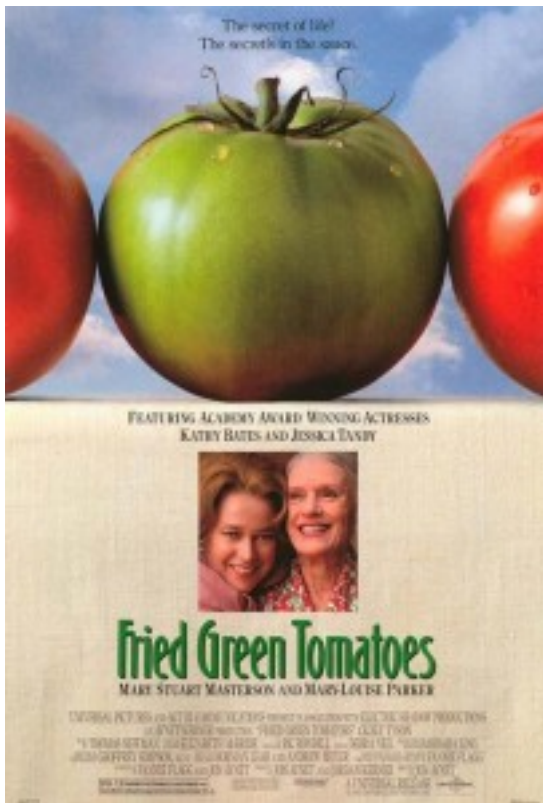


Fried Green Tomatoes (1991)



Theatrical release poster (Wikipedia)

TOMATOMETER

All Critics

83

Average Rating: 6.5/10 Reviews
Counted: 23 Fresh: 19 | Rotten: 4
No consensus yet.

Top Critics

No Score Yet...

Average Rating: N/A Critic Reviews:
4 Fresh: 4 | Rotten: 0

AUDIENCE

87

liked it Average Rating: 3.7/5 User
Ratings: 133,466

Movie Info

A woman learns the value of friendship as she hears the story of two women and how their friendship shaped their lives in this warm comedy-drama. Evelyn Couch (Kathy Bates) is an emotionally repressed housewife with a habit of drowning her sorrows in candy bars. Her husband Ed (Gailard Sartain) barely acknowledges her existence, and while he visits his aunt at a nursing home every week, Evelyn is not permitted to come into the room because the old women doesn't like her. One week, while waiting out Ed's visit, Evelyn meets Ninny Threadgoode (Jessica Tandy), a frail but feisty old woman who lives at the same nursing home and loves to tell stories. Over the span of several weeks, she spins a whopper about one of her relatives, Ildgie (Mary Stuart Masterson). Back in the 1920s, Ildgie was a sweet but fiercely independent woman with her own way of doing things who ran the town diner in Whistle Stop, Alabama. Ildgie was very close to her brother Buddy (Chris O'Donnell), and when he died, she wouldn't talk to anyone except Buddy's girl, Ruth Jamison (Mary-Louise Parker). Ildgie gave Ruth a job at the cafe after she left her abusive husband, Frank Bennett (Nick Searcy). Between her habit of standing up for herself, standing up to Frank, and serving food to Black people out the back of the diner, Ildgie raised the ire of the less tolerant citizens of Whistle Stop, and when Frank mysteriously disappeared, many locals suspected that Ildgie, Ruth, and their friends may have been responsible. Evelyn finds herself looking forward to her weekly visits with Ninny, and is inspired by her story to take a new pride in herself and assert her independence from Ed. *Fried Green Tomatoes* was based on the novel *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe* by actress-turned-author Fannie Flagg, who makes a cameo appearance as the leader of a self-help group. ~ Mark Deming, Rovi

PG-13, 2 hr. 10 min.

Drama, Comedy

Directed By: [Jon Avnet](#)

Written By: [Fannie Flagg](#), [Carol Sobieski](#)

In Theaters: Dec 27, 1991 Wide

On DVD: Apr 18, 2000

Universal Pictures

[www.rottentomatoes.com]

Fried Green Tomatoes

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Fried Green Tomatoes is a 1991 comedy-drama film based on the novel *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe* by Fannie Flagg. Directed by Jon Avnet and written by Fannie Flagg and Carol Sobieski, it stars Kathy Bates, Jessica Tandy, Mary Stuart Masterson, and Mary-Louise Parker. It tells the story of a Depression-era friendship between two women, Ruth and Ildgie, and a 1980s friendship between Evelyn, a middle-aged housewife, and Ninny, an elderly woman who knew Ruth and Ildgie. The centerpiece and parallel story concerns the murder of Ruth's abusive husband and the accusations that follow.

The film received a generally positive reception from film critics and was nominated for two Academy Awards. The filmmakers drew criticism from some reviewers for removing the lesbian content of the book's plot, but the film won a GLAAD Media Award for "best lesbian content".

Plot

Evelyn Couch (Kathy Bates), a timid, unhappy housewife in her forties, meets elderly Ninny Threadgoode (Jessica Tandy) in a Birmingham, Alabama, nursing home. Ninny, over several encounters with Evelyn, tells her the story of the now-abandoned town of Whistle Stop, Alabama, and the people who lived there. The film's subplot concerns Evelyn's dissatisfaction with her marriage and her life, her growing confidence, and her developing friendship with Ninny. The narrative switches several times between Ninny's story, which is set between World War I and World War II, and Evelyn's life in 1980s Birmingham.

Ninny's story begins with tomboy Imogene "Ildgie" Threadgoode (Mary Stuart Masterson), the youngest of the Threadgoode children, whom Ninny describes as her sister-in-law. Ildgie's close relationship with her charming older brother Buddy (Chris O'Donnell) is cut short when he is hit by a train and killed. Devastated, Ildgie recedes from formal society for much of her childhood and adolescence until Buddy's former girlfriend, the straitlaced Ruth Jamison (Mary-Louise Parker), intervenes at the request of the concerned Threadgoode family.

Ildgie initially resists Ruth's attempts at friendship, but then gradually allows a deep attachment to develop. Ruth leaves Whistle Stop to marry Frank Bennett (Nick Searcy) and moves to Valdosta, Georgia. Ildgie is upset at losing her friend and struggles to forget

her. After some time she visits Ruth, now pregnant and suffering from physical abuse from Frank. Against Frank's wishes, Ruth returns to Whistle Stop with Ildgie, where her child, named Buddy Jr., is born. Papa Threadgoode gives Ildgie money to start a business so she can care for Ruth and Buddy Jr. Ruth and Ildgie open the Whistle Stop Cafe, employing cook Sipsey (Cicely Tyson) and her son Big George (Stan Shaw), who makes a barbecue that quickly becomes popular with their patrons.

Frank Bennett eventually returns to Whistle Stop in an attempt to kidnap Buddy Jr., but is thwarted by an unseen assailant. Frank goes missing and his truck is later found at the bottom of a nearby lake. Ildgie is immediately a suspect, as she had publicly threatened violence against him for beating Ruth. She is arrested along with Big George for Frank's murder. The local sheriff offers to release her and pin the crime solely on Big George, but Ildgie refuses to sacrifice her friend. During the subsequent trial, the local minister lies, providing Ildgie and Big George with an alibi for the time of Frank's disappearance. Taking into account Frank's reputation for getting drunk, the judge rules his death an accident. Ildgie and Big George are cleared of all charges.

After the trial, Ruth develops cancer and dies. Following her death, the café closes. Over time, many Whistle Stop residents eventually move away, bringing Ninny to the end of her story, but not before the revelation of what really happened to Frank: Sipsey had killed Frank (with a blow to the head from a cast-iron skillet) while trying to stop him from kidnapping Buddy Jr. Big George then barbecued Frank's body and served it to the Georgia sheriff searching for Frank.

Evelyn discovers that during Ninny's temporary stay at the nursing home, Ninny's house was condemned and torn down. Evelyn, having become good friends with Ninny, offers her a room in her home which Ninny accepts. As the two friends walk away from Ninny's former home, they pass Ruth's grave, freshly adorned with a jar of honey and honeycomb and a card which reads "I will always Love You. The Bee Charmer", Ruth's old nickname for Ildgie.

Cast

- Kathy Bates as Evelyn Couch
- Mary Stuart Masterson as Ildgie Threadgoode
- Mary-Louise Parker as Ruth Jamison
- Jessica Tandy as Ninny Threadgoode
- Cicely Tyson as Sipsey
- Chris O'Donnell as Buddy Threadgoode
- Stan Shaw as Big George
- Gailard Sartain as Ed Couch

- Timothy Scott as Smokey Lonesome
- Gary Basaraba as Grady Kilgore
- Lois Smith as Mama Threadgoode
- Danny Nelson as Papa Threadgoode
- Jo Harvey Allen as Women's Awareness Teacher
- Macon McCalman as Prosecutor
- Richard Riehle as Reverend Scroggins
- Raynor Scheine as Curtis Smoot
- Grace Zabriskie as Eva Bates
- Reid Binion as Young Julian
- Nick Searcy as Frank Bennett
- Constance Shulman as Missy

Differences between the film and novel

Unlike the novel, the film does not make the lesbian romance between the two central characters explicit, instead making the relationship between Idgie and Ruth ambiguous. The DVD contains an audio commentary in which the director acknowledges the relationship and points out that a scene between the two women engaging in a food fight was intended to be seen as symbolic love-making. At the time of the film's debut, it was criticized by reviewers and activists for what was seen as "glossing over" the lesbian relationship. However, the film won an award from the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation for best feature film with lesbian content. The film also focuses more on the racial theme rather than the lesbian plot of the novel.

Production

Conception and casting

Avnet first read Fannie Flagg's novel *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe* in 1987. He was introduced to it by producer Lisa Lindstrom, with whom he worked on television films *Heat Wave* and *Breaking Point*. Although he wanted her to give him a synopsis of the story, she insisted he read the book and like her, he loved it. He decided to turn the story into a film and pitched the idea to Norman Lear's company, Act III Communications, who were interested and gave Avnet a small budget for a screenwriter. He hired Carol Sobieski who had written the screenplay for 1982's *Annie*. She wrote a draft for *Fried Green Tomatoes* as a musical, which Avnet was unhappy with. Sobieski left the project and he hired Fannie Flagg. Flagg, who had been surprised that anyone would want to turn the novel into a film, worked to develop the script. Although she had some screenwriting experience, she found the process of turning her own novel into a script a strange one. The job was made somewhat easier by the work done by Sobieski and Avnet in choosing which characters from the book were going to be

featured, but she found it difficult. She too left the project, after writing 70 pages of the screenplay. With no money left to hire another writer, Avnet took the script over himself and spent the next 2–3 years developing it. Flagg gave her blessing to the final draft.

Avnet wrote the film with Jessica Tandy in mind; she expressed excitement about making the film. He had worked with Kathy Bates and Chris O'Donnell on the 1990 film *Men Don't Leave* before offering them the roles of Evelyn Couch and Buddy Threadgoode respectively. When Bates read the script she loved the characters and was particularly keen to work with Tandy. Mary-Louise Parker was casting director David Rubin's first choice for the role of Ruth Jamison. She read for the part several times, initially unhappy with her own tests. When she read along with Mary Stuart Masterson, they—and the producers—agreed that they had good chemistry.

Setting



Inside the Whistle Stop Cafe, Juliette, GA

Avnet hired Barbara Ling as production designer. Scouting for a location, she found Juliette in Monroe County, Georgia, a town that was, according to Avnet, nearly deserted. The building chosen to be the Whistle Stop Café was formerly an antiques and hardware store. It was redesigned as a cafe, with a horse-shoe shaped counter to allow for optimal camera angles. After the release of the film, Juliette saw an influx of tourists and, with John Avnet's encouragement, locals opened The Whistle Stop Café, recreated to mirror the film set. Although

"Whistle Stop Café" is now a registered trademark, other establishments have appeared using that name.

When writing the novel, Flagg based Whistle Stop on Irondale, Alabama, and the café on a real-life restaurant, the Irondale Café. She was a frequent visitor to the café which was formerly owned by her great-aunt.

The scene where Ildgie goes to collect honey from a beehive for Ruth was originally intended to be performed by a stunt performer. However, after the stunt double backed out at the last minute, Masterson volunteered to do it herself. This footage of Masterson covered in a swarm of live bees is seen in the final version of the film.

The steam locomotive used in the film is A&WP 290 then in use pulling steam excursions for the New Georgia Railroad.

Release

The film was given a limited release in the US on December 27, 1991, opening in five theaters. It got a wide release four weeks later on January 24, 1992, in 673 theaters. It ran for 19 weeks in total, with its widest release having been 1,331 theaters.

Reception

Box office

The film grossed a total of \$82,418,501 in the United States alone, and took in \$37,000,000 outside the US, bringing the total to \$119,418,501 worldwide. In its opening weekend it earned \$105,317, and at its wide release opening weekend it earned \$5,235,940, which was 6.4 percent of its total gross. According to Box Office Mojo, it ranked at #11 for all films released in the US in 1991, and #5 for PG-13 rated films released that year.[!]

Critical reception

Fried Green Tomatoes was generally well received by critics. Film review aggregate website Rotten Tomatoes gave the film a "fresh" score of 82 percent based on 22 reviews.

Critics enjoyed the narrative, but found it conventional and predictable. The adaptation of the separate narrative of book to the screen was criticised by *Time Out* as "clumsy"; Roger Ebert agreed saying that the flashback device did not work.

Writing for *The New York Times*, Janet Maslin praised the costume and production design and Emanuel Levy praised the cinematography and score. The cast drew praise for their performances, particularly Masterson and Tandy.

Awards and honors

The film was nominated at the 64th Academy Awards for Best Actress in a Supporting Role (Jessica Tandy) and for Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium (Fannie Flagg and Carol Sobieski). At the 46th British Academy Film Awards in 1992, Tandy was nominated for the Best Actress award, and Bates was nominated as Best Actress in a Supporting Role. Both actresses also received Golden Globe nominations for their work, and the film got a Best Picture (Comedy or Musical) nomination.

American Film Institute recognition:

- AFI's 100 Years...100 Movie Quotes:

"*Face it girls, I'm older and I have more insurance.*" - Nominated

Soundtrack

Fried Green Tomatoes: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack is the soundtrack to the 1991 Academy Award-nominated film *Fried Green Tomatoes*. For the original score of the same film, composed by Thomas Newman, see *Fried Green Tomatoes* (score).

Track listing

1. "I'll Remember You" (Grayson Hugh) — 5:08
2. "What Becomes of the Brokenhearted" (Paul Young) — 4:34
3. "Cherish" (Hip Hop Version) (Jodeci) — 3:58
4. "Danger Heartbreak Dead Ahead" (Taylor Dayne) — 3:20
5. "Rooster Blues" (Peter Wolf) — 3:15
6. "Barbeque Bess" (Patti LaBelle) — 2:54
7. "If I Can Help Somebody" (Aaron Hall) — 3:49
8. "Cool Down Yonder" (Marion Williams) — 3:10
9. "Cherish" (Movie Version) (Jodeci) — 2:29
10. "Ghost Train" (Main Title) (Thomas Newman) — 3:11
11. "Visiting Ruth" (Newman) — 1:46
12. "A Charge To Keep I Have" (Newman) — 1:50