THE DISHWASHER

Directed by Nick Hartanto & Sam Roden
Starring Kevin Balmore & Elisha Yaffe

2019 / 13 minutes / Drama, Comedy / USA / Color / English, Spanish
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Logline

A Mexican dishwasher at a fine dining restaurant in New York is asked by his chef to find good tortillas.

Synopsis

Nicolás, a Mexican immigrant, is a dishwasher at a fine dining restaurant in New York. When his head chef challenges him to find handmade tortillas for a surprise addition to their menu, Nicolás jumps at the opportunity to prove himself, embarking on a quest that ultimately tests the very limits of his ambition.


**About “The Dishwasher”**

**From the directors.** The story is based on true events with some of the cast playing themselves. Through satire, it explores the contradictory forces at play in American assimilation, as well as the current state of the American Dream. These views are colored by Hartanto and Roden’s first hand experiences cooking in a Michelin rated restaurant and for celebrity chefs in New York and San Francisco.

**Based on a true story.** Co-director Hartanto was a line cook at a fine dining restaurant in Park Slope when one night he witnessed the head chef send the dishwasher off to the neighboring Latino neighborhood, Sunset Park, to find handmade tortillas for a last minute addition to their menu. The dishwasher ended up disappearing for hours, enraging the chef and throwing the kitchen into a state of disarray. When he finally returned, the tortillas he brought back were so beautiful that the chef could not stay angry at him, instead rejoicing with the other cooks at his find. Years later, Hartanto went to Sunset Park to find out where those tortillas came from and found to his surprise no one in the neighborhood made their own tortillas. All the restaurants used store bought tortillas and the consensus was that it really didn’t matter to them. The food was good enough already. This revelation fascinated Hartanto and Roden, and they began to ponder where the tortillas ultimately came from and what would drive the dishwasher to find something that he must have known did not exist. Combining their personal knowledge of the fine dining world with the realization that these experiences were ripe with satire and cultural irony, inspired the idea for their screenplay.
**Why New York?** The story is based on true events co-director Nick Hartanto experienced working as a fine dining line cook in Brooklyn. The Park Slope restaurant location in the film is owned by Hartanto’s former head chef and the very person the chef character is based on. Sunset Park is the actual neighborhood the dishwasher biked to in order to find tortillas. The assumption (by the chef in Park Slope) that the Latino neighborhood of Sunset Park would have an abundance of handmade tortillas, when in fact, seemingly no one in the neighborhood cares about such levels of authenticity, is at the core of what made Hartanto and Roden interested in pursuing this story. Only in New York, with its diverse bordering neighborhoods, can one find such a distilled story about cultural ironies like The Dishwasher.

**First generation immigrant (from Hartanto).** As a first generation immigrant, I believe at its heart this story is about an ambitious young kid who wants to succeed in life but is caught between two worlds: the one of his grandmother’s - an old school immigrant mentality which leans on the value of heritage and community - versus the one of the immigrant who decides to double down and assimilate into American culture in order to pursue their dreams. He doesn’t really care much about cultural authenticity or even about becoming a chef – simply put, he just wants to succeed. In my experience, this is a sentiment shared by many immigrants. One of the most important lessons my mother taught me as a child was that in order to achieve the American Dream one must learn to play the game and ultimately use it to their own advantage. At the end of our story Nicolás learns this lesson and succeeds by using “authenticity”, but as it does for many immigrants, it comes at a cost.
**Fun facts.** The lead actor, Kevin Balmore, starred alongside Mel Gibson in *Get the Gringo*, was part of the main cast of Fox’s *Surviving Jack* and was in the award winning indie hit *Short Term 12*.

Our composer, Adam Baker, was the founder and front man of the indie rock band *Annuals*.

**Directors’ Biography**

Nick Hartanto and Sam Roden are based in Brooklyn and Los Angeles, respectively. They premiered their debut feature documentary "Traveler" at the 2016 Ashland Independent Film Festival, followed by their short documentary "King of the Rails" which premiered at the 2017 Big Sky Documentary Festival. Their latest short film “The Dishwasher” is colored by Hartanto and Roden’s first hand experiences working as line cooks at multiple fine dining restaurants, including a Michelin rated restaurant, and working for celebrity chefs in New York and San Francisco. Their commercial clients include Condé Nast Traveler, Netflix, West Elm, Adult Swim, GQ, FiveThirtyEight & Wieden+Kennedy.
Credits

Crew
Directors: Nick Hartanto & Sam Roden
Producers: Nick Hartanto, Sam Roden, Jessica Braff & Holly Lynn Ellis
Screenwriters: Nick Hartanto & Sam Roden
Cinematographer: Nick Hartanto
Editor: Sam Roden
Composer: Adam Baker
Production Manager: Clara Peterson
Gaffer: Andrew “Tank” Rivara
Grips: Brian Bonacci & Lloyd Hembrador
Sound: Alistair Farrant
Re-Recording Mixer: Owen Granich-Young
Supervising Sound Editor: Owen Granich-Young
Sound Editor: Samuel Plattner
Foley Artist: Brooke Lowrey
Production Designer: Kevin Deck
Set Decorator: Bing Qing Ye
Production Assistants: Kate Gordon, Jen Hoffer & Sean O’Neill

Cast
Nicolàs: Kevin Balmore
Chef: Elisha Yaffe
Riley: Holly Lynn Ellis
Brandon: Brandon Knapp
Ricardo: Teddy Cañez
Abuela: Arisleyda Lombert
Bike Thief: Dennis Dannel
Todd: Richie Moriarty
Chuck: Cavan Rogers

Partygoers:
Katie Ballen
Luke Bearden
Graham Burns
Rachel Castillo
James Maxwell
Kirsten Stuke
Mike Majette-Torres
Trista Majette-Torres
Mike Twombly

Partygoers ADR:
Amy Harmon
Emilia Richeson

Contact Information

Official Website: www.dishwashershort.com
Trailer: https://vimeo.com/315536473
Instagram: @dishwashershort
Production Company Website: www.rodanti.com