



Review

This image released by Sony Pictures shows, from left, Brenda, voiced by Kristen Wiig, Frank, voiced by Seth Rogen, Sammy, voiced by Ed Norton and Lavash, voiced by David Krumholtz in a scene from, 'Sausage Party.' — AP photos

Audacious 'Sausage Party' is a delicious feast

It's happened. Someone has outdone the "Team America" puppet scene and even made it look somewhat quaint in comparison. Anyone even vaguely interested in the very R-rated animated film "Sausage Party" has likely heard whispers about the food scene. Words can't even begin to do this sequence justice, but I guarantee you've never seen anything like it in a mainstream studio movie. It's jaw-dropping. Of course it's compliments of the minds that blew up a foreign leader in "The Interview" and revealed in the comedy of rape by demon in "This is the End." Yes, co-writers Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg have used their singular and delightfully twisted imaginations once more to concoct what is easily the year's most audacious film. And it's packaged in animation cutesy enough for Pixar.

In the grand tradition of "Toy Story," "Sausage Party" imagines the lives of the foodstuffs in the local supermarket aisle. But it doesn't merely anthropomorphize the food. It gives them sexuality, lust, ethnicities and even religion. "Sausage Party" is just as much a sweet story about belief and faith as it is a vehicle for the filthiest jokes you've never dared imagine. Frank (Seth Rogen), a non-descript hot dog, waits somewhat impatiently with his fellow mates to be selected by the humans to be taken to a paradise in The Great Beyond (purchased).

Soul mate

Everyone in the store knows something good is out there waiting. The foods and condiments and sweets begin every day with a rousing song about The Great Beyond, each putting their own spin on it (i.e. the German mustard has added a line about exterminating Juice). For Frank, it's all about paradise and the chance to match with his soul mate Brenda (Kristen Wiig), a sexy hotdog bun with Barbie legs and a desire equal to Frank's. They're waiting for the humans to choose them before they act on anything.

Things go awry when they are chosen. A jar of Honey Mustard (Danny McBride) that was returned to the store by a customer is so

traumatized by what he's seen "out there" that he jumps out of the cart to his death. A few follow him out of their packages to try to save him and get tossed from the cart, including Brenda, Frank, Sammy Bagel Jr (Edward Norton, affecting his best Woody Allen), Lavash (David Krumholtz) and a Douche (Nick Kroll), who becomes dead set on killing Frank for preventing him from reaching The Great Beyond. And that group goes off exploring - some trying to get back to their spot in the store, some searching for the truth, and some (the Jewish bagel and Middle Eastern flatbread) waxing philosophical on the nature of belief. Those that made it to The Great Beyond, including Frank's hot dog buddy Barry (Michael Cera), experience the horrors of dinner time.

Big heart

As in all Rogen and Goldberg films, no matter how raunchy, there is a big heart at the center. It's what distinguishes them from the anything goes satire of Matt Stone and Trey Parker. Anything goes here too, but it's rooted in something deeper and infinitely more earnest. "Sausage Party," directed by Greg Tiernan and Conrad Vernon with co-screenwriting credits for Kyle Hunter and Ariel Shaffir, might not be for everyone (especially kids drawn to the posters and perplexed that cute animation might not actually always be for them), but it's a wild good time that will offend, shock and even delight.

There is no one out there making comedies quite like Rogen and Goldberg. They are putting their definitive stamp on the modern American comedy one decency-smashing double entendre at a time. "Sausage Party," a Columbia Pictures release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America for "strong crude sexual content, pervasive language, and drug use." Running time: 89 minutes. Three and a half stars out of four. MPAA Definition of R: Restricted. Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian. — AP

Stewart, Dogg to host dinner party show on VH1

Martha Stewart and Snoop Dogg are teaming up to throw celebrity dinner parties as part of a new VH1 reality show. The cable channel says the show with a working title of "Martha & Snoop's Dinner Party" is set to premiere in the fall. VH1 says each week will feature a "half-baked evening of cocktails, cooking, conversation, and fun where nothing is off limits."

Stewart and Snoop Dogg would seem to be an unlikely pairing, but the two have made numerous appearances together over the years. Snoop has been a guest on Stewart's syndicated program. They also sat side by side at Comedy Central's "Roast of Justin Bieber" last year and competed on ABC's "\$100,000 Pyramid" last month. — AP



In this March 14, 2015, file photo, Martha Stewart, left, and Snoop Dogg appear on stage at the Comedy Central Roast of Justin Bieber at Sony Pictures Studios in Culver City, Calif. — AP

'Star Trek: Discovery' CBS series to have female lead

CBS' "Star Trek: Discovery" will feature a female lead, Variety has confirmed. Executive producer Bryan Fuller is expected to discuss the role Wednesday at the Television Critics Association summer press tour. CBS Television Studios, which is producing the series, is in the process of casting the role, which could potentially go to a woman of color. During a Q&A last month at Comic-Con, Fuller spoke about Mae Jamison, the first African-American female astronaut and Nichelle Nichols, the lone African American and lone female cast member on the original "Star Trek" series, as inspirations for the characters on his show. "I think that 'Star Trek' is a show of firsts," he said at the time.

Avery Brooks as Capt. Benjamin Sisko on "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine" was the first African American to lead a "Star Trek" series. Kate Mulgrew as Capt Kathryn Janeway on "Star Trek: Voyager" was the franchise's first female lead. The female lead on "Discovery" will not necessarily be a captain. Shooting on "Star Trek: Discovery" is set to begin in two months, with David Semel set to direct the premiere. The series is scheduled to premiere in January with the first episode debuting on the core CBS broadcast network and subsequent episodes available exclusively on subscription streaming service CBS All Access. Fuller announced the title of the series last month at Comic Con, showing off a teaser that revealed a first look at the starship featured on the show. — Reuters



Pitt courting Fincher for 'World War Z' sequel

After losing director J.A. Bayona to the "Jurassic World" universe, Brad Pitt is zeroing in on an old friend for the "World War Z" sequel. Sources have told Variety that Pitt, along with Paramount and Skydance, is in talks with David Fincher to direct the follow-up to the 2013 smash hit. Pitt, who's returning to star in and produce the next "World War Z" installment, recently met with a handful of other directors, but is said to be zeroing in on Fincher for the pic, which is expected to start filming in early 2017.

Skydance and Paramount had no comment on the development. According to sources, Fincher and Pitt met two weeks ago to discuss the possibility of Fincher boarding the zombie tentpole. The talks were initially lukewarm, but sources now tell Variety that negotiations are much further down the road and that other director currently has an offer.

A Fincher-Pitt reunion on "World War Z" would mark their fourth film together, having previously collaborated on "Se7en," "Fight Club" and "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button." Fincher hasn't directed a feature film since 2014's "Gone Girl." The filmmaker has been turning his attention to television as of late. He recently shot the Netflix pilot "Mind Hunters." Sources say Fincher, who is weary of sequels, having aired his displeasure during his time on "Alien 3," has always been open to listening to Pitt when the actor reaches out. The duo nearly worked together on a reboot of "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" for Disney a few years ago but that collaboration never materialized.

Paramount's "World War Z" sequel was previously dated to open June 9, 2017. After losing Bayona, however, the studio is expected to delay the film's release. The original "Z" was a massive hit, having grossed \$540 million worldwide despite a rocky production, which included extensive re-shoots. Plot details are unknown for the sequel, other than it still being set during a zombie apocalypse. "World War Z" is based on the best-selling novel by Max Brooks. — Reuters