

Film Close-Up: Catherine Zeta-Jones

by Joey_Berlin

Welsh beauty Catherine Zeta-Jones is at the top of any director's list of the sexiest and most talented actresses on the screen today. She has her pick of Hollywood projects, and the lucky filmmaker who had the pleasure of casting Zeta-Jones in his new movie, "No Reservations," is Oscar-nominated director Scott Hicks.

CATHERINE ZETA-JONES - Welsh beauty Catherine Zeta-Jones stars as Kate in the romantic comedy 'No Reservations.' CNS Photo courtesy of David Lee. In the PG-rated "No Reservations," Zeta-Jones stars as a high-strung top chef at a fancy Manhattan restaurant who is forced to reevaluate her life after a tragedy. In the film, her sister is killed in a car crash and Zeta-Jones has to take custody of her suddenly-orphaned little niece. Co-starring adorable Abigail Breslin as the niece, with Aaron Eckhart as an opera-loving rival chef and potential love interest, "No Reservations" is a warmhearted romance about a woman learning a new recipe for happiness.

Although she admits she was clueless in the kitchen before training for the role, Zeta-Jones had already perfected her own recipe for success. She was very popular in England for almost a decade before zooming to superstardom here in America. And at 37, she is now living predominantly in Bermuda and happily married to actor Michael Douglas, with whom she has two children.

Q: How did you prepare for your role in "No Reservations," a somewhat snobby, uptight Manhattan chef?

A: The idea of me playing a chef was terrifying, seriously. I thought if I could just pull this one off, well, let me tell you. Aaron Eckhart and I had this intense training together. I had my little apron on. Aaron was ever so professional. He brought his own private knives! I told him I thought I was going to take my finger off. We had a few weeks of that, and then I felt very comfortable in the kitchen. What was terrifying for me was when the real chefs started coming in. You were just trying to get out of their way. I also went out on the floor and that was terrifying because I'd never been a waitress before.

Q: Has the experience changed the way you think about food?

A: I have a new appreciation of being in a kitchen. I have a new appreciation of how a plate of food gets put on my table - of how much work goes into it - instead of wondering if it's cooked right, ha-ha!

Q: If you could cook something that you make well for your co-star, Aaron Eckhart, what would that be?

A: It would be some Welsh lamb with some good roasted potatoes. Good stolid stock that I was brought up with.

Q: You get to travel the world now. Do you have a favorite restaurant?

A: There's a place outside of Barcelona where they prepare food as if they were in a chemistry lab. I went there and it was jam-packed. You have to book two years in advance. So we ate in the kitchen, and it looked like all these scientists concocting these amazing dishes with all these textures that you've never been able to imagine. You'd put your spoon into something and it would all dissolve. It was genius. That was one of the best I've ever had.

Q: This film is also about maintaining balance in life, keeping your priorities straight. How does a busy actress achieve that?

A: I hate to say "balance" with regard to my children because, at the end of the day, they are my life and everything else is a bonus. But for me, now that I have a family, the logistics have gone crazy. As opposed to me years ago accepting a role in Romania, I'd just pack my case and go, now I can't do that. I schedule my work so that they can come with me, or else when Michael's not working. This film was great because I live in Bermuda and I could fly home.

Q: Your character is very driven and cannot seem to get her love life in gear. Is there a recipe for a great relationship with another person?

A: Well, having come from Wales, I always thought I had a healthy ambition. I went to London to do television and theatre. But I was never blinkered in my career or a control freak like this character. But with relationships, you just have to be kind to each other. You meet so many people in life, complete strangers, that you're often nicer to them than you are to the person you love more than anyone else. You just have to be respectful, kind, and nice.

Q: Is there any food you simply cannot resist?

A: It sounds so ridiculous, so silly really, but I love smoked salmon sandwiches on brown bread with potato chips crushed into it. A little bit of lemon, some salt and pepper. I ate them during each of my pregnancies and I had it a few nights ago for dinner. It's a comfort food!

Q: You are in great shape after having had two kids. Do you exercise?

A: I do. It gives me energy, keeps my brain sane. I was just over in Europe doing a lot of swimming, which I adore. I have to drag myself to the gym like everyone else, but when it's over I feel good about it. Then I can have more smoked salmon sandwiches.

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