

**Monica Bhide's E-Course**  
**Introduction to Food Writing**  
*Frequently Asked Questions*

(FAQ updated Aug 4, 2007)

## Monica Bhide's E-Course on Food Writing

### *Frequently Asked Questions*

#### **What is the schedule of this course?**

**Here it is:** (Please note that appropriate assignments are included with each lesson and they will be different depending on your area of interest, whether it be to develop recipes or to review restaurants.)

**Week 1:** *What is food writing?* This week we will focus on the definition and types of food writing: recipe development, essays, cookbooks, cookbook reviews, product or person profiles, service articles, restaurant reviews and more.

**Week 2:** *Understanding the market for food writing.* This week will focus on the differences in food publications (for instance, we'll discuss how the now defunct yet still valuable *Gourmet* was different from *Bon Appetit*).

**Week 3:** *How does one develop recipes?* What are the ethics of recipe development?

**Week 4:** *What are the essentials of a good cookbook proposal?* Students interested in writing cookbooks will work on creating an executive summary of their cookbook idea along with a table of contents for the proposal. Students who are not interested in writing cookbooks will work on product and restaurant reviews.

**Week 5:** *Writing and selling food essays.*

**Week 6:** *Selling your food idea, cookbook concept, or food essay.*

#### **How much does the e-course cost?**

There are three tiers of cost for this course.

1. The *Gold* version is \$750 and offers e-mail support and ½ hour per week of phone support (with appointment.) for six-weeks
2. The *Premium* version is \$500 and offers e-mail support for six weeks.
3. The *Basic* version is just \$200 and offers no e-mail or phone support.

You can pay easily via PayPal or check. Please check the course site at [www.therenegadewriter.com](http://www.therenegadewriter.com) for details.

#### **How do I access the course?**

The lessons are on password-protected web-pages on [www.therenegadewriter.com](http://www.therenegadewriter.com). Every Monday, I will email you the web address, user name, and password to that week's lesson. Just click on the link to the lesson, fill in the username and password (which are case-sensitive) in the pop-up box, and you will be taken to the appropriate lesson.

If for some reason you're having trouble accessing the link, just email me and I will send you a text version of the lesson via e-mail.

### **Do I have to be in a certain place at a certain time?**

No. I send the lessons out every Monday morning (or late Sunday night). You can read them and do the assignments at your convenience. You don't even have to do one assignment per week if you can't or don't want to. For example, you can skip a week and do two assignments the next week. Just keep in mind if you want feedback on your assignments, it will be hard for me to offer critiques on, say, five of your assignments in one week!

### **Can I access the lessons after the session is over?**

Please.... don't tell anyone...but we never change the passwords and user names, so you can access the lessons forever and use the information over and over! Over time, I will update the lessons and add more information, and you'll always have access to it. My goal is to make you knowledgeable and successful in the food-writing world, so please keep accessing and using the information as much as you need to. A request: Please do not share the passwords and user names with anyone.

### **Where do I send my questions or assignments?**

I set up a special account just for the e-course: [FoodCourse@gmail.com](mailto:FoodCourse@gmail.com).

### **What's your teaching style?**

I'd say I'm a facilitator and a coach. It was a huge leap for me to change careers — from a job that paid well over six figures to freelancing — so I do understand the fears and challenges of starting a career as a food writer. I will help you, provide you with learning tools, and motivate you to get over that fear and move forward with the confidence that only knowledge can provide.

When it comes to offering feedback on assignments, I'm thorough but not negative or mean. I have no problem with suggesting changes to ideas, query letters, etc. If something is not working, I will let you know.

### **If I sign up for the Basic version of the course, does that mean I get no e-mail support at all?**

Technically there is no e-mail support (and also no assignment critiques), but my job here is to help you and to be your guide. If you sign up for the basic course and you're having problems with a certain assignment or something I said makes no sense to you, I want to hear from you. I want all of my students to get their money's worth from the course, so I won't leave anyone in the lurch.

### **What kinds of questions can I ask in the Premium version of the course?**

I prefer that students ask questions that relate to the coursework, but I can also answer questions about freelancing in general and provide a motivational boot to the pants if you

need it. I cannot answer questions about writing contracts, so I suggest that writers with questions about contracts contact the Contracts Committee of the American Society of Journalists and Authors ([www.asja.org](http://www.asja.org)). It's free, and you don't have to be a member. I can't answer questions about finding an agent, or writing detailed book proposals during this course. If you only want to work on a book proposal, check out the course by Jennifer Lawler on [www.therenegadewriter.com](http://www.therenegadewriter.com). I do help you come up with an idea for a book in this course — a concept that will then need to be worked on outside the course.

**I'm going on vacation for a week during the course. Is that okay?**

Generally, yes. If you need to take some time off, I'm happy to extend the e-mail support for however long you were off so that you get the full six weeks of support. But please clear this with me, as there may be times when I'm unavailable after the course ends and can't offer an extension of the e-mail support (such as when I have a vacation planned).

**I'll be away/busy/washing my hair when the course starts and would like to start a few days late. Can I do that?**

If you're confident that you can catch up on the lessons and assignments to your satisfaction, starting a little late is usually fine. You can do the assignments at your own pace, so it's not like you have to make a deadline. I'll also be happy to extend the e-mail support so you get your full eight weeks — but again, please clear it with me first in case I'm unavailable after the course ends to extend the e-mail support. If you want to sign up after the course session has started, I'll send you the lessons you missed as soon as I receive your payment, and then you'll get the rest of the lessons on schedule. As for extending the e-mail support so you get your full six weeks, please clear it with me first.

**Will there be any interaction with the other students in the course?**

No. Some courses take place in e-mail groups (such as Yahoo groups) so that the students see one another's questions and assignments and also see the instructor's answers and critiques for every student. My e-course is one-on-one: you send me your questions and assignments directly, and no one sees them but you and me.

**When will you answer my questions/critique my assignments?**

I answer e-mails on Wednesdays and Fridays. You can send me your questions and assignments any time you like, but keep in mind that if you send an e-mail on, say, Friday night or Monday morning, you won't receive a response until Wednesday.

**Do I have to turn in my assignments for critiquing?**

No. You can do the assignments on your own if you wish.

### **Will you critique this query/article/etc. that I already wrote?**

Sorry, but no. I can critique only the materials that you create as part of the coursework in my e-course.

### **I live in the U.K./South America/Australia/etc. Can I write for U.S. food magazines?**

Yes. Thanks to that wonder called the Internet, anyone who's online can write for U.S. magazines. I have plenty of editors I've spoken with only via e-mail! However, keep in mind that it may be harder for you to access U.S. magazines and find markets to query; many magazines have their contents online, but not all of them do. Also, think about how you'll interview U.S. sources (which most U.S. magazines will expect you to do), use U.S. ingredients, and have the measures, etc. for U.S. audiences.

### **At the end of the e-course, what will I have?**

At the end of my e-course, assuming you do all the assignments, you should have:

1. An in-depth understanding of food writing and markets for food writing along with a detailed understand of one magazine/newspaper of your choice.
2. A clear understanding of how to write a recipe.
3. An understanding of the essentials of good food writing — what constitutes a good restaurant/product review?
4. A clear, concise description for the concept of a cookbook (if desired).
5. One food essay (if desired).

### **Do you make a living writing about food?**

I write for magazines, newspapers, and trades. I write cookbooks. I develop recipes, I teach cooking classes, and I coach and mentor upcoming writers — so it fluctuates.

### **I can't decide whether to take your course or the one offered by MediaBistro/WritingClasses.com/etc. How does yours differ?**

I can't say because I haven't taken those courses. When you're choosing an e-course, ask yourself:

- *What are the instructor's credentials?* Has he or she written for many QUALITY outlets (magazines, newspapers etc.)? Are they magazines that you've heard of or that you'd be interested in writing for?
- *How much does it cost?* E-course prices vary greatly. I wouldn't advise shopping by price alone (sometimes there's a good reason that a course is super-cheap or free!), but I understand that price is a consideration for most people.
- *How is the course formatted?* If you want to interact with other students, look for a course that takes place in an online group setting. If you don't

share your ideas and critiques,  
consider a one-on-one course (like mine).

- *What do others say about the course?*

There are many threads on various writer's forums where writers discuss and critique the e-courses they've taken. Try

[www.mediabistro.com](http://www.mediabistro.com),

[www.absolutewrite.com](http://www.absolutewrite.com), and other sites that have forums.

### **What are your credentials for teaching this course?**

Six years ago, I quit my full-time job to start freelancing. I have a technical background and double master's degrees and worked for Ernst & Young and many other prestigious companies in their e-learning groups.

Since I started, I have written for several trade and

newsstand magazines, newspapers, on-line publications. My credits include: *Food & Wine*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Cooking Light*, *AARP-The magazine*, *Health*, *The Chicago Tribune*, and many more. I have a syndicated column with Scripps Howard News service and am the contributing editor to AARP –the magazine. You can find a more updated bio at [www.monicabhide.com](http://www.monicabhide.com)

I have authored three cookbooks.

I've spoken on finding your voice as a writer at the American Society of Journalists and Authors conference in New York City, at Yale, at Georgetown and at many conferences. I have judged food writing scholarships for The Symposium for Professional Food Writers at the Greenbrier.

### **Do you offer a money-back guarantee?**

Yes. You have two weeks from the start date of the

course to drop the course and get a full refund. After two weeks, refunds are on a case-by-case basis.

### **You rock. Is there anything I can do for you?**

Yes! Please tell your friends about my e-course. If you're a current or former student of my e-course and you get a friend to sign up, you'll get a

**should I do?**

Please e-mail me your question at  
[monica@monicahide.com](mailto:monica@monicahide.com)

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