

HOME THEATER

A delectable selection for foodies



'Julie & Julia' (2009)

"She changed everything. Before her, it was frozen food, can openers and marshmallows," says Julie Powell (Amy Adams), food blogger, of Julia Child (Meryl Streep), food icon. Director Nora Ephron deftly combines memoirs by the two real-life women — Powell's "Julie & Julia" and Child's "My Life in France" — to present parallel stories.

In 2002 Queens, Powell is a would-be writer who starts a blog in which she will tackle every recipe in Child's "Mastering the Art of French Cooking" within one year. In 1949 Paris, Child falls in love with French cooking, but is frustrated that there are no French cookbooks in English.

Streep received an Oscar nomination for her turn as the TV chef, despite her unenviable task of having to emulate Child's high-pitched speaking voice. Dan Akroyd's 1978 "Saturday Night Live" skit as Child is seen in the film.



'Waitress' (2007)

When trouble comes to diner waitress Jenna (Keri Russell), she dreams up a pie recipe to go with it. Lately, Jenna is having a *lot* of trouble. She plots to leave her violent husband (Jeremy Sisto); win a pie-baking competition; and use the prize money to open her own pie shop. Then, she learns she is pregnant. And Jenna is *not* a happy mom-to-be.

Andy Griffith turns on the old charm as Old Joe, the irascible owner of the diner. Cheryl Hines ("Curb Your Enthusiasm") plays Becky, a fellow waitress who encourages Jenna's dream, suggesting "somewhere they could really use a little pie shop, like Europe or New Jersey."

Director-writer Adrienne Shelly, who played sad-sack waitress Dawn, never saw the film's release; Shelly was murdered in Manhattan in 2006. Her then-toddler daughter, Sophie Ostroy, played Russell's daughter Lulu in the film.



'Big Night' (1996)

In the 1950s, a failing restaurant bets every last penny on a fancy reception for a visiting celebrity. But Campbell Scott and Stanley Tucci's film is as much about the rocky relationship between two Italian-immigrant brothers as the eye-pleasing cuisine they create. Segundo (Tucci) is the manager and "face" of Paradise, a well-appointed, traditional Italian restaurant at the Jersey Shore. Primo (Tony Shalhoub) is Paradise's fastidious chef, who is unwilling to compromise in his mission to cook authentic Italian fare, whatever the cost. "To eat good food is to be close to God," Segundo tells Ann (Allison Janney), a flower vendor he is sweet on. When a calculating competitor (Ian Holm) promises to deliver singer Louis Prima to Paradise on a Saturday night, Primo and Segundo spare no expense.

"Big Night" was partly filmed in Keansburg and Keyport.



'Pie in the Sky' (1994-97)

Richard Griffiths stars in this British series as Inspector Henry Crabbe, an intuitive detective who desires early retirement in order to focus on his true calling: restauranting.

Crabbe owns and operates the bistro Pie in the Sky with his wife, Margaret (Maggie Steed), an accountant who must constantly point out budgetary realities to her distracted husband. Bella Enahoro plays Crabbe's capable colleague Sgt. Cambridge, and Malcolm Sinclair plays their snake-in-the-grass supervisor, Constable Fisher.

Food often figures in the plots. Case in point: In "New Leaf" (Season 4, Episode 4), Crabbe is enlisted to protect the former wife (Lynsey Baxter) of a gangster she is set to testify against. The woman is wary of police, but Crabbe wins her over with a fondly recalled dish from her childhood: "fish fingers," beans, and "chips" (a.k.a. French fries).



'Eat Drink Man Woman' (1994)

Widower Chu (Sihung Lung) seems unable to meaningfully communicate with his three daughters — except, that is, through food. A chef by trade, Chu insists the four of them keep up the tradition of an elaborate Sunday night dinner, though it is an increasingly uncomfortable ritual.

Chu Jia-Chien (Chien-lien Wu) is a rising airline executive who was always shooed out of the kitchen by her father. Chu Jia-Jen (Kuei-Mei Yang) is a math teacher and devout Christian with trust issues following a broken heart. Chu Jia-Ning (Yu-Wen Wang) has her own little soap opera going when she steals her best friend's (albeit, mistreated) boyfriend. Meanwhile, Chu has been losing his sense of taste — a serious complication for a master chef.

Foodies will be entranced by sequences in which Chu prepares gorgeous, exotic dishes with almost fetishistic care.



'Like Water For Chocolate' (1992)

In 19th-century Mexico, a cruel family tradition dictates that the last-born of three daughters, Tita (Lumi Cavazos), must care for her mother, Elena (Regina Torné), until her death. Elena forbids Tita's true love, Pedro (Marco Leonardi), to marry Tita, instead offering Tita's sister Rosaura (Yareli Arizmendi). A virtual slave in the kitchen, Tita expresses her emotions through cooking. When Tita bakes the wedding cake for Pedro and Rosaura, she cries into the batter. (When wedding guests eat the cake, *they* cry too.)

Over time, Tita uses her sensual cooking as a way to send messages of love to the brother-in-law who should have been her husband. The story is told in flashback by Tita's great niece (Arcelia Ramirez), who notes: "She'll continue to live as long as someone cooks her recipes."

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