

**STRAND
RELEASING**

presents

RAMEN SHOP

A FILM BY
ERIC KHOO

Starring Takumi Saito and Seiko Matsuda

PRESS NOTES

*OFFICIAL SELECTION
Berlin International Film Festival*

Country of Origin: Singapore | Japan | France

Format: DCP/1.85/Color

Sound: Dolby 5.1 Sound

Running Time: 90 minutes

Genre: Drama

Not Rated

In Japanese, English, Mandarin, and Cantonese with English Subtitles

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SHORT SYNOPSIS

Masato, a young Ramen chef, leaves his hometown in Japan to embark on a culinary journey to Singapore to find out the truth about his past. He uncover a lot more than family secrets and delicious recipes.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I have always been intrigued by food and the role that it plays in our lives. As the noted food historian Ben Rogers says, “Food is, after language, the most important bearer of cultural identity”. I feel that what food signifies goes beyond that, it defines who we are and shapes the lives we lead. On top of that, I also think that food is a unifying force. It has the power to bring people together under the most mysterious circumstances.

I started work on this project when a producer friend Yukata Tachibana asked if we could work on something to celebrate 50 years of Japan and Singapore’s diplomatic relations. I felt that food would be a perfect vehicle as both countries are crazy about good food and because there are so many stories about food that have moved me. Hence we started to look into the food of each country that we could incorporate into the story. We settled upon two iconic dishes from each country, Bak Kut Teh and Ramen.

Themes such as acceptance, forgiveness and reconciliation appear in the film. I want to celebrate relationships, not only amongst people but also between food and people. It is a reminder that more than just sustenance, food can warm our hearts and feed our souls.

Eric Khoo

DIRECTOR’S BIOGRAPHY

Cultural Medallion recipient and award winning filmmaker Eric Khoo, who helms Zhao Wei Films and Gorylah Pictures, has been credited for reviving the Singapore film industry and for putting Singapore onto the international film map in 1995.

He was the first Singaporean to have his films invited to major film festivals such as Berlin, Venice, and Cannes. Eric Khoo was awarded the Chevalier de l’Ordre des Arts et des Letters, from the French Cultural Minister and his feature, *My Magic*, was nominated for the Cannes Palme d’Or in 2008.

Eric Khoo was profiled in Phaidon Books, *Take 100 the future of Film – 100 New Directors*. The Pompidou Centre in Paris held an Eric Khoo film retrospective and he served as President of the Jury at The Locarno International Film Festival in 2010.

In 2011, he released his first animated feature, *Tatsumi*, which was invited to the 64th Cannes Film Festival and made its North American premiere at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).

Eric Khoo was invited to be President of the Jury at the Rotterdam International Film Festival and at The Hong Kong Asian Film Awards in 2012. He was head of the Jury at Puchon International Fantastic Film Festival 2013.

In 2015 he directed Cinema for 7 Letters and his sixth feature, *In The Room*, premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival. He paid tribute to Singapore’s hawker landscape with *Wanton Mee*, which was invited to the Berlin International Film Festival Culinary Section in 2016 and he executive produced Boo Junfeng’s second feature *Apprentice* that premiered at Cannes Un Certain Regard. In 2017, he was on the jury for the Cannes Short Film Competition Palme d’Or.

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

- 2018 – **Ramen Shop**
EFM Berlin Culinary
- 2016 – **Wanton Mee**
EFM Berlin Culinary
- 2015 – **In The Room**
Toronto Film Festival
- 2015 – **7 Letters**
Busan Internatioanl Film Festival
- 2011 – **60 Seconds of Solitude in Year Zero**
Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival
- 2011 – **Tatsumi**
Cannes Film Festival, Un Certain Regard
- 2008 – **My Magic**
Cannes Film Festival, In Competition
- 2006 – **Digital Sam in Sam Saek 2006: Talk to Her, No Day Off**
Locarno Official Selection
- 2005 – **Be With Me**
Cannes Film Festival, Directors' Fortnight
- 1997 – **12 Storeys**
Singapore FIPRESCI/NETPAC Award
- 1996 – **Mee Pok Man**
Singapore FIPRESCI/NETPAC Award – Special Mention

MAIN CAST

Masato	Takumi Saito
Jeanette Aw	Jeanette Aw
Wee	Mark Lee
Mei Lian	Beatrice Chien
Kazuo	Tsuyoshi Ihara
Akio	Tetsuya Bessho
Miki	Seiko Matsuda

A WORD FROM THE ACTORS

What was your impression when you first read the script?

TAKUMI SAITO (Masato)

I read the script without knowing the history of Bak Kut Teh. I didn't know the history of Ramen either. After I read the script, I found that these signature dishes from the two countries have a history, both developed as a comfort food for the blue-collars. It's a story that connects those local foods in a real sense. And that connection extends to connecting Japan and Singapore. Masato appears as a symbol of such connection. I thought the story was very interesting and deep as there was a meaning behind every element of it.

How did you like working with Eric Khoo?

SEIKO MATSUDA (Miki)

It is needless to say that he is a great director. As a person, he is just incredible. He constantly talked to us, cared about us, and asked us if we were okay. We were truly thankful for his meticulous attention to us. During the shoot, he often came up with impromptu ideas. These were all practical that everyone could agree. It was a learning experience. I could adopt myself to his idea naturally and didn't worry about it at all. It was wonderful. He is a great director.

What pleased you most while working on this film?

TSUYOSHI IHARA (Kazuo)

At first I was concerned that the story might end up being a shallow food movie, then I saw the diligent effort put in by the team to portray family connections and human relationships through food in great detail. When I arrived on set, I could see the cast were really bringing out the emotional part of this human drama.

What is fascinating about this movie?

TETSUYA BESSHO (Akio)

I can say eating is the most important source of life. And this movie digs into the core of eating. As if it shows a way of Japanese culture, like all the ingredients are crammed in a Donburi or Ramen bowl. The theme is Ramen, our soul food which is getting very popular all over the world. Though Ramen is a symbol of Japan, it also contains full of Asian essences. This movie especially shows that aspect. It just not only entertains us but also shows humans behind the food culture. That can be the dishes that recall your mother, family or hometown. That is the fascination of this movie.

CREW

Director	Eric Khoo
Screenplay	Tan Fong Cheng, Wong Kim Hoh
1 st AD	Hiroyasu Kitagawa
Script Supervisor	Sabrina Poon
Casting	Felicia Tan
Gaffer	Jason Tan
Image	Brian Gothong Tan
Sound Engineer	Daniel Koh, Kazuo Sato (Muse Audio Post)
Costumes Designer	Merideth Lee Wei Lin
Post-Production Supervisor	Lawrence Ang (Infinite Frameworks)
Editing	Natalie Soh (Infinite Frameworks)
Sound Designer	Kazuo Sato (Muse Audio Post)
Music Composer	Kevin Matthews
Music Arranger	Christine Sham
Producers	Yukata Tachibana Tan Fong Cheng Masa Sawada

Production Eric Le Bot
Huang Junxiang
Wild Orange Artists
Zhao Wei Films
Comme Des Cinemas
Version Originale

Distributed by Strand Releasing

FOOD HISTORY

Ramen

Ramen has been traced back to its origins, as a distinctly Chinese soup that arrived in Japan with Chinese tradesmen in the late nineteenth century. Until the 1950s, Ramen was called Shina Soba (支支那 そば, literally “Chinese Soba”) but today, Chūka Soba (中華そば, also meaning “Chinese Soba”) or just Ramen (ラーメン) are more common. It consists of Chinese-style wheat noodles served in a meat or (occasionally) fish-based broth, often flavored with soy sauce or miso, and uses toppings such as sliced pork (Cha shu), dried seaweed (Nori), Menma, and green onions (Negi). Nearly every region in Japan has its own variation of Ramen, from the Tonkotsu (pork bone broth) Ramen of Kyushu to the Miso Ramen of Hokkaido.

Bak Kut Teh

Bak Kut Teh, or pork ribs soup, is a popular Chinese dish in Singapore. There are two varieties – a Teochew style which is customarily prepared through many hours of simmering meaty pork ribs in a broth of pepper and garlic and a Hokkien styled version featuring a mixture of fragrant herbs and spices such as garlic, cloves, cinnamon, star anise, fennel seeds, and coriander. In Singapore, the Teochew Style Bak Kut Teh is more popular. It was popular with Chinese immigrant laborers who would begin their day with this hearty yet humble dish.

DISH FROM MOVIE BECOMES REALITY

When director Eric Khoo and Japanese producer Yutaka Tachibana were working on the script of Ramen Shop, they had often wondered aloud how exciting it would be not only to present the film to audiences but also to let them taste the dish they had invented for the movie. In the film, Ramen Teh is a dish of marriage between Bak Ku Teh and Ramen, two dishes synonymous with Singapore and Japan, respectively.

Now audiences can discover what Ramen Teh actually tastes like. Keisuke Takeda, founder of Singapore’s biggest Ramen chain Ramen Keisuke, has come up with his own version of Bak Kut Teh Ramen. Mr. Keisuke, a Ramen chef and champion, was roped onboard the film project as he shared with the creative team his own personal experiences as a Ramen chef and his ideas of incorporating local tastes into his Ramen recipes. After which, Mr. Keisuke was inspired to come up with the new dish.

Eric has tried the dish and is all praise. He said “it is the combination of two of my favorite childhood foods”. Previously only available in Ramen Keisuke’s Japan outlets – where only 15 bowls of this special flavor were reportedly made and sold daily – Singapore can try it at Ramen Dining Keisuke at Suntec City, from February 1st.

Bak Kut Teh’s Recipe by Chef William Soh

Excerpt from “The Singapore Heritage Cookbook – Past, Present, and Future” co-authored by Dr. Leslie Tay

INGREDIENTS

1.2kg pork loin ribs
150g sugar
30g rock sugar
20g ginger knob, scraped and thickly sliced
4 (each) star anise and cloves
3 cinnamon sticks
1 tbs (each) white peppercorns and dark soy sauce
20ml light soy sauce
Salt and white pepper powder, to taste
2 red chilies, sliced and mixed with soy sauce

STEPS

1. Blanch the pork loin ribs in a pot of boiling water for about 3 minutes. Drain well and rinse the blanched pork loin ribs under running tap water.
2. Place the rinsed pork loin ribs into a cooking pot and cover with enough water.
3. Add in all the remaining ingredients (except the seasonings) and heat the mixture to a rolling bowl, for about 15 minutes.
4. Reduce the heat and simmer for about an hour. Season to taste with salt and white pepper powder.
5. Ladle the Bak Kut Teh into each serving clay pot bowl and serve with the red chili soy sauce.

Serves 4

CHEF TIPS:

Rinsing the blanched pork loin ribs under running tap water helps to remove the scum and the blood from the bone marrows, an important step to keep the taste clean.

Taste the simmering soup often to ensure the soup does not get too salty or too bland before serving.

For more information, please contact Carly Hildebrant at carly@strandreleasing.com or Marcus Hu at marcus@strandreleasing.com.