



Presents a Supper Club Production  
Directed by David Gelb

# Disney **Wolfgang**



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**WOLFGANG** premieres at the Tribeca Film Festival June 12 and debuts on Disney+ June 25

**\*\*Review and Feature Coverage Is Embargoed Until June 12\*\***

Run Time: 78 Minutes

For press materials, please visit:

<https://dmedmedia.disney.com/disney-plus/wolfgang>

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### **Short Synopsis**

After a troubled childhood in Austria, Wolfgang Puck persevered to pursue his dreams and become the world's most famous chef, along the way inventing a radically new American cuisine and creating the very concept of the "celebrity chef." This is the inspiring and emotional true story of the man behind the legend.

### **Long Synopsis**

As a teenager in Austria, Wolfgang Puck harnessed his love of cooking to escape the harsh rule of his stepfather. A local apprenticeship forged his path to train at a revered French restaurant before landing in America at age 24. In '70s Hollywood, Puck began working at Ma Maison, crafting an original menu around fresh ingredients, making the once-tacky eatery a popular, acclaimed darling. Still, the lack of acknowledgment from Ma Maison's owner pushed Puck to take the biggest risk of his career and open his first restaurant, Spago, an instant hit where famous clientele dote equally on Puck's new American cuisine and personality. Almost by accident, Puck created the concept of a "celebrity chef" with his decades-spanning television appearances, building a staggering global empire of restaurants, cafes and products for home cooks. But at home, frenetic professional demands disrupted his family life. From director David Gelb ("Jiro Dreams of Sushi") and the creators of "Chef's Table," **WOLFGANG** is a candid, inspiring and emotional documentary that follows a legend as he reckons with the price of his dreams.

## Director's Statement

When I was 10 years old, my father took me to Los Angeles for the first time on one of his work trips. We had dinner at Spago, and even at a young age, I realized the feeling of importance you get just from being at the restaurant. When Wolfgang Puck, himself, came out of the kitchen, I was starstruck. Wearing chef whites and a rag on his shoulder, he proceeded to visit every table in the restaurant, cracking jokes and introducing customers to new dishes. It was wonderful to watch.

Finally, he came to our table and warmly greeted my dad like he was an old friend. Noting the wiener schnitzel on my plate, he said to me, "Hello there. You look like you are from Austria!" I felt so special that the iconic chef took the time to form a personal connection with me. Had it not been for this moment with Wolfgang, I doubt that I would have gone on to make "Jiro Dreams of Sushi" or "Chef's Table."

Around 25 years after that first table visit, I met Wolfgang in Austria to shoot his namesake documentary. Our most fun nights abroad were spent at local restaurants. The chefs—so happy to see Wolfgang—cooked big feasts before joining us to hang out and taking pictures. Wolfgang Puck is a megastar, but he's also a hometown hero.

I was moved by how readily available Wolfgang made himself to us, physically and emotionally. It was serendipitous that when we wanted to make this film, he was in a place where he wanted to participate fully. Even though he's very experienced in television, he was curious about how we work and asked questions as we set up and broke down our equipment. His commitment to the film exceeded my expectations, and the movie is so much better for it. I think he was quite impressed with the quality of the work and the sincerity of our approach. Him liking the film meant the world to us. As someone born a fourth-generation New Yorker, I'm humbled to return to the Tribeca Film Festival for **WOLFGANG**'s premiere.

The awesome thing about Wolfgang is how committed he is to his restaurants and his teams. He cares deeply. Some of the people that work in his restaurants have been there for 20 or 25 years. There's a real feeling of family and loyalty because he treats his employees so well. He told me that he likes to open new restaurants when he has chefs that need room to grow and become leaders. For decades, he's proven that a chef can be a storyteller, a teacher and a friend.

This film is an origin story that almost feels like a traditional Disney film. Just like Remy's dad in "Ratatouille," Wolfgang's stepfather discouraged him from becoming a chef. This tale follows a kid from Austria, how he makes it in Hollywood, and then completely changes the way we look at food and chefs. I hope that kids see that you can follow a dream and succeed if you take risks guided by the compass of your passion. Even though Wolfgang thought he was running away from something, he was actually running towards what he loved.

The opportunity to share this movie on Disney+ is exciting because for lots of people watching, especially kids, **WOLFGANG** may be the first documentary that they've ever seen. While Disney+ already features nature documentaries, this is among their first profiles of a single individual. We chose to focus on the core of his emotional journey, which means there are significant aspects of his career that aren't in the film. For example, Wolfgang was a pioneer of Las Vegas' chef-headlined fine dining scene.

But back to the wiener schnitzel; Wolfgang's food is very biographical. Today, he has an assortment of Austrian items on his menus. Wiener schnitzel was conceived as Austrian peasant food—a way to make a small amount of veal go a very long way. It's a powerful statement when Wolfgang takes that taste of his childhood and presents it to high-end tables. The lesson in his life, and in his cooking, is to remember where you came from. I hope multiple generations watch **WOLFGANG** and start conversations sharing their different perspectives, or just enjoy a great film together and then eat a great meal.

— David Gelb

## Q&A with Wolfgang Puck

**In your renowned career, you must have been approached previously by filmmakers who wanted to tell your story. What made you say yes this time?**

**WOLFGANG PUCK:** David Gelb became famous in our world because of “Chef’s Table.” He really is a difference-maker in food television: He changed how food is photographed. One of the reasons I thought David would do a great job telling this story is that he is so intimately involved with food. He has done so many stories about food that I knew the food wouldn’t become a side story. I didn’t want the film to be just about movie stars. I wanted to really exhibit how serious we are about our food. I wanted the documentary to be true to myself and what is important in my life.

**What was it like to share the Austria of your youth with David and his crew?**

**WP:** I did not have a great youth in Austria. For years, I didn’t go back because of my stepfather and the memories of the first chef I worked for. It’s difficult to talk about that part of my story, but I want it to be told. Everybody, especially young people, only sees me as Wolfgang, who opened Spago and then became a success, but a lot of things could have gone the other way. So it was a bittersweet homecoming.

The cities there are so old—like Villach, where I grew up—not much has changed over 60 years. It was nice to show people around.

**Describe the experience of reflecting on your life and work through the interviews featured onscreen. What were your takeaways from those conversations?**

**WP:** I don’t tend to do that much thinking about the past. I generally just look at today and tomorrow. David really made me look back much more than I ever had, and I thought it was good that he pressed me. David is so positive with everybody, and he is a master of telling stories, and the crew followed him perfectly. It was a great experience for me.

**Today, how do you feel about the celebrity chef concept?**

**WP:** The celebrity factor was an important part of our growth in the ‘80s. It was a different time where newspapers, magazines and entertainment news shows had more influences because not everyone had a cellphone with a camera. But the questions that drive me are how can I produce the best food possible, and how can I ensure people have the best time possible when they come into the restaurant. It was always about the food and hospitality.

When I look back, my biggest professional achievement is the longevity of our restaurant. Spago has been open for 39 years; that in itself is amazing. I don’t have friends who have been in business that long and still do really well.

**Are you proud that your example has significantly helped elevate the cultural standing of chefs?**

**WP:** We've been fortunate enough to make our profession respectable. Today, we have so many young people who are really smart—who could become doctors or engineers or lawyers—coming into the cooking business. That has elevated our profession. Television in the '80s and '90s changed so much about the perception of our industry. When I came to America, if you told somebody you were a cook or a chef, they said, "Eh." Now, if somebody says they're a cook or a chef, there are all these follow-up questions. "Where do you work? What do you do there?" People are so interested in food. I probably was part of the movement where we changed the food world in America.

**How many restaurants do you have now?**

**WP:** We have about 25 upscale restaurants and 80 cafes in airports and elsewhere.

**What was going through your mind the first time you watched the film?**

**WP:** Susan White—who runs part of our business as senior director, Creative Services at Wolfgang Puck Worldwide—was sitting there crying. It really touched a nerve for her. I was interested to see how David put things together. I was always wondering how they were going to include interviews with different kinds of people, including my ex-wife. The film ended up coming together really well. I was impressed with the way they shot it. Cinematographer Will Basanta did such an amazing job. The photography on the lake in Austria was really beautiful.

**Do you think this documentary is going to be something that parents and kids enjoy watching together?**

**WP:** I hope kids watch to see that sometimes adversity is not really as bad as people think it is. I also hope it helps parents teach their kids that you have to believe in yourself and you have to have endurance. A lot of young people have enthusiasm for a while, and they move on to their next thing. When they look at somebody who is successful in any profession, such as an actor or a sports star, they don't necessarily think about how many hours of hard work there have been. There's a lot to learn from looking at struggles. I hope students in cooking schools will watch the film and say, "Wow, his success didn't happen overnight. There were problems. It wasn't easy."

**Disney+ is bringing this movie to an international audience of millions. Besides the notion that endurance is required to have a career as long-lasting as yours, what do hope resonates with viewers?**

**WP:** I really take a sense of positivity away from the story. America is a great country where you can still really make it. It doesn't matter what background you come from or what language you speak; if you work hard and have passion, you can be successful.

The movie shows being successful also means having a great family. My first son, Cameron, just got his Ph.D. Byron, my second son, went to Cornell and worked in different kitchens in Spain, France, New York and so forth. He's 26 years old now and manages one of our restaurants. Then, I have two younger boys who are in boarding school in Switzerland. Oliver is 15 and so passionate about music. Alexander is a really great kid because he is friends with everybody wherever he goes. Being successful in your profession is one thing, but you've got to have balance. When I look at my life today, what I'm so proud of is my children.

## Bios

### **DAVID GELB (Director/Producer)**

David Gelb is an Emmy®- and GRAMMY®-nominated producer, director and founding partner of Supper Club, a production company. Best known for his critically acclaimed documentary feature “Jiro Dreams of Sushi,” he is also the creator of the Netflix award-winning series “Chef’s Table,” now in its eighth season, and co-creator of “Street Food.” Most recently, Gelb executive produced the Disney+ series “Marvel’s 616” while also directing the first episode, which chronicled the creation of the Japanese Spider-Man. Gelb is currently finishing directing his latest film, the upcoming Disney+ feature documentary **WOLFGANG**, chronicling the life of celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck, which will be released on June 25, 2021, following its Tribeca Film Festival premiere.

Gelb was born and raised in New York City, where he was immersed in the arts and journalism throughout his upbringing. His mother, Donna Gelb, is a food writer and recipe chef, and his father, Peter Gelb, is the general manager of the Metropolitan Opera. His grandfather, Arthur Gelb, was the managing editor of The New York Times, and his grandmother, Barbara Gelb, was an accomplished author and playwright.

### **JASON STERMAN (Producer)**

Jason Sterman is a multiple Emmy® and Peabody Award-winning producer and founding partner of Supper Club. After starting in the film industry under the tutelage of acclaimed filmmaker Tony Scott, Sterman has gone on to executive produce the Oscar®- and Emmy-nominated Netflix documentary “Winter On Fire: Ukraine’s Fight For Freedom,” the Sundance official selection “Sky Ladder: The Art of Cai Gou-Qiang” and the Netflix mini-series “Five Came Back.” In 2017, Sterman won an Emmy and Peabody Award for the Oscar-nominated Netflix documentary “13TH,” and in 2018, he won an Emmy for The New York Times Op-Docs series, “Long Live Benjamin.” In 2020, he executive produced the Netflix series “Trial By Media” and was the showrunner and executive producer of the Marvel series “Marvel’s 616” for Disney+. Currently, Sterman is produced the Disney+ documentary **WOLFGANG** and is directing and producing a documentary feature for Pixar Animation and Disney+.

### **BRIAN MCGINN (Producer)**

Brian McGinn is an Emmy®-nominated director, writer, producer and Supper Club founding partner. He is best known for the critically acclaimed Netflix documentary feature “Amanda Knox,” for which he earned two Emmy nominations. He also executive produces and directs the acclaimed Emmy-nominated Netflix documentary series “Chef’s Table,” which he developed for television with David Gelb. Additionally, McGinn and Gelb co-created and executive produced the



Netflix series “Street Food.” He previously directed the HBO comedy special “Ferrell Takes The Field,” starring Will Ferrell, and in 2018 directed an episode of the Netflix series “Dirty Money.” In 2020, McGinn was showrunner and executive producer of the Netflix series “Trial By Media,” a Supper Club and Smokehouse production, and was an executive producer of the Disney+ series “

## **WOLFGANG PUCK**

The name **Wolfgang Puck** is synonymous with the best of restaurant hospitality and the ultimate in all aspects of the culinary arts. The famed chef has built a brand that encompasses three companies: Wolfgang Puck Fine Dining Group, Wolfgang Puck Catering and Wolfgang Puck Worldwide, Inc.

Born in Austria, Wolfgang began cooking alongside his mother at a very young age. A chef herself, she encouraged Wolfgang and inspired his passion for food. So driven and inquisitive to learn, he started his formal training when he was just 14 years old. As a young chef, he worked in some of France’s greatest restaurants, including Maxim’s in Paris, the Hotel de Paris in Monaco, and the Michelin 2-starred L’Oustau de Baumanière in Provence. At the age of 24, Wolfgang took the advice of a friend and left Europe for the United States. His first job was at the restaurant La Tour in Indianapolis, where he worked from 1973 to 1975.

In 1975, Wolfgang came to Los Angeles and quickly garnered the attention of the Hollywood elite as chef of Ma Maison in West Hollywood. His dynamic personality and culinary brilliance that bridged tradition and invention made Ma Maison a magnet for the rich and famous. Wolfgang was the star attraction. He had an innate understanding of the potential of California cuisine and was pivotal in its rise to national attention during the late 1970s.

### **Wolfgang Puck Fine Dining Group**

After leaving Ma Maison in 1982, Wolfgang opened his first flagship restaurant, Spago. Located in West Hollywood on the Sunset Strip, Spago was an instant success and culinary phenomenon. His early signature dishes, such as haute cuisine pizzas topped with smoked salmon and caviar and Sonoma baby lamb with braised greens and rosemary, put him and Spago on the international gourmet map. Wolfgang and Spago earned many accolades during its popular 18 years in West Hollywood, including winning the prestigious James Beard Foundation Award for Outstanding Chef of the Year in 1991 and 1998 and the James Beard Foundation Award for Restaurant of the Year in 1994. Wolfgang is the only chef to have won the Outstanding Chef of the Year Award multiple times.

In 1983, following the success of Spago, Wolfgang opened Chinois on Main in Santa Monica. His early exposure to Southern California’s multicultural population intrigued him, inspiring him to fuse the Asian flavors and products of Koreatown, Chinatown and Thai Town with his French and California-based cuisine in a fine dining setting. Chinois on Main brings diners a fresh and imaginative Asian fusion menu that laid the groundwork for fusion cooking in America.

In 1997, after 15 years in West Hollywood, Wolfgang moved Spago to an elegant setting on Canon Drive in Beverly Hills. His menu blazed new ground, with a combination of updated Spago classics and newly conceived items. The seasonal menu drew inspiration from Wolfgang's favorite childhood dishes, offering a selection of Austrian specialties such as wiener schnitzel and Kaiserschmarren. Spago Beverly Hills garnered two coveted Michelin stars, one of only three Los Angeles restaurants to achieve this accolade. In 2012, Wolfgang fearlessly transformed Spago through a complete renovation in both menu and design.

In 2006, Wolfgang opened CUT, a sleek, contemporary steakhouse at the acclaimed Beverly Wilshire, a Four Seasons Hotel. After only one year, CUT earned a prestigious Michelin star among numerous other top accolades, including Restaurant of the Year from noted food critic John Mariani in Esquire magazine.

Wolfgang has changed the way Americans cook and eat by combining classic French techniques with California and Asian influences as well as the freshest and finest ingredients. He has also changed the face of dining in cities throughout the nation, first in Los Angeles than in Las Vegas, where he was the first star chef to create a contemporary fine dining restaurant, paving the way for other celebrated chefs and the city's metamorphosis into an acclaimed dining destination.

After opening Spago in the Forum Shops at Caesars in 1992, Wolfgang went on to open six additional restaurants in Las Vegas, including the now-closed Postrio Bar & Grill at The Venetian in 1999, Trattoria del Lupo at Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in 1999, Wolfgang Puck Bar & Grill at MGM Grand in 2004, CUT at The Palazzo in 2008, Cucina by Wolfgang Puck located in The Shops at Crystals in 2010, and his first off-strip restaurant, Wolfgang Puck Bar & Grill, in the burgeoning neighborhood of Downtown Summerlin. In 2018, Spago moved to the prestigious Bellagio Hotel.

#### Wolfgang Puck Catering

Wolfgang formed Wolfgang Puck Catering (WPC) in May 1998 alongside partner Carl Schuster. The company brings a new level of innovation and inspiration to special events and contract dining services for cultural, corporate and entertainment venues across the country. WPC offers a restaurant-quality experience in special event settings for such high-profile events as the annual Governors Ball, where Puck has been honored to serve as official chef for the post-Academy Awards® celebrity banquet for over 20 years, as well as global business summits, film premieres and presidential galas.

#### Wolfgang Puck Worldwide, Inc.

Wolfgang Puck Worldwide Inc. is a privately held corporation that includes a rapidly growing portfolio of company-owned and franchised locations of casual dining and fast-casual restaurants, as well as consumer products, including Wolfgang Puck packaged food and beverages, book publishing, and other licensing and merchandising projects.

The Wolfgang Puck casual dining segment includes a wide variety of concepts in varying venues globally. From airports and universities to hospitals, casinos and street-side restaurants, these

concepts include over 50 locations with a portfolio that continues to expand. The menus rotate new, seasonal specials throughout the year, highlighting the local produce of the season, as well as organic options where possible. Locations featuring a bar also include a boutique wine list and cocktails developed by Wolfgang's beverage team.

Wolfgang Puck has made a name for himself as a communicator. He has been a regular guest on ABC's "Good Morning America" since 1986, the year he also produced his first instructional cooking video, "Spago Cooking with Wolfgang Puck." His Emmy® Award-winning television series, "Wolfgang Puck," debuted on The Food Network in 2001 and aired for five seasons. Wolfgang also has made guest appearances on a multitude of television shows, including "The Late Show with David Letterman," "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno," "The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson," "The Ellen DeGeneres Show," "Entertainment Tonight," E! Entertainment Television, "Hollywood Squares," "Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher," "Frasier," "The Simpsons," "The History Channel," "Wheel of Fortune," "Las Vegas," "Shark" and "What's My Line." In 2001, the A&E Network featured the life of Wolfgang Puck on their popular "Biography" series. Wolfgang has written seven cookbooks, including his latest book, "Wolfgang Puck Makes it Healthy," which debuted in spring 2014. In 2017, Wolfgang opened The Rogue Experience/Wolfgang Puck Test Kitchen, a new restaurant located within the experimental test kitchen of the Wolfgang Puck corporate headquarters in West Hollywood, California. Rogue presented an intimate and untraditional tasting menu experience for eight guests each night. This is currently closed.

The chef is known to millions of television viewers who regularly see him on the Home Shopping Network (HSN). He demonstrates recipes using his growing line of Wolfgang Puck branded housewares. These include stainless steel cookware, small kitchen electrics such as panini grills, food processors, blenders and electric grills, flatware, cutlery, bakeware, his breakthrough pressure oven and other kitchen gadgets and tools.