

Dim Sum

Director Wayne Wong's very good film about a Chinese American family in Chinatown, San Francisco.

Dim Sum illustrates an archetypal mother-daughter theme in the relationship between a widowed mother getting on in her sixties and her grown daughter who wants to be more independent but who is sad to leave her mother alone. Real life mother Kim Chew is Mrs. Tam, and her real life daughter Laureen Chew is Geraldine Tam. They are quite wonderful together on the screen. Uncle Tam, delightfully portrayed by Victor Wong, runs a Chinatown bar—with Geraldine's help—and has taken care of his dead brother's family for some 15 years. The mother is a very traditional Cantonese matriarch who has lived in San Francisco 40 years; the daughter is a graduate

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student, a modern woman; the uncle, charmingly Americanized by *movies*, embodies the bridge between traditional and contemporary. In *Dim Sum*, Chinese-American family life slowly and lovingly reveals itself in gentle images and lustrous humor.

Thirty-six year old director Wayne Wong was born in Hong Kong and came to Berkeley to study film at 18. *Dim Sum* is his second feature film—he made *Chan Is Missing* in 1983; both



Geraldine (Laureen Chew) and her Uncle Tam (Victor Wong) in the gentle tale of family love and responsibility, *Dim Sum: A Little Bit of Heart*.

were shot in Chinatown. *Dim Sum* is a family movie in more than one sense. Wong's former wife Terrel Seltzer wrote the fine screenplay, and his current wife, actress Cora Miao, appears as Geraldine's independent girlfriend Julia. Of course, Laureen and her mother are family; much of the film was shot in Mrs. Chew's house in the Richmond district of San Francisco.

The opening sequence (before the credits) establishes the lingering pace at which *Dim Sum*'s story will unfold. Portraits of mother, daughter, and uncle as well as shots of the house, the beach, the ocean at sunset, and the busy streets of Chinatown set the mood for this thoughtful, funny movie. I like Todd Boekel-

heide's East/West music, and I admire how soundman Curtis Choy evokes a quiet city by emphasizing intimate sounds; hearing a porch swept or a tablecloth hung on the line enhances the personal feeling of *Dim Sum* (which literally translates "a little bit of heart"). For those who like active fast-paced movies, this one may move a little too leisurely. I like the relaxed, unhurried look of the picture; it gives us time to get to know these folks. And I wanted to know them—especially the little-bit-wacky Uncle Tam and Mrs. Tam's mah jong playing cronies—an exuberant, earthy bunch. *Dim Sum* is at Cinema 7 from December 20 through January 2. Enjoy!

—Lois Wadsworth

NOW showing

Attila: Award-winning film based on the true story of George Attila. A Native Alaskan youth caught within a changing culture overcomes tuberculosis to be a champion dogsled racer. Oakway (342-5351).

Baby: A scientist and her husband protect an infant dinosaur from greedy interests. Showing with *One Magic Christmas*. Fine Arts (747-2201).

Back to the Future: A boy trips back to the past, and meets the teenagers who'll become his parents. Shows with *Just One of the Guys*. Mayflower (345-1022).

La Chevre (The Goat): Comedy. The bumbling detectives of *Les Compagnons* track down the kidnapped daughter of a wealthy client. Plays Jan. 3-9 at Cinema 7 (687-0733).

A Chorus Line: Dancers reveal their desperations and desires at a do-or-die audition. Michael Douglas plays the demanding stage director in this film of Broadway's longest-running musical. National (344-3431).

Clue: Who? What? Where? An all-star cast in the mystery movie based on a popular board game. Why? Valley River Twin (686-8633).

The Coca-Cola Kid: An uptight American sales booster for the big soda company gets unravelled in the arms of a sensuous Australian woman. Director Dusan Makavejev (*Montenegro*) counters greed with a little sex and comedy. Bijou (686-2458).

Dim Sum: A Chinese-American family approaches love and marriage through a mix of cultures. This week at Cinema 7 (687-0733).

Enemy Mine: Space adventure. Starts this week at West 11th (342-4142).

Jewel of the Nile: Kathleen Turner and Michael Douglas return with this adventurous sequel to *Romancing the Stone*. Cinema World (342-6536) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Just One of the Guys: Comedy. A high school girl, tired of feeling like a second-class student, disguises herself as a boy. Shows with *Back to the Future*. Mayflower (345-1022).

Monty Python and the Holy Grail: Zany version of King Arthur and his knights. *Idylls of the King* it ain't. Late show this week at the Bijou (686-2458).

101 Dalmations: Animated. Rescuing stolen puppies is the main plot of this Disney classic. Some nice music, I recall. Cinema World (342-6536) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

One Magic Christmas: Non-animated holiday fare from Disney. Stars Mary Steenburgen and Harry Dean Stanton (*Paris, Texas*) as an angel. Shows with *Baby* at Fine Arts (747-2201).

Out of Africa: Romantic drama about married author Isak Dinesen and the aristocrat she falls in love with. Stars Meryl Streep and Robert Redford. Directed by Sydney Pollack (*Tootsie*, *The Way We Were*). McDonald (344-4343).

Rocky IV: The Italian Stallion pits his pecs against a monstrous Russian. Yo! Springfield Quad (726-9073) and Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Santa Claus—The Movie: Fantasy/comedy. The jolly one is challenged by bad guy John Lithgow (*Footloose*, *Terms of Endearment*). Dudley Moore (*Arthur*) is chief elf. West 11th (342-4142).

Spies Like Us: Chevy Chase and Dan Aykroyd bungle their way through international danger. Low-brow intelligence? Cinema World (342-6536) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

White Nights: Two dancers, one a Soviet defector, make an unscheduled landing in Russia. Trouble for Mikhail Baryshnikov and comrade Gregory Hines. Cinema World (342-6536).

Young Sherlock Holmes: Adventure, brought to us by Stephen Spielberg. West 11th (342-4142).

—Michael Sussman?

(NOTE: For most theatres, this week's film listing covers from Dec. 20-26 only. For information on films showing after Dec. 26, please contact individual theatres.)

CINEMA 7

"A real charmer, a heartwarming story."
—Roger Ebert, CHICAGO SUN-TIMES
"A very special movie... exquisitely filmed and very engaging... a lot of heart on every level."
—Judith Crist, WOR-TV
"With such quiet artistry, 'Dim Sum' proves how moving a still life can be. AN HOUR LATER YOU'LL BE HUNGRY TO SEE IT AGAIN!"
—Richard Corliss, TIME MAGAZINE



DIM SUM
a little bit of heart

Cinema 7 wishes all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

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—Jeffrey Lyons, Sneak Previews/INN

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FILM,
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—Dave Kehr, Chicago Magazine

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