

THE FOOD OF LIFE

By Steve Chagollan



JULIE & JULIA
(2009)

► Nora Ephron

This parallel tale of Julia Child and the modern-day writer who decided to cook every recipe in Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and translate it into a successful blog and book represents the sweet spot for director-writer-author Ephron, whose passion for food resulted in her own *Nora's Cookbook*.

FILMMAKERS HAVE LONG had a tenuous relationship with food, which is often introduced in movies, but the consumption of it not so much. There are exceptions, of course: Brad Pitt devours all manner of junk food—from nachos to burgers—in Steven Soderbergh's *Ocean's Eleven* and somehow makes it look sexy. When food plays a more conspicuous role, the result can have a Pavlovian effect. In Mike Nichols' *Heartburn*, for example, the gustatory ecstasy Jack Nicholson exhibits after Meryl Streep, who plays a food writer, whips up a late-night pasta carbonara is infectious. In the following films, food and wine reveal character, and often leave viewers hungry for more.





“In order to get the audience salivating, you have to show the process, which is really stimulating for the taste buds.” —ANG LEE

EAT DRINK MAN WOMAN (1994)

► Ang Lee

The opening cooking scene—involving braised pork belly, steamed dumplings and a smoked duck with gorgeously lacquered skin—might stand as a high-water mark in the annals of epicurean cinema. “The film’s use of food is both voluptuous and serious, amplifying the story even as it offers an irresistible diversion,” said *The New York Times*.

“You have to reimagine these characters in a totally different environment ... so substantial things had to change.” —SCOTT HICKS

NO RESERVATIONS (2007)

► Scott Hicks

This remake of the German film *Mostly Martha* pits an easy-going Italophile (Aaron Eckhart) who cooks from the heart against a steely perfectionist (Catherine Zeta-Jones) who values precision and control above all else. The persnickety chef lets her guard down, and opens her heart, by revealing the secret to her saffron sauce.



PHOTOS: (TOP) EVERETT; (BOTTOM) PHOTOFEST; (OPPOSITE, TOP) AMPAS; (BOTTOM) PHOTOFEST



BURNT (2015)

► John Wells

Bradley Cooper plays a disgraced, abusive bad-boy chef (think Anthony Bourdain crossed with Gordon Ramsay) who has burned every bridge. This food porn-laced drama is as much about battling demons and achieving salvation as it is about the high-stakes world of Michelin-caliber eateries.



“Usually in movies when you see [food] you can’t eat it, it doesn’t taste good; in this one even though we know better, we’re eating in rehearsals.” —JON FAVREAU



CHEF (2014)

► Jon Favreau

Favreau works both sides of the camera as a disillusioned L.A. chef who abandons the high-end restaurant scene and opens a food truck. There’s plenty of big- and small-kitchen action, especially a delectable primer on making Cubano sandwiches. Favreau enlisted guerrilla food trailblazer Roy Choi as a consultant.



“It’s a story about food and family and love, and the importance of us holding hands and forming a global family.”

—LASSE HALLSTRÖM

PHOTOS: (TOP) ALEX BAILEY/THE WEINSTEIN COMPANY (2); (BOTTOM & OPPOSITE) EVERETT



THE HUNDRED-FOOT JOURNEY (2014)

► Lasse Hallström

Once again, Hallström (*Chocolat*) explores burgeoning romance in a small French village accented by the sensual pleasures of the palate. Only this time, the culture clash is East/West, as rival restaurants in close proximity contrast earthy Indian with French haute cuisine. The tension, of course, is both professional and sexual.



“There’s a lot of wine talk in the book and not in the movie. I needed to make sure the wine related to the characters.” —ALEXANDER PAYNE

SIDEWAYS (2004)

► Alexander Payne

This rueful comedy about a failed writer played by Paul Giamatti who worships Pinot Noir and reviles Merlot boosted sales of the former and put Santa Barbara’s wine country on the map. In one immortal scene, Giamatti rhapsodizes about the delicate, temperamental nature of Pinot as if he’s talking about a long, lost lover.



“We have in the picture the greatest sandwich in the history of motion pictures.”

—JAMES L. BROOKS

SPANGLISH (2004)

► James L. Brooks

With an assist from culinary superstar Thomas Keller of French Laundry fame, Brooks cast Adam Sandler as an L.A. chef of equal stature with a troubled home life. If the scene of Sandler making an American variation of the croque monsieur, replete with runny egg, doesn’t whet your appetite, nothing will.



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