

THE TASTE OF THINGS

France (2023) 135 minutes

Director: Tran Anh Hung

Cast: Juliette Binoche (Eugénie)
Benoît Magimel (Dodin Bouffant)



Screening 19th March 2025 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

Cook Eugénie and her boss Dodin, a fine gourmet chef, grow fond of one another over 20 years, and their romance gives rise to dishes that impress even the world's most illustrious chefs. When Dodin is faced with Eugénie's reluctance to commit, he begins to cook for her...

Reviews



In this case, Tran's starting point was a 1920s novel, *The Passionate Epicure* by Marcel Rouff, inspired by the great 18th century gastronome Brillat-Savarin, although his script takes off in a different direction. Rouff's Dodin is a pioneer of the celebrity chef tradition – a martinet who treats his guests as candidates in a gastronomic examination. One error of taste and they're never invited again.

Tran's Dodin is a much calmer and more contemplative character. He's also in love with his collaborator, Eugénie, the cook who shares his country manor house and transforms his ideas into delicious reality.

The film season's most exhilarating action sequence doesn't feature bad guys and explosions but simmering sauce pans and delectably steaming plates of veal. In director Tran Anh Hung's sublime drama *The Taste of Things*, the long and elaborate preparation of an ornate meal on the fire stoves of a 19th century French kitchen proves to be as nourishing to watch as the food itself would be to eat.

The cook, Eugénie, who may be a genius, and her two young assistants move about the sun-dappled kitchen with the precision of a crack military team and the grace of Balanchine dancers. They are aided by the château's owner, Dodin Bouffant, a revered gourmand who declares, "The discovery of a new dish brings more joy to humanity than the discovery of a new star."

Chuck Wilson, Metro Times (Detroit MI)

They're in 'the autumn of their years' when we meet them and for decades, Dodin has been asking Eugénie to marry him, but she prefers to maintain a measure of independence, which means she chooses the nights when her bedroom door will be open to him. Nonetheless, their love for one another is reflected in every meal they prepare.

The boldness of Tran's technique lies in all that he leaves out. He uses very little music and his dialogue is pared-back and to the point, as is his plot. The household's elaborate meals are enjoyed only by Dodin, Eugénie and a small group of close friends who share their interest in food.

Their maid, Violette (Galatea Bellugi), is included, along with her young cousin Pauline (Bonnie Chagneau-Ravoire).

Sandra Hall, The Sydney Morning Herald

Film Facts

- The *Taste of Things* was the official submission of France for the 'Best International Feature Film' category of the 96th Academy Awards in 2024.
- Benoît Magimel was once married to Juliette Binoche in real life (1998-2003).
- The French term for Baked Alaska translates as Norwegian Omelette