



Food Writing Resources

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Introduction

CREATIVE NONFICTION: Sources of sustenance.

Food—and the way we grow, source, prepare, eat, and write about it—links us to our families, our histories, our culture, our health, our environment, and our bodies. Food also plays a vital role in tradition, ritual, and celebration. “To write well is a public service, and a chance to influence millions,” wrote the food blogger Lisa Gosselin. “To write well about food, is a chance to influence millions in their daily choices: we all eat!” Food writing can be an investigation, an exposé, an odyssey, a memoir. Perhaps you’ll write about the pleasures of your grandmother’s famous falafel or the plight of the next-door dairy farm. And remember, as the journalist and cookbook author Ramin Ganeshram puts it, “it’s not really about the food.” We hungrily await your entry.

Competition Information

The 2023 Food Writing Competition runs from Monday, April 3, 2023 to Tuesday, April 18, 2023.

Writing Form: Creative Nonfiction

Subject Areas: Geography, History, Journalism, Literature/English, Science, Social Studies

Length: 600-1000 words

Opens: Monday, May 1

Drafts due for Expert Review: Monday, May 8

Submissions Due: Tuesday, May 16

Exploring Food, Memory, and Meaning

Food writing is about so much more than the food! This genre tells a story in which food plays a central role, but the themes and ideas conveyed are about much more than the food itself.

Begin by writing a list of foods that have a special place in your life. Below each food (or in notes branching out from that word), write several words to indicate the various descriptions, memories,

associations, anecdotes, or deeper meanings that come to mind as you think of each item. Consider the roles of culture, family, friends, holidays, place/location, and anything else related to the food's significance to you.

Look over your list and subsequent notes. Does one section speak to you more than others? Are there any connections between foods in which common themes become apparent? Is there a significant story or memory rising to the surface through a particular type of food? Reviewing your notes will help you identify the areas you're most interested in addressing in your essay.

Read and Discuss Food Writing

Note to Teachers: Have your class discuss, or write responses to, the following questions based on their reading of one (or more) of the winning entries or honorable mentions for the [2020](#), [2021](#), and [2022](#) Food Writing Competitions.

1. How does the writer engage you in the essay? For example, does the essay tell a story, build suspense, describe a scene in detail, or use humor to capture your attention?
2. What type of food does the essay tell you about? Aside from the food that's addressed, what other themes and ideas does the essay cover?
3. How does the writer's language, word choice, paragraph breaks, and sentence structure contribute to the essay? Why might this be important to keep in mind for your own writing?

Writer Interviews

Sometimes there's more to the story than can be told in one essay. Writing responses to interview questions, or recording your answers digitally, is one way to share more details about your writing process and the ideas that inspired your essay.

Step One: Read our interviews regarding previous Food Writing Competitions with WtW young writers [Eloise Davis](#), [Audrey Wahking](#), and [J Leo Kuhtz](#) as examples of writer interviews.

Step Two: Write your own responses to the interview questions (or similar questions of your own design). If you're still in the process of drafting your essay, your interview answers might reveal some details that you'd actually like to include in the essay.

Step Three: Read your classmates' interviews, along with their essays, to learn more about their writing process and the role of a significant food in their lives.

Additional Resources

Q&As with WtW's former guest judges [Limahl Asmall](#), [Andrea Nguyen](#), and [Sally Sampson](#) — for more inspiration and guidance in exploring the genre of Food Writing.