

“RATATOUILLE”

From Academy Award®-winning director Brad Bird and the amazing storytellers at Pixar Animation Studios comes RATATOUILLE, the most original comedy of the summer about one of the most unlikely friendships imaginable. The film’s protagonist is a rat named Remy who dares to dream the impossible dream of becoming a gourmet chef in a five-star French restaurant. Together with a down-and-out garbage boy named Linguini, the pair carves their own imaginative path to becoming the greatest chef in Paris.

All his life, Remy has had a gifted sense of smell and a most unusual dream for a rat: to cook in a gourmet restaurant. Undeterred by the obvious problem of trying to make it in the world’s most rodent-phobic profession, not to mention his family’s urgings to be satisfied with the usual trash-heap lifestyle, Remy’s fantasies are filled with flambés and sautés. But when circumstances literally drop Remy into the Parisian restaurant made famous by his culinary hero, Auguste Gusteau—whose mantra “anyone can cook” has been Remy’s lifelong inspiration—he soon finds that being discovered in the kitchen can be alarmingly perilous if you’ve got whiskers and a tail.

Just as Remy’s dreams look like they will go up in smoke, he finds the one thing he needs, a friend to believe in him: the restaurant’s shy, outcast garbage boy who is about to be fired from his job. Now, with nothing left to lose, Remy and Linguini form the most improbable partnership—with Linguini’s clumsy body channeling Remy’s creative brains—that will turn Paris upside down, leading them both on an incredible journey of comical twists, emotional turns and the most unlikely of triumphs, which they could never have imagined without each other.

Disney•Pixar presents RATATOUILLE, directed by Brad Bird, the film is produced by Brad Lewis and executive produced by John Lasseter and Andrew Stanton. Bringing to life a wide-ranging roster of memorable characters is a voice cast that includes popular stand-up comedian Patton Oswalt, Golden Globe® Award winner Brian Dennehy, Emmy® Award winner Brad Garrett, comic star and Emmy® nominee Janeane Garofalo, Academy Award® nominee Ian Holm and the legendary eight-time Academy Award® nominee Peter O’Toole.

THE RATATOUILLE RECIPE: BRAD BIRD BLENDS TOGETHER A UNIVERSAL TALE OF FAMILY, FRIENDSHIP AND FOLLOWING ONE’S OWN PATH IN LIFE

Pixar has repeatedly taken audiences on totally original adventures with a host of cinema’s most surprising and unforgettable characters. From toys coming to life (“Toy Story” and “Toy Story 2”) to a group of monsters terrified by a little girl roaming their world (“Monsters, Inc.”) to a tiny fish lost in a vast ocean (“Finding Nemo”) to superheroes trying to lead suburban lives (“The Incredibles”) to a hot-shot race car waylaid on Route 66 (“Cars”), the cutting-edge animation studio has consistently presented unique stories full of emotional and visual excitement.

This summer, with RATATOUILLE, that storytelling tradition takes yet another wild leap, this time into an uproarious, and unprecedented, animated riff on classic physical comedy. As the film follows a young rat named Remy’s quest to leave his garbage-eating roots behind and really

cook, it takes him into a world where he's at once creatively inspired and in constant danger—a circumstance ripe for all kinds of comically chaotic situations and side-splitting stunts. Just as it looks like Remy's one big chance at finding his way into a five-star kitchen is in trouble, he strikes up an unlikely friendship with the restaurant's down-and-out garbage boy, coming up with a clever, if literally hair-raising, plan that will allow these two outcasts to achieve great things together.

Amidst the perils and pratfalls, the film also traverses through universal themes: the bonds of friendship and loyalty; the battle against family expectations and finding your own independence in spite of them; and most of all, the importance of being true to who you are, even if you're not quite what anyone expects.

Says the film's director, Brad Bird: "I think we all have impossible dreams and we do what we can to pursue them—and Remy's dream might be the ultimate impossible dream of them all."

Comments John Lasseter, chief creative officer of Walt Disney and Pixar Animation Studios and a two-time Academy Award®-winning director: "The idea of following one's creative passion against all odds is one that Brad Bird cares deeply about. And it shows because he's created an amazing film that's deeply funny in an original way and has a real emotional core to it, which is so important to us. There's a level of depth, complexity and humor to this film that I don't think any Pixar film has had before."

For Bird, RATATOUILLE was a chance to choreograph a kind of Buster Keaton or Max Sennett-style physical comedy full of dashing, leaping, chasing and catapulting—yet also imbued with the spirit of die-hard characters tackling the implausible and triumphing over all the adversity that comes their way.

The story's original mix of witty repartee, acrobatic hijinks, tightly choreographed comic timing and resonant emotional themes was an exciting next step for Bird, who made his Pixar debut with the Academy Award®-winning hit "The Incredibles," an animated feature so humanly complex and moving that it was included on numerous year-end top-ten lists right along with its live-action cousins, breaking down the barriers between the two.

"I was really intrigued by the possibilities of RATATOUILLE's premise," says Bird. "The story has such a great and relatable hero, because in order for Remy to do the one thing he loves, he has to go into a world that's completely hostile to him. He wants to express himself in a way the world doesn't expect him to, and I think a lot of people know that feeling," says Bird. "The question is: just how bold and clever can this little guy be in pursuing the thing that matters most to him, and what will he discover along the way? The story is in the tradition of that kind of timeless physical comedy that spans all languages and cultures, but it's been given a fresh twist."

Bird was especially excited about injecting the film with wild twists and turns from nail-biting suspense to no-holds-barred comedy, from navigating the whitewater rapids of Paris' famously intricate sewers to the high-pressure hustle of a restaurant serving dinner with a critic in the house. "Part of the joy of RATATOUILLE is simply that it is so unpredictable," Bird notes. "If we've done our job right, when you think it's going left, it goes right, and vice versa; hopefully all in a way that's not only humorous but from the heart."

The enchantment of RATATOUILLE begins with the charm of the characters, developed by Bird and Jan Pinkava, who first invented the film's premise, and whose characters join the Pixar pantheon with real and relatable inner lives. At the center of the tale's emotional appeal are Remy's many different relationships—including those with the affectionate but flummoxed father who doesn't understand the road he has chosen; with the ghost of the legendary French chef he has idolized all his life, despite their different species; and especially with Linguini, with whom he forms an unusual symbiotic friendship based at first on their mutual desperation, but which turns into something truly life-altering for both of them.

Though rodents have a long and storied history in animation, right down to Mickey Mouse himself, rats are often cast as villains and rarely as screen heroes. But Remy manages to bust through that taboo as he finds wily ways to evade detection inside the kitchen, often by a mere whisker, while whipping up recipes that become rousing successes. His courage comes to the fore as he uses one of his species' most inspiring and humanlike qualities—a spirited affinity for taking on a perilous world far larger than themselves—in remarkably inventive ways, including pairing up with Linguini to make an invincible team in the kitchen.

For Brad Bird, the many barriers that appear to stand between Remy and success—from his family's lowly expectations to the health inspector's impending visit—made the storytelling process that much more humor-filled and exciting. “When you have a lead character with such big obstacles to overcome, that's really juicy stuff for animators. There's so much inherent conflict and drama to grab onto,” the director notes. “I've always liked stories that take advantage of how far character animation can go, but this goes to a new extreme.”

Indeed, with its fast and furious comic pacing, its madcap antics and its painterly beauty, RATATOUILLE features some of the most sophisticated visuals yet seen in a CG-animated film, once again nudging the technical bar for animated filmmaking skyward. Among the film's many unique qualities is its locale—an ornately magical imagining of Paris. Then there is the food. Not just any food, but the most delicious, scrumptious, artistically presented gourmet meals imaginable. All of which takes audiences into a realm of sublime visual delights previously unexplored in CG animation, helping to create an utterly authentic world in which audiences might even believe that a rat could be a chef in the kitchen.

Yet the technological achievements of the film are always in service to spinning an even more enveloping and laughter-filled tale that celebrates the challenges of being true to friends, family and the search to find real happiness in life. Notes John Lasseter: “These characters are so charming and so emotionally believable that the audience isn't likely to even realize they are seeing new technology. You're just too caught up in their story.”

Producer Brad Lewis believes that Brad Bird was the perfect man to take on this mission of pushing the boundaries of animated comedy in the name of innovative storytelling—in part because of his Remy-like refusal to believe anything is impossible. “Brad Bird is as intense and passionate as Remy is in the film,” Lewis muses. “I've never seen someone so locked into what's going to make a story work creatively and emotionally. He's got these skills of perception where he always hones right in on what's going to make things a little more natural, or a little more funny or a little more true. And he's a genius with physical comedy.”

Bird ultimately hopes the film will take audiences on a journey that keeps them constantly off guard yet rooting for Remy to achieve the seemingly impossible and save not only himself but his new friends at Gusteau's Restaurant. Sums up Bird: "When you can get audiences to believe in something that might seem inherently unbelievable, that's the real magic of movies."

THE COOKS IN THE KITCHEN: BRINGING TO LIFE THE CHARACTERS OF *RATATOUILLE*

As with all Pixar films, the heart of *RATATOUILLE* lies in the characters who—whether *homo sapiens* or *genus rattus*—bring their own unique personalities, quirks and passions to the story's mix. Their lifelike natures and wonderfully familiar dilemmas—from family squabbles to job headaches to standing up for friends—are the result of a collaborative artistic effort that starts with a stellar voice cast and continues with the film's cutting-edge animation, filled with a layered artistry that makes both the film's animal and human characters stand out creatively in the CG world.

The cast of *RATATOUILLE* spans the gamut, from some of the greatest actors in cinema to character-obsessed in-house Pixar staff, which is just the way Brad Bird likes it. "Great voices inspire great animation," he explains, "because it's those little nuances in the voice that animators can grab ahold of and use physically. Pixar has been very good about casting people who are right for the roles, whether they're famous or not. So on the one hand, we have some of our talented in-house artists doing voices, and on the other, we have acting legends such as Brian Dennehy, Ian Holm and Peter O'Toole—yet they each bring something really specific and special to their roles. We also were lucky to cast Patton Oswalt, Janeane Garofalo and Brad Garrett, who are all gifted stand-up comedians. I think they give the film a special comic edge. In every case, the voice performers provided the animators with a creative turbo charge."

It all began with Remy, who might be a rat but had to be a true underdog hero at heart. Behind his whiskers, tail and perked-up ears are aspirations and dreams to which anyone could relate. "What I love about the character of Remy is that he doesn't settle," says Bird. "He's always looking to the horizon for a new experience. Of course, that's why he's the skinniest of all the rats—because he only wants to take in the very best. He always wants something more from life, and I like that about him."

To bring Remy's voice to life, the production considered a wide range of actors, but it was only when Brad Bird heard comedian Patton Oswalt doing one of his outrageous routines on the radio that a light went off. "In one of his routines, he was actually talking about food; besides being hilarious, I was really impressed by his passion, exuberance and volatility," Bird recalls. "He has a great voice that sounds like it's coming from a smaller being, but there's also a tremendous force of personality. To me, that was Remy—a small guy with very big feelings, who can be passionate one minute and outraged the next, and you believe it all."

Oswalt, who was chosen by *Variety* as one of ten "comedians to watch" and was *Entertainment Weekly's* "It Comedian" in 2002, was already a huge fan of Pixar's movies, so getting offered the role of Remy was like a dream come true. "I can't even call it a dream," he corrects, "because it

was so far beyond anything I ever could have conceived of as happening. It was on the crazy list, along with getting the secret powers of Shazam.”

While secret powers were not forthcoming, the role of Remy now belonged to Oswald. He quickly fell in love with the tiny fellow and his irrepressible yearning to be who he is no matter what obstacles stand in his way. “He has such a huge hurdle to his goals, because the one place he wants to be—a gourmet kitchen—is made worse by his very presence!” Oswald notes. “But Remy is one of those guys who is openly, unapologetically passionate. His enthusiasm is infectious and he isn’t going to give up. He decides to put everything on the line to try to make his dreams happen. The little guy has quite a journey ahead of him.” Oswald also had quite a journey. “Playing Remy was exhausting,” he laughs. “I’ve actually never done more physical stuff than in playing this pure voice role! Trying to conjure up all these different actions and emotions while standing in one place, it’s like a kind of Kung-Fu...Voice-Fu, perhaps.”

He was thrilled to be guided along the way by Brad Bird. “Brad is an even bigger animation geek than I am. He has the entire universe of the movie in his head, and he is so creative that it seems he can always give you that one tip that really makes for a great line or scene,” says Oswald. “I’m also a big foodie, and a lot of people on this movie are foodies, so that was a lot of fun. The food itself in this movie is a landscape of deliciousness that is just so artistically done. I love that Pixar is always deepening and deepening the experience of animated movies.”

When it came to forging Remy’s features, Bird wanted to give him as much opportunity for expression as an animated rodent could possibly get. “The facial articulation of characters is getting better and better all the time, and we wound up with about 160 individual controls for Remy’s face,” Bird explains. “It’s like having more keys on a keyboard, because it opens up so many more possibilities. Still, one of the big challenges for us is that a rat’s face doesn’t necessarily shoot well from all angles. Because rats have such a long snout, the mouth can be kind of hidden underneath if Remy’s head is angled down, for example. So it was something we tried to work around quite a bit, to make sure the audience is always really getting to know him.”

Remy’s dreams would never get a chance to come true if it weren’t for Linguini, the lowly garbage boy at Gusteau’s who discovers the rat’s talents and finds them changing his own fortunes. Although they start out partnered together out of mutual desperation—Linguini needing to hang on to his job and Remy hoping to finally get his chance to work in a real, live restaurant kitchen—Remy and Linguini slowly become buddies who learn they can truly count on one another.

Says Oswald: “Linguini is the one human Remy can sort of trust, and they wind up collaborating in a very funny and unique way. You just so want to root for poor Linguini.”

In some of the film’s most uproarious scenes, Linguini lets Remy literally control his own attempts at cooking. Explains Bird: “Linguini is somebody who doesn’t like to attract attention, and thanks to Remy, he gets a huge amount of it. He’s a great example of someone who thinks they aren’t anything special, but when the going gets tough, they find it within themselves to be amazing and do the right thing.” Character supervisor Brian Green admits he had another contemporary movie character in the back of his mind when it came to Linguini—“I thought of

him a little bit like Napoleon Dynamite; he's appealing, he's funny and somehow you can't help but root for him," he says.

Adds directing animator David DeVan: "Linguini was really fun to animate because he's got this great quality of always being kind of wide-eyed and witnessing everything for the very first time." Also a challenge for the filmmakers was Linguini's hair, which is not only a key to his character, but becomes the kind of "joystick" with which Remy controls his brilliant cooking moves. "Linguini's hair is wild and out of control, just like him," notes groom supervisor Sanjay Bakshi. "It's a type of style we haven't done before."

To play Linguini, Pixar ultimately went in-house, tapping Lou Romano, who had served as a production designer on "The Incredibles" and had voiced some smaller roles in earlier productions. When Bird heard Romano doing Linguini's voice on a temporary track, he was struck by how beautifully it worked. "He's studied for years and he's a terrific actor," says Bird. "Knowing the whole process so well frees him up to be very inventive. The film wouldn't work without him. Lou has a certain shy hesitancy, but he also has this reserve of passion where he can become very assertive and powerful, just like Linguini. And Lou acted Linguini just crazy enough to make it believable that he'd let himself be controlled by this little rat."

"It was really exciting when I heard that I would be cast," recalls Romano. "To be a great filmmaker, I think you have to already have a real appreciation and understanding of performance. People at Pixar have that appreciation, and what's great is that the studio allows a lot of us the chance to voice the characters they create."

Adds Romano, "Of course Linguini is very insecure and completely out of his element in the kitchen, so I was able to draw on my own experiences of feeling out of my element for the role."

Definitely in his element in the kitchen is Auguste Gusteau, the legendary chef who was Remy's lifelong idol—and is now an inspirational apparition. Of Gusteau, Brad Bird says: "He was once the toast of the culinary world and he just exudes passion and authority. He's kind of Remy's mentor or conscience, like a Jiminy Cricket or Obi Wan Kenobi, who inspires Remy to be more courageous and inventive."

To play Gusteau, the filmmakers recruited popular comedian Brad Garrett ("Everybody Loves Raymond"), a veteran of past Pixar films who, despite being featured in "Finding Nemo" and "A Bug's Life," was very excited about his role in RATATOUILLE. "This is the first time I don't have fins or nine legs," laughs Garrett. "Gusteau is a great character who also has a lot of heartfelt moments."

"Brad Garrett is another piece of wonderful casting," says Bird. "He has an innate sense of comic timing and that great basso profundo voice that is perfect for Gusteau. It was also tremendous fun to work with him because he's always got something funny to say."

The character required special technological touches. "We had to create a special rig for him because he has so much fat that sloshes around and he's so flexible, and as a figment of Remy's imagination, he's able to fly, so he's a really unique character," says Brian Green.

To voice the role of Skinner, the dictatorial head chef of Gusteau's kitchen who is dubious of Linguini's newfound cooking talent, the filmmakers found themselves blessed with an Academy Award[®]-nominated, Shakespearean tour de force: British star of stage and screen Ian Holm, who recently played the hobbit Bilbo Baggins in Peter Jackson's "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy.

"You simply can't do better than Ian Holm," remarks Bird. "He's such a wonderfully gifted actor that he challenged me as a writer to give him a lot of colors to play with. The character reminds me of Inspector Dreyfus in the 'Pink Panther' movies because he really believes Linguini is incompetent, but he can't quite catch him in the act. It's a wonderful comic situation, and I think Ian hits it out of the park."

It was the story that lured Holm to the part. "It's very touching and moving and there's lots of laughter, so you have that great combination," he says. "I'm really proud to be in a Pixar movie." But Holm acknowledges that it wasn't an easy gig. "I think it was Tom Hanks who said that doing 'Toy Story' was the hardest work he'd even done in his career. I understand that sentiment—and I would go along with that."

In drawing the 3' 6"-tall Skinner, the filmmakers had a lot of fun. "The big challenge with Skinner was his expressiveness—the way his lips are really big and how they move and the way his neck jumps around," says Green. "He's very dynamic."

Laughs Holm: "I don't think he looks like me! He's small, he has very large eyes, a tiny pencil moustache and a comb-over. He's really quite an unpleasant-looking fellow. It's actually quite a shock to see this character you've helped bring to life."

Golden Globe[®] winner Brian Dennehy, who is well known for playing tough and imposing men on screen, was cast this time as a tough and imposing rat—Remy's father, Django, who can't quite understand why his son is drawn to a world where his kind has never been welcome. Dennehy was also drawn to the thrill of joining a Pixar production. "Just to be a part of this is a kick because you're working for the most cutting-edge company and, unquestionably, some of the most creative people in the business. It's some bunch," he sums up. "It's also hard to resist a clever, funny, beautifully written story set in classic Paris."

For Brad Bird, Dennehy was the perfect choice for Django. "Django represents the kind of wisdom of the Old World, from the time when rats and humans didn't mix. And Brian has such a sense of authority in his voice that I think he really sounds like someone who's been around awhile and has gained a lot of knowledge. He's a marvelous actor."

As the voice of Collette, one of the cooks struggling to remake Gusteau's Restaurant, the filmmakers cast popular comedienne Janeane Garofalo, who dons a French accent for the role. "Collette is a female chef in a world populated mostly by men," notes Bird, "so she's someone who comes in hard as nails, very determined, but is really a softie underneath. Janeane is also a tough cookie who can also be very vulnerable. She's a very gifted actress. The animators loved working with her voice and she was very game to do a French accent."

Garofalo enjoyed the character's open-minded approach, putting the quality of the food above all else. "Colette doesn't have any 'us versus them' feelings about rats and she is ultimately willing to live peacefully with them. I admire that about her," says the actress.

Once she saw her character's look, Garofalo also came to admire her ravishing, ultra-shiny hair, which is cut into a typically chic bob. "We wanted to make her hair very striking," says Green. "She's very French and very elegant in the way she is designed. I thought of her as a kind of flower who hasn't quite blossomed yet, and you really see her grow in the course of the story."

Also joining the main cast is one of the greatest actors of our time, eight-time Academy Award[®] nominee Peter O'Toole as the hard-to-impress restaurant critic Anton Ego. "The proudest casting moment was when Peter O'Toole agreed to voice Ego," says Bird. "I was over the moon. I'm a huge Peter O'Toole fan and I had written every line of Ego hoping against hope that Peter O'Toole would agree to be our guy. His voice is the one I heard in my head as I was writing."

O'Toole enjoyed the character's supreme powers as an unforgiving critic. "His opinion can and does make or break restaurants," says O'Toole. "If he says, 'The Yorkshire Pudding was splendid,' you're in business but if he says, 'The New England Clam Chowder was ghastly,' you're out!"

Yet O'Toole was not without sympathy for Mr. Ego. "His saving grace is that he loves food," he says. "I can always forgive any critic if they are criticizing something they love."

Most of all, O'Toole had a blast just watching Pixar do what Pixar does. "The whole thing for me was a revelation. Bit by bit, I've come to understand the process more and more, but I'm still getting over it. The way the non-human characters become even more human than the human figure is astounding, as is the beautiful use of camera angle, dimension and perspective," he says. "I've really enjoyed it thoroughly."

Another in-house Pixar story artist and animator who had a blast taking on a major role is Peter Sohn, who was tapped to play Remy's garbage-loving, pear-shaped brother and taste-tester, Emile. "Emile is a very relaxed dude," notes Sohn. "He's chubby and he'll basically eat anything, so he and Remy, who has this very peculiar high taste, have an interesting dynamic. But, also, Emile will always be there for Remy. His feeling is 'I guess you've got to be who you are.'"

Topping off the cast is the so-called "Pixar good-luck charm": John Ratzenberger, who came to fame in the role of lovable postman Cliff Clavin on the hit television series "Cheers," and has been in every single one of the studio's movies since "Toy Story." From the school of fish in "Finding Nemo" to The Under-Miner in "The Incredibles" to Mack in "Cars," it's become an enjoyable puzzle for Pixar fans to figure out which voice is his in every film. In RATATOUILLE, he plays the waiter Mustafa, who he describes as "always in a panic. He's very smooth with his customers, but once he crosses the threshold of the kitchen, he's always worried the food isn't coming fast enough, the soup isn't hot enough, et cetera."

Once the voices were recorded, the animators faced the unforeseen challenge of animating characters who speak with French accents, which meant that their mouths would have to move in mysterious new ways. “When someone’s speaking with a French accent, the mouth shapes are different,” notes supervising animator Mark Walsh. “We had to find a way to capture that, not only in the voice performances, but to infuse some of those authentic gestures and mannerisms into the animation.”

For inspiration, the animators literally watched the French...being French. “We even watched classic French films and modeled some of the characters from great French actors,” says Brian Green. Ultimately, the faces of such French icons as Brigitte Bardot, Serge Gainsbourg and even Charles de Gaulle helped to inspire some of the character designs.

Sums up Brad Bird of the interaction between the voice actors and animators: “The situations in the story and the great vocal performances were like catnip to the animators!”

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