

The Bear Serves Up Culinary Chaos

Jeremy Allen White is no foreigner to playing a flawed south-side Chicagoan with a less-than-perfect family dynamic, an odd nickname, and a chain smoking habit that just won't quit. From his iconic role of Phillip aka "Lip" Gallagher on [Showtime's *Shameless*](#), White transforms into the similar, yet equally complex, character of Carmen aka "Carry" Berzatto on FX's *The Bear*. The chances of one actor playing such analogous characters is not a great coincidence. White has mastered the brooding younger brother, too often ignored, hoping that his talent and brains will take him away from the wrong side of Chicago's tracks. Though somehow the "L" always leads White back to the same character.

White's portrayal of Carry is only one of the complicated, yet endearing characters seen within the current two season run of *The Bear*. This series has an excellent ensemble cast with each character chaotically relatable in their own unique way. The show opens as Carry, a professional chef, is attempting to pick up the pieces of his family's sandwich shop, The Beef, after the owner, his brother Mikey (John Bernthal), has committed suicide. The staff is resistant to Carry's control, specifically Mikey's best friend, "cousin" Richie (Ebon Moss-Bachrach), who considers the Beef "a delicate fucking ecosystem."

Richie is a hot-headed, somewhat dumb-witted, character whose transformation within the first two seasons of the series will leave viewers astonished. The audience's initial reaction to Richie is to be annoyed, and even agitated, by his lack of common sense and communication skills. He has all the grace of the bull in a china shop, or even worse, a bull in a fully-staffed kitchen. His immaturity seems to be the bane of Carry's existence within the first five episodes as he accidentally drugs a catering event for a children's birthday party with Xanax and is caught by Carry selling cocaine in the alleyway of The Beef. However, the endearing side of Richie begins to emerge as we see flashbacks of his relationship with Mikey and his relationship with his own daughter. He has a heart-to-heart with Carry, in which the audience becomes aware that his resistance to change within the restaurant is not about Carry, but about losing the memory of Mikey and his fear of no longer fitting in within the new staff dynamic.

Along with "cousin" Richie, the other captivating ensemble members that play the kitchen staff of The Beef include Sydney (Ayo Edebiri), Ebraheim (Edwin Lee Gibson), Sweeps (Corey Hendrix), Tina (Liza Colon-Zayas), and Marcus (L-Boy). Each episode seems to reveal more about each individual character, peeling back the layers of their personalities like an onion. Marcus, the baker, is excited by what Carry, as a professional, can bring to The Beef, while Tina, a longstanding chef within the kitchen, refers to him as "Jeff" rather than "Chef" in order to mock his, in her eyes, unnecessary training.

Unlike the rest of the staff however, newcomer Sydney Adamu is the only one who, like Carry, has worked in professional kitchens. Sydney, a young Chicago native, grew up coming to The Beef with her father. She feels an emotional attachment to the memories made within the

restaurant, and when questioned why she doesn't work in a more established restaurant, she tells Carmy "I think this place could be so different from all the other places we've been at." And like her belief about this restaurant, the series *The Bear* is so much different than all the other shows being made right now.

The cast bounces off each other with a candid ease that gives the show a sense of authenticity rarely seen. The scenes are fast, dramatic, realistic, and anxiety-inducing in a way that makes the audience feel like they themselves will be doomed if the au jus sauce does not turn out to Carmy's liking. It strays from the [formulaic shows](#) that are able to produce twenty seasons without a hitch. It is refreshing to see an ensemble with such chemistry create an atmosphere that makes the audience want to jump inside the screen and try a french omelet with potato chips crumbled on top.

The creator of the show, [Christopher Storer](#), based the idea of the show partially on his own experience working at Mr. Beef, a legendary Chicago sandwich shop, during his teenage years. The hectic atmosphere and charming neighborhood regulars were the foundation on which he built the show's premise. Storer was able to encapsulate the authentic feeling of a Chicagoan mom-and-pop shop, along with all the Italian chaos that comes with it.

Within *The Bear* more character development and creative writing has been done in two seasons than other shows are able to do in twenty. With its growing popularity and passionate audience, no one is particularly surprised by its renewal for a third season. It serves up everything you never knew you needed from a television series and more.

