

= Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire =

" Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire " , also known as " The Simpsons Christmas Special " , is the series premiere episode of The Simpsons . It was the first episode to air despite originally being the eighth episode produced for season one . It is the only full @-@ length episode to air during the 1980s , having originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on December 17 , 1989 .

In the episode , Homer Simpson discovers that he will not be getting a Christmas bonus and thus his family has no money to buy Christmas presents after they had to waste money on getting his son Bart 's tattoo removed . He decides to keep their financial troubles a secret and gets a job as a shopping mall Santa Claus , but later discovers that the job does not pay enough . Desperate for a miracle , Homer and Bart go to the dog @-@ racing track on Christmas Eve in hopes of earning some money but end up adopting an abandoned greyhound , Santa 's Little Helper .

The episode was the only one to be written by Mimi Pond , and it was directed by David Silverman . " Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire " was nominated for two Emmy Awards in 1990 , and has received positive reviews from television critics . It was viewed by approximately 13 @.@ 4 million viewers in its original airing .

= = Plot = =

After attending the Springfield Elementary School Christmas pageant , the Simpsons prepare for the holiday season . Bart and Lisa prepare their letters to Santa , however , Bart 's letter enrages Homer and Marge and they forbid Bart from getting a tattoo . The next day , Marge takes the kids to the mall to go Christmas shopping . Bart slips away to the tattoo parlor and attempts to get a tattoo that reads " Mother " . With the tattoo practically completed , Marge bursts in and drags Bart two doors down to the dermatologist to have it removed . Counting on Homer 's Christmas bonus , Marge spends all of the family 's holiday money on the procedure . Meanwhile , at the power plant Homer 's very mean @-@ spirited boss , Mr. Burns , announces that there will be no Christmas bonus this year . Whilst discovering there is no money for Christmas presents and not wanting to worry the family , takes a job as a shopping mall Santa at the suggestion of his friend Barney Gumble . On Christmas Eve , Bart goes to the mall and harasses Santa , exposing Homer 's secret . Bart is apologetic for the prank and actually supportive of Homer 's moonlighting , remarking " You must really love us to sink so low " . After Homer is paid less than expected for his Department Store Santa work , he and Bart receive a dog racing tip from Barney .

At Springfield Downs , Homer , inspired by an announcement about a last @-@ minute entry named Santa 's Little Helper , bets all his money on the 99 @-@ 1 long shot . The greyhound finishes last . As Homer and Bart leave the track , they watch the dog 's owner angrily disowning him for losing the race . Bart pleads with Homer to keep the dog as a pet , and he reluctantly agrees . When Bart and Homer return home , Homer finally comes clean to the family that he did not get his bonus , however the family assumes Santa 's Little Helper is their present and are overjoyed by Homer 's gesture . The Simpsons family then celebrate by singing " Rudolph the Red @-@ Nosed Reindeer " .

= = Development = =

= = = Origin of The Simpsons = = =

The Simpsons creator Matt Groening conceived of the idea for the Simpsons in the lobby of James L. Brooks 's office . Brooks , the producer of the sketch comedy program The Tracey Ullman Show , wanted to use a series of animated shorts as bumpers between sketches . He had asked Groening to pitch an idea for a series of animated shorts , which Groening initially intended to present as his Life in Hell series . However , when Groening realized that animating Life in Hell would require the rescinding of publication rights for his life 's work , he chose another approach and formulated his

version of a dysfunctional family .

The Simpson family first appeared as shorts in The Tracey Ullman Show on April 19 , 1987 . Groening submitted only basic sketches to the animators and assumed that the figures would be cleaned up in production . However , the animators merely re @-@ traced his drawings , which led to the crude appearance of the characters in the initial short episodes . In 1989 , a team of production companies adapted The Simpsons into a half @-@ hour series for the Fox Broadcasting Company . Brooks negotiated a provision in the contract with the Fox network that prevented Fox from interfering with the show 's content . Groening said his goal in creating the show was to offer the audience an alternative to what he called " the mainstream trash " that they were watching . The half @-@ hour series premiered on December 17 , 1989 , with " Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire " .

= = = Production = = =

" Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire " is the first episode of The Simpsons and the Fox network was nervous about the show because they were unsure if it could sustain the audience 's attention for the duration of the episode . They proposed doing three seven @-@ minute shorts per episode and four specials until the audience adjusted , but in the end , the producers gambled by asking Fox for 13 full @-@ length episodes . The series was originally planned to premiere earlier in the fall of 1989 with the episode " Some Enchanted Evening " , but due to major problems with the animation of that episode , the series began on December 17 with this episode . " Some Enchanted Evening " instead aired as the season finale . The episode , being the first to air , lacked the opening sequence which was later added in the second episode , " Bart the Genius " , when Groening realized that a longer opening sequence resulted in less animation .

The " Santas of many lands " portion of the Christmas pageant is based on Groening 's experience in the second grade when he did a report on Christmas in Russia . Groening also used that reference in his comic strip " Life in Hell " when he spoofed himself as a young man , being told that it is too bad his grandmother is from Russia , because Christmas is against the law there . Also , Groening claims that this episode has been incorrectly credited with creating the " alternate version " of " Jingle Bells " that has become a well @-@ known children 's playground song .

Mimi Pond wrote the episode and staff writer Al Jean came up with the title , which alludes to " The Christmas Song " , also known as " Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire . " David Silverman directed this episode , while Rich Moore storyboarded it and designed Ned Flanders . Several of the scenes were laid out by Eric Stefani , brother of Gwen Stefani . In this episode , Barney had blonde hair which was the same color as his skin , but that was later dropped because of the belief that only the Simpson family should have such hair . Seymour Skinner , Milhouse Van Houten , Sherri and Terri , Moe Szyslak , Mr. Burns , Barney Gumble , Patty and Selma , Ned and Todd Flanders , Santa 's Little Helper , Snowball II , Dewey Largo , and Lewis all make their first appearances in this episode . Snowball I is mentioned for the first time and Waylon Smithers can be heard over the speaker at the power plant , but he is not seen .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire " finished thirtieth place in the weekly ratings for the week of December 11 ? 17 , 1989 with a Nielsen rating of 14 @.@ 5 and was viewed in approximately 13 @.@ 4 million homes . It was the second highest rated show on the Fox network up to that point . Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . IGN 's Robert Canning in a 2008 review of the episode noted , " though not the funniest of episodes , it certainly was groundbreaking . [...] With this episode , The Simpsons had its premise down , and it certainly had its edge . " Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , the authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , said of the episode : " pretty standard early fare , with the series not quite hitting its stride . " They went on to say , " the realism of the first season is much apparent , with only the laser used to remove Bart 's

tattoo hinting at what the series will become . " In a DVD review of the first season , David B. Grelck gave the episode a rating of 3 ½ / 5 and commented : " Surprisingly , this early episode has a lot of the zest of the later shows , despite fairly odd looking art and a very Walter Matthau voice for Homer , still has some laughs " . Colin Jacobson at DVD Movie Guide said in a review that the episode " is good but not great early Simpsons " and further commented : " For many years I thought of ? Roasting ? as a terrible episode , but it ? s not . While I don ? t feel it ? s anything special , it remains a fairly entertaining show that has a few entertaining moments . "

The episode was nominated for two Emmy Awards in 1990 : " Outstanding Animated Program " and " Outstanding Editing for a Miniseries or Special . " Because " Simpsons Roasting on an Open Fire " was considered a separate special , The Simpsons was nominated twice in the Animated Program category . This episode lost to fellow The Simpsons episode " Life on the Fast Lane " . In 2009 , the website named the episode number 4 on its " Top 10 Holiday Specials " list , writing " With the off @-@ beat sense of humor that we have learned to love from The Simpsons and a story showing the value of family on the Christmas holiday , we can 't help but watch this great special every year . "

In 2014 , it was selected by current showrunner , Al Jean , as one of five essential episodes in the show 's history .

= = Home release = =

The special was the subject of the series ' first home video release , The Simpsons Christmas Special , released on VHS in 1991 . The episode was also included in The Simpsons ? Christmas (later retitled Christmas with The Simpsons) , a DVD compilation of the series ' Christmas episodes , produced in 2003 . The episode was also included on The Simpsons season one DVD set , which was released on September 25 , 2001 . Groening , Brooks , and Silverman participated in the DVD 's audio commentary .