

Kerala Food Cuisine: The Story of Joan's Rainbow and the Multi-Layered Cake's Exploration in the Malayalam Movie *Salt N' Pepper*

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The writer Alan D. Wolfelt relates the image of food and love to highlight the fact that the combination of food and love can express more than words. Now days, umpteen number of movies are coming up based on the theme of food and they add love to the subject of food. The relationship between human love and food transcends than dialogues written in the script for the cinema. The Malayalam movies such as Salt N Pepper, Spanish Masala, Rasam, Usthad Hotel, Mr. Butler, etc has centralized the imagery of food and have picturized food as a symbol to fall in love with each other. The Malayalam movie Salt N Pepper is one of the best instances for the food movie among all the movies in Malayalam industry.

The movie Salt N Pepper directed by Aashiq Abu has proved that any relationship can be developed through food. The story revolves around two main characters who cultivate fondness through food conversations. Kalidasan, the protagonist will receive a phone call not intended for him and slowly they develop feelings for each other once they start their conversations on food. They use derogatory words towards each other before they start their discussion on thattil- kutty- dosa. Kalidasan will gradually understand her interest in cooking and eating food. He sees himself in Maya and gets attracted towards her interests in cooking food. The movie begins with the introduction of Kalidasan's childhood days and the classroom scene. The director focuses on the child Kalidasan reply to his class teacher that "we live to eat food" when the teacher teaches them food chain and we eat food to sustain our life. The title song "Chembavu" features the visuals of famous eateries of Kerala and the hotels in Kerala. The eateries such as Kuzhal Putt, Biriyani, Pazhampori, Kulukki Sarbath and variety dishes of Kerala are shown on screen. The Malabari hotels like Paragon, Bombay, Amma, Sagar, Rahmath and the three-metre tea stall in Kumbalangi are screened in the movie.

Salt N Pepper is a 2011 Malayalam romantic comedy movie which talks about Kerala Cuisine. The most attractive reference to food in the movie is the preparation of cake called Joan's Rainbow and the romance between Maya (Shwetha Menon) and Kalidasan (Lal) while Kalidasan dictates the recipe through telephone to prepare Joan's Rainbow. The movie says that there will always be a reason to prepare a dish and it would have been created a history in some way or the other. Here, the director traces back the history of World War II to give this message to his audience.

He took this information from an article titled “Feast on Romance” written by Nita Sathyendran in The Hindu in the year 2011:

“The story goes that at the end of the Second World War, a French soldier’s wife started baking a strawberry cake to give her husband when he returned from the War. He didn’t turn up that day, nor did he the next day when she had added a pistachio-flavoured layer to the cake. On the third day she baked a third layer, one in orange flavour, but he didn’t come that day either. On the fourth day when she was about to lose hope, her husband arrived bearing a box of chocolates! The woman is said to have melted the chocolates and made a fourth layer, and served the rainbow of layers to her husband, sealing their bond of love forever” (10).

Here, the central characters Kalidasan who is an archaeologist and Maya who works as a dubbing artiste set out to prepare this delicious cake. They motivate each other and gets involved in their food conversations for about four days and slowly falls in love. The director says that the title of the movie is significant because it is in fact “a celebration of food that peppered as it is with many clippings that mentions about authentic Kerala cuisine” (10). The movie proved that even a multi-layered cake could unite two hearts and could make their life more colourful when their love was added with their fondness in food. Romance plays a vital role in almost all the scenes in the movie. The romance between Kalidasan and Maya was shown to make the audience understand that a foodie can also become romantic through their food conversations. The movie also depicts the local Kerala cuisines like Achppam, Unniyappam, Mambazha Pulisseri and Palada Pradhaman through the story of a chef named Babu (Baburaj) who will later become the chef at Kalidasan’s home. The other characters in this movie are Manu (Asif Ali) and Meenakshi (Mythili). Manu is a happy-go lucky management graduate who gets attracted towards Meenakshi for her smartness whereas Meenakshi works as an IELTS teacher who dreams to immigrate to Canada. But at the end of the story both of them falls in love and decides to get married. A cup of coffee becomes a reason to re-unite their hearts. Hence, food is a symbol to unite and re-unite lovers and it could definitely become a major reason to preserve long distance relationships.

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