

Add depth of field to
your images!

Food Photography

From Snapshots to Great Shots

Second Edition



Get great detail
in your subjects!

Nicole S. Young

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Snapshots to
Great Shots

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Peachpit
Press

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Peachpit Press
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Dedication

To my husband, Brian, for being my best friend, partner, and all-time favorite person. Thank you for your love, for your support, and for being my personal cheerleader... as well as for your patience while I photograph the food before we eat it. I love you!

Acknowledgments

Creating a book is no small task. The process of writing, editing, and publishing a book is, at times, overwhelming. It's a creative challenge to make the content work within the pages; teach the reader (as clearly as possible) about technique, skill, vision, and creativity; and also stay true to the layout, flow, and structure of the book itself. My name may be on the cover of the book, but I'm really only a part of the process, and there's no way that this book would be what it is without the guidance, hard work, dedication, inspiration, and motivation of so many other people.

I wouldn't be where I am today without the support and love from my family. They believe in me (and always have) and never doubt my ability to succeed at whatever I set my mind and heart to do, and because of that, I will be forever grateful. I love you guys!

I am blessed with an amazing group of friends, mentors, and colleagues. You all have opened my eyes to things I couldn't see without your guidance, and you have also been the voice of reason when I stumbled. Thank you for your never-ending dedication, loyalty, and patience. Thank you also for your wisdom, advice, and knowledge, and, even more importantly, thank you for giving me hope and inspiring confidence.

I want to thank the Peachpit crew and the team involved in producing this book, especially my editors, Linda and Valerie. Thank you for your patience, flexibility, and teamwork while working on this book.

I am extremely thankful to my readers. It means so much to me when I get a note from someone thanking me for a book, a blog post, or a bit of knowledge that helped him or her become a better photographer. You, my readers, are the reason I wrote this book, and I, in turn, have learned so much from being part of an amazing, worldwide, kind, and generous community of creative and talented people.

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Introduction

Three years ago, I wrote the first edition of this book (*Food Photography: From Snapshots to Great Shots*). It was a book that I had in my head for quite some time, and Peachpit Press was willing to give me a chance with it. The response was so much more than I had anticipated, and while writing it (and throughout the years that followed), I became more and more infatuated with food photography.

Another thing that happened over the past few years is that my own personal style and attitude toward food photography has evolved and become much more refined. I light my food differently, use different props and plates, have taken a much more minimalistic approach toward my postprocessing, and use Adobe Lightroom instead of Adobe Photoshop. Because of these things, I decided that it was time to refresh my first book with a second edition, which has now become the book you are reading this very moment.

I hope you find this book useful as you make your way on your own journey through the world of food photography. Inside this book you will learn about some basic photography and lighting techniques, food styling, how to have an online presence through social media, as well as how to process your images using Adobe Lightroom.

In the end, we all develop our own style of photography, but one thing rings true when photographing food: It needs to look delicious. The purpose of this book is to guide photographers at all levels to make their food look as good as it tastes and to do so as naturally, organically, and simply as possible.

Here is a quick Q&A about the book to help you understand what you'll see in the following pages:

Q: What can I expect to learn from this book?

A: This book starts with the basics of photography (photographic fundamentals and equipment) and works through the steps of lighting, styling, composing, and editing the photographs. It shows how to present the food that you've cooked and prepared and turn it into a mouth-watering photograph.

Q: How does this book differ from the first edition?

A: In this edition, I wanted to make certain that those of you who already have my first edition will still get your money's worth. The first few chapters may seem a little similar (there's only so much to be written about the basics of photography and lighting for food); however, you will find nearly all of the photos have been replaced, and the last three chapters (almost half of the book) have been completely rewritten! I also updated certain chapters to better suit my current style in props and food styling.

Q: Who is this book written for?

A: Ultimately, this book is for anyone who wants to create beautiful food photographs. I wrote it with food bloggers and home cooks in mind, but all of the techniques can be used by photographers, cooks, or chefs of any type or skill level in any situation or environment.

Q: Should I read the book straight through or can I skip around from chapter to chapter?

A: There's really no set way to read the book. If you're new to photography, however, I recommend that you read the first few chapters to get an understanding of the basics and build a solid foundation of photography before diving in to the lighting and food-specific information. If you're a fairly seasoned photographer who understands your camera and most of the basic techniques, then you can jump straight to the more food-specific chapters.

Q: What are the challenges all about?

A: At the end of most chapters, I list a few exercises that will help you practice and solidify some of the techniques and settings you learned about. Feel free to try them out if you like, and if you do, be sure to get online and share your photographs! I would *love* to see them.



Canon 5D Mark III •
ISO 100 • 1/20 sec. •
f/4 • Canon 100mm
f/2.8L Macro lens

3

Styling and Props

The Art of Presentation

One of the reasons I love food photography is that I truly enjoy styling and crafting the food, and one of the biggest compliments I get from people is that my images made them hungry! When we eat food, all of our senses are at work—we see, smell, touch, and taste the food—but when we look at a photo, we can use our eyes only. Styling food is one way to capture its flavors, aromas, and textures and to communicate them to viewers. Creating an amazing-looking dish is an art, whether you eat it or photograph it, and you can do a lot of little things to enhance the look of the food and (ideally) make people salivate when they view your photographs.

Poring Over the Picture

I added a small plate with a wooden spoon in the background to balance out the scene.

On a trip to Thailand, I discovered a new favorite dish: Khao Soi. It's a spicy, curried noodle dish with tons of spices and aromatics that is traditionally topped with fried noodles. When I got home, I wanted to make the recipe a little bit healthier. So instead of adding fried noodles to the top, I added a handful of micro greens. Not only do they make the dish healthier, they also make it more colorful!

Canon 5D Mark III •
ISO 100 • 0.5 sec. •
f/5.6 • Canon 100mm
f/2.8L Macro lens



I used a very small bowl to make the elements inside of the bowl look larger.

A piece of white foam board bounces light back in to the side of the dish.

Poring Over the Picture

One thing I love to photograph is any type of pancake or French toast. There is a lot of potential for color, style, and texture, and I find myself photographing (and eating) them quite often! These little pancakes were made with coconut flour, filled with yogurt, and topped with blueberries and huckleberries. The berries add a nice touch of sweetness and color to a healthy breakfast.

I photographed this at eye level to add height to the pancakes.

Canon 5D Mark III •
ISO 100 • 1/45 sec. •
f/5.6 • Canon 100mm
f/2.8L Macro lens



A small sprig of mint placed on top adds color.

I used white plates and a light tabletop surface to highlight the colors of the food.

Styling Considerations

When we photograph our food, we want it to look beautiful, mouth-watering, and delicious. But there are several issues to consider before you go full speed.

Using a Food Stylist

Food stylists are extremely talented artists, most often with a culinary background. Their job is to make food look fresh and appetizing for the camera, so an understanding of how food acts and behaves is a must. They know all the tricks and techniques to create beautiful-looking dishes and use their skills to make the food look as delicious as it tastes. Does every food photographer need to work with a food stylist? It depends.

If you are the photographer for a big production (one with a large budget or for a high-profile company), having a stylist is a good idea. Even if you have the chops to style the food yourself, doing both the photography and the styling would probably be overwhelming. Hiring a food stylist ensures that your main focus stays where it should be: creating the photographs. Styling food on set is a one- or maybe two-person job, so when you are in an environment where time is limited (or there are several food items to style and photograph), then you are probably better off working with a professional food stylist.

On the other hand, if you're a food blogger or you just want to photograph food for fun, then it's likely you don't have the budget to hire a bona-fide food stylist. In that case, it's up to you to learn how to style your food and present it so that it not only looks appetizing but also looks good on camera. Later in this chapter I will show you some of my favorite tools and techniques that you can use to make food look beautiful all on your own.

Ethical Considerations

When it comes to styling food, there are some ethical restrictions that you must adhere to, mostly when you're photographing food for commercial purposes. The basic guideline is that if you're photographing food for advertisements (such as an ice cream image for a specific brand of ice cream), then you need to photograph the actual product, which in this case would be ice cream. If the advertisement is for a particular brand of ice cream, then you can't photograph fake ice cream and pass it off as the real thing.

But let's say you are hired to photograph sprinkles and toppings that go on top of the ice cream. In this case, the product that is being advertised is *not* the ice cream itself, so you could use fake ice cream because ice cream is, after all, one of the more difficult things to style and photograph. With all that said, I am not a lawyer, so if you find yourself in an unclear situation, it's best to do your own research and also seek legal advice if necessary.

Styled Food vs. Real Food

When you see an advertisement with a photograph of a fast-food hamburger, odds are that a food stylist had a heavy hand in making that hamburger look as juicy, plump, and deliciously messy as it could possibly be. If you go through the drive-through and order that same hamburger, however, you're likely going to be underwhelmed by the looks of the actual food that you receive. Although the beautiful hamburger in the photograph may in fact have been "real" food (with some added stylistic effects), it sure as heck was not *realistic*.

So what exactly is food styling? If you ask me, it has a broad range of definitions. Some people may consider food styling to encompass only the "weird" things that can be done to enhance the look of food, such as using aerosol starch and motor oil on pancakes, or soap bubbles in coffee or on bacon. The reason those types of styling options are popular is because they photograph well, look realistic, and also have a longer shelf life on set. My own definition is much more liberal because I think that we all style our food. Every intentional adjustment you make to your dishes, whether it's for food you're going to eat or to photograph, is styling. When chefs prepare meals at restaurants, they also style their dishes. Presentation is extremely important with food, especially when it's going to be photographed; when you can't smell the food, hear it sizzle, or hold it in your hands, its appearance is everything (Figures 3.1 and 3.2).



Figure 3.1
These images show how using something as simple as a cookie cutter to refine the edges of a small cheesecake can make a huge difference in its appearance. The integrity of the food was not compromised in styling this dish; rather, it was just prepared carefully so that it looked more elegant for the camera.

Photographed with an iPhone 6+



Figure 3.2

To style this dish, I used a cookie cutter to shape the cheesecake and then topped it with pomegranates and candied lemon peel.

Canon 5D Mark III •
ISO 100 • 2 sec. •
f/5.6 • Canon 100mm
f/2.8L Macro lens

You see, styling food doesn't mean you need to compromise the integrity of the dish and contaminate it with nonfood items in order to create a stunning photograph. To me, nothing is more beautiful than real food, but it still takes a bit of work to make that food look good for a photograph. You can also create your entire dish and do a bit of "editing" to the plate, which can be as basic as taking what is in front of you and moving things around to make it look more appealing.

The way you style and present your food is up to you, and the ultimate purpose of your photograph will also play a role in the presentation. If you run a website that showcases recipes and food, you might want to make your dish look as real as possible and only edit or style it to represent the recipe both truthfully and attractively. Or, if you just love food and want to create beautiful dishes for the love of photography, sneaking in a few "tricks" may not be such a bad thing. There's no right or wrong way to style food; just do what fits the purpose of your photography and your own personal style.

Ensuring Food Quality

When you cook a meal, you want to use quality ingredients to get the best flavors possible, right? When photographing food, you want to make sure that you follow the same principle, while ensuring that the way each ingredient *looks* is just as important as its *flavor*. It's simple, really—find only the most beautiful food to photograph.

Using Fresh Ingredients

The key to achieving a high-quality look for the food in your photographs is to use the freshest ingredients possible. Food doesn't last forever, and its beauty usually dissipates before it spoils or loses flavor. Herbs and veggies sitting in a refrigerator have a limited life span, so make sure you plan your photographs in advance and try to buy your food *the day or the day before* it's photographed.

To ensure that the quality of my food is up to par, I tend to shop only at certain grocery stores and markets. I know that some locations will have, for example, a really great selection of seafood, so I go to one of those stores when I'm shopping for that ingredient. I also like to go to the local farmers market to buy seasonal produce and fruit, and sometimes I'll conceive the look of a dish based on the freshest ingredients I can find while I'm shopping.

I also prefer to use fresh food rather than canned food, especially when it comes to vegetables (I will, from time to time, use frozen vegetables because they hold their shape and color well after being cooked). The guideline I use is that if I can buy it fresh (in the produce section of the grocery store), then I stay away from any canned alternatives. This also gives me a lot more control over the shape, color, size, and texture of the food. I make exceptions to this, of course, such as when I want to use something like canned mandarin oranges or water chestnuts. The bottom line is that if the food looks good enough to photograph, whether it's fresh or comes out of the can, bag, or jar, then go ahead and use it.

Shopping Smartly

When purchasing the ingredients for your dish, you need to be extremely selective. Choosing the most attractive ingredients (also referred to as the *hero* food) is essential to a great-looking dish. It's also a good idea to buy more than you need. (You can always eat the leftovers!) Having more than one of each item gives you options for the look of the ingredient, and it's also insurance in case anything goes wrong with your first pick.

When shopping for ingredients, be aware of how they will be handled when they are scanned at the register. If you have a self-checkout lane, then that's a good option if you are purchasing something fragile or easily altered, such as bread or soft fruit. Otherwise, kindly let the clerk know that you are photographing the food and ask if they can handle it with care. Another option is to find a discarded cardboard box and place the items in there so that they are not unintentionally squished at the bottom of a grocery bag. One of my favorite places to shop for produce is the local farmer's market (**Figure 3.3**). Not only is the food beautiful, I get to do all of the handling myself!

I am also very selective about the ingredients that I choose for my photographs. If I have one particular ingredient that will stand out, such as an artichoke, then I will search through all of the artichokes until I find a few of them that have the right shape and color for the image I want to create. If I am purchasing something in the meat department, I will usually ask for a specific item and will also ask the butcher to handle it with care because I will be photographing it. And, if you don't find what you are looking for, then either find a different ingredient or go to another store. Never compromise the look of an ingredient if you don't have to.



Figure 3.3
I prefer to shop for produce at the local farmer's market. The produce is fresh, and it's easy to find beautiful items to cook with.

Fuji X-T1 • ISO 400 •
1/800 sec. • f/2.8 •
Zeiss Touit 50mm f/2.8

Food Styling Basics

There is no single right (or wrong) way to style food, but there are some things that many food stylists and photographers do to make the food look its best. Before I get into the how, I'll start with the what. For instance, **Figure 3.4** shows some of the gadgets and tools that I use (and you can use) to make it all happen.

Gadgets and Tools

I use a lot of little gadgets and tools when styling food, but many of them are just everyday kitchen utensils. Here is a list of some of the basic tools I use often and wouldn't want to be without:

- **Tweezers:** I use tweezers to place small items (such as mint leaves or sesame seeds) or to reposition things on the plate.
- **Prep bowls and ramekins:** These are really useful for holding garnishes and sauces near your dish or workspace. You can also place them upside down in bowls to add bulk to foods.
- **Plastic spoons:** These are useful for mixing and stirring, as well as for applying things such as sauces, sour cream, or any kind of liquid. Because they are extremely light and thin, I find that they give me more control than metal spoons.
- **Paper towels:** I always have a full roll of paper towels sitting near my workspace when styling food. They're handy for cleaning drips on plates, and if you're styling food in the spot where it will be photographed, you can place them under the plate to catch accidental spills.
- **Water:** I use canned water to add a fine mist to salad, fresh fruits and vegetables, and the like.
- **Grater and peeler:** These are great for preparing garnishes, such as Parmesan cheese or lemon zest.



Figure 3.4

This is a sampling of some of the tools I use when styling food.

Canon 5D Mark III • ISO 400 • 1/10 sec. • f/6.7 • Canon 100mm f/2.8L Macro lens

Using Stand-ins

If you're familiar with movie or television production, you know that the lights need to be set for each scene, which usually takes quite a while. So, instead of having the main actors sit or stand on the set while the lights are being moved and measured, *stand-ins* (people who have a similar look to the actors) take their place so the actors can relax, have their makeup fixed, memorize their lines, or simply stay in character. A similar method is used in food photography.

When you style and photograph food, you usually have to work quickly so the food stays fresh. All food has a limited life span, which is even more apparent when you're photographing it. Shiny food loses its luster, oils and sauces soak into cooked meats, and foods such as herbs and lettuce wilt away quickly (**Figure 3.5**).

When I photograph food, I always use a stand-in. I do this so I can set the lights, composition, props, and so on, ahead of time and prevent the food from losing its luster by the time everything is ready to go. In fact, I don't even do any cooking, styling, or preparations until the light is ready. That way, once the food is prepared, I can drop it into place, make a few minor adjustments, and start photographing within seconds of the food being placed on set.

A stand-in can be anything. An extra piece of food that doesn't require cooking (such as a hamburger bun) usually makes a good stand-in. Or you could use something totally random that has similar tonal qualities as your prepared food will have (**Figures 3.6 and 3.7**). Try to use something that is the same shape, width, or height so you can set your composition in the camera (this is especially handy if you are using a tripod).



Figure 3.5

This sequence shows how much a simple herb such as basil can change over the course of one hour—it goes from being crisp and green to dull and wilting.

Canon 5D Mark III • ISO 50 • 1/6 sec. • *f*/6.7 • Canon 24–70mm *f*/2.8L lens

Canon 5D Mark III •
ISO 100 • 1/4 sec. •
f/5.6 • Canon 100mm
f/2.8L Macro lens



Canon 5D Mark III •
ISO 100 • 0.3 sec. •
f/5.6 • Canon 100mm
f/2.8L Macro lens



Figure 3.6
I used a crumpled-up napkin as a stand-in for the yogurt in this photograph.



Canon 5D Mark III •
ISO 100 • 0.3 sec. •
f/6.7 • Canon 100mm
f/2.8L Macro lens



Canon 5D Mark III •
ISO 100 • 0.7 sec. •
f/6.7 • Canon 100mm
f/2.8L Macro lens

Figure 3.7
A stand-in doesn't need to look identical to your actual food. In this case, I placed a simple knitted cloth on the plate as a stand-in for the pasta.

Maintaining a Clean Environment

A perfectly prepared photo setup can easily be tainted with an unwanted stain. When I'm preparing a plate of food for a photograph, therefore, I try to do most of the work away from the location where it will be photographed, usually on my kitchen counter or at a table that sits nearby. This way I can get close to the dish as well as keep all my tools, food, and garnishes nearby, and it doesn't matter if I make a mess.

Sometimes, however, you won't be able to do all of your plating off set and will need to style the dish as it sits in front of the camera. In those instances, you need to be careful to protect the environment from drips and spills. The simplest solution is to place a few paper towels around the area (**Figure 3.8**), which will likely save you from having to quickly re-create your scene. This also allows you to focus on the look of the food without worrying about making any messes.

Styling from Camera View

When photographing food, the only area of the food that you need to pay attention to is the side that's being photographed. It's always best to put yourself in the position of the camera and style the food from that perspective. If you're photographing the front part of a dish, it doesn't matter what the back of the dish looks like, so long as it's not in the image.

Another useful way to style food (and set up the overall scene, too) is to use the Live View feature on your camera (most of the newer DSLR models have this as a standard feature). Being able to watch what is happening in your scene with Live View makes it so easy to place things in the scene, add garnishes, and even just frame and compose the photo. The downside to Live View is that it drains the battery more quickly than just looking through the viewfinder. It also will sometimes cause interference when you're firing strobes and flashes wirelessly. If you run into that problem, you'll need to turn off Live View temporarily to trip the shutter and create the photograph.

Following Your Instincts

Overall, much of styling food involves using what works for your situation. There is no one way to do everything, and depending on how the food was prepared or how you want it to look, you'll probably have to get creative.

You also need to make sure that you are deliberate in your approach to creating your food and developing its overall appearance. When I style food, everything that ends up in the photograph is there because I want it to be there. A crumb that looks like it landed naturally on the plate may have been placed with small tweezers, or it crumbled off on its own and I just liked the way it landed. Often it's the things that may be considered small and unimportant that can actually take a photo from average to amazing.



Figure 3.8
When working with messy food, such as this berry bruschetta topping, place paper towels over the table's surface to prevent drips and stains.

Canon 5D Mark III •
ISO 100 • 1/4 sec. •
f/6.7 • Canon 100mm
f/2.8L Macro lens

Figure 3.9

By placing a small upside-down cup in the bowl, I was able to “float” the asparagus tips on the top of the soup. Without the small cup, they would have sunk to the bottom of the soup bowl.



Styling Tips and Tricks

There are a lot of techniques you can use when styling your food to enhance its appearance. Here are some simple tips and tricks to help you make your food look great when it’s being photographed.

Adding Bulk

When you place food in a bowl, often it will sink to the bottom and lie flat (especially with foods like pasta and chunky soups or stews). You can bulk up food in a bowl in a few ways. The first is to set a dome of Styrofoam in the bottom of the bowl and then place the food on top of it. This usually works best for slippery foods that won’t stay put, but one major downside is that if you’re planning to eat the food after it’s photographed, you’re out of luck (unless you want little bits of plastic foam in your meal). Another



method is to place a smaller bowl, such as a prep dish or small ramekin, upside down in the bowl and then pile the food on top (**Figure 3.9**). This keeps your food fresh and does a really good job of adding a little extra bulk. For soups, another good trick is to use clear glass stones at the bottom of the bowl to help bring any added items up to the surface, such as noodles or vegetables.

If you're working with food that is flat, especially when you are stacking more than one item on top of the other, adding something between the layers can help make the food look much more full. In **Figure 3.10**, I placed two tortillas on top of each other before adding the carnitas meat and garnish. However, just having the tortillas lie flat on top of each other made them look lifeless. So I added torn-up tortillas between the layers to help bring up the front edges and make them look more appealing. You can use anything you like between your food to give it more life—cardboard, toothpicks, or even folded-up paper towels.



Figure 3.10
I added torn-up tortilla pieces between the two tortillas to add bulk and texture to the food.

Canon 5D Mark III • ISO 100 • 0.5 sec. • *f*/5.6 • Canon 100mm *f*/2.8L Macro lens

Using Garnishes

Adding a touch of color to a dish can do wonders, and I often do this by adding garnishes, such as fresh basil, cilantro, or any herb that is appropriate to the food and its ingredients (Figure 3.11). Just as adding herbs and spices will enhance flavor when cooking the food, adding them to your photograph can make it look livelier and more appealing.

This technique also helps create your point of focus. By adding a bright, colorful food item to the dish, you will draw the viewer's eyes to that location. And it's the perfect spot to focus on with your camera. (Chapter 5 offers more suggestions on focus and composition.)

Canon 5D Mark III •
ISO 100 • 1/6 sec. •
f/8 • Canon 100mm
f/2.8L Macro lens



Canon 5D Mark III •
ISO 100 • 1/4 sec. •
f/8 • Canon 100mm
f/2.8L Macro lens



Figure 3.11

Adding green onions and cilantro as a garnish helped give this photo a boost of color.

A Little Mess Is Okay

One thing to keep in mind when you're creating your dishes is that they don't always have to look perfect. A few crumbs or drips to the side of the food, or even a dish with a fork already dug into the food, makes the food look more real and attainable to the viewer (**Figure 3.12**). It can also add balance to the composition of the photograph. A little mess is okay; just pay attention to your crumb or drip placement so that it still looks appealing and delicious.

Figure 3.12
Adding a little bit of mess, like these drips coming off of the peaches, helps add realism to the photo.

Canon 5D Mark III •
ISO 100 • 3 sec. •
f/5.6 • Canon 100mm
f/2.8L Macro lens



Real Ice vs. Fake Ice

Tip

When adding ice to a glass, be sure to fill it all the way up to the top so that the ice is peeking slightly above the liquid's surface. Real ice floats, but fake ice does not, so filling to the brim is a "sneaky" way to make it look more realistic!

I use fake ice in many of my photographs. In fact, any time there's a water glass in the frame (usually in the out-of-focus background), I've probably added some fake ice to the cup, usually without even adding water (**Figure 3.13**). I use fake ice so frequently because real ice has two major flaws: It melts quickly, and it can look very foggy when photographed. Fake ice, on the other hand, will hold its shape and stay shiny and crystal clear (**Figure 3.14**).



Figure 3.13

For this plate of pasta, I wanted to add something to the background. So I filled a glass with fake ice and placed it in the top left corner of the frame, knowing that it would end up blurred and slightly unrecognizable. The ice adds depth and a bit of sparkle to the background without being overpowering.

.....
Canon 5D Mark III • ISO 100 • 0.7 sec. • *f*/4.5 •
Canon 100mm *f*/2.8L Macro lens



Figure 3.14

These two images show the difference between fake ice (left) and real ice (right).

.....
Canon 5D Mark III •
ISO 100 • 1/10 sec. •
f/8 • Canon 100mm
f/2.8L Macro lens

Although there are places that create custom, realistic (and expensive) acrylic ice cubes, the ice I use is relatively inexpensive and purchased through an online retailer. If you are creating photographs that require ice and you don't have a big budget, this is probably a good option for you as well.

Adding Movement

Another way to add to your image is to give the photo a sense of movement. You could do this by photographing the act of drizzling syrup onto French toast, sprinkling cheese over pasta, or even adding a utensil that is taking a scoop from the food itself (Figure 3.15). One of my tricks for adding movement is to use a Manfrotto Magic Arm (www.manfrotto.com). By placing a spoon or fork in the jaws of this adjustable arm-like clamp I can mimic the act of someone taking a bite (Figures 3.16 and 3.17). The Magic Arm's flexibility allows me a lot of control when styling and framing my scene while keeping the utensil firmly in place (Figure 3.18).



Figure 3.15
Drizzling syrup over French toast is a great way to add movement to an image.

Canon 5D Mark III •
ISO 400 • 1/125 sec. •
f/5.6 • Canon 100mm
f/2.8L Macro lens



Figure 3.16
I used a Manfrotto Magic Arm to set up this shot as if someone was holding a fork off camera.

Canon 5D Mark II •
ISO 100 • 0.3 sec. •
f/8 • Canon 70–200mm
f/4L IS lens



Figure 3.17
The Manfrotto Magic Arm was used to create this image of honey dripping from a honey dipper.

Canon 5D Mark III •
ISO 100 • 1/4 sec. •
f/5.6 • Canon 100mm
f/2.8L Macro lens



Figure 3.18
This is a behind-the-scenes image showing how the Manfrotto Magic Arm was positioned to create the image in Figure 3.17.

Fuji X-T1 • ISO 2500 •
1/125 sec. • f/3.6 •
Zeiss Touit 32mm
f/1.8 lens



Canon 70D · ISO 100 ·
0.4 sec. · f/4 ·
Canon 50mm Macro lens

6

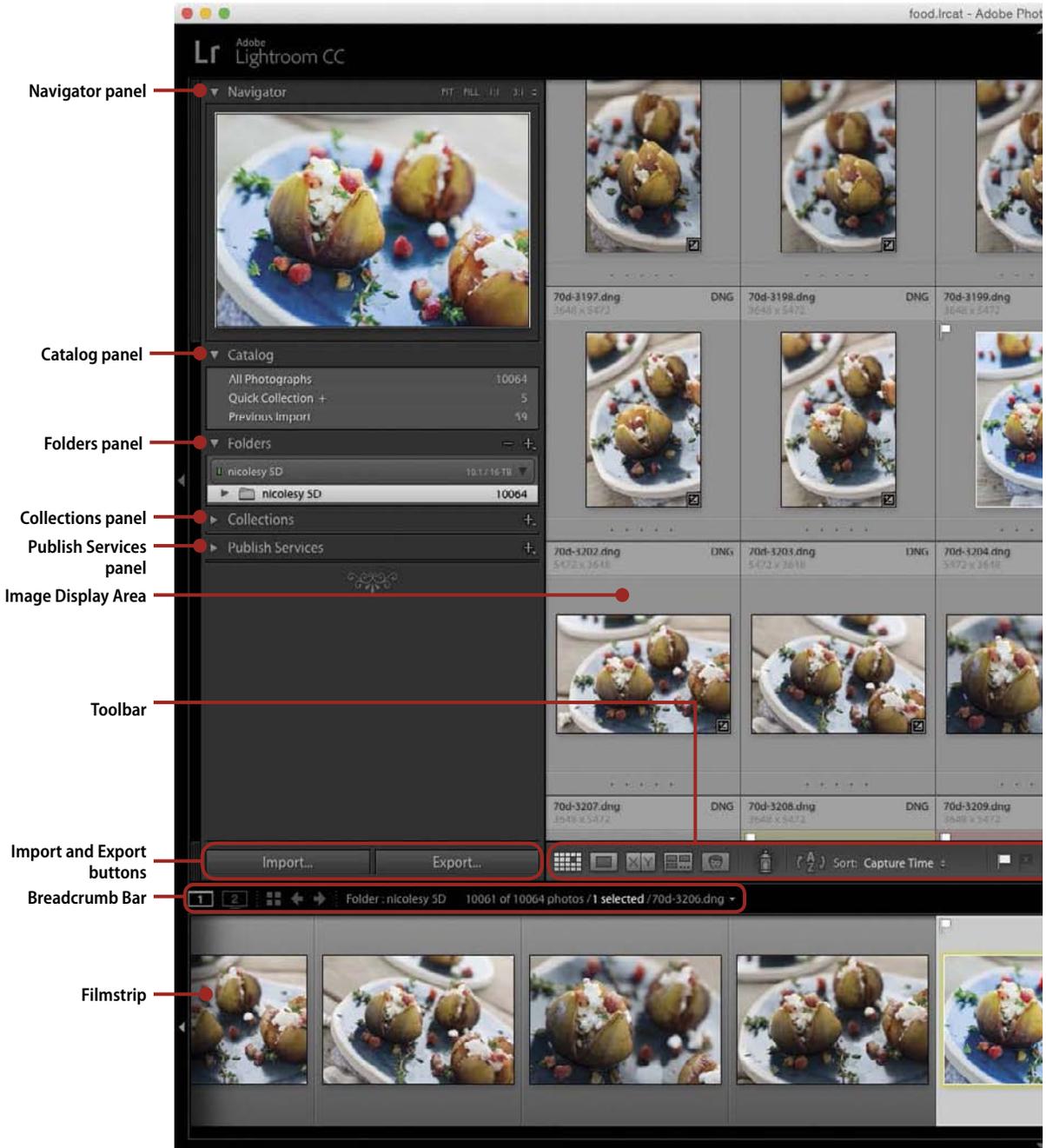
Processing Images with Adobe Lightroom

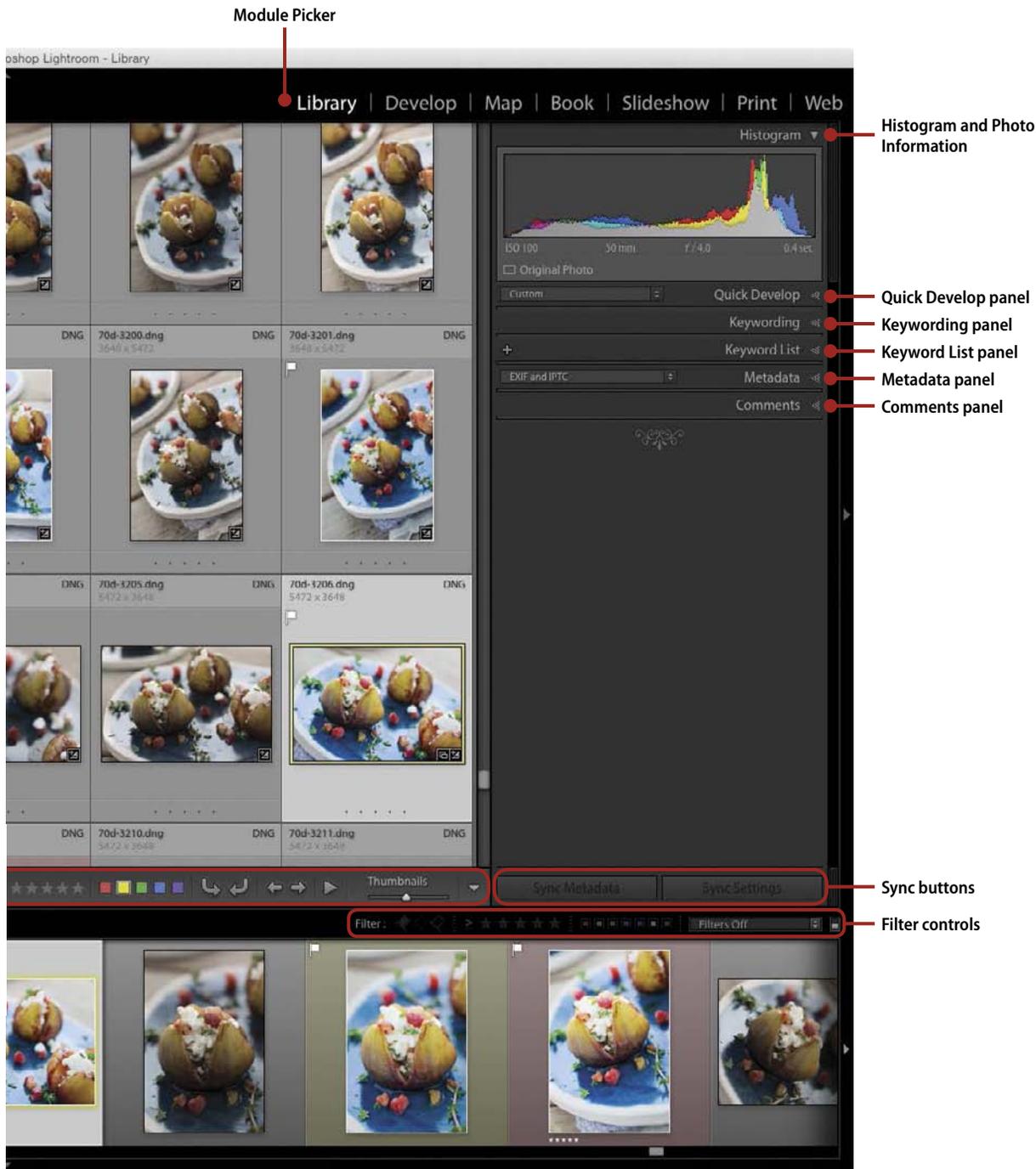
Making Your Photographs Look Their Best

As digital photographers, we cannot avoid processing, or editing, our photos. The good thing is that when editing food photographs, you usually won't use a lot of flair or crazy, off-the-wall editing techniques. My philosophy is to keep my photographs clean and make them look like they were not edited. Ironically, extensive editing can sometimes make a photo look as if it hasn't been edited, so I prefer to use simple, basic techniques that I apply subtly.

Although I included as much information in this chapter as I could about working in Adobe Lightroom, it is not an all-encompassing lesson on using the software. It does, however, cover many of the basics specific to organizing and editing your photographs. There is no right way to process any given image, but by using the techniques in this chapter, you will be off to a good start in developing your own style and overall editing workflow.

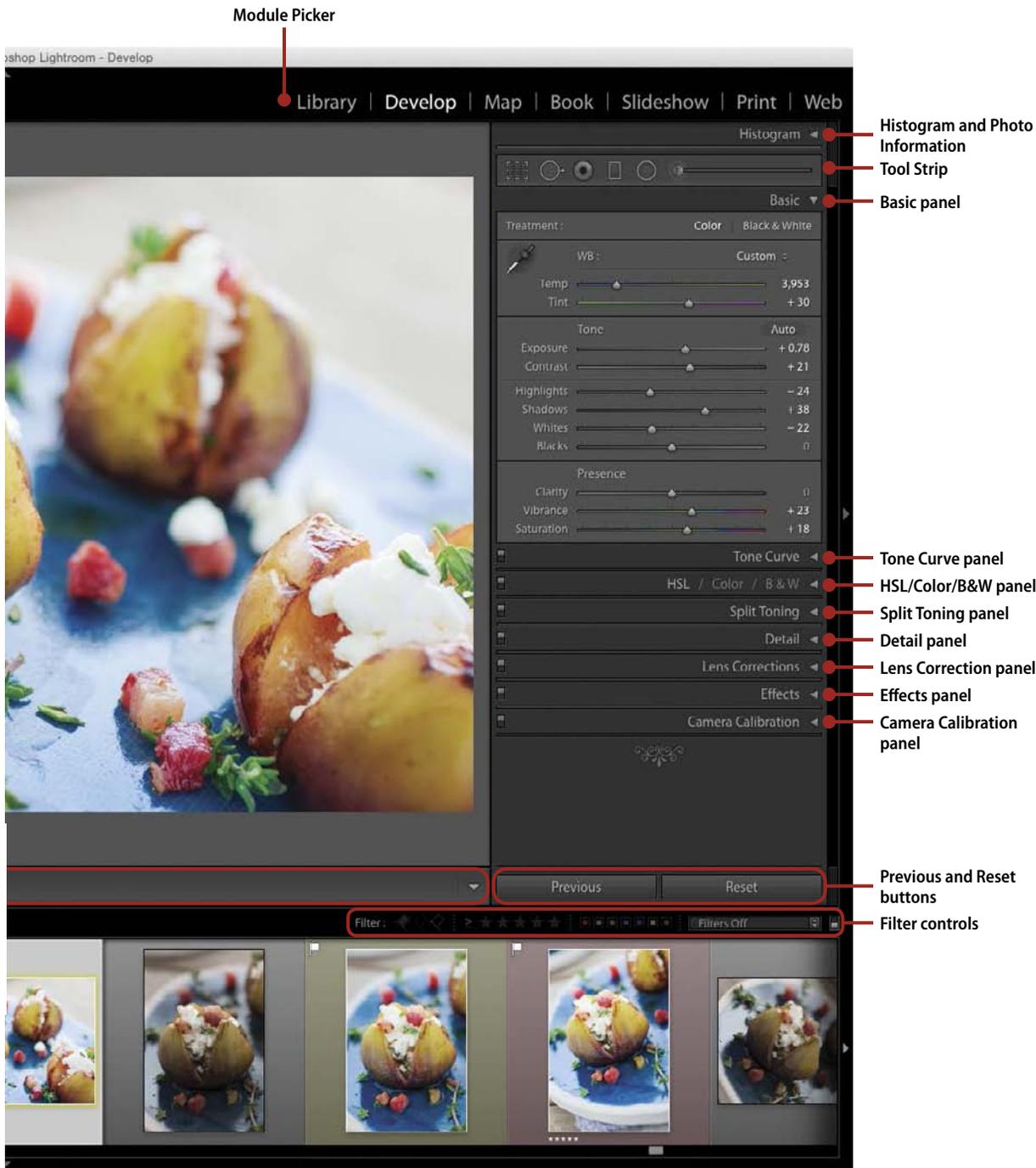
The Library Module Workspace





The Develop Module Workspace





Getting Started

Before you jump in to editing your photos, you'll want to understand a couple of things to make the editing process easier: monitor calibration and photo-editing software.

Calibrating Your Monitor

If you plan to share your photos on the Internet or through any type of computer interface, a color-calibrated monitor is essential to ensuring proper colors in your images. When you calibrate your monitor, you are setting up your screen so that it looks as balanced as possible. So if you edit a photo on your computer and post it on the Internet, other people looking at it on calibrated monitors will see identical colors and brightness in the image.

If you don't calibrate your monitor, you run the risk of colors or brightness skewing to one side of the spectrum. Things might appear normal on *your* screen, but they won't look the same on other computers.

The best way to avoid this is to use a display calibration device, which is a piece of hardware that plugs in to your computer. You run its software, and it makes all of the adjustments for you (Figure 6.1). You can find many brands out there with different levels of calibration, but you don't need to spend a lot of money to get one that works well. If you're serious about photography, it is a necessary investment.

Figure 6.1

This is the calibration software I use for my monitors, the X-Rite ColorMunki Display (www.xrite.com). To calibrate, I launch the software and use a special device that plugs into my computer and rests on my monitor during the calibration process. You don't have to break the bank for a calibration device. Many of them are relatively inexpensive and still do a good job balancing the colors and tones of your monitor.



Photo-Editing Software

When it comes to processing photos on your computer, you definitely have more than one option. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how to use Adobe Photoshop Lightroom (www.adobe.com), but it's likely that you may want to consider and try some other options for postprocessing. I find that Lightroom is well rounded and allows me to process the majority of my food photographs from start to finish in just the one program, but that's not to say that I never use anything else.

One obvious alternative is Adobe Photoshop®. For those of you who do not use Lightroom, then you can still get a lot out of this chapter! Most of the techniques used here can also be applied using Adobe Bridge® and Adobe Photoshop (specifically, Adobe Camera Raw®, or ACR for short). The interfaces will look different, but the sliders and other menu names should remain the similar. Photoshop is a pixel editor, so it has some other added benefits (especially if you need to clone anything or make aggressive changes to an element in your image). The more powerful Lightroom becomes, however, the less I find myself using Photoshop.

Another application I use in conjunction with Lightroom is the on1 Perfect Photo Suite (www.on1.com). This software has many useful features, including the ability to work with layers and masking; has its own dedicated file browser to search through your folders and files; and also includes a powerful editor, Perfect Effects, where you can add color, tone, and many other types of adjustments. There are several options on the market for photography tools, and many of them offer free trials. I recommend you try them out to see which ones you prefer and go from there.

Working in Adobe Lightroom

Adobe Lightroom has seven modules that you can work from, each with their own panels, functions, and purposes. In this book, I will demonstrate how to process photos using two of these: the Library and Develop modules. The Library module is where you can import, export, and organize your photographs, and the Develop module is the place to process your RAW photos to make them stand out and look beautiful.

My Lightroom Workflow

When working in Lightroom, you will eventually develop your own methods, along with a start-to-finish workflow. I have been using Lightroom for years, and you will probably find that the order you work in is similar to my own.

Here is a typical workflow that I use in Lightroom:

- 1. Import:** The first step is always to import the files into the Lightroom catalog. I typically will do this after each shoot using the memory card from my camera.
- 2. Organize and sort:** Next, I sort and organize my files in the Library module. I choose which images I want to process in the Develop module, and I also organize the photos into collections if needed.
- 3. Develop:** The next step is to process the photos in the Develop module. If I have multiple photos from the same shoot that are similar in exposure and subject, I will sync the develop settings for all of those images.
- 4. Export:** The last step is to export my files. Most often, my photos are going to be shared on a website, so I resize them so that they are smaller (usually around 2000px wide) and export them to my hard drive.

How the Lightroom Catalog Works: It's a Database!

One thing to keep in mind when using Lightroom is that the program first organizes a catalog of your photos in a database. All photos in Lightroom remain stored in a location and folder hierarchy of your choosing. Lightroom does not tuck your photos away in a difficult-to-reach location, buried out of sight. The Lightroom catalog only *points* to the files on your computer and shows the data from those images (the image preview, metadata, and so on). The files themselves do not relocate from where you originally saved them.

The Library Module

One of the biggest advantages of working in Lightroom is its ability to help you organize and catalog your photographs. This is what makes Lightroom so incredibly powerful! And all of this organization takes place in the Library module.

In this section, I will walk you through the steps for creating a catalog, importing your photographs, and also organizing your images using folders, collections, keywords, and other labels (such as flags and ratings). So, let's get started!

Creating a Catalog

When you open up Lightroom for the first time, it will typically create a default catalog on your computer. This catalog, usually named something like "Lightroom 6 Catalog.lrcat," is a good place to get started and may be the only catalog you ever need.

I prefer to work with one large catalog that includes all of my photographs, and right now my Lightroom catalog has close to 250,000 files! I find that keeping all of my images organized in one catalog is the easiest way for me to work efficiently, as I am constantly jumping around to look for photos to either share online or use in articles or training materials.

Another option is to use more than one catalog. You can set this up in Lightroom by choosing **File > New Catalog**. Some reasons for multiple catalogs might be if you work with different clients and prefer to keep their work separate from all of your other images. Choosing the number of catalogs and how you ultimately organize your photographs is a matter of your own personal preference.

Importing Your Files

Now that you have your catalog, it's time to import some files! As photographers, we have to get our photos downloaded to our computers through memory cards. However, if you are new to using Lightroom or if you have some existing photos sitting on your computer, then you will probably want to import those as well. In this section, I'll show you how to do both. Let's get started with importing from a memory card, which is the one you'll likely use most often.

Importing from a Memory Card

To transfer files from your camera to your computer, you will need to use the memory card. To get started, remove the card memory card from your camera and insert it into the card reader (Figure 6.2). Then, in Lightroom's Library module, choose **File > Import Photos and Video**. You can also click the Import button in the lower-left portion of the window (Figure 6.3).

Next, the Import window pops up. There are two different views for this window: expanded and minimized. The default view is minimized, but I always recommend expanding the window to see more options. To do this, click the upside-down arrow on the bottom-left of the Import window (Figures 6.4 and 6.5).



Figure 6.2
This is the card reader I use to import files to my desktop computer, a Lexar multi-card USB reader.

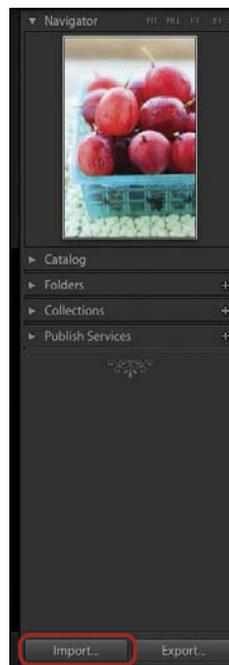


Figure 6.3
Use the Import button to add photos to your Lightroom catalog.



Figure 6.4
The default Import window is a smaller version with fewer options.

Figure 6.5
By expanding the Import window, you gain more options to work with when importing your photos into Lightroom.



Now, let's go through each of the sections within this window, starting with the Source panel on the left. The Source panel is where you select the source of your images, in this case the memory card you just inserted. Memory cards typically appear at the top of the list, so click a card's name to select it (Figure 6.6).

Next, go to the top of the window to choose how the image will be copied to your computer. When importing from a memory card, you have two options: Copy as DNG and Copy (Figure 6.7). The first option, Copy as DNG, imports the photos and then converts the RAW files to DNG files in the process. Selecting Copy copies the RAW files to your computer (CR2, NEF, and so on). If you're not sure which way to go, you might want to just stick with Copy. If you decide to convert them to DNG down the road, you can do that in the Library module under Library > Convert Photos to DNG.

Figure 6.6
The Source panel is where you select the location of the files you want to import into your catalog. Here I selected a memory card with images photographed from my Canon 5D Mark III.

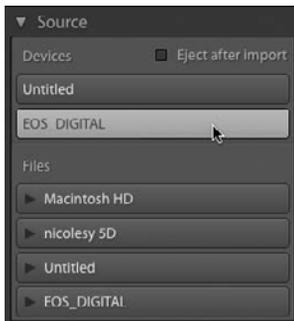


Figure 6.7
The Copy as DNG option, which I have selected here, will import the photos and convert them to DNG files. The Copy option will directly copy your RAW files (CR2, NEF, and so on). The other two options, Move and Add, are only for importing photos that already exist on your hard drive and are grayed out here because I am copying from a memory card.

What Are DNG Files?

When importing your images, you may notice that you have the option to convert your photos to DNG at the time of import. DNG stands for Digital Negative, and it is a RAW file that has a few advantages. One advantage is that this file format is nonproprietary, meaning that it is not associated with a specific brand and is less likely to be outdated in years to come.

Another great feature of the DNG file is that all of your changes are saved in the file itself. When you process a regular RAW image in Lightroom, such as a CR2 from a Canon camera, Lightroom saves a side-car file that holds all of the information from your edits (**Figure 6.8**). Without this file, the photo would be reset to its straight-out-of-the-camera state, and you would lose your changes. With a DNG file, the changes are written to the DNG file, so no additional files need to stick with the photo for the changes to appear (**Figure 6.9**).



Figure 6.8
This folder is filled with Canon CR2 RAW files, along with their sidecar .XMP files. The .XMP file holds the information from changes made in the Lightroom catalog, such as white balance and tone adjustments.

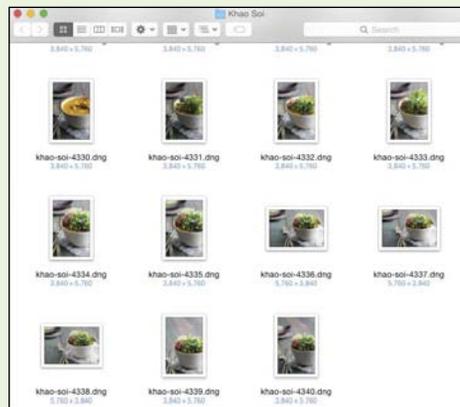


Figure 6.9
With DNG files, the information from changes in the Lightroom catalog is stored inside the file.

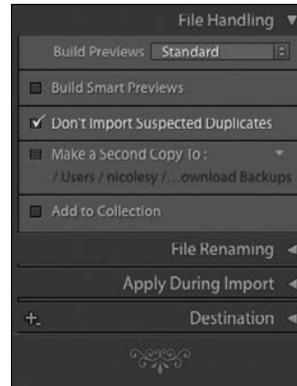
Just below the top panel is the thumbnail preview of your images. In this section, you can select which images you want to view, how they are presented (either in a grid or as a full image), how big the thumbnails are, and also how they are sorted (**Figure 6.10**). A checkmark next to the photo means that it will be imported, and if the photo does not have a checkmark or is grayed out, it will not be imported.

Figure 6.10
The center window displays the photos you will be importing, and it also allows you to sort them and view them at different sizes.

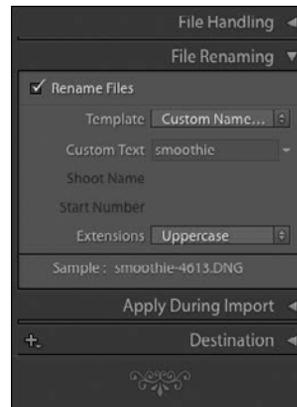


Over on the right is where you select where to import the photos to, how you name the files, and how they are handled on import, as well as the option to add your copyright or other metadata (such as keywords) to your photos. This section can be a little bit daunting for first-time users, so let's go through each panel and discuss what it does, along with some of the basic settings you can use to get started.

- **File Handling:** Through this panel you tell Lightroom how to handle the files you are importing. For the Build Previews drop-down, I recommend sticking with the Standard setting for previews. Also leave the Smart Previews option unchecked. It's a good idea to keep a check in the Don't Import Suspected Duplicates box to prevent you from re-importing old files. If you are backing up your images to a second source, then you can deselect this box and specify the backup destination. Finally, you can place the photos into a collection on import as well.



- **File Renaming:** This panel is pretty straightforward. You choose how the files will be named. You are not required to rename them, but I prefer to give my files names that make sense. The settings I use for renaming files are to use a custom name with the original file number. For example, for this group of images I photographed a green smoothie. I will set the custom text to “smoothie,” and the original file number will remain. There are other options as well, and you can even create and save your own preset. I recommend experimenting with a file-naming structure that best suits your organizational style.

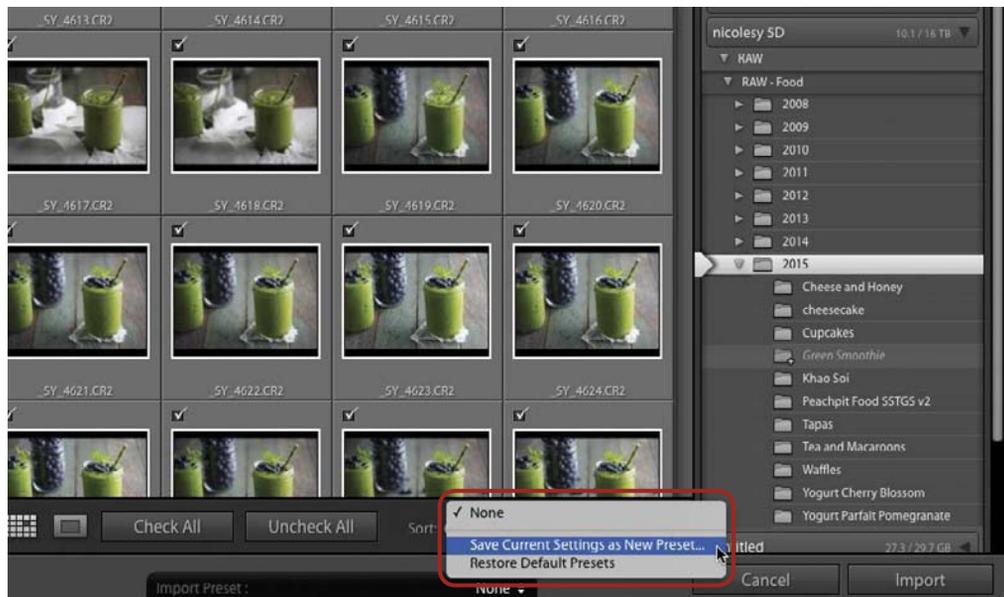
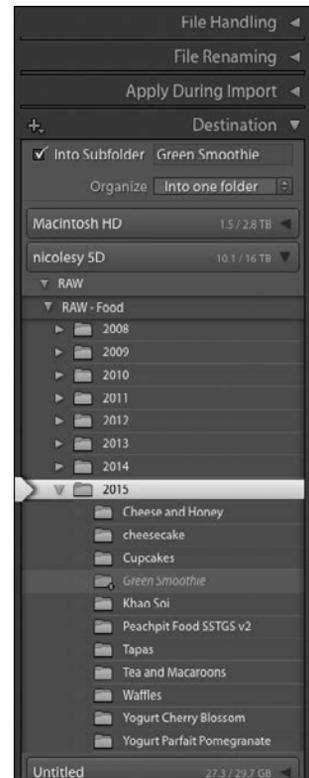


- **Apply During Import:** While importing files, you also have the ability to apply certain settings to your images. If you have a develop preset you would like to apply, you can do that with the drop-down. You can also create a metadata preset, which is a great way to embed your copyright information in the file. Last but not least, there is a box for quickly applying keywords to your files as well.



- **Destination:** The last setting is the destination where you would like your photos to reside on your computer after they are imported. Here, Lightroom gives you two options to organize your files: by date or into one folder. My preference is to create my own named folder hierarchy using the Into One Folder option, where I label my folders based on the type of photos I was creating. For food photography, that will always be the name of the dish inside a folder labeled Food.
- **Import Preset:** The last panel in the Import window is at the bottom of the window, and this is where you can save presets of your import settings. I do this often and find that it is a much faster way to quickly apply settings, and then I can make small changes (such as changing the name of the file) before importing.

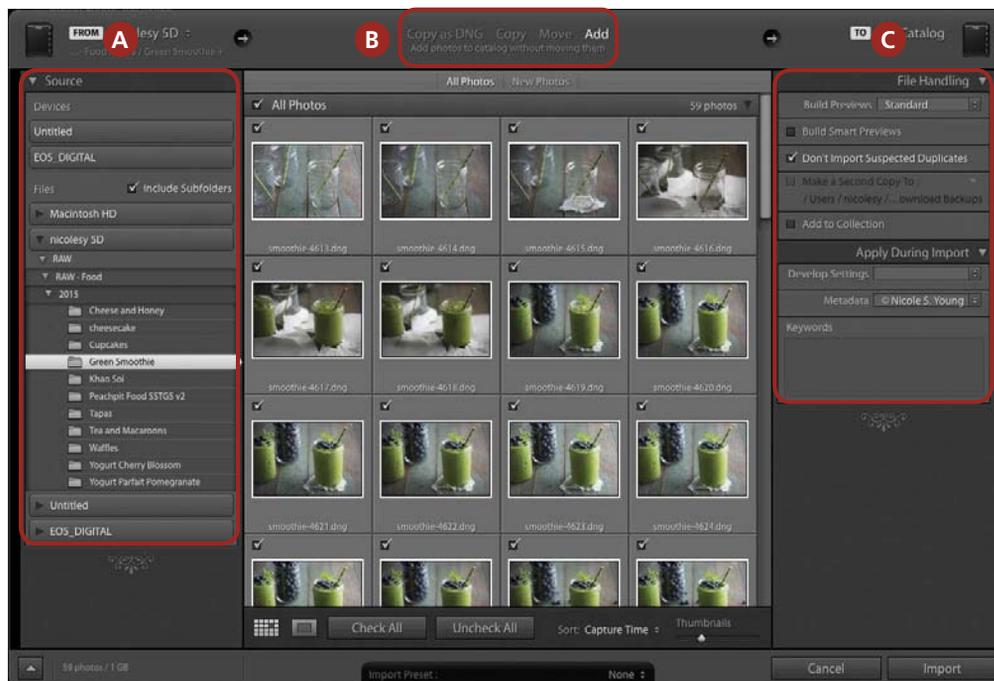
To create your own preset, first set up the Import window the way you would like to import a certain group of photos. Then, click the Import Preset drop-down and select “Save current settings as new preset.” Give your preset a name and then click OK. Now, the next time you import photos, select that preset from the list, and all of your settings will be applied.



Importing from Existing Files on Your Computer

If you already have files on your computer, then importing them using the Import window is a breeze. Here's how to import existing files into your Lightroom catalog:

1. Open the Import window, and select the source files from on the left (A).
2. From the top, select the action you want perform with the files: Copy, Move, or Add (B). Copying the files makes a copy of the images and places them into a folder of your choice. Moving the files relocates the files to a new folder, and the Add option keeps the images in their existing location, which is a good choice if you already have the photos on your computer and don't want to move them. Selecting Add is the easiest and simplest option to work with; use that option for this example.
3. Because the files are being added to the catalog without being moved, you have fewer options to choose from on the right side of the window. For this example, leave the File Handling options as-is and select the appropriate settings in the Apply During Import panel (C).



4. Click the Import button, and the photos are added to your Lightroom catalog.

Organization Tips

As I mentioned previously, one of Lightroom's most powerful features is the ability to help you stay organized. But just because you have Lightroom doesn't mean that your images will magically be filed away in an order that makes the most sense to you. It will take some planning on your part to make sure that your images are added to your catalog in an order that makes the most sense.

Folder Organization

How you ultimately organize your folders is completely up to you. Some photographers will sort their files by date (a folder for the year and then a folder for each month or day). I personally find that a bit confusing because I don't always know what or where I was photographing on a particular day of the year. Instead, I prefer to organize my folders by year, and then I list out each photo shoot within that year (**Figure 6.11**).

As you can see, I group my food photographs separate from my other files, and it's likely that you will have many other photos in your Lightroom catalog as well. Keep in mind that it may take time to decide on a structure that works best for you, so don't fret about this right away. You can even move your photos around to reorganize them, but if you do, be sure to do all of your moving from in Lightroom! Going outside of Lightroom and making changes to the folder structure will confuse Lightroom and cause it to lose track of those photos. So, if you need to rename, relocate, or reorganize your photos and folders, be sure to do it *only* from within the Folders panel in Lightroom.

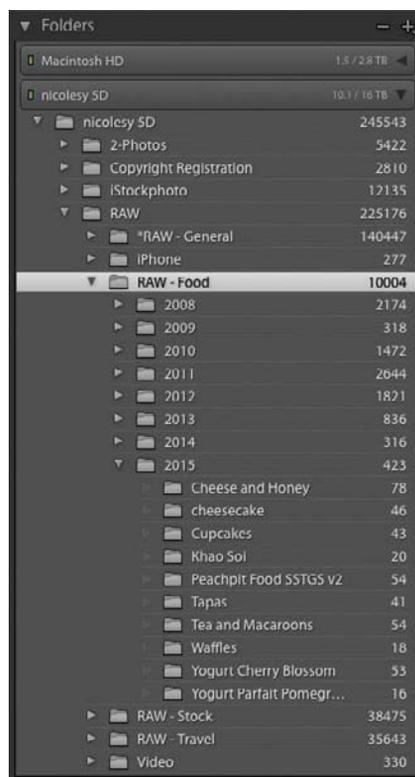


Figure 6.11
I organize the photos in my Lightroom catalog by year and then by photo shoot.

Using Collections

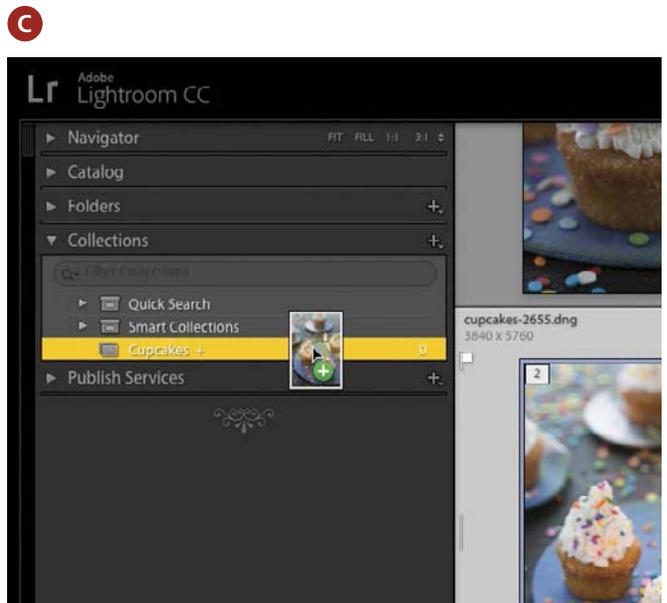
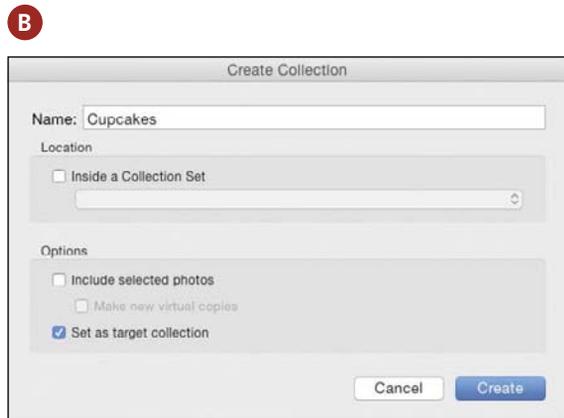
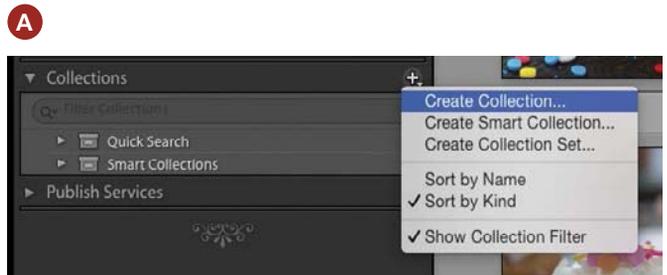
Staying organized using folders is a good way to maintain order in Lightroom, but you can also use the Collections panel to sort and group your photos. Saving a photo to a collection does not move the photo. Rather, it displays photos as a group, and the photos can come from any folder in your catalog.

Here are a few possibilities for collections in Lightroom:

- Your very best photos to be shared in a portfolio or gallery website
- Images that will be shared on your blog or posted to social media
- Photos to use for a specific project, such as a cookbook or eBook
- Images that you want to postprocess at a later time
- Photos to be used on a stock website

Once you have an idea for a collection, you'll need to create it. Here's how:

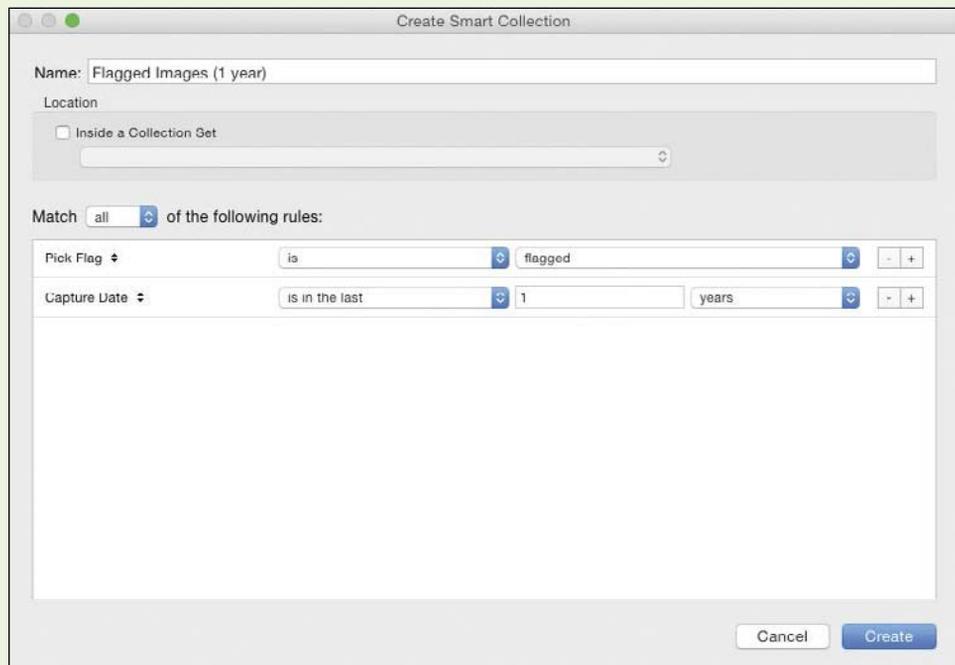
1. Go to the Collections panel and click the plus icon. Then, select **Create Collection** from the pop-up (A).
2. Give your collection a name, and if you have a Collection Set already created, you can add it to that as well. Also, there are a few check boxes in the Options setting to choose from. Place a check in the "Set as target collection" option, and leave the others unchecked. When you are finished, click the **Create** button (B).
3. Your new collection will now appear in the Collections panel. To add photos to it, drag and drop them from the folders in your catalog. Also, because you set this collection as a target collection, you can also use the keyboard shortcut **B** to add any selected image to that collection (C).



Collections, Smart Collections, and Collection Sets

When creating a new collection, you'll notice that Lightroom offers three types of collections: a collection, a smart collection, or a collection set. Here's a quick breakdown of what each of these do:

- **Collection:** This type of collection will hold photos and is the one you will use most often when using this panel. You add photos to collections manually or while you are importing your files.
- **Smart Collection:** You can create a collection that will be automatically populated based on certain criteria. For example, you could create a smart collection that shows all images you photographed in the last year that have a Pick Flag status set to Flagged. Then, Lightroom would scan through your entire catalog and automatically add those files to the folder and update it as necessary. There are many different ways you can use smart collections, and at times they can be handy.



- **Collection Set:** A collection set holds other collections, so you can use this to further group and organize your collections.

Selecting Keepers

After importing a batch of photos to your Lightroom catalog, odds are that you will want to process a handful of them only. The best way to know which ones you will be working on is to go through a sorting process right off the bat. Lightroom offers a few ways that you can sort through your images to select and label your best shots.

Flags, Color Labels, and Star Ratings

There are three main ways you can label your images in Lightroom: flags, color labels, and star ratings. And the great news is that you don't have to choose just one. You can, in fact, add more than one type of label to each image, so you can have different methods of sorting to organize your photos. Each sorting method can be applied either by using a keyboard shortcut or through the toolbar below the Preview window (**Figure 6.12**).



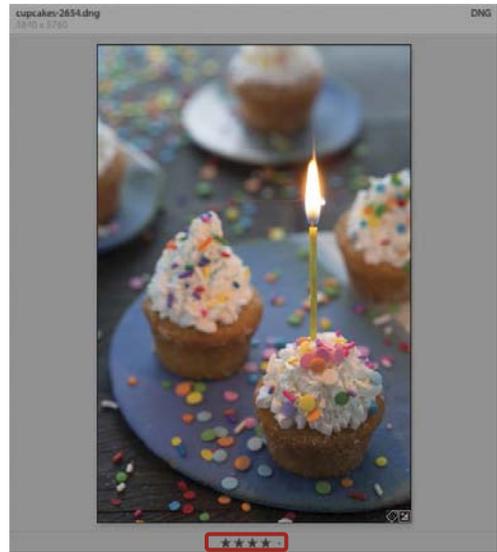
Figure 6.12

The toolbar below the Preview window allows you to sort, rate, or flag your images.

- **Flags:** Flagging is probably the simplest of the labeling methods and is the primary way I sort my images in Lightroom. Each photo can be flagged (left), unflagged (middle), or rejected (right). To flag an image (or group of images), highlight it and then press the **P** key (P stands for “pick”). You can also hover over the image and click the flag icon in the upper-left corner of the box in the Grid view or in the toolbar below the Preview window. If you would like to unflag a photo, use the keyboard shortcut **U**. And, to reject a photo, use the keyboard shortcut **X**.



- **Star Ratings:** If you prefer to rate your photos on a scale of 1 to 5, you may want to use the star ratings. To add a star rating, highlight your photo (or group of photos) and then press a number on your keypad; number 1 will give your photo a 1-star rating, 2 a 2-star rating, and so on. The highest rating you can give your images is a 5-star rating.
- **Color Labels:** Color labels are another good way to group and organize your photos. You can add red, yellow, green, blue, or purple color labels to your photos in Lightroom. I will sometimes use these as a temporary way to tell myself that I have processed the photo or want to add it to a specific collection.



Tip

Press the **T** key on your keyboard to toggle the toolbar's visibility.

Grid View vs. Loupe View

When viewing images in the Library module, you will likely view them in one of two ways: Grid view or Loupe view (Figures 6.13 and 6.14). In Grid view (keyboard shortcut: **G**), you can see many images at the same time, and it's the best way to label or edit several images at once. If you want to view the image closer, then press the **E** key to go to Loupe view. These options can also be selected using the toolbar below the main Preview window.



Figure 6.13
Use the Grid view (keyboard shortcut: **G**) to view more than one image at a time in the main window.



Figure 6.14
Use Loupe view (keyboard shortcut: **E**) to feature one image in the main window.

Hiding and Revealing Sidebars

You can customize the Lightroom window to display only the panels you want to view. The default window shows a left and right panel, along with a filmstrip panel at the bottom (Figure 6.15).

However, you can toggle the visibility on all of the panels by using the keyboard shortcut Shift+Tab (Figure 6.16). To hide only the left and right panels, use just the Tab key. You can also hide them individually by using the small gray triangles on the far edges of the window.

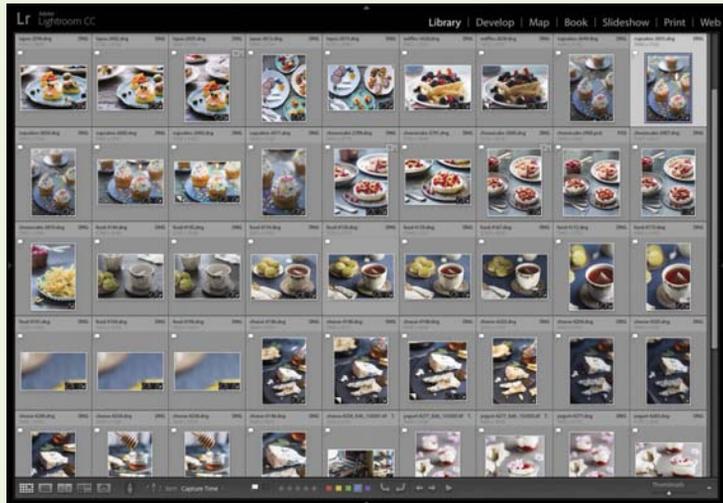
Figure 6.15

This view shows all panels (top, bottom, left, and right).



Figure 6.16

Using the keyboard shortcut Shift+Tab, you can hide all panels in the Lightroom window.



Survey Mode

If you are still trying to decide which photos to select as your keepers, you might want to consider using Survey mode. This allows you to view only select photos in a side-by-side arrangement, and it is a good way to pick your best images, especially with photos that are similar.

Here's how to use Survey mode in Lightroom to choose the keepers from a photo shoot:

1. Highlight a group of images using the Grid view (keyboard shortcut: **G**) in the Library module. You can hold the Shift key to select adjacent photos, or you can hold the Cmd key (PC: Ctrl) and click more than one image to highlight individual photos. **(A)**
2. Press the **N** key to enter Survey mode. Now you can see all the photos you highlighted.
3. When you find a photo you do not want to work on and want to remove from the group, hover over the image and click the X that appears in the lower-right portion of the photo. **(B)**
4. Continue X-ing out photos until you have a group of images you are happy with. **(C)**
5. When finished, press the Esc key to go back to Grid view. The photos that you selected are now the only ones highlighted, so you can apply a flag, label, or star rating to indicate that you will be processing only those files. **(D)**



A



B



C



D



Should I Delete My Rejected Files?

All photo shoots will result in photographs that you will not end up using. Maybe the composition is not ideal, or they are images you just don't like. When you run into these situations, the question to ponder is whether to delete those photos that you don't use. You could argue that if you delete them, then you would save space on your hard drive. But what if you changed your mind later?

My personal advice is to never delete your photos! Hard-drive space is cheap, and you may find a use for those images later. It's a good practice to follow *especially* when working with clients, but also for your own photos. Besides, the more experienced a photographer you become, the fewer reject photos you will end up with.

Filtering Your Picks

Once you have your images labeled, you can filter through them to show only those that you have chosen to work with. The easiest way to do this is through the filmstrip at the bottom of the window.

To sort your images, go to the far right and use the options to the right of the Filter label. You can select from the drop-down, or you can click one or more of the label items (flags, stars, or colors) to set that as your filter setting (**Figure 6.17**). (If you don't see the additional filter icons, click Filter once for them to appear.)

Figure 6.17

You can use the Filter bar to view only images with certain labels applied to them. In this example, I am filtering by flag status, but you can also use this section to filter by star rating, by color label, or by custom filter using the drop-down.



The Develop Module

Now that you have made your selections, it's time to start processing! In this section, we'll head over to the Develop module and work our way through several of the panels to give you a good idea on how to get started with processing your photos in Lightroom.

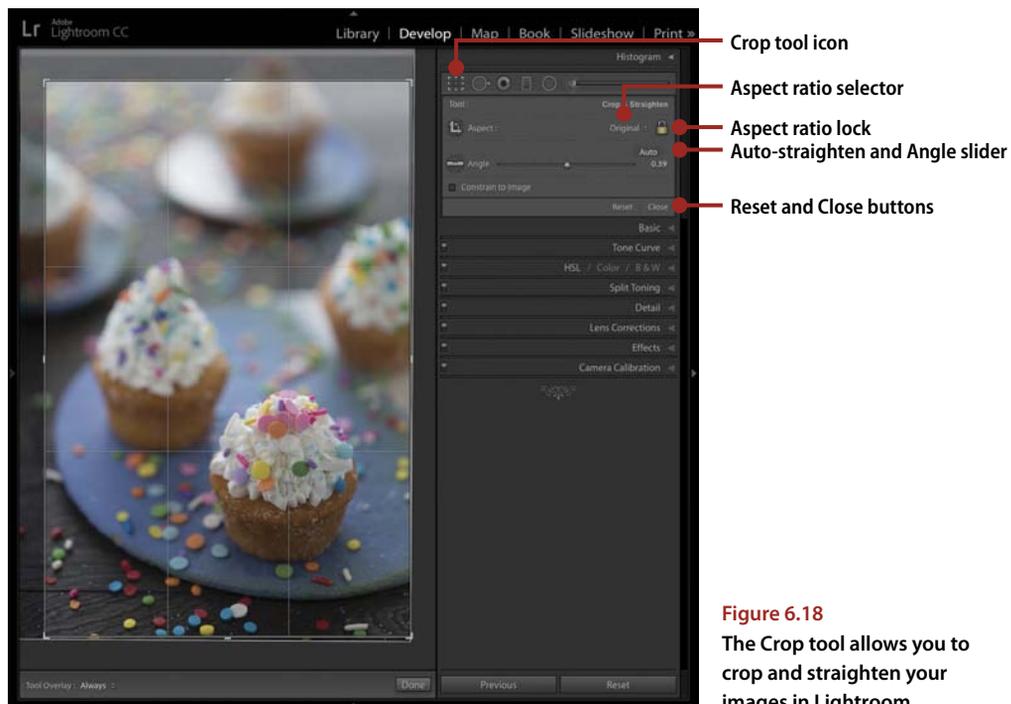
When deciding where to start editing, the best approach is to work from top to bottom. This means you will start at the topmost panel and work your way down. Of course, you can always go back and make adjustments to any panel at any time, but it's a good method to start with, especially if you are feeling overwhelmed or don't quite know what you want to do with your photo.

Cropping and Cloning

At the top of the right sidebar, just below the Histogram panel, is a row of tools. These tools can be useful when the need arises. The two you will likely use most often with food are the Crop and Spot Removal tools.

The Crop Tool

One of the first things I do with my photos before doing any processing is to crop the image (Figure 6.18). I do this because I like to see the overall composition of my photo



before making any other edits. To use the Crop tool, click the far-left icon and then use the overlay in the Preview window to make your changes with your cursor. (You can also use the keyboard shortcut **R** to activate it quickly.) Here are some things to keep in mind when cropping:

- To keep your aspect ratio locked, you can click the lock icon in the panel to prevent it from changing.
- If you would like to change the aspect ratio altogether, click the drop-down and choose one from the list or enter a custom ratio of your own.
- To straighten the image, click the Auto button above the Angle setting. If that doesn't do the trick, use the Angle slider to do it manually.

The Spot Removal Tool

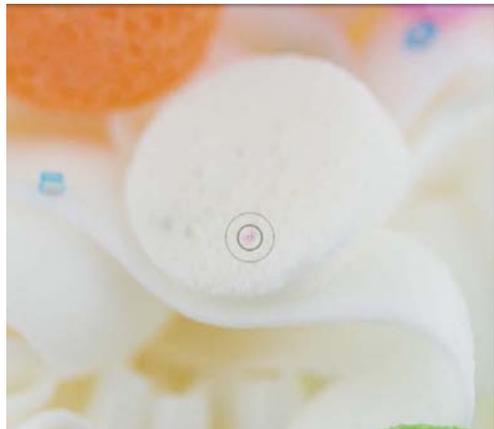
If you have small spots in your image that need to be removed, such as a sensor spot or a crumb that is out of place, you can remove them using the Spot Removal tool. Here's how:

1. Zoom into your image by clicking once over the spot you want to remove. **(A)**
2. Activate the Spot Removal tool using the toolstrip, or press **Q** on your keyboard to activate it quickly.
3. Use the cursor and move the tool over the spot in your image that you would like to remove. If you need to resize the brush, you can do that from inside the panel on the right. **(B)**

A



B

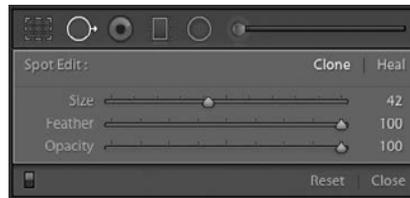


- Next, click once over the spot, and watch it disappear! Lightroom chooses a similar area within your image to clone from, and you will see this overlay as you hover over the image. (C)
- If you need to make adjustments or relocate the cloned area, hover the cursor over the circular icon until the cursor changes to a hand. Then, click and drag to a more appropriate location.
- You can also make further adjustments to the Size, Feather, and Opacity of the cloned area inside the panel. (D)

C



D



Basic Edits

Now, let's go through the panels and sliders you can use when processing the tones and color of a food photograph in the Develop module. This is a good introduction to using the panels in this module, and if you would like to see these settings in action, please turn to Chapter 7, where I show how to process several photographs from start to finish.

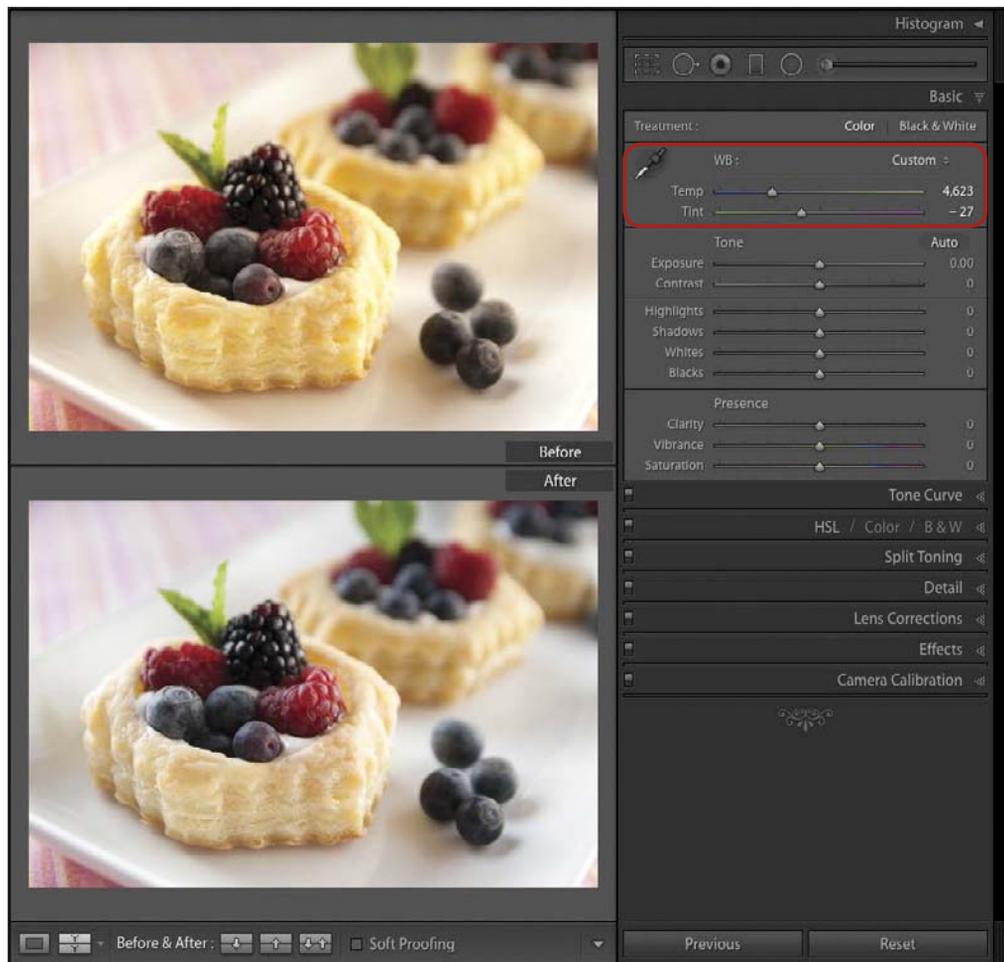
The Basic Panel

The Basic panel is where you will make the majority of the edits to your food photographs. It's where you can change the white balance of your raw photo, and it's also the best place to adjust the tones as well. Here is an explanation of how of these settings affect your images:

- WB (Temp and Tint):** This section is where you adjust the white balance of your images. Do this first before making any other changes, and try to get the photo to look as balanced as possible. It's likely that your camera did a good job, especially if you used its auto white balance, but sometimes your images will still need minor

corrections. You can also try the different options in the drop-down to the right, or you can use the eyedropper tool to select a white portion of your image to automatically set the white balance based on the colors in your photo (Figure 6.19).

Figure 6.19
The original white balance for this image was too yellow, so I moved the Temp slider to the left to cool it down.



Previewing the Before and After Image

Sometimes the best way to know if you are on the right editing path is to see what the photo looked like before and compare it with the changes you have made. The best way to do this is by using a keyboard shortcut: the backslash key (\). Press this key to toggle the before-and-after view of your image.

- **Tone:** This section is to increase or decrease exposure and contrast in your image. When you are starting out, the best way to discover which settings to use is to just try them. Slide them back and forth until you get to a good idea of where to place the slider. You can also use the Auto button to get you off to a possible starting point and then adjust the settings from there (Figure 6.20).

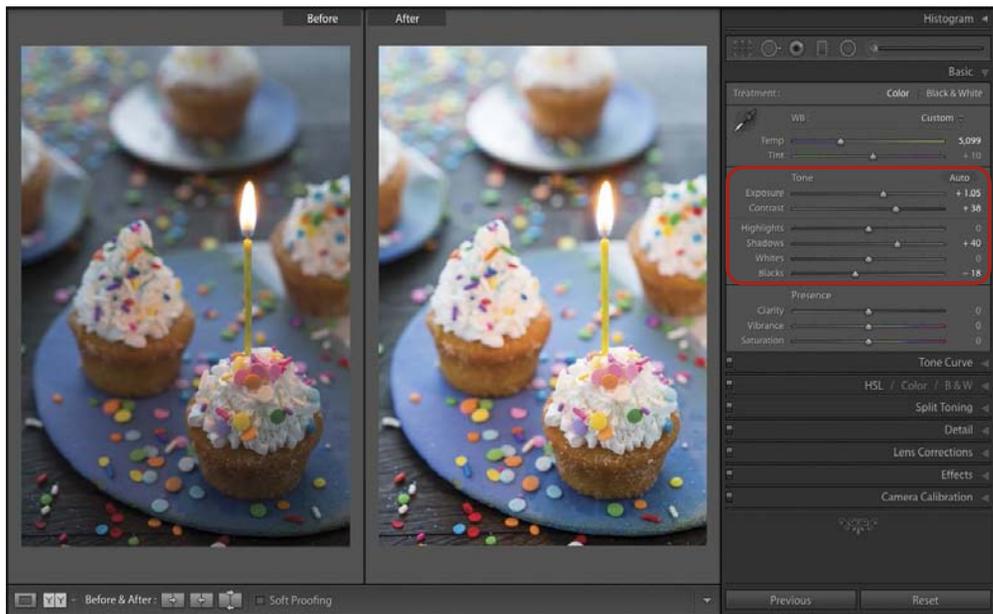
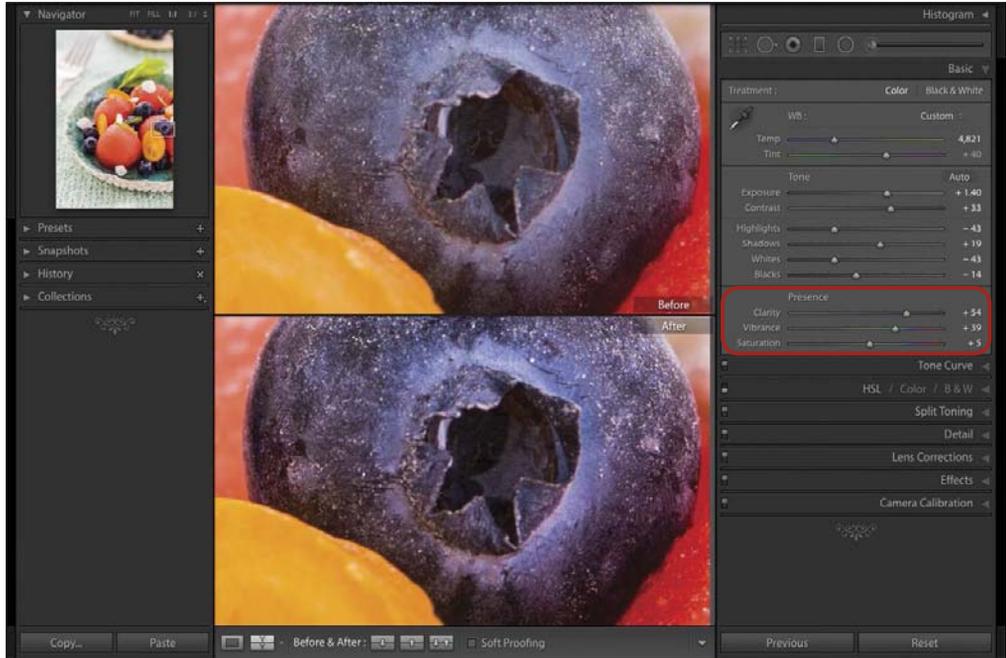


Figure 6.20
To adjust the tone in this image, I first clicked the Auto button and then made adjustments to add more brightness and contrast.

- **Presence:** This section has three sliders: Clarity, Vibrance, and Saturation. The Clarity slider is similar to a sharpening effect. Use it lightly, or you can add a little too much “crunchiness” to your image. Both the Vibrance and Saturation sliders either increase or decrease the color in your image. Again, try to not be heavy-handed with these sliders, especially if you are going for realistic color (Figure 6.21).

Figure 6.21

By zooming in on this photo, you can see that I added a slight amount of clarity, along with some vibrance and saturation to enhance the colors.

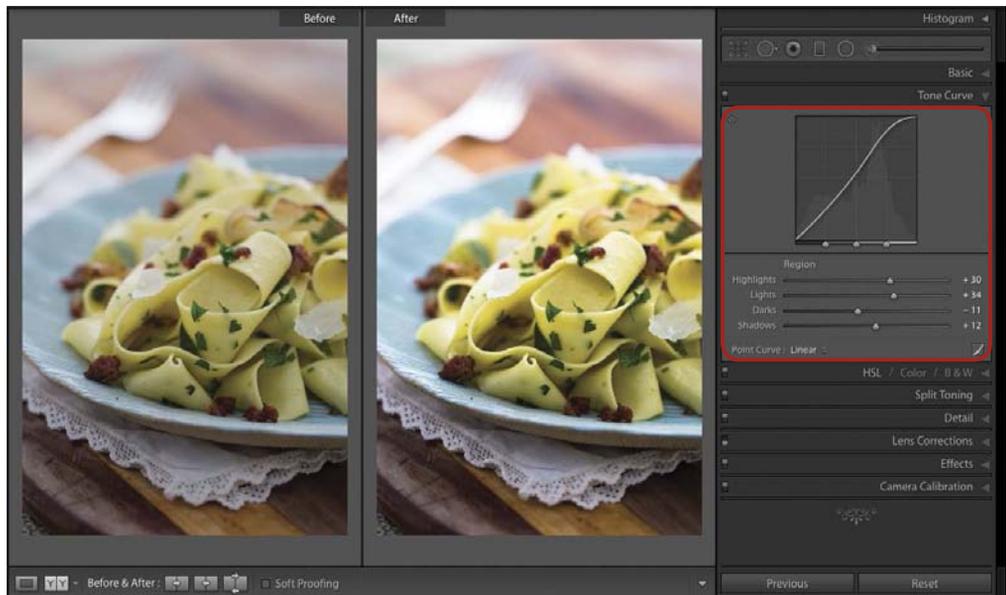


Tone Curve

The Tone Curve panel is a good place to further edit the tones in your image. You can either use the sliders in the section labeled Region or click the Point Curve icon to edit the curve yourself (Figure 6.22).

Figure 6.22

You can either edit the tone curve by using the sliders, like I did with this image, or you can click the small icon in the bottom right to manipulate the curve directly.



HSL

If you would like to make selective edits to the colors in your image, the HSL panel is the best place to do so. The Hue section will alter and change the colors of the image, Saturation will intensify the existing colors, and Luminance will either darken or lighten specific groups of colors (Figure 6.23).

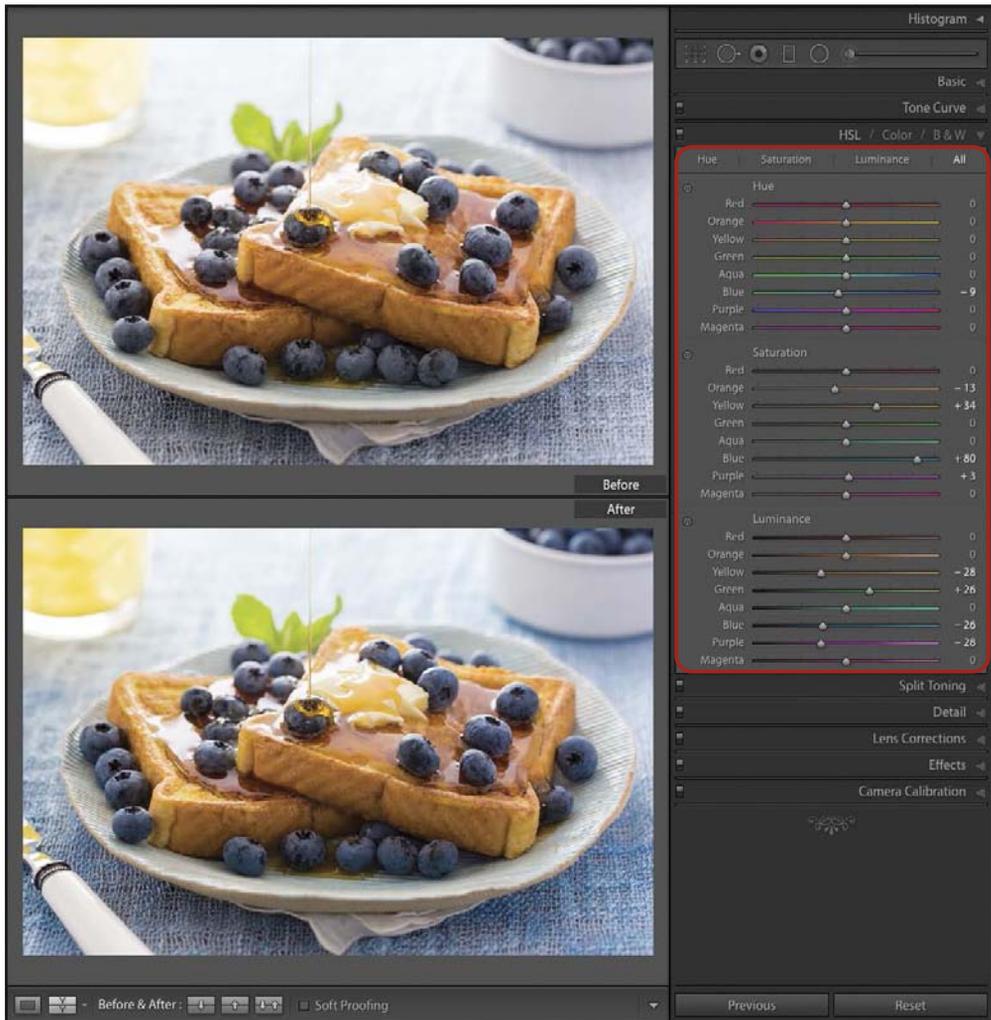


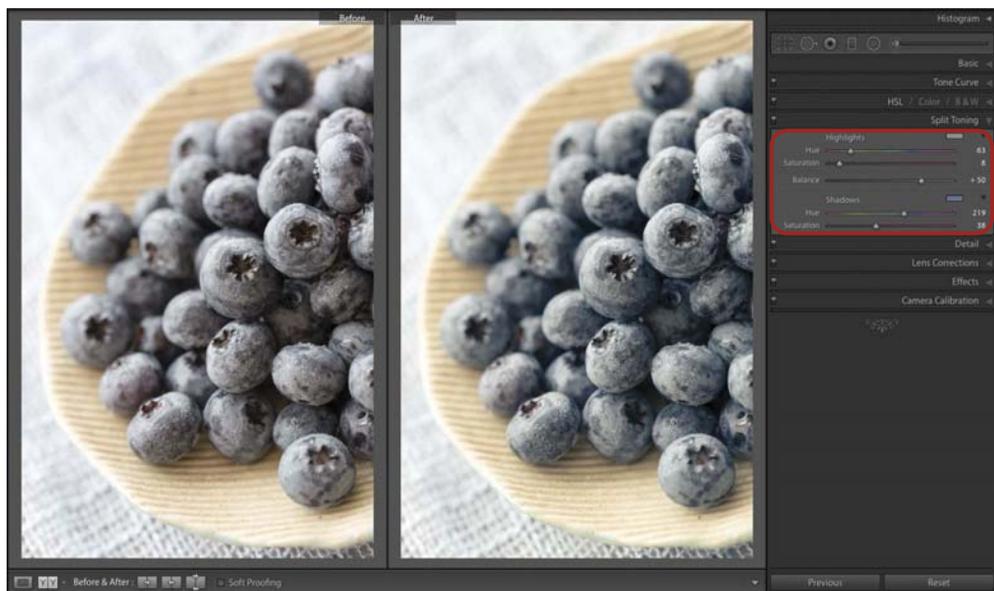
Figure 6.23

For this image, I made several adjustments to make the colors stand out. I altered the Blue sliders to make them darker and more saturated, I decreased the luminance of the Yellow slider to darken the cup and the butter, and I also slightly desaturated the Orange slider to reduce some of the color in the toast.

Split Toning

With the Split Toning panel, you can alter the color of the highlights, shadows, or both. It is meant to mimic a cross-processed film photograph, and while you may not use it often with your food images, it can be a fun tool to use for other images (**Figure 6.24**).

Figure 6.24
This shows an example of a subtle split tone effect on a plate of blueberries.



Detail

The Detail panel is the place to go if you want to add sharpening or reduce the noise in your photo. My advice when using either of these sliders is to zoom in to make sure that you are not adding any artifacting or halos to the photo (**Figure 6.25**). Also, adding too much noise reduction can make the photo look “mushy.” Just be aware of the changes you are making so that they are not overdone.

Lens Correction

Lightroom has the ability to correct your image for distortion and vignetting caused by certain lens types. It can also automatically remove *chromatic aberration*, which is the appearance of unsightly green or purple halos around the edges of some portions of your image (**Figure 6.26**). Chromatic aberration usually appears on photos with a lot of contrast or shiny metal objects (such as flatware) and is also more prevalent with lower-quality lenses. You can also access the other sections of this panel (Profile, Color, and Manual) to make more precise or manual adjustments to your image as needed.



Figure 6.25
It's best to zoom in when making changes in the Detail panel to avoid overdoing it.

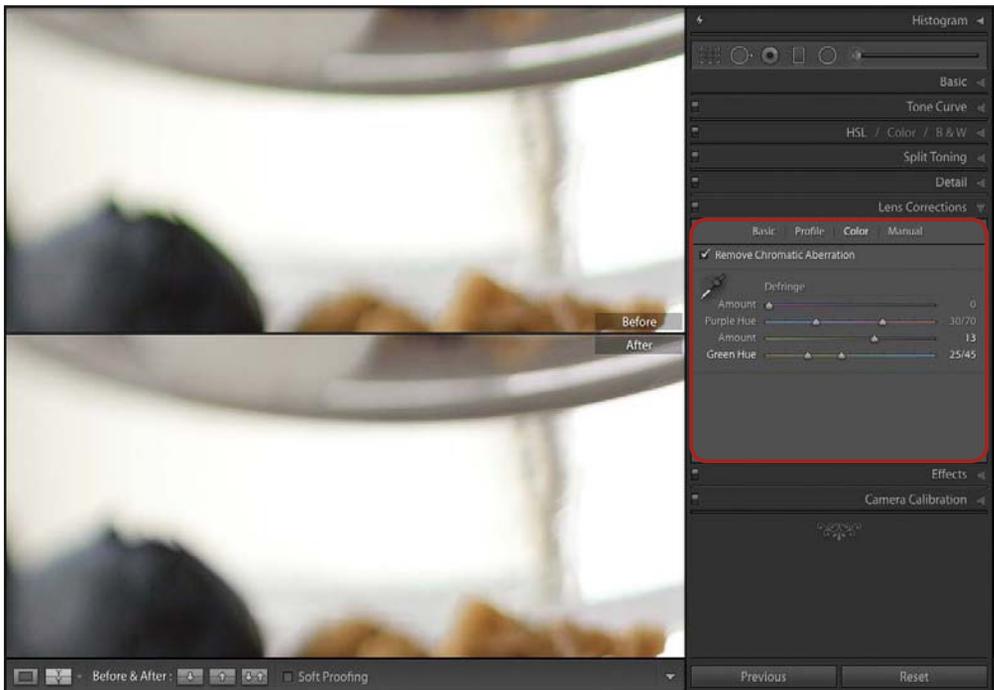
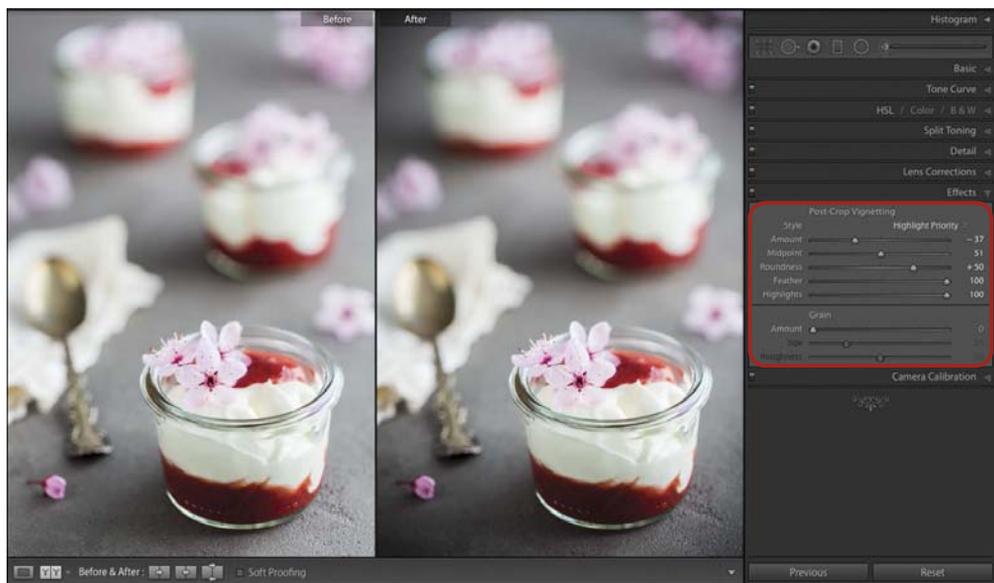


Figure 6.26
I used the Color section in the Lens Correction panel to remove green chromatic aberration from an out-of-focus portion of a photograph.

Effects

The Effects panel is for adding vignettes and film grain. It's unlikely that you will want to *add* grain to a food photograph, but you may choose to add a subtle vignette, and this is a good place to do so (**Figure 6.27**).

Figure 6.27
I added a vignette to this image to darken the edges.



Camera Calibration

The last panel in the right sidebar is Camera Calibration. Here you can select the process version (which is set to the most current version by default), as well as make adjustments to the profile (**Figure 6.28**). It is another way to adjust the colors in your image, but it's unlikely that you will find much of a need to go here regularly.

Tip

To reset any slider, hold the Opt (PC: Alt) key on your keyboard and then click over the Reset text.

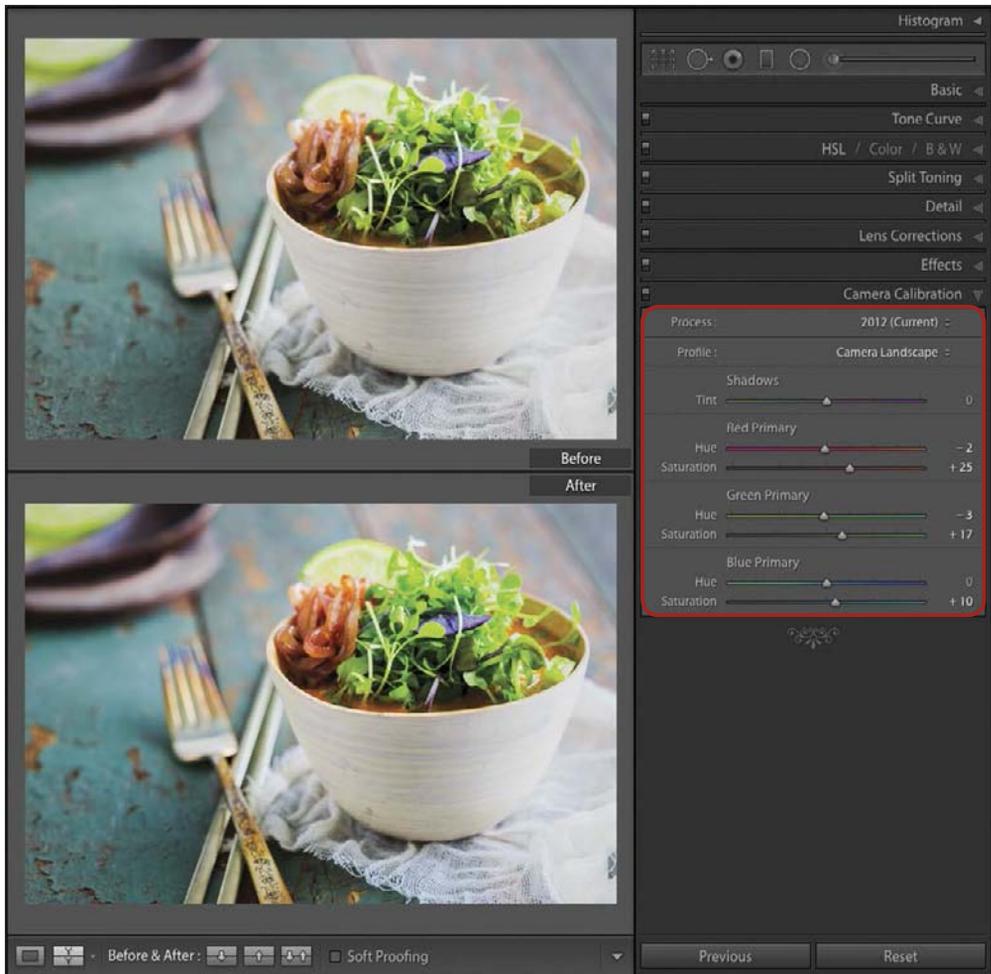


Figure 6.28
Notice the difference in color saturation between the Adobe Standard profile (top) versus the Camera Landscape profile (bottom). (Note: the items listed in the Profile drop-down may vary depending on the camera model used for the photograph.)

Syncing Your Settings

When processing photos from the same food photo shoot, it's likely that you will want to copy your settings to the other images. In Lightroom this is called *syncing* your files, and you can do it easily in the Develop module. Here's how:

1. Process a photo using the panels in the Develop module.
2. Making sure that photo is selected, select (highlight) the other photos in the Filmstrip that you would like to copy the settings to.
3. Once your images are all highlighted, click the Sync button on the right. (A)
4. A new window pops up, asking which settings you would like to sync. It is usually best to sync only the settings that are applicable to each photo (for example, you will probably not want to sync your crop settings across all images). When you have the appropriate boxes checked, click Synchronize. (B)
5. All of your photos now share common settings. You may need to go through and make minor changes to some of them, but synchronizing your settings will get you to a good starting place. (C)



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