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**WORLD PREMIERE OF SWEET STÖRY TO OPEN
THE 2025 SONOMA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL**

JOAN CHEN TO RECEIVE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

**MICHELIN-STAR CHEF YOSHINORI ISHII TO PRESENT
FILMS & MASTER CLASS ON JAPANESE CULTURE & CUISINE**

NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE OF GOLDEN BEAR WINNER “DREAMS (LOVE, SEX)”

**CALIFORNIA PREMIERE OF ANDREW AHN’S “THE WEDDING BANQUET”
TO CLOSE THE FESTIVAL**

Sonoma, CA – March 4, 2025 – The 28th annual Sonoma International Film Festival (SIFF), renowned for its unparalleled blend of world-class cinema, culinary excellence, and wine country charm, returns March 19-23, 2025. This year’s festival features a spectacular lineup of 39 narrative features, 16 documentaries, and 38 short films from over 21 countries alongside an impressive array of renowned filmmakers, celebrated actors, and culinary icons.

“After last year’s record-breaking festival, we’re thrilled to elevate the experience with a lineup of extraordinary films, visionary talent, and an exclusive culinary program,” said Carl Spence, SIFF Artistic Director. **“The Sonoma International Film Festival isn’t just an event—it’s a destination where world-class cinema, fine wine, and gourmet food create an unforgettable cultural experience.”**

A WINE COUNTRY FILM FESTIVAL LIKE NO OTHER

SIFF is more than a film festival—it's a full sensory experience that brings together award-winning cinema, star-studded tributes, and gourmet indulgence. Festival-goers can enjoy exclusive SIFF Pop-Ins featuring curated food and wine experiences at top Sonoma restaurants, lively parties at celebrated establishments, and intimate conversations with film industry veterans.

Notable stars with films at the festival include: Bérénice Béjo, Gael García Bernal, Nicolas Cage, Joan Chen, Glenn Close, Brady Corbet, Julie Delpy, Daisy Edgar-Jones, Jacob Elordi, Lily Gladstone, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Nicole Kidman, Vicky Krieps, John Leguizamo, Matthew Macfadyen, Dacre Montgomery, Bill Murray, Carey Mulligan, Jonathan Pryce, Renate Reinsve, Kyra Sedgwick, David Strathairn, Steve Coogan, Kelly Marie Tran, Naomi Watts, Bowen Yang, and Youn Yuh-Jung.

FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

- **Opening Night Film: *Sweet Störy*** (World Premiere) – A captivating documentary following Meg Ray of San Francisco's Miette on a heartfelt journey to save a charming café on the remote Swedish island of Rödlöga.
- **Centerpiece Film: *On Swift Horses*** (California Premiere) – Starring Daisy Edgar-Jones and Jacob Elordi, this evocative adaptation of Shannon Pufahi's novel follows intertwined journeys of risk, romance, and self-discovery.
- **Closing Night Film: *The Wedding Banquet*** (West Coast Premiere) – A fresh reimagining of Ang Lee's 1993 classic by acclaimed director Andrew Ahn, featuring Bowen Yang, Lily Gladstone, Kelly Marie Tran, and Joan Chen.
- **Special Presentation Films: *The Ballad of Wallis Island*** (United Kingdom), ***One to One: John & Yoko*** (United Kingdom), ***The Penguin Lessons*** (United Kingdom), Dag Johan Haugerud's ***Love Sex Dreams*** Trilogy (Norway).
- **Tribute to Joan Chen:** The acclaimed actress will be honored with the SIFF Career Achievement Award at the Closing Night presentation of *The Wedding Banquet*.
- **20th Anniversary Screening:** Gregg Araki's groundbreaking ***Mysterious Skin***.
- **Culinary Films & Events:** 15 food-focused films, an intimate Italian wine dinner honoring culinary legend Marcella Hazan, and a Master Class in Japanese Cuisine & Culture by Michelin-star chef Yoshinori Ishii.
- **World premieres** of Roush Niaghi and Greg Morris's ***Ali Eats America***, Fernando Guillermo Barreda Luna's ***Cafe Chairel***, Mark Benjamin and Katie Carpenter's ***Fatal Watch***.
- **North American Premiere: *Dreams (Love, Sex)*** – Berlinale Golden Bear winner by Dag Johan Haugerud, alongside his full trilogy.
- **California premieres** of Mark Craig's ***Apollo 1***, Mimi Cave's ***Holland***, Lorcan Finnegan's ***The Surfer***, and Emilie Blicheld's ***The Ugly Stepsister***, amongst others.
- **Audience Favorites and Award Winners: *Bad Shabbos*** (USA) Tribeca Film Festival Audience Award Winner, ***Ballad of Wallis Island*** (United Kingdom) Sundance Film Festival Crowd Pleaser, ***Bob Trevino Likes It*** (USA) SXSW Jury and Audience Award Winner, ***DJ Ahmet*** (North Macedonia) Sundance Film Festival Audience Award Winner,

The Last Journey (Sweden) Official Oscar Submission, Best International Feature, ***Long Good Thursday*** (Finland) - Chicago Film Festival Audience Award Winner, ***Waves*** (Czech Republic) - Official Oscar Submission Shortlist, Best International Feature.

- **Other highlights** include a **Spotlight on Italian Cinema** and a mini-focus on **Films from Scandinavia**.

SPECIAL GUESTS & PANELS

- A live recording of “**The Film That Blew My Mind**” podcast, featuring Sundance Director Emeritus John Cooper, Tabitha Jackson, and special guest Christine Vachon.
- **Film Veterans Tell All:** Come hear film academy members give the ins and outs of the film business. Get insider stories from industry veterans about the film world! A must-attend panel for aspiring filmmakers and film lovers alike.
- **SIFF’s SVHS Media Arts Student Showcase:** A platform for the next generation of filmmakers from Sonoma Valley High School’s acclaimed media arts program.

CELEBRATING CINEMATIC EXCELLENCE

PROGRAMMING TEAM: The five-day festival is curated by Artistic Director Carl Spence, along with senior programmers Amanda Salazar and Ken Jacobson and shorts programmer Oscar Arce Naranjo.

FESTIVAL JURORS: This year’s jury includes esteemed international industry professionals including Rajendra Roy (Chief Curator, MoMA), Greg Ellwood (*The Playlist*), Rachel Rosen (New York Film Festival), Brian Brooks (Cinetic Media), Jaie Laplante (DOC NYC), Daniela Michela (Morelia International Film Festival), Maggie Mackay (Vidiots), and Angelo Acerbi (Fred Film Radio). Their expertise ensures that SIFF remains a platform for groundbreaking storytelling and artistic innovation.

FEATURE COMPETITION FILMS: ***Café Chairel*** (Director: Fernando Guillermo Barreda Luna/Mexico), ***DJ Ahmet*** (Director: Georgi M. Unkovski/North Macedonia), ***Gloria*** (Director: Margherita Vicario/Italy), ***Long Good Thursday*** (Director: Mika Kaurismäki/Finland), ***Mexico 86*** (Director: César Diaz/France), ***My Favorite Cake*** (Director: Maryam Moghaddam, Behtash Sanaeeha/Iran), ***The Party’s Over*** (Director: Elena Manrique/Spain), ***Waves*** (Director: Jiří Mádľ/Czech Republic)

DOCUMENTARY COMPETITION FILMS: ***Ali Eats America*** (USA) Directed by: Roush Niaghi, Greg Morris, ***Apollo 1*** (United Kingdom) Directed by: Mark Craig, ***Fatal Watch*** (USA) Directed by: Mark Benjamin, Katie Carpenter, ***Free Leonard Peltier*** (USA) Directed by: Jesse Short Bull, David France, ***Mistress Dispeller*** (China) Directed by: Elizabeth Lo, ***Suburban Fury*** (USA) Directed by: Robinson Devor, ***Sweet Störy*** (United Kingdom) Directed by: Sarah Justine Kerruish, Matt Maude, ***Tokito: The 540-Day Journey of a Culinary Maverick*** (Japan) Directed by: Aki Mizutani.

ABOUT SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTED FILMS:

Sweet Störy (USA) In this real-life fairy tale, Meg Ray, owner of the beloved Bay Area patisserie Miette, embarks on a five-year odyssey to help save a magical café on the remote Swedish island of Rödlöga. An irresistibly delicious story of community, self-discovery, renewal, and the power of baked goods. World Premiere. (USA/75min)

On Swift Horses (USA) stars Daisy Edgar-Jones and Jacob Elordi. Set in the 1950s, this gorgeous adaptation of Shannon Pufahi's 2019 novel follows a seemingly sensible newlywed and her wayward brother-in-law as they undertake parallel journeys of risk, romance, and self-discovery. (USA/117min)

The Wedding Banquet (USA) This fresh, modern reimagining of Ang Lee's 1993 classic by Andrew Ahn follows a group of friends who need to get married for convenience—until family arrives, and the plan spirals into extravagant, chaotic mayhem. It stars Bowen Yang, Lily Gladstone, Kelly Marie Tran, Joan Chen, and Youn Yuh-jung. California Premiere. (USA/103min)

The Ballad of Wallis Island (United Kingdom) Eccentric lottery winner Charles reunites his favorite folk duo for a private island gig, but old tensions threaten his dream concert. With sharp wit and stellar chemistry, this charming British comedy stars Carey Mulligan, Sian Clifford, Tom Basden, and Tim Key. (99min)

DJ Ahmet (North Macedonia) A shepherding boy's love of techno music sets him on a path of small-town love and rebellion in this modern-day "Footloose." A wonderfully touching and humor-filled debut from director Georgi M. Unkovski. Audience Award Winner, Sundance Film Festival. (99min)

Dreams [Love Sex] (Norway) In this installment of Dag Johan Haugerud's trilogy "Love-Sex-Dreams," a young woman explores her first love through writing, causing her mother and grandmother to examine their views on love, sexuality, and self-discovery as they grapple with the literary potential of the work. Winner, Golden Bear, Berlin Film Festival. North American Premiere. (110min)

Marcella (USA) Marcella Hazan is the secret ingredient that made Italian cuisine irresistible. Through her cookbooks, teaching, and passion for tradition, she stirred up a culinary revolution, turning simple ingredients into masterpieces. This mouthwatering journey is Marcella's unforgettable story, served up with flavor and flair. (98min)

Tokito: The 540-Day Journey of a Culinary Maverick (Japan) Maverick chef Yoshinori Ishii, an internationally renowned two-star Michelin chef, returns to Japan to transform a historic restaurant in Tokyo into an innovative auberge. But when a personal crisis arises, Ishii's journey takes an unexpected turn. (84min)

[Click here for the complete lineup with press materials, images, and film descriptions.](#)

About Sonoma International Film Festival

The Sonoma International Film Festival is a 501(c)3 organization dedicated to promoting the best in independent film and filmmakers from around the world, inspiring savvy film lovers, and introducing the power of film to student filmmakers. Blending a program of international film, food, wine, and fun, SIFF hosts its annual festival each March, as well as year-round events and special screenings. Carl Spence is the Artistic Director, Ginny Krieger is the Executive Director, and Dr. Kevin W. McNeely is the Director Emeritus.

SIFF's signature initiative--the Media Arts Program started at Sonoma Valley High School in 2002--introduces students to film by providing ongoing support so they may explore their creative pursuits. SIFF has given more than \$800,000 in resources to the program since its inception, with hundreds of students to date graduating through the program, in addition to providing college scholarships annually to deserving students.

The Sonoma International Film Festival is supported year-round by **Sustaining Sponsor** KHR McNeely Family Foundation and **Official Airline** Delta Air Lines.

SIFF2025 Festival Premiere Sponsors include Chihuly Studio, Gloria Ferrer Winery, Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, San Francisco, and Sebastiani Vineyards and Winery

For festival passes, tickets, and more information, visit sonomafilmfest.org.

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