

# Exactly Right

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friend, Sydney Prosser (Amy Adams). She's his soulmate, a former stripper who appreciates Irving's genius and adds her own astute spin. The two sell stolen and forged art and nonexistent loans to desperate folks, with Sydney posing as Edith Greensley, an Englishwoman with banking connections and distractingly low necklines.

But when the two are busted by an ambitious loose cannon, FBI agent Richie DiMaso (Bradley Cooper), he forces them into a more elaborate scheme to snag prominent targets like the mayor of Camden and several congressmen. The scheme depends on Irving's expertise, but violates all of his methods for setting up a good con.

The film opens with Irving assembling his elaborate comb-over, a hilarious and

symbolic demonstration of the care involved in Irving's method. Indeed, hair and clothes are especially vivid throughout the film, a bonus that comes with the story's setting in the garish, hair-obsessed 1970s. Sydney's long, flowing ginger hair is part of a distractingly luscious persona that dazzles people into parting with their cash. DiMaso, overestimating his smarts as much as his charm, wears his in-home-permed curls as tightly-wound as his persona. And Irving's loose-cannon wife, Roslyn (Jennifer Lawrence), works her chaotic sex appeal with a blond bouffant as unruly as she is.

These are just a few of the characters who make up the conflagration that Irving must contain. Bradley Cooper applies just the right amount of manic energy to DiMaso, who keeps pushing the deal bigger and bigger, driven by ambition and greed.

Jennifer Lawrence very nearly steals the film as Roslyn; as Irving recognizes, she is a master manipulator and he is her "mark." She has a habit of setting things on fire (both literally and figuratively) and then deflecting blame on a dime so that she is actually the hero.

Amy Adams manages, in dresses cut down to her navel, to convey a woman of subtlety; she is working all her assets to rise above her circumstances and never stops strategizing, even when the social roles available to her don't allow her many options. A confrontation in the ladies' room between the two women is worth the price of admission all on its own.

And there is lots of other great work here, including from Jeremy Renner as the Camden mayor, Alessandro Nivola as a prosecutor supposedly modeled on Rudy Giuliani, Robert DeNiro as (what else?) a menacing mobster, and Louis C-K as DiMaso's long-suffering boss.

But Bale's performance is the heart of

the film. His Irving is a marvel of complexity; his expressions convey that he is always strategizing, calculating odds, and occasionally despairing of keeping in the air all the balls that DiMaso has tossed there and Roslyn has diverted.

Although always working an angle, Irving struggles with the implications of his actions; he worries about Roslyn's son and about his failures of loyalty to Sydney and the mayor, to whom he has grown attached. Director Russell has made him the moral center of the film, which is itself a bit of flim-flam that suits the material. His morality is only satisfying if you don't think about it too hard -- which somehow makes the film very satisfying.

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## FOOD

If you use sea scallops and not bay scallops, cut them into quarters before adding them to the pasta. Original recipe makes 4 servings.



### Spinach Fettuccine with Scallops

#### Ingredients:

- 1/2 pound dry fettuccine pasta
- 6 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1 (10 ounce) package frozen chopped spinach
- salt and pepper to taste
- 3/4 pound scallops
- 4 cloves garlic, sliced
- 2 (4.5 ounce) cans sliced mushrooms, drained
- 1 (10.75 ounce) can condensed cream of mushroom soup
- 1 cup white wine
- ground black pepper to taste

#### Directions:

1. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add pasta and cook for 8 to 10 minutes or until al dente;

drain and reserve. Meanwhile, in a large skillet, heat 1 to 2 tablespoons of oil and add spinach and salt and pepper to taste. Sauté spinach for 5 to 7 minutes or until wilted and no longer watery. Remove spinach from skillet and toss with pasta; transfer and keep warm.

2. In the same skillet, heat 2 more tablespoons of oil and add scallops and 2 cloves of sliced garlic. Cook scallops for 1 to 2 minutes or until they appear opaque. Add scallops and garlic to fettuccine and spinach mix; transfer and keep warm.

3. In the same skillet, heat 2 tablespoons of oil. Add 2 more cloves of sliced garlic and sauté until golden. Add mushrooms, soup and white wine to skillet. Stir over medium heat for 8 minutes or until warm. Pour over fettuccine and spinach and add ground black pepper to taste; serve.

### Healthy Mexican Chicken Bake

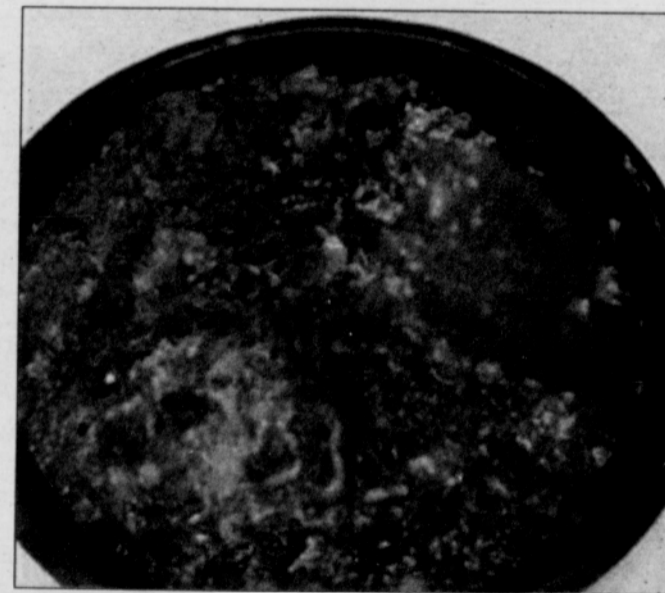
A high-protein, low-calorie meal that leaves you FULL. It's so flavorful. Goes great with cornbread and/or a side of refried beans. Makes 4 servings.

#### Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- salt and ground black pepper to taste
- 4 ounces shredded Mexican cheese blend
- 1 cup salsa

#### Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Heat vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Season one side of chicken breasts with half the cumin, half the garlic powder, salt, and black pepper; arrange chicken breasts with seasoned sides down in the hot oil. Fry until chicken is lightly browned on the bottom, 4 to 5 minutes.
2. Season the top of each chicken breast with the remaining cumin, remaining garlic powder, salt, and black pepper; flip chicken and cook until other side is lightly browned, 4 to 5 minutes. If the skillet gets dry, pour in just enough juice from the salsa to keep it from burning.
3. Transfer chicken breasts to a 9x9-inch baking dish; sprinkle with Mexican cheese blend. Loosen all the drippings from the skillet with some juice from the salsa and pour on top of chicken breasts. Spoon salsa over cheese layer.
4. Bake chicken breasts until no longer pink in the center and the juices run clear, 20 to 25 minutes. An instant-read thermometer inserted into the center should read at least 165 degrees F (74 degrees C).



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