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**Subject:** The Modernist Cuisine Gallery is coming to Las Vegas this May  
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I am opening an art gallery in Las Vegas.

That is probably the least likely combination of words for me to ever string together in a sentence. Indeed, if you had asked me about this notion a few years ago, I would have bet big against it. And lost, because this week we are announcing the Modernist Cuisine Gallery, at the [Forum Shops at Caesar's Palace](#).

It's amazing how life can take you to completely unexpected places. A series of individually quite reasonable ideas, goals, and facts can utterly transform your context, transporting you to a world where the impossible becomes inevitable.

When I decided about a decade ago to create a cookbook, I saw an exciting opportunity to do something new in food photography—to portray food in new and unexpected ways that simultaneously draw readers in and illustrate the science at work in cooking. *Modernist Cuisine: The Art and Science of Cooking* was a big, crazy bet, as were its two sequels, *Modernist Cuisine at Home* and *The Photography of Modernist Cuisine*. But so far about 250,000 copies are in print worldwide across all editions. And the crazy bets keep coming: This autumn we will release [my latest cookbook](#), a six-volume, 2,500 page book all about bread.

Almost immediately after our first book appeared, people started asking us where they could buy prints of the photos. That seemed like a reasonable enough request, and we did include a few free prints with later books. Our photographs have also been exhibited in art galleries in Le Havre and [Hong Kong](#), as well as in [science and food museums](#) across the U.S. My team and I looked into the idea of selling prints, but we honestly struggled with the idea.

The marketing and distribution of art is just so damn weird. There is what I call Art with a Capital A—the famous, expensive stuff in fancy galleries in major cities, or sold by auction houses. That is a world of its own, and a very strange one indeed if you compare it to the way normal products are sold. It seems rather unlikely as a distribution channel for me. (Indeed, I probably lost them at “distribution channel,” before we even get to the pictures.) Which is just as well, since the Capital A Art world is a rarefied domain that doesn't fully overlap the multitude of foodies who love Modernist Cuisine.

Then there is art for home decoration, which is often found in the “design center” in major cities. That is typically a cavernous building stuffed with individual boutiques carrying all sorts of decorative arts, including furniture. These places also typically almost empty of people, because in a stroke of total marketing irony, actual customers are not allowed on the premises. Design centers are where you send your interior designer. The attitude seems to be “Don't try this at home folks, leave it to the professionals.”

At the other end of the spectrum are weekend arts and crafts fairs, mazes of booths set up in a park or parking lot. Photography is sold at such events, alongside chainsaw sculptures, handmade dream catchers and wind chimes made from melted beer bottles. I don't envision quitting my day job to caravan around the country exhibiting each weekend. And frankly if I were tempted, I'd probably run a food truck instead.

That leaves us with just one way forward: to open our own gallery. But where? Many cities—Seattle included—have a part of town where the art galleries cluster. Some cities, such as New York and Los Angeles, are big enough to have several such areas. Everybody knows that a gallery on Madison Ave. is going to be a different experience than one in SoHo or near the High Line. The trouble with gallery neighborhoods, which are the result of decades of development, is that they favor incumbents, not new entrants. It's very hard for the new guy to break in.

Hence Las Vegas. People from all over the world travel to Vegas. Some love it, some hate it, but most well-traveled Americans (and world travelers) will visit at some point. The typical visitor stays in Vegas for just three days. So it really doesn't matter how long your gallery has been in business; new things pop up all the time, but few visitors even realize they are new.

Las Vegas has also become a destination for foodies. Sure, Napa Valley, New York, New Orleans, and the like are still foodie meccas, but where else other than Las Vegas can you find 10-foot-tall portraits of famous chefs lit up on towering hotels? Larger-than-life celebrity chefs join the ranks of entertainers and Cirque du Soleil as major attractions. For all these reasons, Las Vegas is the perfect place to hang my shingle and see if people want to take home my food pictures.

Will they? Time will tell. But as far as I know, no other gallery is dedicated solely to food photography. So perhaps there is an unfilled niche. On the other hand, I can't look to industry norms for an answer. We faced the same issue years ago when we made a \$625, 2,500-page cookbook. That turned out well, and I'm hopeful this project will, too.

All I know is that, just as *Modernist Cuisine* became the cookbook I had long wish existed, this gallery will be the kind of place where I would like to shop. I am just self-aware enough to know that I have no objectivity on this topic. I'm the kind of person who does hang big pictures of food in my home and office. But, analytically, I can say that people definitely like food—all of our homes include a place to cook and eat. And they clearly also like pictures of food—witness Instagram.

That said, art (including the small "a" variety) doesn't lend itself well to analysis or objectivity anyway. Art that succeeds expresses passion through a medium. I am going to do that with my passion for food and photography. And we'll see if it resonates with anyone else.

Nathan