

WEEKEND **KEEPSAKE**

The scenes that stick with us

MANGO HOURS

// BY LEONARDO CHUNG

On summer nights back in Korea, we gather in the kitchen. The electric fan whirs weakly next to the window as it blows humid air, and our hand fans barely cool our cheeks. But we don't mind the warmth.

My mom stands at the counter peeling mangoes. Every time she drops the skins into a bowl, they ring like a bell to signal a new slice is ready to be devoured.

My dad, hovering near the stove, pretends to help, but he's really only waiting to steal the ripest slices. I sit at the table recounting my day to anyone who will listen.

In these hours, the entire family is focused on the cool, sweet mangoes. Time stands still. The bowl chimes as it fills with peels, the fan clicks like a metronome and the fruit disappears faster than my mom can slice it.

As the next mango is on the chopping block, we holler about stories I can't remember anymore or lick mango juice off our chins in sultry silence. During my time in Korea, mango hours weren't scheduled.

Now at college 5,000 miles away, I feel the absence of the mango hours. Sometimes, companionship is felt most after you leave it behind.

PLAYLISTS FROM HOME

// BY MADISEN FINCH

Phoebe Bridgers and Ms. Lauryn Hill. The Marias and Fiona Apple. David Bowie. Billy Joel. That playlist was the framework of our lives.

Every Sunday night, my sister and I drove from Mom's to Dad's, then Dad's to Mom's. For once we didn't need to discuss the transition, explain it to some outside audience, instead we could just listen to someone else's story. They were a routine in an otherwise divorced life.

Home was never an address. It wasn't a place you could simply point to on a map — it was wherever my little sister was. Under the guise of listening to music, I built a stable home for us — with every song added, I crafted the keys that would unlock our front door.

For my sister and I, home is not a four letter word. It's a list of songs that soundtracked the eight minute drive between Mom and Dad. The moments driving in the rain, driving through the snow, driving with her are my moments of home.

When I'm 1,300 miles away, walking with my earbuds in, we are still walking together.

SUNDAY KIND OF LOVE

// BY MARIEM IQBAL

Every Sunday, like clockwork, chai is brewing in my house. Well, technically it is every day, but Sundays are special. Bleary-eyed and barely awake, I traipse down the stairs into the kitchen at noon. My dad, finally home from a long week at work, stands vigil over the old gas stove that my mom swears is the secret to her good food. There's music playing softly: "Bejeweled" by Taylor Swift — or as my dad, the world's biggest undercover Swiftie, calls it "Shimmer." Sliding across the wood floor in my Notorious RBG socks, out the next line, breaking my dad from his watchful reverie. He turns around, smiles his mega-watt smile and sings along with me, using his ladle as a microphone.

Fatal mistake. Anyone who's made chai knows that it's a dangerous game. You have to let it boil until the exact second before it bubbles out of the pot. It waits for the one moment you're distracted and decides to somersault over the ledge faster than Simone Biles.

Eyes widening at our error, we rush to turn off the heat and salvage the chai still left in the pot, laughing all the while. Sipping my spoils of war while sunlight streams through the bay windows and bathes the scene in swathes of honey, I feel something settle in my stomach. I'm home.

WATCHING WORLDS

// BY CHANEL MOHAMED

Something beautiful happens when you decide to take the long way. You replace the familiar with the unexpected. These moments of discovery are what make a place home.

The independent cinema, nestled in Forest Hills, Queens, was the sight of this discovery for me. An art house theater with vintage charm and six screening rooms where I empathized

with Jo March watching "Little Women" and cried watching "The Holdovers." There are newer and bigger movie theaters in Forest Hills, but I always find myself coming to the Kew Gardens Cinema, strolling along the streets that wind through this enclave of the city. Along Austin Street, there is extra charm in the small moments where the tree-lined streets dappled with English cottages are the backdrop to the long conversations I have with my mom on the walk there and watching the leaves fall as I turn past an old pub. Suburban Queens has a certain rare calm.

This cinema, always one of my favorite parts of home, is a fragment of the mosaic of my memories and experiences. Whether it is the walk down the garden's tree-lined streets or sitting in screening room two, here I am reminded to keep an eye out for the next piece of the picture I call home.



ILLUSTRATION BY MAIA WILSON

REVIEW

Ratatouille: A Family Recipe

A review of the childhood classic.

// BY LILLY PRICE

My favorite icebreaker question has always been "What was your favorite movie growing up?" Although preferences change with the times, I think the movies we watch in our formative years truly shape us: they represent our family's values, instill in us a moral compass and have possibly inspired many years of Halloween costumes. When I'm asked the question in return, I proudly respond "Ratatouille!"

Many years before I could properly place the vowels in the word "Ratatouille," I was mesmerized by the coppersy kitchen, covered in fear when Remy lost his family in the sewer tunnel, and bobbed my pigtails to "Le Festin" as the closing credits rolled. Sitting beside me each time I watched it — always eager to point out Thomas Keller's cameo — was my dad. Often, we would rise from the movie to cook together, grabbing "Everyday Cooking" by Jacques Pépin from our bookshelf. We were inspired by Pépin and Gusteau's shared mantra, "everyone can cook." I'd groan with exasperation when he'd show me again his trick for peeling a clove of garlic, or the ingredients in a béchamel. "I know!" I'd huff, but I share his rejection of the garlic press: a unitasker, as our favorite Food Network

host, Alton Brown, calls it.

Rewatching my childhood favorites, I find my reactions split into two camps: either I'm horrified that I once enjoyed them, or I'm enveloped in nostalgia, noticing with glee the innuendos I missed or drawing connections to larger cultural or political phenomena. "Ratatouille" falls squarely into the second category.

It isn't just nostalgic because of my childhood associations; the movie captures the push-and-pull of family dynamics that play out in our everyday lives. "Ratatouille" represents the complex relationships that arise from both the genealogical and cultural definitions of family: Remy, the rat protagonist, feels torn between his passion for cooking and his father's expectations that he continue in the family's traditions. Conversely, Alfredo Linguini, the trash boy extraordinaire, feels the immense pressure of having the late, renowned Chef Gusteau as his father, despite not knowing their relation until after his death.

Although it is a children's movie, "Ratatouille" reveals — in classic Pixar fashion — something deeply profound about what it means to care for someone

through the evolution of Remy's connection to his family and colony. His unorthodox culinary ambitions feel at odds with his father's fear-driven priority for the safety of their colony. Humans, a group his father views as fundamentally opposed to the survival of their kind, enchant him. But Remy puts his adoration for cooking on the back burner, using his mastery of the culinary senses to identify rat poison in food, to his father's delight.

Remy is separated from his colony and has a stint working at the restaurant of his idol Chef Gusteau. Later in the film, when he reconnects with his dad, the first thing his father says is, "Finding someone to replace you as poison checker has been a disaster!" Rather than being intrinsically valued as a member of the family, he is valued only for his utility. The colony then jumps at the opportunity to use Remy's access to a fully stocked pantry. He is reluctant, but succumbs. While he can follow his dreams in the human world, he will always be out of place and detested.

The promise of belonging draws him to abuse his access to human resources. His father says, "The world we live in belongs to the enemy. We must live carefully." Remy is doubtful, naive about humans'

do and we'll get it done!" Remy reconciles his desire to create and innovate with his father's emphasis on safety and tradition. Together with his colony, and the help of Linguini, Remy opens a bistro with a rat section serving garbage-based culinary innovations, which fuse Remy's appreciation for the art of cooking with his nature as a rat.

Alfredo Linguini has a parallel arc of self-discovery. He must fail again and again, with the immense pressure of his heritage looming over him, to find his own ambitions and talents. When he eventually rises to success, with Remy at the reins, he credits his lineage. Remy sulks at this, as he has been the mastermind behind Linguini's culinary triumphs. Linguini's relationship to Gusteau becomes a point of pride only insofar as he feels he can live up to it. When confiding in Remy's colony, Linguini admits that he's "never disappointed anyone before because nobody's ever expected anything of me."

The final, most subtle family portrayal is that of Anton Ego, the lanky, hardened critic and skeptic of Gusteau's open-minded principles. He has sharp taste buds and a scathing baseline for his reviews. Remy's final bid to impress him, with the titular dish ratatouille, draws concern from other chefs. When Ego bites into the "peasant food," his head snaps to attention and his eyes widen: cue flashback. He is transported to his mother's kitchen, freshly bleeding from a juvenile bike crash, as his mother wipes his tears and spoons the stew onto his awaiting plate. The nostalgia factor alone softens him, showing that no matter how cynical or jaded we become, the comfort of family remains. His willful exterior crumbles in an instant, revealing his enduring longing for care.

"Ratatouille" persists as a cultural staple nearly two decades later. The film owes its status as a childhood classic to its universal nature: within these three distinct portrayals of family, there is something for everyone. I've certainly never learned of my deceased father's status as a celebrity chef; my father is alive and well, and not a celebrity in any sense. But I have felt the pressure of following in family footsteps. I feel drawn to create and add to the world as I transition to this new stage of my life. And, like Anton Ego, I feel the tug of home across the chasm of 3,000 miles, the longing for the familiar, for my ratatouille.

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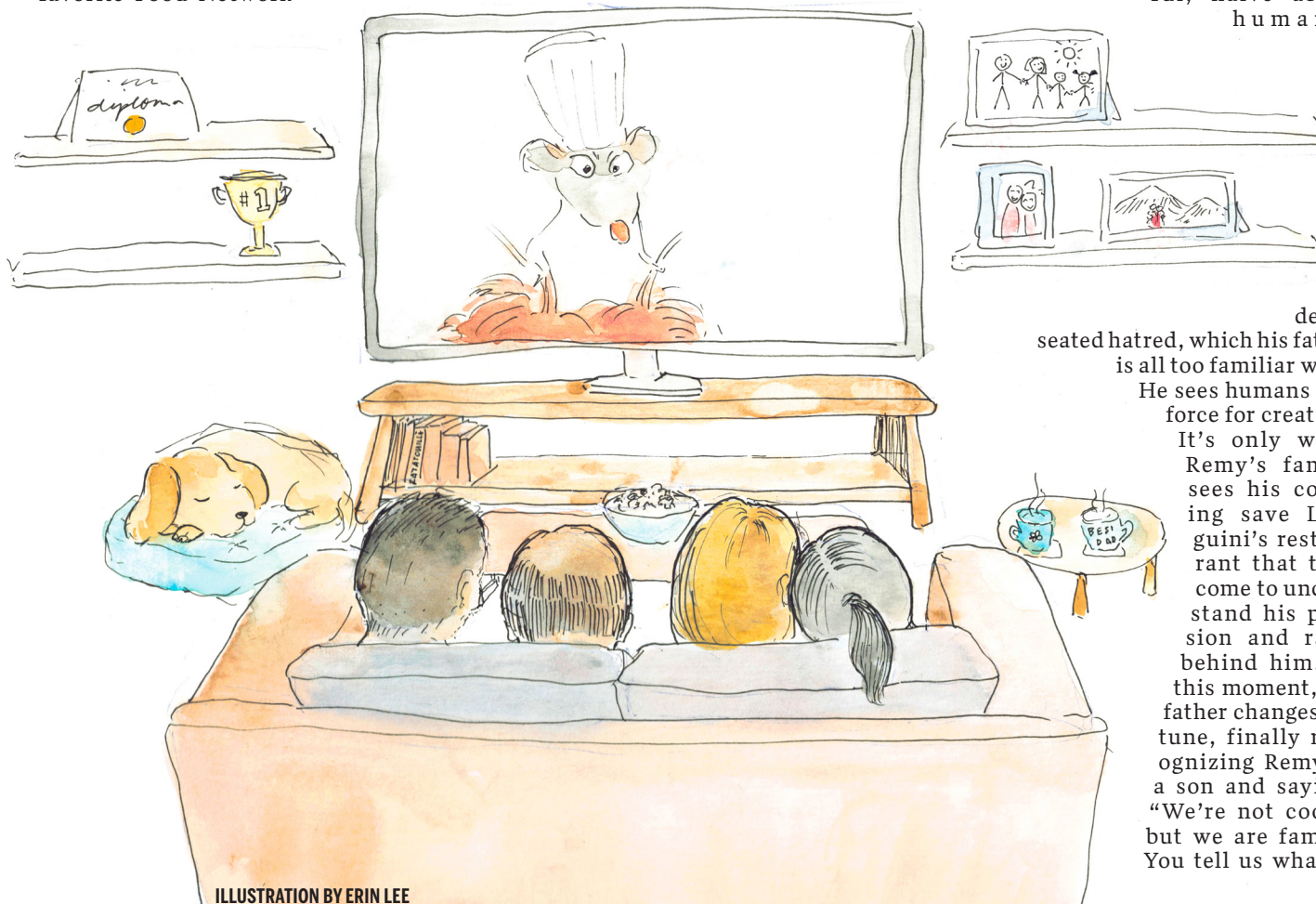


ILLUSTRATION BY ERIN LEE