



Cinema/Chicago and the Chicago International Film Festival  
Education Program Screening: *For Grace*  
Director: Kevin Pang and Mark Helenowski  
92 minutes

Please use the below synopsis/study questions to lead your students in film preparation and post-screening discussion. Following the field trip, students are required to respond to the screening with a one-page essay. Essays must be sent to Cinema/Chicago in order to be invited to subsequent film screenings.

### **Synopsis**

After cooking his way through several of Chicago's top restaurants, Chef Curtis Duffy is ready to open his new and ambitious restaurant, Grace. An in depth look at what it takes to create and manage one of the world's greatest eateries, *For Grace* also tells the complex story of a man constantly pushing forward in a quest to overcome his traumatic past and create his own future.

### **Chicago Restaurant History**

Before it closed in 2012, Charlie Trotter's was one of the most famous restaurants in Chicago and in the world. It was named one of the 30 best restaurants in the world by Restaurant Magazine in 2007 and was one of three restaurants in Chicago to be rewarded two Michelin stars. Many famous Chicago chefs, like Alinea's Grant Achatz and Curtis Duffy, began their careers working in the Charlie Trotter kitchens.

Michelin stars began in 1900, when the Michelin tire company began creating travel guides as a way to promote road trips in France. Being awarded a Michelin star is a hallmark of fine dining and is also a very difficult process. Michelin stars can also be taken away if the food is not to the same standard.

Anonymous reviewers review restaurants for Michelin stars. They are rated from 0 to 3 stars and aspects like quality, mastery of a technique, consistency and originality are evaluated when making a decision. Reviewers also take into consideration the décor and service. In Chicago, Grace restaurant and Alinea are the two restaurants to receive a two star rating.

### **Study Ideas/Questions**

1. One of the strongest connections in the film is between Curtis and his middle school home economics teacher Ruth Snider. Do you have a similar relationship with someone? How has that person supported you?
2. What do you think is the broad message or theme of the film? Why?
3. Do you think people who are not interested in food or culinary arts would enjoy this movie? Why or why not?
4. Are there any ways you connect with Curtis? Do you see any similarities between him and yourself? If so, what are those similarities?
5. Towards the end of the film, we learn about Curtis' childhood tragedy. Did learning about the story change how you saw him for the rest of the film? Why or why not?
6. What was your favorite part of the film? Was there a part that was unexpected for you? Why?
7. How did Curtis pursue his dream of becoming a world-renowned chef? In what ways do you try to attain your dreams?
8. The name of Curtis' restaurant is Grace and he has a tattoo on his arm that says "grace is the beauty of form under the influence of freedom." What does the word "grace" mean to you? Is your definition of the word grace seen at all in the film?
9. Throughout the film, interview subjects say it is Curtis work ethic that has allowed him to succeed. In what ways is his work ethic shown in the film? Is there any one scene that you think really shows his drive?
10. What did you learn about the Chicago restaurant business after watching the film? Why did this particular aspect resonate with you?
11. What are some adjectives you would use to describe Curtis? Why did you pick those adjectives?
12. To open his new restaurant and achieve his goal of becoming a three Michelin star chef, Curtis has to put his career before his family life resulting in his divorce. Are there any sacrifices you would make if it meant achieving a lifelong goal? Why or why not?
13. When Michael and Curtis are buying the furniture for the restaurant, they have very specific qualifications. Why do you think the décor is so important to Curtis?
14. Are there any questions you have after watching the film? What are they?

**Useful Resources**

Chicago International Film Festival [website](#)

Chicago Tribune [review of Grace](#)

For Grace film [website](#)

*Guide prepared by Hannah Hoffman – Cinema/Chicago, 2015*