

PREPPING YOUR FOOD BLOG FOR FALL & WINTER

your ultimate guide



www.foodbloggersofcanada.com

Get your food blog ready for fall and the holiday season with our ultimate guide to prepping your blog for the holidays!

It's summer and the living is easy ... and the blog traffic is slow.

But, September is less than a month away and we all know that for most food bloggers, September through January is **food blogger busy season**. More sponsored work is available as brands look to get their products in front of consumers for the busy holiday season. Your readers are going to be looking for places to eat for holiday parties and recipes to make for entertaining guests, back-to-school lunches and holiday feasts. Even January can be a busy month as people look to boost their healthy eating habits.

Are you ready?

Here are our tips for prepping your blog for fall whether you're a restaurant blogger, a culinary travel blogger or a recipe blogger. And we warn you in advance, it's long (we said it was the **ultimate** guide!). If you don't have time to read it all in one sitting, you can download a PDF version to read later or even print out

1. Create a Strategy For Your Old Seasonal Content

Don't let all that great content you've created in past years languish in your archives! Inventory your old posts for back to school, Thanksgiving, Halloween, Christmas, Hanukkah, New Year's, et cetera.

Inventory Your Posts

Odds are good if you've been blogging for more than a year or two and have over 100 posts, you may not even remember some of your older content. Make life simpler and [make the most of your blog archives!](#)

Try a simple WordPress plug-in like [List URLs](#) that will let you download all of your post links (and even tag and category links) into an excel spreadsheet. We're finding that having a spreadsheet of all our links is an invaluable tool not only for inventorying old posts, but also for keeping records of posts we've updated, promoting old content on social media and even for determining if we need to delete or consolidate posts.

Create A Plan & A Schedule to Promote Your Seasonal Archives on Social Media

Promote that old content to your social channels. Try tools like [Meet Edgar](#) for Facebook and Twitter, [Tailwind](#) or [Viral Tag](#) for Pinterest, [Plann](#) for Instagram, or other tools like [Buffer](#), [Tweetdeck](#) or [Hootsuite](#), or WordPress plugins like [Co-Schedule](#).

You can also schedule posts weeks in advance natively on Facebook, which many people have found performs better than using a third party scheduler on Facebook.

If you belong to one of the many social sharing groups for food bloggers on Facebook, start adding your old posts to the share threads (FBC has [its own social sharing group with daily share threads](#) you can join if you're an FBC member).

You can also try joining group Pinterest boards to give your posts more exposure ([FBC has several open](#) to FBC Members).

Don't forget to create shareable content that suits the social medium you're using.

Example:

DO: Posting a photo on Instagram of your latest recipe is a great idea. Telling your followers the link to the post is in your Instagram bio is also great.

DON'T: Don't then auto tweet that instagram update to your Twitter account. Anyone using Twitter then has to click through to your IG post, only to discover that's not the recipe and that to get the recipe they have to navigate to your IG bio to get the link. If you want social media engagement, don't make your followers work. Use each medium the way it's meant to be used. Craft a tweet for the post on its own, include a photo and make it easy!

Create Internal Links On Your Old Posts For Better SEO

Google **loves** internal links on blog posts. Basically an internal link is when you link to another post on your site in the body of your current post. Don't confuse this with related posts plug-ins. You want to get those internal links right in the body of your post — the closer to the top the better!

Go through your old posts and see if you can add internal links to them by linking to newer content. Use your spreadsheet of post URLs to keep track of the posts you've updated!

Example:

If you wrote a post on gingerbread cookies three years ago and last year you wrote a post on icing gingerbread, make sure you link to your icing post in the old gingerbread cookie post. This is also great for encouraging multiple page views!

Promote Older Seasonal Content on Your Blog A Second (or Third, or Fourth) Time.

Sure you're promoting your seasonal archives on social media but what about on your blog as well?

Consider creating a few roundup posts that feature **only your content**.

Here are a few ideas:

- Great places to hold your office Christmas party (and link to five reviews you've done for restaurants that would be a great for an office party).
- Your best holiday cookie and bar recipes.
- A roundup of your best back to school lunch ideas — turn it into "A Week of Back To School Lunch Ideas."
- Your best meal planning menus or meal planning tips.
- Your favourite spooky Halloween treats.
- Five student budget-friendly places to grab lunch in your city.
- A roundup of recipes from your blog that would make great Thanksgiving or Christmas side dishes.
- Don't forget [Grey Cup](#)! Round up your best appetizer recipes or your favourite pubs/bars to watch the game.

Make Use of Your Sidebars

Look at your blog sidebar; what's in it? That [sidebar real estate is valuable](#) — use it to keep people **on** your site, not to send them **away** from your site!

Create a sidebar widget that you can change by season. Use it to feature back-to-school lunch ideas from your archives in September, Thanksgiving side dishes and Halloween treats in October, and ... well, you get the idea.

WordPress plug-ins like [Genesis Featured Widget Amplified](#), [Pretty Sidebar Categories](#) (both these plug-ins haven't been updated for a while but they still seem to work really well), [Ad Rotate](#) or [Custom Sidebars](#) can make this easy to do!

2. See What Seasonal Content Gaps You Have

Once you've spent some quality time with your archives and inventoried what you have, you'll get a really great idea of what types of content you'll need. It's a great way to help you [plan your editorial calendar](#). Oh, and PS ... don't forget January! January can be a huge traffic month for food bloggers as people look for healthy recipes, meal plans and healthy eating advice.

Example:

If you focus on blogging sweet recipes what are you missing? Perhaps you've covered off Christmas pies, bars, cookies, decadent desserts and candy. Why not consider a "how to" post on hosting a cookie swap for all those goodies or how to create [a festive dessert table](#) for your [open house](#) (linking to old recipes, of course!).

You could even do a post on your best kitchen tools for creating festive desserts (see more when we talk about affiliate links), or your favourite reference books for baking and decorating techniques.

3. Inventory and Update Old Posts

While you're inventorying all this old content, using your spreadsheet of links, start making notes of posts that could use some updates to keep them relevant or appealing. Not sure where to start? Check your Google analytics for your 10 to 20 most popular posts. Start with those and work your way through.

Here's a quick checklist to run through:

- **SEO:** make sure you're following good SEO practices with [H tags](#), key words, [alt and title tags for photos](#), [nofollow links](#), photo placement and internal links.
- **Photos:** do you have some photos that make you cringe and stop you from sharing old posts? Make notes on what could use a reshoot.
- **Improved methods:** have you found a better way to make those delicious appetizers? Update the post.
- **Update information:** is that restaurant you reviewed a year ago still as awesome? Or even more important, are they still open?
- Work on internal linking.

4. Start Planning Your Media Kit & Pitch Strategy

Most brands start working on their fiscal budgets for the coming year in the fall. Now is the time you want to get [your media kits in front of them](#), when budgets are still in the planning stages, not in January when they're already set in stone (there are, of course, some exceptions).

[Get your media kit updated](#) with your current stats, social reach, updated links and a current bio.

If writing for print (and even many on-line) publications is part of your plan for the new year, be forewarned that magazine editorial calendars are set months in advance — sometimes even for the entire year. So don't get caught pitching Valentine ideas to a publication in January; you'll be too late! Follow our [tips for finding magazine editorial calendars on-line](#).

5. Come Up With 5 Evergreen Content Ideas

Evergreen content is invaluable — it works for you long after you've written it. (Not sure what evergreen content is? We've got [loads of examples and ideas just for food bloggers!](#)).

Try to plan for five evergreen content ideas for your blog — one per month from September through January — that **are not** recipe or restaurant related. Think of the most frequently asked questions your readers have for you; that's a great place to start!

6. Plan How to Convert New Visitors Into Long-Term Fans

The fall and the holiday season are without a doubt the busiest traffic period for most food bloggers. A lot of new readers will be hitting your blog, often coming from search results and Pinterest. We call that "one hit wonder" traffic. In other words, the odds of them ever coming back after getting what they came for are pretty slim. Your goal should be to make them stick around and become raving fans.

How are you planning to do that?

Here are some ideas:

- Have a highly visible way for them to subscribe to your newsletter.
- Consider offering an incentive to get them to subscribe (a PDF of some of your most popular tips posts, a short e-book of holiday recipe ideas or a city restaurant guide or a short contest).
- Make sure your social channels are easy to spot and subscribe to.
- Ensure you respond to any comments or questions people leave you.
- If somebody new comments on a post, why not actually email them a personal reply? That can be a game changer!
- Leave a note on your posts asking people to let you know how the recipe turned out if they try it.
- Use those internal links and great sidebar images we mentioned earlier to draw them to other posts.

7. Update Your About Me Page & Social Media Links

With a lot of new blog traffic headed your way this holiday season, including potential brands and editors you've been contacting, make sure your **About Me, Start Here, Portfolio and Contact Me** pages are up to date. **Use those pages to direct new readers to your strongest content.**

The same goes for your social media links! We're always amazed by how many members who have great YouTube channels don't link to them with their other social media links. Snapchat is another one we see lots of members using without including links to it on their site (although with the changes to Snapchat and Instagram, you might want to think about that one!).

8. Work On Holiday Gift or Resource Guides (And Your Affiliate Strategy)

If you're the type who enjoys doing holiday or resource gift guides, start planning them now! These aren't for everyone, but they can be a lot of fun to put together especially if you make them look beautiful (we love how [Oh My Veggies](#) puts together their product roundups) and curate them carefully with products you really love and use.

These are also a great way to earn affiliate revenue, which can be a powerful income tool for bloggers (we have [8 great tips for powerful affiliate marketing](#)). One tip we will add is looking at a tool like [Geniuslink](#), which will help you link to products in different Amazon country shops. So if you have a Canadian and a U.S. reader, they can both click on the link and be directed to the right Amazon shop for their location. This can help you maximize your affiliate revenue!

Early Christmas or Hanukkah gift guides can go up as early as November. Last-minute gift guides can go up in December. But don't forget all the other important dates in there as well.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Cookbooks! You can group by genre, or your favourite books of the year or best sellers.
- Your favourite kitchen stocking stuffers.
- Splurge items like small appliances or tech-y items.
- Snack items.
- Fancy teas, coffees or chocolates or other small luxuries.

9. Assess Your Ad Strategy

Ad revenues for bloggers are at their highest in the last quarter of the year. Marketing departments put most of their budgets into action between October and December. They run more ads through ad

networks and Google. It's also your biggest traffic season, meaning you will likely earn your most ad revenue in this quarter.

Assess Your Ad Strategy and Placements.

If you run ads, you want to make sure they're visible but not irritating to the reader. A good way to test this is to get non-blogger friends to check your site out both on mobile and on desktop. Have them tell you what, if anything, annoys or frustrates them. Adjust and test again.

This is also a good time to review the types of ads you opt out of; for instance, if you're a vegan blogger, you don't want ads running for food items that are non-vegan!

So don't fret the slow traffic summer months! Make use of that extra time to get outside and get inspired, play with family and friends and plan for your most awesome fall and winter blogging season yet!