

## Scenes From an Italian Restaurant: An Interview with Trattoria filmmaker Jason Wolos

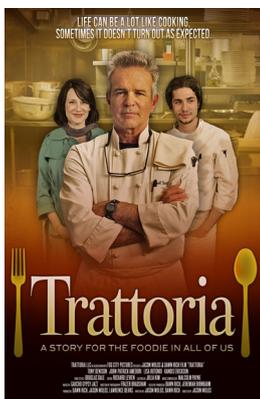
by Justin Hoenke

Jason Wolos has some sage advice for new filmmakers out there: Whatever you do, try not to make a restaurant or food movie as your first feature film. "It is hard enough to write a film, get it funded, and then get the crew together. Then we added in gourmet food that not only had to be prepared but it also had to look really good."

Take it from Jason, co-writer and director of *Trattoria*, a thoughtful and romantic film that is packed with family, friends, and of course, food. Though he is a veteran of filmmaking, having been a part of numerous projects for major international companies, government agencies, nonprofits, and more, *Trattoria* was Jason's first dive into independent filmmaking. Released in 2013, this wonderful independent film has received positive reviews from critics and had sold-out showings at the Sonoma International Film Festival and the Cinema By The Bay Film Festival.

Going independent with *Trattoria* wasn't the original plan, but in the end, it worked out. "Making any kind of movie is difficult, but with an independent movie it takes a lot of perseverance," said Jason in a phone interview. "We started out by pursuing the typical Hollywood route, but early in the process we realized that by going that way we might not end up with a completed movie. This film is a passion project, and from the start we knew that we wanted reach our goal and make the movie. Because of that we knew we had to do it ourselves."

The making of *Trattoria* started just like any film, with script and rewrites as the first steps. It was the next step, what Jason calls "the search for money," that made this passion project into the indie feature film that you see today. "Once we had the script in place, I had to rely on my inner strength and drive to get the film funded and into production," says Jason. Ultimately, the filmmaker found backing by what he calls "pounding the pavement, picking up the phone, and doing the dance" with potential investors. "There's a lot of money outside of the Hollywood system, so perseverance and drive are key if you want to get your film completed."



Another key ingredient that made *Trattoria* a truly independent film was having a family member help out along the way. When it came to staffing the film, Jason realized that hiring a food stylist to cook and keep the food looking good while filming wasn't in the budget, so he turned to his uncle, Douglas Dale, a chef at Wolfedale's in Lake Tahoe, to fill the spot.

"All the beautiful food shots you see in the restaurant contain real food, his delicious cooking hot off the stove. Once we got the shot, the actors and crew continued to eat off-camera till it was all gone. This is different from Hollywood movies with million-dollar budgets—they make fake food that will look hot and fresh for hours under the movie lights and allow you to do several takes with the same plate of food. So we were very fortunate to have my uncle contribute his food skills to making *Trattoria* as good as it is, as well as having him on set also provided me with another level of support on my first independent movie."

Being the creator of *Trattoria* isn't the only way that Jason is part of the indie community.

He is the founder of IndieHouse SF, where he is using his own production space to help build

the indie filmmaking scene in San Francisco. A space that can be used for anything from "screening works in progress to networking parties to wardrobe fittings," as Jason notes, IndieHouse SF is where filmmakers, interns, and others can connect and learn from each other. "Something that is disappearing in San Francisco is a place to connect, because real estate is so expensive," Jason laments. Filmmakers now have access to a space that brings this community together and where they can also rent filmmaking tools from an arsenal of equipment to help with their own projects. (See [indiehousesf.com](http://indiehousesf.com) for more information.)

Jason sees a bright future in store for indie films. With a "growing appetite for independent media coupled with a new generation of filmmakers producing independent media with production values and professionalism right up with the Hollywood films," public viewing of independent films is on the rise. "In the summer I work with kids on filmmaking at SFFILM's Young Filmmakers Camp and this year I asked them how much video they're watching every day and where they're watching it. They're watching 4-6 hours per day on platforms like YouTube and Vimeo, which are platforms great at presenting independent media."

For more information, visit the Facebook page for *Trattoria*: [facebook.com/trattoriainmovie](https://www.facebook.com/trattoriainmovie).

To purchase *Trattoria* for your collection: [createspace.com/379514](http://createspace.com/379514).

A word for the wise: don't sit down to watch **Trattoria** until after you've had a good meal. **Trattoria** is a thoughtful, romantic story that weaves together two things that bring people closer: family and good food. Filmmaker Jason Wolos' first feature film manages to pull together a cast that works well together and a story that keeps the viewer interested in what's going to happen next. Focused on the interplay between chef Sal Sartini and his son, Vince, as they learn how to live and work together over cooking food, actors Tony Denison and John Patrick Amedori's scenes together shine and are some of the highlights of the film. One of the unique parts of **Trattoria** is how it is interspersed with bits of real-life wisdom from San Francisco-area chefs. This does quite a bit for the film in terms of keeping it fresh, fun, and captivating for the audience. Advice from these professionals helps the film's story grow, and allows the viewer the chance to get more in touch with the characters. If you're looking for a good film to watch with your significant other, look no further than **Trattoria**. The plot and characters feel just like a good home-cooked meal that you'll never forget. Just remember: eat dinner before watching!