

Ketchup & Soya Sauce (2019)

<https://www.ks.upfilm.ca>

A film by ZhiMin Hu

Logline:

Six Chinese-Canadian couples reveal how love, culture, and history collide in mixed relationships shaped by Canada's legacy of interracial taboos.

Short Synopsis:

A documentary revealing the nuances of mixed relationships between first-generation Chinese immigrant and Canadian while exploring historical taboos and criminalization of interracial relations in Canada. We follow six couples in different age groups as they contend with communication challenges, relationships with extended family, differing food habits, financial conflict, interpretation of intimacy, and how their relationships were shaped by the history of mixed relationships in Canada since the 1930's.

Long Synopsis:

Ketchup & Soya Sauce is a feature documentary that unpacks the emotional, cultural, and historical complexity of mixed relationships between first-generation Chinese immigrants and their Canadian partners, across six decades and generations. Told through the stories of six diverse couples and structured in thematic chapters — including food habits, language barriers, financial management, political views, relationships with in-laws, child-rearing, and conflict resolution — the film explores how intimacy, identity, and history intersect in deeply personal and unexpected ways.

The film opens with Verma Demerson and Harry Yip, a couple whose relationship in the 1940s defied the law — and paid the price. Verma, a white Canadian woman, was imprisoned for being pregnant out of wedlock with Harry, a Chinese immigrant working as a restaurant waiter. After they married, she lost her Canadian citizenship — a stark reminder of the state-sanctioned racism that once criminalized interracial relationships in Canada.

From this harrowing history, the film moves through time to explore quieter, but equally complex, relationships in the decades that follow. ZhiMei, now in her 80s, reflects on her late partner Marcel, with whom she shared decades of love without ever marrying or living together — a bond shaped by culture, religion, and unspoken limits.

We then meet couples across younger generations — Steve and Stannie (60s), Gerald and Ryan (40s), Flavia and Luc-Eric (30s), and Xingyu and Roxane (20s) — each navigating different cultural intersections of Chinese and Canadian life. Among them, Gerald and Ryan, a queer couple, offer a layered perspective on how sexuality and cultural identity collide in their pursuit of love and acceptance.

Through the lens of memory and cultural history, *Ketchup & Soya Sauce* uncovers how the most intimate rituals of daily life — cooking, speaking, parenting, arguing, showing affection — are shaped by what we inherit and what we resist. The result is not just a portrait of cross-cultural love, but a meditation on the resilience and wisdom of the heart.

