

**Boston University / International Conference on Food Styling and Photography....
A Fledgling's Perspective**

For some, the first weekend of June 2007 signified the Red Sox and Yankee rivalry was in full swing, with throngs of people descending upon Fenway Park and the Big Green Monster. For others, those who call themselves “foodies,” traveling from Mexico, Dubai, Norway, England, Spain just to name a few of the countries as well as across the United States attended The International Conference of Food Photographers and Styling held at Boston University. Assembled in one town were some of the best and brightest of food photographers and stylists as well as those aspiring to enter the choice field. It was a weekend of summer camp for the proverbial foodie.

The weekend consisted of paneled discussions, seminar programs and hands-on demonstrations hosting standing room only. The only caveat, you couldn't be in two places at once. Opting to take as many hands-on demonstrations, which I found not only informative but also entertaining, I would sigh when I would hear how wonderful a discussion was being held at the same time. If only an aspiring food stylist and freelance baker could morph herself into two places at one time!

The demonstrations – of which there were at least two or more per day, were not only informative but also entertaining. You could see and feel how each stylist loves their job. Each stylist had his or her own specialty and would bring their own unique flair to their chosen topic. From how to work and handle chocolate; to the perfect browning technique for “that perfect chicken;” to how to deal with ice cream; especially if it chooses not to “behave” – you left each class armed with notes, handouts and, in some cases, actual samples. The seminars focused on current trends and future ideas; to production fundamentals; to what's happening in the world of food photography, plus much more. The panelists provided their insight and knowledge as well as their own personal thoughts.

Other than the discussions, and demonstrations, what I noticed more than anything was how friendly and giving of their time everyone was. As a newcomer and someone, who seemed to walk around with a wondrous awe, it became evident that whether you were talking with a seasoned veteran of the food styling world or a world-class photographer, they offered words of wisdom and hope. If you really give it thought, they too were once in the spot where the newcomers now find themselves. In the mornings you could find well-known food stylists talking with eager fledging stylists over coffee and muffins on what was their best “war story” and/or day on the job. At lunch, you could find yourself sitting in between a photo editor from *Gourmet* and editor from *The King Arthur Baker’s Catalog* discussing their favorite food memory that inspired them and the careers today. Like a small child, who is actually seeing Mickey Mouse in person, you could find yourself sitting there in complete awe.

While the weather was stagnant with humidity and drizzling with rain, the weekend provided stylists and photographers with the opportunity to get together, see old friends, meet new people and see where their professional roads would lead them to next and to seeing each other again next year.