

Film Notes

By Alice Fortt

Big Night

1996 | 107mins

Directors: Campbell Scott, Stanley Tucci

Starring: Minnie Driver, Tony Shalhoub, Stanley Tucci

What is the cost of the American Dream? How far can one go in the pursuit of 'success' until your sense of self is lost entirely? These are the questions that lie at the heart of *Big Night*, a comedy-drama that follows two Italian immigrant brothers in 1950s America.

Primo (Tony Shalhoub) and Secondo (Stanley Tucci) desperately try to save their authentic Italian restaurant from ruin, beaten out by money-hungry competitors who have resolved to serve Americanised versions of classic Italian dishes. Primo and Secondo's fight to save their restaurant with one last 'big night' of food serves not only to save their business, but to validate their pride in their own immigrant identities.

Tucci, screenwriter, co-star and co-director, lays out his love of food in *Big Night* for all the world to see. Magnificent dishes are lovingly laboured over, watched by an effectively drooling camera. Lingering shots let us savour each dish as if we were about to taste it ourselves; it's rare to finish a viewing of *Big Night* without feeling ravenous.

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Big Night cements itself in a collection of films that places food on the highest pedestal. Food represents home, comfort, and the only link these brothers' have back to their home country, a place they revere so deeply they've dedicated their lives to sharing its flavours with the world. To quote Primo himself, "To eat good food is to be close to God".

A tale about risking it all on one big, near-impossible dream, *Big Night* offers a hopeful, brave depiction of defiance in the face of a culture so readily disregarding of a national identity that differs to its own. Both a heartwarming ode to authentic Italian cooking and an honest, humorous, unwrapping of Americanised food culture, it's a watch that feels just as poignant today as it did 30 years ago.

'Tucci and Campbell Scott care enormously that you have a good time at their party. They never want you to refill your own glass'

- The Guardian

Excellent

Fair

Poor



What did you think of the film? Please mark or tear the number.

Please add any further comments here

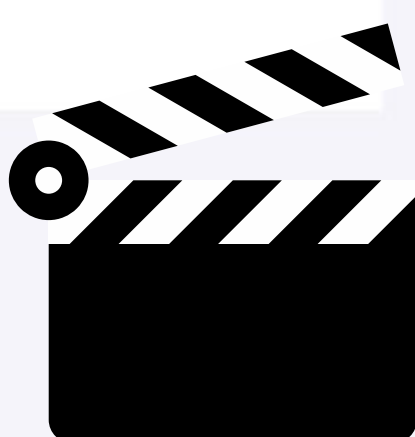
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Did You Know?

- *Big Night* was Stanley Tucci's film directorial debut, a role he would revisit again for *The Imposters* (1998), *Joe Gould's Secret* (2000), *Blind Date* (2007), and *Final Portrait* (2017).
- *Big Night* was nominated for four Independent Spirit Awards, winning Best First Screenplay for Stanley Tucci and Joseph Tropiano.

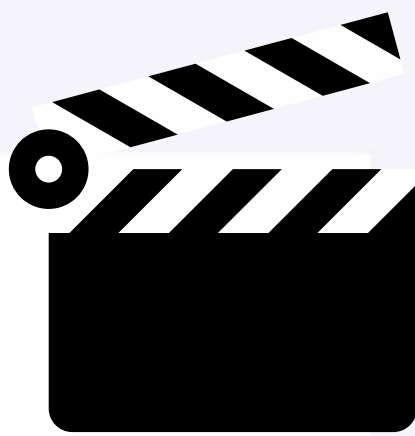
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Eat Drink Man Woman (1994)

A bittersweet story following a Taiwanese chef and his daughters.



Julie and Julia (2009)

Features a variety of past and present flashbacks to chef Julia's life.

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Excellent

Fair

Poor



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