

NATHANIEL CRAWFORD

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Creative Director and Art Director with 10+ years leading brand visual identity, campaign concepting, and photo and video production for food, CPG, and hospitality brands. Experienced in directing cross-functional creative teams, managing end-to-end production, and building brand systems that drive business results across digital, e-commerce, social, and print channels. Deep expertise in food and lifestyle storytelling with a track record of elevating brand perception and building loyal audiences.

EXPERIENCE

PHOTO ART DIRECTOR & SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER | HOME CHEF | Chicago, IL | December 2024 – Present

- Photo art directs weekly menu launches, campaign shoots, and product innovation for one of the country's largest meal kit brands, leading a team of associate photographers, R&D chefs, and external vendors to deliver cohesive, on-brand visual storytelling at scale.
- Direct end-to-end production of 100+ hero assets per month across digital, app, email, and print channels, maintaining brand consistency and elevating visual standards under tight weekly deadlines.
- Partners cross-functionally with culinary, marketing, and e-commerce teams to concept and produce assets supporting seasonal campaigns, product launches, and business growth objectives.
- Mentors associate photographers with ongoing creative direction and hands-on feedback, improving workflow efficiency and maintaining high production quality across a high-volume studio environment.
- Manages shoot logistics including crew coordination, prop and set direction, and post-production review to ensure all deliverables align with creative brief and brand intent.

OWNER & CREATIVE DIRECTOR | CRAWFORD CAPTURES PHOTO & FILM | Chicago, IL | January 2015 – Present

- Lead brand creative direction, campaign concepting, and integrated visual storytelling for nationally recognized food and CPG brands including Garrett Popcorn, Bob's Red Mill, The Spice House, Bartsian, Frango Chocolate, and de Buyer, producing imagery that elevated brand perception and drove customer affinity.
- Manage end-to-end production across 100+ annual shoots, owning creative direction, client communication, brief development, crew and talent coordination, on-set direction, and post-production delivery.
- Develop and maintain visual identity systems, brand guidelines, and campaign creative for clients across food, beverage, CPG, and hospitality categories, ensuring consistency across digital, print, packaging, and social channels.
- Direct photographers, stylists, prop coordinators, and production crews on location and in-studio, translating creative briefs into polished, brand-aligned visual narratives.
- Oversee all post-production using Adobe Lightroom, Photoshop, and Premiere Pro, ensuring brand adherence and premium output quality across every deliverable.

CO-FOUNDER & CREATIVE DIRECTOR | MORNING JAY'S | Chicago, IL | August 2024 – Present

- Co-founded and led all creative direction for a Chicago-based breakfast pop-up and emerging CPG brand, building the brand from zero including visual identity, logo design, packaging, typography system, website UI/UX, photography, video, and social content across Instagram, TikTok, and Substack.
- Grew brand's Instagram and TikTok followings 3x within two months of launch through entirely organic content strategy, with multiple posts reaching thousands of views and several crossing into the millions.
- Secured press coverage from the New York Times, Chicago Sun-Times, and Midwest Living, and established brand partnerships with Recess Beverages, Topo Chico, and others through creative-led brand positioning.
- Directed full-funnel marketing strategy across social, email, and brand collaborations, growing a loyal community audience and expanding into catering and wholesale channels.

MARKETING MANAGER | THE FRENCH PASTRY SCHOOL / THE BUTTER BOOK | Chicago, IL | June 2020 – April 2021

- Oversaw all marketing and branding initiatives, driving substantial revenue growth and customer acquisition through omnichannel campaigns across social, email, and digital platforms.
- Orchestrated a holiday campaign generating \$100K+ in revenue and 1,100+ new trial sign-ups within one month through integrated social media, email marketing, and partnership activations.
- Led rebranding initiative for the home baker consumer segment, developing new visual identity, marketing collateral, and digital channel strategy that significantly enhanced brand presence and engagement.

MARKETING MANAGER | FIRST HOSPITALITY GROUP | Chicago, IL | May 2018 – June 2020

- Led creative strategy and visual identity across 19 hotel properties, developing omni-channel campaigns that drove a 20% increase in bookings year over year.

- Directed social media content production and visual systems for 4 full-service hotel properties, overseeing all creative output across digital platforms and establishing brand standards at scale.
- Developed and led corporate creative training for social media coordinators across multiple properties, establishing brand standards and visual best practices across the portfolio.
- Produced food and lifestyle photo shoots on location at hotel and restaurant properties, leading shoots from concept through final delivery while managing creative budgets and production planning across 19 properties.

CORE COMPETENCIES

Creative Direction • Art Direction • Brand Identity & Visual Systems • Campaign Concepting • Photo & Video Production • On-Set Direction • Creative Team Leadership • Brief Development • Cross-functional Collaboration • End-to-End Production Management • Post-Production Oversight • Social & Digital Content • E-commerce Creative • CPG & Food/Beverage • Adobe Creative Suite • Figma • AI Creative Workflows • Capture One

EDUCATION

Eastern Illinois University | Bachelor of Science, Hospitality Management | Charleston, IL

RECOGNITION

Shortlisted — Production Paradise Spotlight Awards 2023 • Honorable Mention — International Photography Awards 2023 • Shortlisted — IACP Food Photography & Styling Awards 2022 • 75 Collection Winner — Foodelia International Food Photography Awards • Named Among Best Food & Restaurant Photographers in Chicago — UpMenu • Named Among 13 Best Chicago Food Photographers — Peerspace