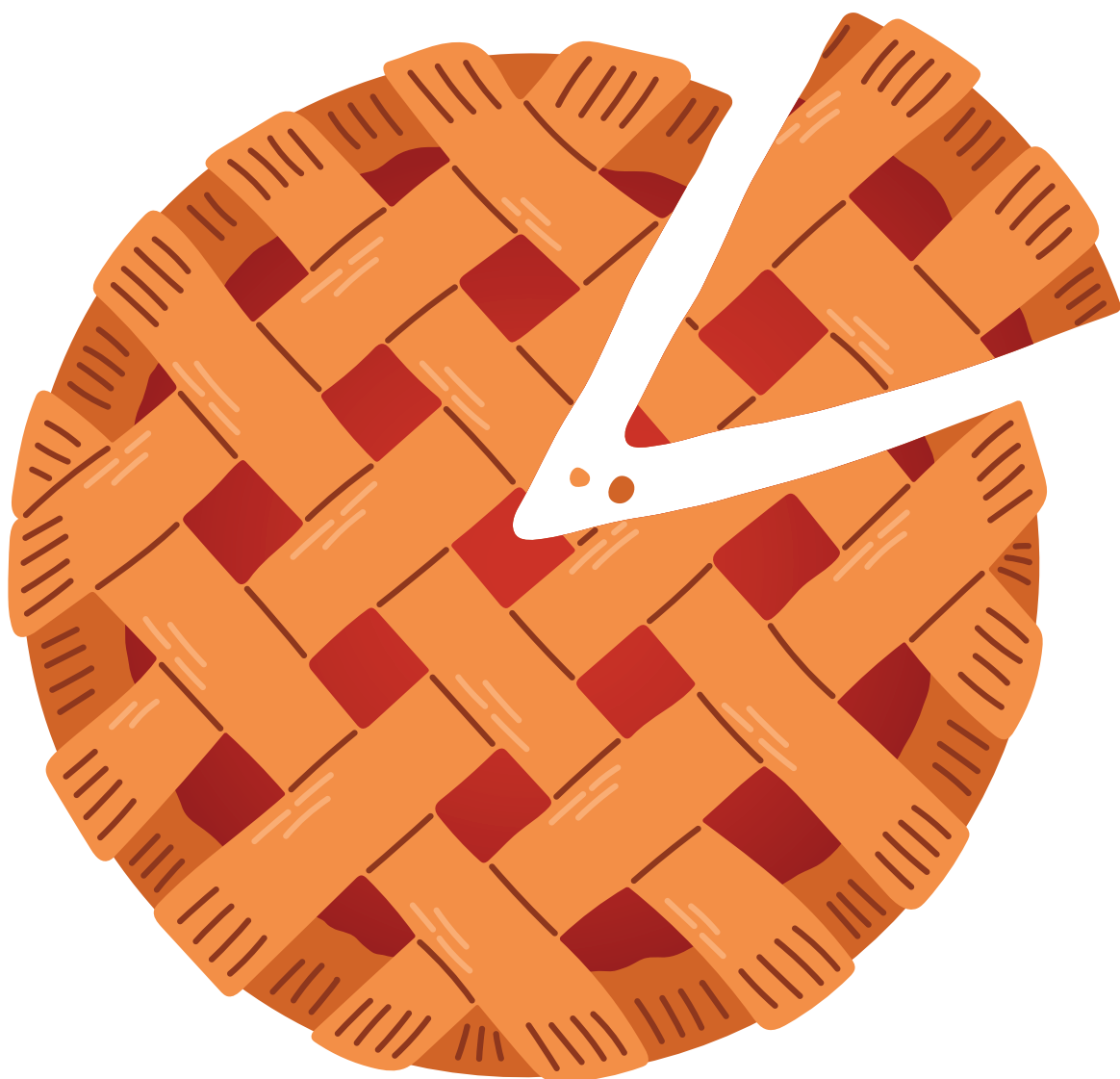


Waitress

•• Study Guide ••



Show Synopsis

Act One

Jenna is a waitress at a roadside diner, focused on making a pie when her two friends (and fellow waitresses), Becky and Dawn, enter the diner to begin the workday.

Jenna is taking an order from Joe, a loveable curmudgeon (who we learn is the owner of the diner), when she suddenly feels nauseous. She races to the bathroom with Becky and Dawn right behind her. Becky gives Jenna a pregnancy test and the results are not what Jenna wanted - she's pregnant. Not knowing quite what to do, Jenna creates a recipe for the Betrayed By My Eggs Pie.

Jenna's husband, Earl, enters the diner, stealing her tips like usual. Jenna tells Earl how fast one of her pies sold out, but he dismisses her, telling her she's "no Sara Lee." He leaves, and Becky says she shouldn't be married to him, but Jenna says he's had a tough time and she can't afford to leave anyway. She gets back to baking.

Jenna goes to her usual doctor, but instead meets the new doctor, Dr. Jim Pomatter. She is alarmed because Dr. Perkins had been her doctor for her entire life, but she awkwardly talks with Dr. Pomatter and as she leaves, she gives him the pie she had brought for Dr. Perkins. Dr. Pomatter tells her he doesn't eat sweets like that anymore, but after she leaves, he tastes the pie and is blown away.

Back at the diner, the boss and cook Cal yells at the waitresses for being late and they get to work, discussing baby books and Dawn's dating life. Joe the curmudgeon enters, senses she is pregnant, and tells Jenna about the National Pie Bake Off with its \$20,000 prize. Jenna's wheels start spinning in her head thinking of new pie ideas.

As she waits for the bus, Dr. Pomatter appears at the bus stop as well. He tells her of a woman he loved who worked at a bakery, and that Jenna's pies are better. Jenna gets home, and shortly after so does Earl, drunk and in a rage because he was fired for being late all the time. He comes on to Jenna and she turns him down. This makes Earl furious, and just as he is about to hit her she tells him she's pregnant. His tone changes and he is overjoyed.

Back at the diner, Dawn is nervous about a date, and Jenna tells her friends that she is going to enter the pie bake off to win money to leave Earl. Jenna starts hiding some of her tips.

Meanwhile, Dawn's suitor Ogie is very persistent but Dawn thinks he is peculiar. He finally wins her over by wanting to take her on a date to a reading of the Federalist Papers. With Dawn being into Revolutionary War reenactments as well, she begins to fall in love with him.

Jenna has some bleeding, so she goes to Dr. Pomatter's office for an early morning appointment. When Dr. Pomatter tells her everything is ok, she gets mad, wanting to know why he had her come down here so early before his office is even open and since he has no answer she storms out. Jenna storms back in to get her forgotten purse and kisses the doctor. They stop themselves because they are both married and she's pregnant, but in the end succumb to the temptation.

Act Two

Jenna is baking at the diner and catches Becky and Cal the cook kissing. When Jenna calls Becky out on cheating on her elderly husband, Becky will not be shamed, and says indulging in your feelings can be a good thing.

A month after the kiss, Jenna goes to Dr. Pomatter's office. He asks her to please not go a month without contacting him again, and they kiss again. The affair continues. Later when Jenna goes to another doctor's appointment, she is disappointed and told that he had to leave town with his wife for a wedding. Jenna listens to her baby's heart and imagines what she will write to the baby in the baby book Dawn gave her.

Dr. Pomatter surprises Jenna at work. She tries to tell him she can't live like this and he gives her a golden pie plate, asking her to bake for him.

Dawn and Ogie are getting married! At the wedding reception, Joe tells Jenna she should go for what she wants in life. Earl enters in a rage and makes Jenna leave. At home, he shows her how he found her hidden tips. She says it's for stuff for the baby and he takes all the money. Jenna is crushed. She won't be able to make it to the pie bake-off now, and is disappointed in her life. She begins to go into labor.

In the hospital, Jenna is in agony. Joe is wheeled in because he is having surgery down the hall, and gives her a card. Earl comes in ready to film the birth. Hospital residents come in and one introduces herself as Francine, Dr. Pomatter's wife. Jenna is mortified, the residents leave, and Jenna has a baby girl. It is love at first sight. She tells Earl she's leaving him and to get out. He does!

Dr. Pomatter comes to check on her, and Jenna says after meeting his wife, their affair must end. He agrees, and they thank each other for how they have changed each other's lives.

Jenna names her baby Lulu, and opens the card Joe gave her. She is inheriting the diner, and Joe just wants a pie named after him. Time goes by. Back at the diner, tons of pies are being boxed up. Lulu the little girl runs around as Jenna runs the business, renamed Lulu's Pies.

Character List

Jenna Hutcherson - Unhappily married expert piemaker who works at a roadside diner and dreams of more.

Dawn - Eccentric and youngest of the waitresses, enjoys playing Betsy Ross in Revolutionary War reenactments and is looking for a love who likes the same.

Becky - Oldest of the waitresses, Becky has seen it all, done it all, and got the t-shirt. Incredibly particular about things like the placement of salt and pepper shakers on tables.

Earl Hutcherson - Jenna's husband who is handsome but peaked in high school. Narcissistic and short-tempered and abusive toward Jenna.

Dr. Jim Pomatter - Jenna's sweet gynecologist who is blown away by Jenna's pie and falls for her despite being married.

Ogie - Quirky oddball in love with Dawn. Enjoys the Federalist Papers and Revolutionary War reenactments.

Joe - Acts curmudgeonly but truly is sweet. Owner of the diner Jenna and the others work at.

Cal - The cook and the boss at the diner. Brash, unsentimental, but still charming.



Adrienne Shelly and Her Legacy

Waitress - The Musical is based on the 2007 film *Waitress* with Keri Russell. But the story of film writer, director, and co-star, Adrienne Shelly is a bittersweet story in itself. Shelly was considered an indie movie star, and had struggled for years finding her place in the film industry, where women are not always in the positions of power. When she created *Waitress*, she made the film of her dreams that mirrored much of her own life.

Like the main character of *Waitress* (Jenna), Shelly was a new mother, a creator, an artist who dreamed of more, and worked and wrote the screenplay for *Waitress* while she was pregnant with her daughter Sophie. This multitalent then wrote, directed, set designed, costume designed, and acted in her film *Waitress*.

While Adrienne Shelly was thrilled to be accepted into the Sundance Film Festival, she sadly had another parallel with *Waitress* lead character Jenna when she became the victim of violence. On November 1, 2006, Shelly's husband Andy Ostroy found her body at the office that she used in Manhattan's West Village. Although the door was unlocked and money was missing, NYPD at first thought she had taken her own life.

However, her autopsy showed neck compression, and with her husband's insistence that she would never take her own life, the investigation continued and found footprints near where her body was found. This sneaker print matched other prints from construction being done in her building, and shortly after a 19-year old construction worker confessed to her murder. Shelly was unable to see her film debut at Sundance in January 2007, and also missed seeing the film's great success, the Tony-nominated musical that came after, and watching her daughter grow up.

Her husband honored his wife's legacy by establishing the Adrienne Shelly Foundation, a nonprofit that supports women filmmakers by providing them with grants, scholarships, living stipends and other funds. These winners are further supported by the foundation's partnerships with organizations like NYU, Columbia University, Sundance Institute, Tribeca Film Institute and more.

<https://adrienneshellyfoundation.org/>



Adapting Waitress

The journey to Broadway and the women behind it

New Jersey couple Fran and Barry Weissler have produced some of Broadway's most beloved musicals including *Chicago*, *La Cage aux Folles*, *Pippin*, *Annie Get Your Gun* and *Finding Neverland*. They pick stories that will fill audiences' hearts, which is how adapting the 2007 film *Waitress* into a Broadway musical began. The Weisslers bought the movie rights shortly after the film premiered.

Writer Jessie Nelson's 12-year-old daughter was obsessed with the film *Waitress*, and played it on repeat at their house. When Nelson was approached to write the book for the musical, she knew first-hand how empowering the film was for women to watch, and agreed to be a part of the project. While Nelson had written several popular character-driven movies such as *I Am Sam* and *Corrina, Corrina*, this would be her first foray into Broadway. With the blessing of Shelly's ex-husband, Nelson was able to utilize some of Shelly's unfinished scripts to write the book for the musical.

Veteran theatre director Diane Paulus championed both Nelson and Bareilles, and the Weisslers attended a Sara Bareilles concert in Central Park since they only knew her by name. She was an instant hit with the duo, and they asked her if she would like to be a part of creating the musical. Bareilles was game, and wrote "She Used to Be Mine" which completely captured the spirit the Weisslers were hoping for.

Bareilles had become a household name with the tongue-in-cheek pop song "Love Song," the debut single off her 2007 debut album, *Little Voice*. Her label Epic Records wasn't quite happy with what she was showing them and kept asking her to write more, like a marketable love song. Frustrated, she went into the rehearsal space and quickly wrote "Love Song."



"I'm not going to write you a love song, cause you asked for it, cause you need one.."

The song seemed to write itself.

Bareilles had an exciting new challenge on her hands with *Waitress: The Musical*. She found it fun to write for a character, and the experience ultimately widened her scope and changed the way she writes songs. In 2015 she released the concept album *What's Inside: Songs from Waitress* where she enlisted pop star Jason Mraz to sing on two tracks. Mraz was then hired to play the role of Dr. Pomatter on Broadway, with Bareilles acting next to him in the lead role in some performances.



This was the first time pop star Sara Bareilles had even worked on Broadway. She not only wrote the music but also starred as the lead character in select performances. She is also the lead in the filmed version of the *Waitress* musical that recently streamed in theatres around the country. (Fun fact: she met her current partner Joe Tippett while working together on *Waitress*!) And she's had other Broadway appearances post-*Waitress*, including her Tony-nominated appearance as The Baker's Wife in a revival of *Into the Woods*. She is currently writing the music and lyrics for the musical *The Interestings*, based on the book by Meg Wolitzer.

Waitress was the first Broadway production to boast an all-women production team, and while they didn't intentionally try to create an all-woman creative team, sometimes things work out the way they are supposed to. A supportive sisterhood was formed between Bareilles, Paulus, Nelson, and choreographer Lorin Latarro, and they strove to keep Adrienne Shelly's legacy alive. *Waitress: The Musical* opened at the American Repertory Theatre in 2015 to critical and audience raves, and it premiered on Broadway in 2016.

Sarah Bareilles interview with American Repertory Theatre:
<https://americanrepertorytheater.org/media/stories-in-song/>

Breaking the Narrative

The connecting theme for our 2024-2025 Theatre Season is “Breaking the Narrative,” because all of the stories we will be telling upend expectations and break the mold. In *Waitress*, pie-maker Jenna is unhappy in her abusive relationship, and when she has an unwanted pregnancy, she plots a way to leave her husband.

This leads to an affair with her doctor that goes on for the duration of her pregnancy. In a more typical Hollywood movie, Jenna and Dr. Pomatter would sail off into the sunset together, leaving their partners in the dust and starting anew together. *Waitress* filmmaker Adrienne Shelly went for a more honest and realistic ending though, with Jenna telling Dr. Pomatter that they need to end the relationship right there before they drag it on and end up hurting everybody. Jenna also leaves her husband, and raises the baby - not alone - but with a little help from her friends.

Funny Recipes from the Script

“My Husband’s a Jerk Chicken Pot Pie”

Pound chicken til it’s unrecognizable
Pack flour quickly
Use only essential ingredients
Simmer without a lid, allowing the vapor to
escape swiftly from the moisture

“Getting Out of the Mud Mud Pie”

Generous scoops of mocha almond ice cream
Sprinkled with bittersweet chocolate morsels
And slivered almonds

Photo of one of our prop pies made by our
prop shop team at the Arvada Center!

