruits, jams, crackers. The Instagram trophy.

**EYE-LEVEL**

Phone at board height. Side-on so cheeses read as 3D.

**TOP-DOWN**

Phone above. Full board fills frame. Garnishes spilling at edges.

**LOW HERO**

Phone at table edge tilted up. Knife in foreground, cheese soft.

STYLING TIP

Three cheeses, never four. Add at least one cluster of grapes — the classical-painting prop.

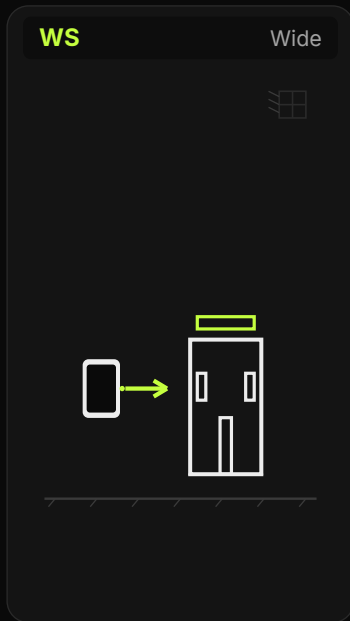
RESTAURANT

SCENARIO 18 OF 20

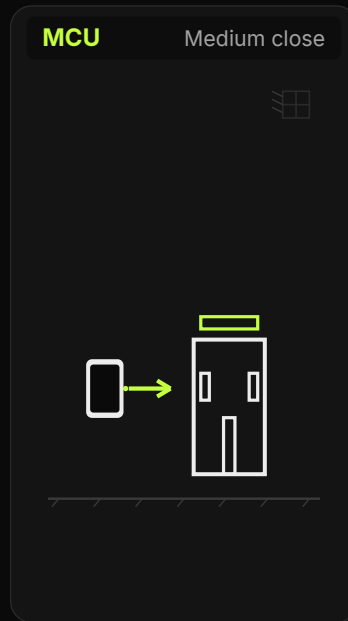
SCENARIO 18

Restaurant facade at dusk

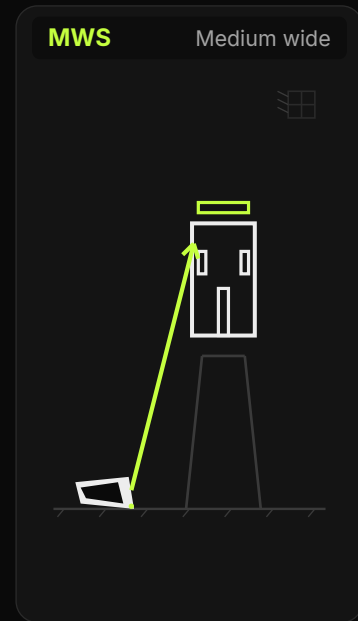
The exterior with the warm glow inside. Sells the destination.

**EYE-LEVEL**

Stand 5 m back. Phone vertical.
Wait until no cars block the view.

**TOP-DOWN**

Skip — use a detail of the door
handle or sign instead.

**LOW HERO**

Crouch right by the door.
Building looms.

STYLING TIP

Shoot 30 minutes after sunset. Sky is still blue but the windows already glow warm. Best 15 minutes of the day.

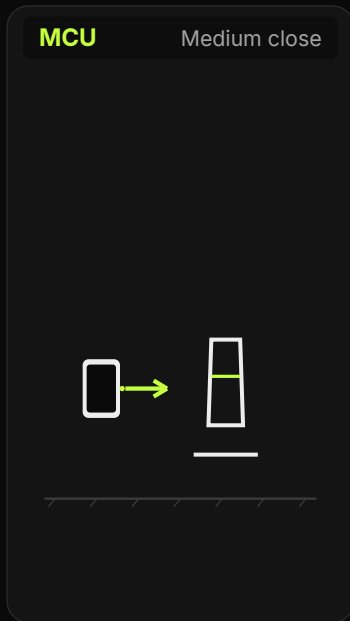
RESTAURANT

SCENARIO 19 OF 20

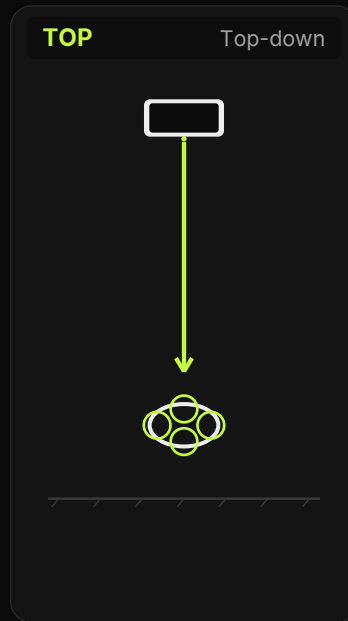
SCENARIO 19

Coffee + dessert close

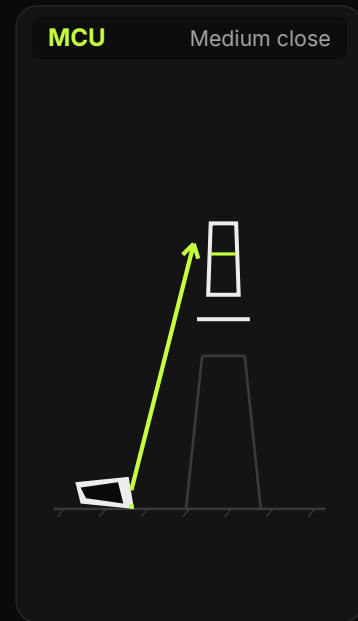
Espresso cup, biscotti, fork. The end-of-meal still life.

**EYE-LEVEL**

Phone at saucer rim. Slight angle.

**TOP-DOWN**

Phone above. Cup centred, biscotti and fork as side props.

**LOW HERO**

Phone at table edge. Cup looms, dessert blurred behind.

STYLING TIP

Use a small saucer with the cup, not a big one. Compositions feel cramped when the saucer dominates.

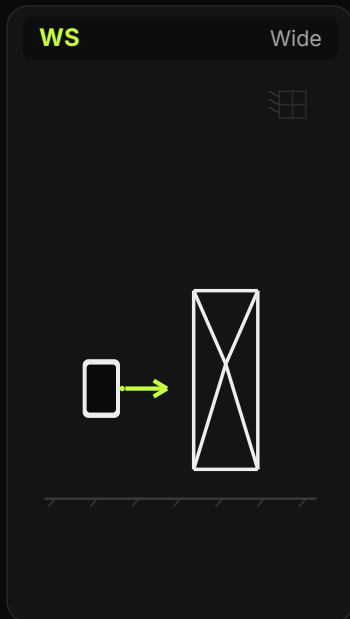
RESTAURANT

SCENARIO 20 OF 20

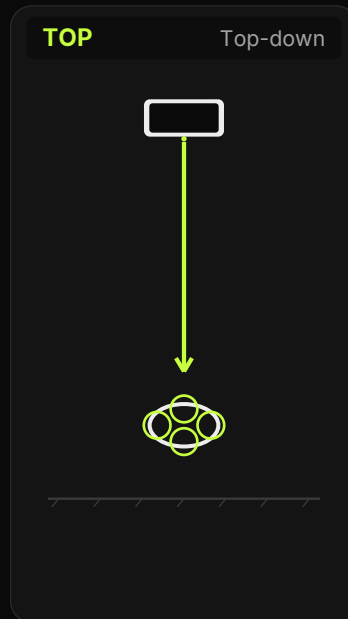
SCENARIO 20

Empty restaurant before service

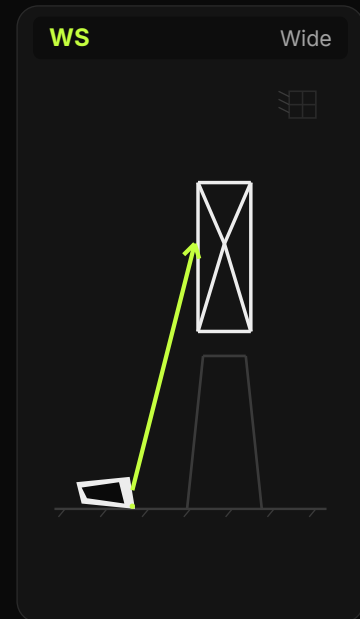
The dining room set, lights warm, no one yet. Anticipation.

**EYE-LEVEL**

Stand at the back. Phone vertical. Long perspective down the room.

**TOP-DOWN**

Phone above one set table. Symmetrical place setting.

**LOW HERO**

Phone at floor at room corner. Tables and chairs arch over the frame.

STYLING TIP

Shoot 30 minutes before doors open. Best shot of the day, often unphotographed.

YOU'VE GOT THE PLAYBOOK.

Now go shoot.

This guide was built specifically for restaurants. Every scenario in it works on a phone you already own. The only missing ingredient is press-the-button, ten times in a row, until one of them is the keeper.

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