

Chef is a brilliant and refreshing film that's wonderfully executed and ultimately has the ability to rekindle the human spirit. The film is written and directed by Jon Favreau. If you're not familiar with Favreau's vast body of work, you'll undoubtedly recognize his star-studded and prominent cast of characters that inhabit this off-beat indie delight. While there is a respectable amount of iconic names that are integrated into the mix, we unfortunately only get to see some of them briefly as they pop in and out of the frame and then vanish from the film completely. Despite this, they all play a pivotal part in the grand scheme of things as the film progressively builds to the heart of the story. They almost feel like speed bumps along our journey of discovery, but essential ones nonetheless. Among some of the iconic names that pop in and out of the film are Scarlett Johansson, Dustin Hoffman, and the man we've come to know simply as Iron Man or Tony Stark: Robert Downey Jr. Others that have much more presence as the story unfolds are Sofia Vergara (Modern Family) and Oliver Platt (X-men: First Class, 2012).

Carl Casper (Favreau) a beloved chef in the Venice Beach area of Los Angeles has one passion that keeps him moving forward – cooking. Casper may not be the ideal husband, seeing as how he's divorced. He may not be the most suitable father figure, considering he only spends time with his son sporadically while putting his main focus into what he's going to cook next at his restaurant. But one thing is for certain, Casper excels at touching people's lives with his undeniable prowess in the kitchen.

As we meet Casper, we discover that he's in somewhat of a creative rut. He's been cooking the same menu for the past five years at the restaurant he's employed at. An opportunity of a lifetime arises as a world renowned food critic from Los Angeles, Ramsey Michel (Platt) plans on paying a visit to Casper's restaurant. Casper takes the initiative to strategically plan a brand new menu for Ramsey's arrival. Just as Casper rallies his cooking staff to brief them on how he plans to implement change, in walks Riva, the owner of the restaurant (Hoffman). Much to Casper's chagrin, Riva illustrates his disapproval to cooking anything new. Riva proclaims that the customers love what he cooks and the current menu is the very reason they're one of the most respected and prosperous restaurants in LA. After a brief verbal clash, Casper concedes and cooks the routine menu.

After receiving a less-than stellar review by Ramsey on the routine dishes that were presented to him, Casper goes berserk. He invites Ramsey back to the restaurant for a second review on a new menu. When Ramsey returns, Casper trudges into the main dining room and goes haywire on the pretentious and arrogant food critic all while being captured on someone's iPhone. Following the pandemonium, the video inevitably goes viral on the internet and Casper loses his job at the restaurant.

In the midst of seeking out a new job, Casper's ex-wife, Inez (Vergara) invites him to come to Miami with her and their son for a brief getaway. Inez wants nothing more than for Casper to be happy and to spend some much needed time with their son, Percy (Emjay Anthony). Casper although reluctant at first, eventually complies and joins Inez and Percy on the spontaneous trip to Florida. Once the estranged family arrives in Miami, Inez summons an old idea that she previously hounded Casper about when she witnessed his unhappiness at the restaurant: starting up a food truck and ultimately working for himself. While in Miami, Casper ends up meeting with one of Inez's wealthy ex-husbands (Robert Downey Jr.) who graciously agrees to invest and back Casper's food truck.

After receiving proper consent from Inez who ends up flying back to California on her own, an unforgettable excursion is set into motion with Casper, his son Percy, and one of Casper's old cooking staff members from the restaurant back in LA. The cooking staff member, Martin (John Leguizamo) winds up flying down to Florida to join them after hearing about the idea come to fruition. Together, the group travels back to California while simultaneously cooking and serving hundreds of happy and satisfied customers on their new food truck which specializes in Cuban sandwiches. The road trip ends up serving as a golden opportunity for Casper to rekindle his relationship with not only his son, but his love and passion for a craft that makes him happy: cooking.

When skimming the surface, Chef has all the right ingredients to bare real fruit. After finishing, as the film fades to black and the credits begin to roll, you'll quickly realize that this is one dish in particular that you'll want to taste again and again and again.

Chef is now available on DVD, Blu-ray, VOD, & Redbox!