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# ***Eat Drink Man Woman* confounds expectations**

by Matt Bass

**E**at Drink Man Woman is indeed about food and sex, but that is all that is predictable in this amazing new film by Ang Lee, the director of *The Wedding Banquet*. Lee's latest effort is the story of a father and his three daughters as they attempt to define themselves both as individuals and as members of a family in a world where the two definitions are rarely compatible. The only thing the family members have in common is the roof over their heads and their mutual worries. But that, as the film teaches us, may be enough.

It's a rare movie that can set up a standard plot, and then follow through so astonishingly that you forget that what happens is what you were expecting. This is what we are given:

The patriarch of this family is Mr. Chu, Taiwan's greatest chef. A widower of 16 years, Mr. Chu is still struggling to forge a relationship with his three

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"I have an announcement."*

daughters, all in their 20s, while still maintaining the possibility of a love interest. A failure as a communicator, Mr. Chu tries to speak through his food, despite the fact that his own taste buds have long since died.

Living with Mr. Chu is his eldest daughter Jia-Jen, a school teacher and devout Christian who claims to be mending a heart that was broken nine years ago. This all changes when the new, cute volleyball coach accidentally kicks a ball into her classroom.

The middle daughter, Jia-Chien, had wanted as a child to become a great chef like her father. But Mr. Chu banished her to the classroom, where she graduated and became a successful airline executive. Now she is faced with a promotion to Amsterdam and a new love who may be Jia-Jen's old one.

Meanwhile, Jia-Ning, the youngest daughter, works in a fast food restaurant and finds herself falling for her best friend's boyfriend.

Do the daughter's all get their men? Will Mr. Chu be able to make it if all his daughter's leave him? These are the simple questions that the movie sets up, but the answers we get are anything but simple. Hold onto your seat any time someone stands up at a Sunday dinner and says, as they do frequently, "I have an announcement." You may be following their actions and think you are following their thoughts, but don't count on guessing the contents of the announcement. I missed my guess every time.

It was refreshing to see a movie that can break from the mold without consciously rebelling against convention. Around the Chu family's dinner table these seemingly two dimensional characters come to life with the right mix of heart, stomach, and funny bone to separate themselves from every other dysfunctional family trying to muddle through in the movies today.

★Recommended

★★Highly Recommended



Above: Jiu Wong tastes one of his Sihung Lung's concoctions.



Below: Yu-Wen Wang and Chao-Jung Chen.