

# Michelin-rated cuisine through the lens of food films: analysing *The Hundred-Foot Journey* and *Ratatouille*

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## Introduction

Michelin-starred cuisine occupies a unique position in the global culinary landscape, symbolising both the pinnacle of gastronomic artistry and an institution steeped in exclusivity [1]. The representation of Michelin-level dining in film provides a rich foundation for examining the socio-cultural dimensions of fine dining [2, 3]. This article explains how *The Hundred-Foot Journey* [4] and *Ratatouille* [5] use food as a medium for storytelling, exploring themes of cultural integration, social mobility, and institutional hierarchy. *The Hundred-Foot Journey* critiques the Eurocentric nature of the Michelin system through the struggles of an Indian chef, Hassan, while in contrast, *Ratatouille* subverts traditional culinary hierarchies through its anthropomorphic protagonist. By analysing these narratives, this article engages with broader discussions on food, culture, and cinematic representation [6, 7].

## Food as a medium of transformation

Both films portray food as a catalyst for social change, allowing characters to transcend boundaries of class, nationality, and institutional rigidity [8]. Hassan's culinary journey reflects the broader experience of cultural assimilation [3] as he fuses Indian and French cuisines to gain recognition in the elite world of Michelin dining [6, 7]. He leverages food as the bridge between cultures, while also revealing the difficulties faced by outsiders seeking acceptance in a Eurocentric culinary framework [3].

Similarly, Remy, an unlikely hero due to his status as a rat, challenges rigid perceptions of who belongs in the fine-dining world. His talent ultimately wins over even the most sceptical figures, including food critic Anton Ego. This portrayal suggests that true culinary excellence should transcend established power structures, reinforcing the idea that

innovation and passion should hold greater weight than rigid traditions [8].

### **Anthropomorphism and culinary legitimacy**

Anthropomorphism, the attribution of human traits, emotions, or intentions to non-human entities, serves as a central narrative device. A central irony lies in Remy's dual struggle: while he possesses remarkable skill, he is judged solely based on his species. His success is only possible through deception, highlighting the barriers that prevent outsiders from breaking into elite culinary spaces [9]. In contrast, Hassan's journey requires him to conform to French culinary expectations before his talents are fully acknowledged. These dynamics underscore the limitations of the Michelin system, where innovation is often celebrated only when it aligns with existing standards [10].

### **Food as a cultural bridge**

Both films emphasise food's ability to bridge societal divides. Hassan's fusion cuisine symbolises cultural acceptance, demonstrating that culinary traditions are not static but evolve through exchange and adaptation [3]. Similarly, the climactic scene in which Anton Ego is transported back to his childhood by a simple dish illustrates how food transcends class and cultural barriers [11, 12, 3].

Ultimately, *Ratatouille* and *The Hundred-Foot Journey* offer more than cinematic escapism—they provide valuable reflections for hospitality professionals navigating an increasingly diverse and competitive dining landscape. Both films invite industry leaders to reconsider how talent, innovation, and cultural identity are recognised and valued within fine dining. Hassan's journey demonstrates the creative and commercial potential of cross-cultural fusion, showing how culinary openness can enrich both menus and market reach. Meanwhile, *Ratatouille* disrupts conventional hierarchies, encouraging a rethinking of how creativity and skill are nurtured across all levels of the kitchen. Together, these narratives suggest that lasting excellence in hospitality depends not on rigid tradition but on adaptability, inclusion, and a willingness to see potential in unexpected places. For today's practitioners, that may be the most transformative recipe of all.

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