

SEO & Accessibility Cheat Sheet

For Food Media Professionals

PART 1: SEO FOUNDATIONS

Search visibility isn't just for recipe developers, whether you're a food writer pitching your portfolio, a cookbook author building your platform, or a photographer showcasing your work, SEO determines whether your ideal clients can find you. The good news: you don't need to be technical. Tools like Yoast SEO or Rank Math (WordPress plugins) will guide you through optimization, and many modern platforms like Squarespace and Showit have built-in SEO fields. Focus on making every page discoverable by treating your URL, title, and first paragraph as a mini pitch for what that page offers. Want a deeper dive into SEO and how to find the right keywords? Check out my [SEO 101](#) blog post.

Page Optimization Checklist (Every Page)

- One primary keyword per page
- Keyword included in:
 - Page Title
 - H1
 - First 100 words
 - Meta description
 - URL slug
 - A subheading or two (H2, H3)
- Clean URL structure
 - /vegan-coconut-cake/
 - /post?id=4567
- 2–5 internal links
- 1–3 external authority links

- Optimized meta title & description (140–160 characters)
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Recipe SEO Checklist

(Note: Even if you're not a recipe developer, schema markup exists for articles, reviews, how-tos, and more—it's worth exploring)

Recipe card plugins like [WP Recipe Maker](#) make schema markup automatic. If you're on a platform without plugins, tools like [Schema.org's markup generator](#) can help. [Recipes Generator](#) is great for those on Squarespace. For non-recipe content, consider articles or how-to schema to get rich snippets in search results.

- Recipe schema markup (JSON-LD)
 - Prep time
 - Cook time
 - Total time
 - Yield
 - Ingredients (structured list)
 - Step-by-step instructions
 - Nutrition info (if available)
 - Jump-to-recipe button
 - Print-friendly format
 - FAQ section (for long-tail keywords)
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Technical SEO Quick Wins

Speed and performance matter to Google and humans alike. Compress images with [TinyPNG](#) or [ShortPixel](#) before uploading. If your site feels slow, consider managed WordPress hosts like [Bigscoots](#), my favorite hosting provider. Run a free speed test with [Google PageSpeed Insights](#) or [GTmetrix](#) to see where you stand. Often a few image optimizations and caching plugins make a massive difference.

- Site loads under 3 seconds
 - Images compressed (WebP preferred)
 - Mobile responsive
 - HTTPS enabled
 - XML sitemap submitted
 - No broken links
 - Proper heading hierarchy (H1 → H2 → H3)
 - Alt text on all meaningful images
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PART 2: ACCESSIBILITY ESSENTIALS (WCAG BASICS)

Accessibility isn't an option. It's a legal requirement in many contexts and, more importantly, it ensures everyone can engage with your work. Food media thrives on visual storytelling, but if your site can't be navigated by keyboard, read by screen readers, or viewed by people with low vision, you're excluding potential readers, clients, and collaborators. The [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#) (WCAG) sound intimidating, but most fixes are straightforward. Tools like [WAVE](#) (browser extension) or the free scan at [accessibe.com](#) can audit your site and flag issues in minutes. Use [WebAIM](#) to easily check color contrast.

Visual Accessibility

- Color contrast ratio 4.5:1 minimum
 - Body text at least 16px
 - Avoid long paragraphs in script fonts
 - Clear hover & focus states
 - Don't rely on color alone to convey meaning
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Images & Media

- Descriptive alt text
 -  “cookies”
 -  “Three chocolate chip cookies stacked on parchment paper”
 - Decorative images marked appropriately
 - Captions for videos
 - Transcripts for long-form video/audio
 - No autoplay audio
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Structural Accessibility

- One H1 per page
 - Logical heading order
 - Form labels visible (not placeholder-only)
 - Error messages clearly explained
 - Keyboard navigable menus
 - Skip-to-content link
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THE GOLDEN RULE

If it's:

- Hard to navigate
- Slow to load
- Impossible to use without a mouse

- Confusing to screen readers

It's hurting both SEO and accessibility. Simple structure wins.