

# How To Pitch: *Saveur*

This freelance-friendly food magazine craves pitches that bring a 'sense of discovery' to the table

By Kate Parham – June 3, 2011



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The information in this article is current and accurate

**Circulation:** 330,000

**Frequency/Issues per year:** Nine issues/year; double issue in January/February, June/July, and August/September

**Special issues:** January/February is "*Saveur* 100," a list of the mag's 100 favorite foods, restaurants, drinks, people, places and things. The remaining two or three themed issues are devoted to whatever editors happen to be most excited about at a given time.

**Background:** *Saveur* launched in 1994 as a bimonthly magazine. From its first issue, with a cover story devoted to the regional cuisine of Oaxaca, Mexico, *Saveur* set out to provide perspectives on food that other magazines wouldn't and to delve deeper into regional cuisines and cooking traditions around the world. *Saveur* readers (61 percent of which are women, with a median age of 51) look at the world food first and are passionately curious about the origins of cuisine; they're people who experience the world through food. The magazine has likewise always been committed to the idea that the best way to understand a culture is through its cooking.

"If anything, over the years, as we've developed an incredibly loyal and enthusiastic core readership," says deputy editor Beth Kracklauer, "we've been able to experiment with new ways of fulfilling that mission -- with more themed issues, for example, which allow us to cover a particular topic in depth." Kracklauer is particularly proud of the recent "American BBQ" issue: "We were able to do something really unique: dispense with the clichés and provide fresh and surprising perspectives on a beloved American food -- for example, offering an insider's guide to the competition barbecue circuit, and looking at a day in the life of an immigrant from Puebla, Mexico, who serves up pit-cooked lamb barbacoa in her backyard every Sunday. And, because our readers are accomplished and avid cooks, we knew the recipes would have to go beyond typical backyard grilling and get to the art and science of authentic barbecue."

Although *Saveur's* mission has remained constant, ownership has changed drastically over the years. Originally owned by Meigher Communications, *Saveur* was bought by World Publications in January 2000. Co-founder Colman Andrews became editor-in-chief in 2002 and remained in that position until October 2006. Now, the mag is owned by Bonnier Corporation, and James Oseland (you probably recognize him from *Top Chef Masters*), formerly *Saveur's* executive editor, is the magazine's editor-in-chief.

Compared to its competitors (*Bon Appétit* and *Food & Wine*), *Saveur* is less about trends and more about abiding traditions and the way people really eat, day after day, generation after generation. Says Kracklauer, "The view of the world's cuisines that we provide is both egalitarian and wide-ranging." Like other culinary titles, *Saveur* does provide recipes and travel guides, but always strives to place food in its larger cultural and historical contexts, connecting with people on the ground who can give voice to stories that will expand readers' understanding of the world.

Editors at *Saveur* have a good number of talented writers to call on, but are very open to developing new relationships. "Periodically, we meet and vet pitches in marathon pitch meetings," Kracklauer says. "Obviously, a strong, concise, engagingly written pitch is one that will stand out in such a meeting against the hundreds of other pitches we're considering."

**What to pitch:** With over 50 percent of its content being freelance-generated, there is ample opportunity to break in. "We want to surprise our readers, to provide a genuine sense of discovery with each issue," says Kracklauer. "We look for stories that will move us and stick with us, because they tell us something we don't know or allow us to look at something familiar in a new way." So, think personal, intimate chronicles of lived experiences (a cherished family recipe or a hard-won technique gleaned while working the line in a restaurant kitchen) rather than merely reported pieces. Editors want to know, "What can you tell us about this food that no other writer can?"

Freelancers should shoot for these sections first:

"*Saveur* Fare" (50-500 words): This front-of-book section is the most common entry point for writers pitching *Saveur* for the first time. Articles can range from charticles, to reviews of new books, to short personal essays. If *Saveur* were to ever do a trend piece, it would appear in this section. But even here, trend pieces typically have a little something extra, like a personal angle or an especially thoughtful take.

"Source" (400-450 words): The spotlight here is on an outstanding food, or occasionally a cooking tool, made by an artisanal producer that is available for purchase online or via mail order. Pitches should demonstrate enthusiasm for both the food and the story of the person who makes it.

"Kitchenwise" (750-1,000 words): A view into an interesting kitchen, which might be anywhere in the world. What editors are looking for is a story about a kitchen, from the most humble to the high-end, that reflects a very personal approach to cooking. "We want to see design and cooking converge in a way that might make us rethink the way we go about cooking. We want to see how a cook's personality comes through in the kitchen in which he or she cooks every day. It's a profile of the cook as much as it is a profile of the kitchen," says Kracklauer.

"Classic": This section celebrates and deconstructs a classic dish -- anything from American macaroni and cheese to Korean bibimbap to Valencian paella -- and includes the dish's history, best techniques for preparing it, and one or more recipes. The "Ingredient" section is very similar, except it focuses on a single ingredient rather than a dish.

"Reporter" (1,000-1,500 words): A reported piece on some aspect of the world of food, like the October 2009 story about efforts to revive American heirloom apple varieties and December 2009's first-person account of Switzerland's raucous pre-Lent carnival, Fasnacht.

"Memories" (700-1,500 words): A personal essay or reminiscence, such as restaurant critic Gael Greene's moving tribute to the late Jamie Gillis, a former lover and fellow gourmet for "Dinners with Jamie" in August/September 2010. Meanwhile, the "Essay" section is typically a think piece on either an aspect of contemporary food culture or an episode from food history, as in secular Jewish novelist Francine Prose's loving ode to pork for December 2009, "Faith and Bacon."

**What not to pitch:** "We're generally not interested in trend pieces that simply take the trend at face value and offer nothing more in the way of analysis or personality," says Kracklauer. "Vague and unfocused pitches aren't helpful. Though the pitch should be as concise as possible, if it lacks detail, we're left questioning the writer's authority on the topic. If we don't know why you're the best person to write this piece -- what is your personal experience in this area? Have you made it a particular point to educate yourself on this topic, or do you simply have a unique insight to offer? -- it's difficult to commit to assigning it."

**Online opportunities:** Online pitches are always welcome and pieces written for the website typically run 200-400 words.

"For pitches, think authentic cuisine, think Web-by, and if you've seen it somewhere else before, it's probably not for us," says Kracklauer. Editors like getting ideas for seasonal content, but are very selective when publishing recipes that haven't been tested by their in-house test kitchen.

"For travel, we prefer personality-driven roundups written by local experts. Great visuals are absolutely essential," Kracklauer explains. "We focus on beautiful photography in the *Saveur* style: lived-in, natural light, not over-processed. We welcome video pitches as well, though those are the rarest assignments."

**Percentage freelance content:** 50 to 75 percent

**Percentage of freelance submissions accepted:** Three to five percent

**Recent freelance stories pitched and published:** "Mexico Feeds Me" (May 2011) focused on the writer's trip to his parents' birthplace to learn how to prepare their family recipes and certain regional specialties. Kracklauer praises his pitch for its exacting detail -- not just of the food, but of his relatives, the local markets, and other places of interest. "Best of all, what he presented was not just a topic and a list of recipes -- he presented us with a story arc: the story of a homecoming and a coming of age." Lonnée Hamilton also wowed *Saveur* with her pitch on collard greens, which resulted in a byline in the "Ingredient" section for November 2010. Again, freelancers, strong storytelling is key to breaking through. Kracklauer says Hamilton stood out by weaving an account of her own experiences making collard greens over the years into her pitch along with attention to cooking techniques and which ingredients best complement the veggie.

**Etiquette:** Email is strongly preferred. If you're new to *Saveur*, a clip or two provided via URL or as an attachment is helpful. Editors encourage writers to think of the pitch itself as an example of your writing

style and skill. Pitch meetings happen every few months, so follow up if you haven't heard back within two months.

**Lead-time:** Six to seven months for the "Saveur Fare" section; one year for everything else.

**Pay rate:** \$1/word

**Payment schedule:** On publication

**Kill fee:** 25 percent

**Rights purchased:** First worldwide exclusive in North America for six months

**Contact info:**

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**Direct pitches to the appropriate editor:**

For food products, Gabriella Gershenson or Karen Shimizu: GABRIELLA dot GERSHENSON at BONNIERCORP dot COM, KAREN dot SHIMIZU at BONNIERCORP dot COM

For wine and books, Betsy Andrews: BETSY dot ANDREWS at BONNIERCORP dot COM

For spirits and books, Beth Kracklauer: BETH dot KRACKLAUER at BONNIERCORP dot COM

For chefs and restaurants, Dana Bowen: DANA dot BOWEN at BONNIERCORP dot COM

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