

Chef (2014) Favreau

P Michell, 2019

American [comedy-drama film](#) written, co-produced, directed by, and starring [Jon Favreau](#). He plays a chef who, after a public altercation with a food critic, quits his job at a popular Los Angeles restaurant to operate a [food truck](#) with his young son. It co-stars [Sofia Vergara](#), [John Leguizamo](#), [Scarlett Johansson](#), [Oliver Platt](#), [Bobby Cannavale](#), [Dustin Hoffman](#), and [Robert Downey Jr.](#) albeit in a cameo role.

Favreau wrote the script after directing several big-budget films, wanting to go "back to basics" and to create a film about cooking- Food truck owner and chef [Roy Choi](#) served as a co-producer and oversaw the menus and food prepared for the film. It grossed over \$45 million at the box office and was well received by critics, who praised the direction, writing, story, and performances.

A film of our time. Food trucks, chef power, split families and Twitter. Explores the 'reality' of the US obsession with food trucks. Also part of the long line of road and chef movies'. Great supporting cast in small roles.

Creative Personnel

Favreau is director, who started as an independent film maker, now more noted for his superhero action films (Ironman, etc.). Not only wrote, directed but is the featured actor in Chef.

"It was nice to work on a little movie like this again, where I have so many responsibilities between writing and directing and acting, and you live and die by your own talents. I missed the feeling of doing something small and personal, where I wouldn't have to explain my vision to anyone but the people I was collaborating with."

Much of the production personnel – cinematography, design are either from his big budget movies. Eg. **Kramer Morgenthau** (cinematographer) or other high calibre people. Such as **Alicia Maccarone** – Art Direction.

IMDB lists 25 (!) producers / executive producers / co-producers for Chef. Must be a near record! Could be Favreau listing lots of his friends.

Hark back to when Hollywood could turn out light romantic comedies pre 1990s.

Bobby Cannavale (102 credits). Like most of the cast splits his time between live theatre film and TV. Also of Latino heritage.

Member of a notable Lee Strasberg alumni: [Al Pacino](#) , [Robert De Niro](#), [James Dean](#), [Marilyn Monroe](#), [Steve McQueen](#), [Paul Newman](#), [Christopher Walken](#), [Dennis Hopper](#), [Matt Zeman](#) and others. Member of the Circle Repertory Theatre and the Lab Theatre Company, both based in New York City. Only member of Boardwalk Empire to win an Emmy. Was in Woody Allen's Blue Jasmine (2013).

John Leguizamo (144 credits) – Latin American actor appearing in many films and TV inc Executive Decision (1996) and To Wong Fu Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar (1995), all then ‘Ice Age’ films. In 1991 appeared on stage in Leguizamo: Mambo Mouth, a witty show where he played seven different Latino characters.

Emjay Anthony (17 credits) – 11 years old when film made, born 2003. Debut in ‘Its Complicated’ (2009).

Trivia

Near the end of the credits, there is a brief scene of chef Roi Choi teaching Jon Favreau how to make the perfect grilled cheese sandwich.

[Roy Choi](#) only agreed to train [Jon Favreau](#) to cook, if Favreau promised to be absolutely authentic in his portrayal of a professional chef, from the way that his character Carl folds the towels at the beginning of the film, to the way in which he cleans his station. Choi also put Favreau to work in several of his kitchens doing repetitive, menial tasks, such as picking parsley. This training was designed to keep Favreau focused on the smallest of details, and to serve as a method acting exercise, in order to understand the mindset of a professional chef, who must be persistently detail-focused in a pressurized environment, which requires repetitive tasks.

Towards the film's ending, the El Jefe truck is seen at a nighttime food truck event, along with many of Los Angeles' most popular food trucks. This is an actual event in Venice called "First Fridays". For a brief moment, you can see Chef [Roy Choi](#)'s Kogi truck, the food truck that started a gourmet food truck craze in the United States.

[Oliver Platt](#)'s brother is a prominent food critic in the New York City metropolitan area and has invited Oliver on some of his restaurant visits.

Ramsey Michel ([Oliver Platt](#)) is likely named for two world famous chefs: [Gordon Ramsay](#) and Michel Roux Jr. Both chefs have owned restaurants that have earned three Michelin stars.

Inspired by the Irish comedy-drama [The Van](#) (1996).

Food prepared for the shoot was eaten by the cast and crew after filming. Much of the dialogue in the food truck scenes between John Leguizamo, Jon Favreau, and Emjay Anthony was improvised in order to capture the banter of a kitchen environment.

Reviews:

Food-porn at its best - [basil19849](#) April 2014

Jon Favreau's pet project, after a decade of big budget, heavy-on-special-effects, blockbusters and fantasy fair, is as charming as they come. The film follows a master chef (played by Favreau) whose career is derailed and, as a last resort, opens a food truck and drives across country with his young son and his sous-chef, played by John Leguizamo, selling Cubano sandwiches. Along the way, we're treated to food-porn at its best and introduced to a cast of characters that would make Woody Allen blush: Oliver Platt, Dustin Hoffman, Sofia Vergara, Robert Downey Jr., Scarlett Johansen, and a slew of other familiar faces.

This is still a far cry from 'Swingers' - the film that began the plague that is Vince Vaughn and managed to charm every straight man in America - but the man knows how to make a light comedy with clever dialogue that doesn't feel frivolous. This is far from indie/art-house but Favreau was candid in saying that he had no desire to make a cinematic contribution, he simply fell in love with the premise, ran with it, and the result brought the house down.

Three Stars. Susan Wloszczyna – Roger Ebert.com

Carnivores, prepare to salivate. "Chef," an affable and affectionate celebration of food, friendship and familial love, may feature two of the most photogenic ladies in Hollywood but even such dishy visions as [Sofia Vergara](#) (using her indoor voice for once) and [Scarlett Johansson](#) (with boho bangs and hipster tattoos) can't hope to compete with the sight of a sizzling slab of Texas-style brisket that's been grilled to crusty blackened perfection.

Just as audiences were compelled to clap after [Jennifer Hudson](#) got through decimating the Broadway showstopper "And I Am Telling You" in "Dreamgirls," many filmgoers may be moved to audibly share their appreciation of the succulent slices of barbecued heaven. That is in addition to being able to ogle scrumptious portions of Cuban sandwiches, beef cheeks, Cornish game hen and a glistening, gluttonous mound of fresh-off-the-pig bacon. Not that there aren't an occasional bunch of carrots and a couple yucca roots lying around the kitchen. But no one will ever mistake "Chef" of being vegan-friendly.

The script, alas, is somewhat less dramatically meaty than the entrees. Let's just say the final outcome is as almost-as-expected as the bill at the end of an evening of dining out. But it is a pleasure to sit back and enjoy the goings-on as performed by an engaging troupe of actors and to savor the efforts of "Chef"'s star and writer/director [Jon Favreau](#), whose warm and down-to-earth personality flavors every scene. This is comfort comedy, pure and simple.

"Chef" is being hailed as a return of sorts to Favreau low-budget indie roots as a filmmaker with "[Swingers](#)" and "[Made](#)." That was before he was recruited for summer tentpole duty with "[Iron Man](#)" and "[Iron Man 2](#)," along with the roundly panned outer-space Western "Cowboys & Aliens." Although this re-embrace of a more modest approach—a palate cleanser, as it were—probably has most in common with the good-natured spirit and emotional highs of "[Elf](#)" than those early bro-capades with pal [Vince Vaughn](#).

However, it is not hard to make a connection between Favreau's motivations behind making "Chef" and those of his of Carl Casper, a respected head cook at a fancy Los Angeles eatery who feels stymied by the creative restrictions placed upon him by his more conservative boss ([Dustin Hoffman](#), in testy terrier mode). "Be an artist on your own time," shouts Hoffman, himself an infamous perfectionist who has probably been the recipient of such advice back in the day.

When Carl is forced to serve an influential restaurant critic ([Oliver Platt](#)) the same old tried-and-true menu instead stretching beyond the expected, the result is a scathing review that not only tears into his "needy aunt" recipes but also insults his girth, suggesting that the chef has been consuming all the meals sent back to the kitchen. It's a blow to his very soul.

What blogging was to "Julie & Julia," tweeting is to "Chef." Carl gets a first-hand lesson in the dangers of social media when his 10-year-old tech-whiz son, Percy (admirably real-kid-like [Emjay Anthony](#)), shows him how to set up a Twitter account so he can follow the reaction to the nasty write-up. When Carl accidentally replies to the critic publically, it sets off a flame war as well as results in a viral smart-phone video of him losing his temper that ultimately gets him canned.

Carl's well-off ex-wife Inez (Vegara) decides to play fairy godmother—rarely has a former partner in a movie been this mature and supportive—pays his way to Miami so he can share more time with their son while she works. Her ulterior motive is for him to get his juices flowing again by revisiting where he got his start in the food business. She also recruits her first ex-husband, the wealthy owner of a local construction firm, to provide a food truck so Carl can get back to basics and start fresh.

At this point, "Chef" briefly becomes "The [Robert Downey Jr.](#) Show" as Favreau allows his Iron Man to amusingly turn his character into an attention-deficit poster boy who is capable of discussing five different subjects at the same time in a single conversation. Once Carl, Percy and line-cook buddy Martin ([John Leguizamo](#)), who adds welcome spice) remodel the beat-up vehicle into a spiffy Cubano sandwich emporium, "Chef" hits the road and becomes part food-fueled travelogue, part father-and-son reunion as the trio travels to such feasting meccas as New Orleans (beignets at Café Du Monde) and Austin (the aforementioned brisket at Franklin Barbecue) before returning home to L.A.

If the Food Network ever decided to add a soap opera to its lineup, it could do worse than borrow from Favreau's stripped-down yet satisfying recipe. I, for one, would add it to my DVR queue, even if they recast Carl with Guy Fieri.