

= The Food Wife =

" The Food Wife " is the fifth episode of the twenty @-@ third season of the American animated sitcom The Simpsons . It originally aired on Fox in the United States on November 13 , 2011 , and was seen by around 7 @.@ 5 million people during this broadcast . In the episode , Homer feels left out when Marge , Bart , and Lisa join a group of foodies . Their personal blog quickly becomes popular and the trio is invited to a molecular gastronomy restaurant . Feeling pity toward Homer , Marge invites him along . However , after beginning to worry that he will reclaim his position as the parent perceived as the most fun by the children , she sends him to the wrong address . Homer unknowingly arrives at a meth lab , where a gunfight starts as the police burst in .

The episode was written by Matt Selman . It contains several references to different foods and famous chefs , and is largely devoted to the foodie culture , which Selman has said that he " always thought was funny and fascinating . The idea of food as not only something you enjoy eating , but as something that you are so passionate about that you 're kind of bragging about it . " Tim Heidecker and Eric Wareheim , the stars and creators of Tim and Eric Awesome Show , Great Job ! , guest starred in the episode as two foodies and performed a hip hop song that makes fun of foodies . Chefs and media personalities Anthony Bourdain , Gordon Ramsay , and Mario Batali also guest starred in the episode , but as themselves in a dream sequence . Although " The Food Wife " has received generally positive reviews from television critics , particularly for the hip hop song , it has also attracted criticism from certain food critics .

= = Plot = =

Homer takes Bart and Lisa to a video game convention for another fun Saturday . Upon their return home , Marge feels upset that Homer gets to be the " fun dad " , while she is stuck doing unexciting things with the children , not helped by Homer being a sexist stating that 's how it should be . The next Saturday , she decides to take Bart and Lisa to an " X @-@ Games " convention , thinking it will be something fun . However , when they arrive , they are disappointed to find out that it is a Christian event , and the actual name of the convention is " ? (Cross) Games " . The car engine dies on the way back and they are forced to stop in the neighborhood of Little Ethiopia , where the three go into a restaurant serving Ethiopian food . Although initially averse to the exotic delicacies , Marge is reminded of the fact that she wants to be a fun mom and therefore asks for the most authentic dish on the menu for her and her children . All three of them enjoy the food . At the restaurant , Marge , Bart , and Lisa bump into a group of foodies , who encourage them to start their own food blog , " The Three Mouthketeers " . The blog quickly becomes popular and the three spend much time together trying out new food and writing about it . A jealous Homer makes a quick announcement of his dislike for trying new foods and dishes over dining on such pedestrian , reliable fare as fast food and leftovers , causing the kids to call him narrow minded and boring .

When the trio gets an invitation to an exclusive molecular gastronomy restaurant called El Chemistri , Homer learns the truth and confronts Marge . Realizing that the kids would rather spend time with Marge and having no one respect him , Homer sadly retreats in the garage making baseball bats . Marge invites Homer out of pity , which makes him happy . After announcing this to Bart and Lisa , he reclaims his " fun dad " title , leaving Marge worried about losing her new bond with the children . In one of her dreams that night , she and the children are trying out new food together with chef Anthony Bourdain when Homer jumps in on a hop ball and eats up everything , taking away the children 's attention from Marge . Homer , Bart , Lisa , Bourdain , and other famous chefs that have shown up (like Mario Batali and Swedish Chef) then jump away from Marge on hop balls , leaving her by herself . Afterwards , Gordon Ramsay appears next to her , using profanity while telling her that she should not have invited Homer . Before removing her from his dream , Gordon tells Marge to find a way to keep Homer from stealing her thunder by misleading him away from El Chemistri . The next day , she deliberately gives Homer the wrong address to the restaurant . Bart and Lisa learn the truth and confront Marge about her actions .

When Marge and the children arrive at El Chemistri , Homer unknowingly arrives at an illegal meth

lab that he thinks is the actual restaurant . While the trio eat their meal (deconstructed Caesar salad) with the other foodies clearly enjoying themselves , Marge feels guilty about misdirecting Homer . Meanwhile , Homer meets the meth dealer and other drug addicts , whom he believes to be food hipsters . Just as he is about to have a taste of the meth (which he thinks is food produced with the help of molecular gastronomy) , the police burst in and a gunfight ensues between them and the drug addicts . Homer realizes that he had been duped by Marge and is caught up in the fracas . At El Chemistri , Marge receives a panicked text message from Homer requesting help , and she asks the other foodies to help save her husband . They refuse , so she and the kids run off the meth lab . After arriving , Marge throws apple pie from her doggie bag into the mouth of the meth dealer . This causes a flashback inside his mind to his childhood days when his mother used to make apple pie . With the help of this distraction , the police subdue him . Marge apologizes to Homer and though angry with her for leaving him out , he is grateful and promises to let her be the fun parent once in a while . The Simpsons have a family fun day at Krustyland . There , Homer keeps his promise to Marge and giving the kids \$ 50 to enjoy themselves , while he spends quality time with her .

= = Production = =

" The Food Wife " was written by executive producer of The Simpsons Matt Selman . The writing process began around September 2010 . According to Selman , the episode mainly revolves around Homer and Marge competing about who is perceived as the most fun by Bart and Lisa , a situation that he thinks parents can identify with in real @-@ life . The episode also focuses heavily on foodies and food blogs . Selman said in an interview with New York magazine 's Grub Street publication that the foodie culture is " just a world that I always thought was funny and fascinating . The idea of food as not only something you enjoy eating , but as something that you are so passionate about that you 're kind of bragging about it . ' I 'm the one who discovered this particular Korean pork @-@ neck soup restaurant , ' and you can kind of claim that as yours . The blogging just feeds into that kind of territorial element that I always thought was inherently funny . And when I write Simpsons episodes , I try to start with a world I think is funny , and think , ' What 's a good story we can tell in that world , using the characters that we have ? ' "

Describing himself as " sort of a foodie " , Selman has said that food is constantly on his mind and that he particularly likes reading food critic Jonathan Gold 's reviews in LA Weekly . He told LA Weekly 's Squid Ink food blog that he likes foodies , despite making fun of them in " The Food Wife " . He commented that on the show , he has often " taken something that I love , found the one little weird , bad thing about it and harped on that " , giving foodies as an example and writing : " You can make fun of them for being pretentious or snobby or taking the fun out of eating . That you 'd rather photograph something than taste it is a funny nuance of the phenomenon . That it 's more about sticking your flag in something than actually enjoying it . We kind of make fun of foodies , but in real life we actually love them . "

Selman was pleased with the finished result of the episode . He noted in the interview with Grub Street that Marge starting to blog about food " does not sound inherently exciting , but the episode itself is actually very exciting , and I 'm super thrilled with the way it 's turned out . " Selman thinks a strong thing about the episode is the fact that , despite Homer 's love for food , Homer is not the one that becomes a foodie as one might expect . He explained that this is because although Homer loves eating , " he 's kind of a blue @-@ collar kind of guy who doesn 't like foreign food , weird food , savoring food , intellectualizing food , blogging about it , photographing it ? he just wants to be stuffed all the time . "

= = Cultural references = =

Selman wanted to include things in the episode that " only really hard @-@ core foodies would have any idea what we were talking about . This was like a love letter to foodie culture . " Food references featured in the episode include jokes about sriracha sauce and sous @-@ vide cooking , referrals to chefs Wylie Dufresne , Frank Bruni , and Ruth Reichl , a mention of the soup ph? from

Vietnam and how to pronounce it correctly , and the inclusion of the El Chemistri owner who is based on the Spanish chef José Andrés (known for using molecular gastronomy) . Selman has commented that food produced with the help of molecular gastronomy " lends itself to comedy quite nicely . There ? s a dish [at El Chemistri] , for instance , called Regret . The waiter cries into your soup when he serves it . The human tear is the final ingredient . " The fictional character Swedish Chef is also seen in the episode , and the scene where the meth dealer is reminded of his childhood after eating the apple pie is a reference to the Pixar film Ratatouille , which was written and directed by former Simpsons consultant Brad Bird .

In addition to the foodie culture , " The Food Wife " parodies the video game industry and references games such as Assassin 's Creed , God of War , Half @-@ Life , BioShock , Call of Duty , Medal of Honor , Madden NFL , and Angry Birds . In the episode , Homer , Bart , and Lisa visit a video game convention called the Expensive Electronic Entertainment Expo (E4) , which is a reference to the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) that is presented annually in the United States by the Entertainment Software Association . This marked the first time that the family visited a video game convention in The Simpsons . Selman and other staff members on the show had previously visited E3 during the release of The Simpsons video games such as The Simpsons Game . While appearing on GameTrailers TV with Geoff Keighley on November 11 , 2011 , Selman commented that " We 've been to so many [E3s] and we 've been pushed around , and knocked around , and seen so many PR guys [talk] about how hard it was working on their game . We 've seen how expensive the food is , and how nuts it is , and the bloggers , and the photos , and just the noises [...] We had to do it on the show . "

In the episode , Homer and his children want to see the unveiling of a new Funtendo console called Zii Zu , which is a reference to Nintendo 's Wii U console . As he and the children make their way through the crowded convention to get to the unveiling , the screen turns into a first @-@ person shooter game through the eyes of Homer . He uses Frisbees and a fire extinguisher as weapons to get forward . According to Selman , the inspiration for this came from the fact that " if you 've been to E3 , you know it 's insane , it 's super @-@ crowded , it 's super @-@ loud , and walking through it feels like a video game , like a nightmarish first @-@ person video game of bloggers and nerds . You just want to get the thing that you want to get to . "

= = = Guest appearances = = =

Tim Heidecker and Eric Wareheim , the stars and creators of the American sketch comedy television series Tim and Eric Awesome Show , Great Job ! , guest starred in the episode as foodies Amus Bruse and Fois Garth , respectively . These two characters are among the foodies that Marge , Bart , and Lisa meet at the Ethiopian restaurant . In the episode , they rhyme a hip hop song that according to Selman is " all bragging about how awesome and cool you are as a foodie . " It was co @-@ written by the duo , and was inspired by the song " Empire State of Mind " . Selman has commented that " In animated TV shows , whenever you 're trying to show people having fun doing their new thing [in this case , Marge and the children creating content for their blog] , it just kind of becomes a boring montage . And we 've done so many montages on The Simpsons over 25 years , it 's like , oh , God , no more montages . [...] So we were like , ' Why not do a silly rap song ? ' Rapping is sort of inherently boastful , and there 's something about being a foodie that 's inherently boastful . It 's like the boastfulness links those things . So Tim and Eric perform a food rap song in the show ? an extremely silly rap song , and the name is intentionally silly : ' Blogging a Food Blog . ' "

American chef Anthony Bourdain guest starred in the episode as himself . Selman wanted him on the show because he is a big fan and he thinks Marge would have a liking for him . Bourdain 's appearance was cut short because the episode ended up being too long , and as a result , his " bad boy persona is not fully explored , " Selman told Squid Ink . In addition to Bourdain , guest stars in the episode include chefs and media personalities Gordon Ramsay and Mario Batali as themselves . These three all appear in Marge 's dream . When asked by Digital Spy about his appearance , Ramsay said that " I grew up watching The Simpsons and love that they 're foodies , " and joked

that " For God 's sake , I had to promise Marge a spot on MasterChef to get on the bloody show ! " Selman wishes that he could have given Batali more than one line , but has admitted that " You just can 't fit everything into a 21 @-@ minute show . "

= = Release = =

The episode originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on November 13 , 2011 . It was watched by approximately 7 @.@ 5 million people during this broadcast . In the demographic for adults aged 18 ? 49 , the episode received a 3 @.@ 4 Nielsen rating (down five percent from the previous episode) and an eight percent share . The Simpsons became the highest @-@ rated program in Fox 's Animation Domination lineup that night in terms of both total viewers and in the 18 ? 49 demographic , finishing before new episodes of Family Guy , American Dad ! , and Allen Gregory . For the week of November 7 ? 13 , " The Food Wife " finished seventeenth in the ratings among all prime @-@ time broadcasts in the 18 ? 49 demographic .

= = = Critical reviews = = =

Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . Ology 's Josh Harrison gave it an eight out of ten rating , writing that " You gotta love these Simpsons episodes that really get into the heart of a subculture . Diving head @-@ first into the world of foodies and food blogging (after a hilarious geeky pit @-@ stop at a video game expo) , ' The Food Wife ' shish @-@ kabobs gourmet diehards while highlighting a very real problem between Homer and Marge . " He concluded that the episode is " a definite swing for the fences , and I think it hits its mark completely . " The scenes at the video game convention were praised by Anthony Severino of Game Revolution as well . He commented that the writers " nailed it . Everything from the massive displays , long lines , and even the look of the Los Angeles Convention Center was spot on . The best was how they portrayed people with ' VIP passes ' , you know those things that we journalists get , as douches who think they 're better than the regulars . "

In his review of " The Food Wife " , HitFix 's Alan Sepinwall commended it for " stay [ing] true to the characters . Of course the kids would consider Homer to be the fun dad on those occasions when he 's actually making an effort , and of course Marge would feel jealous of this . And if she goes too far in trying to keep this as her special thing , she also recognizes it immediately , feels guilty throughout the meal and then heads off to save the day , complete with a great homage to the climax of Ratatouille . " Sepinwall also praised the episode for being " packed with great jokes " , such as Heidecker and Wareheim 's hip hop song and the scenes at the video game convention where the screen turns into a first @-@ person shooter game . Similarly , Haydens Childs of The A.V. Club praised the episode as " funny and well @-@ observed " , giving it a B + grade , and cited the hip hop song as the highlight of the episode . He also praised Bourdain , Batali , and Ramsay , and stated that he wished Bourdain would have gotten a bigger part in the episode . Childs further wrote that " The best thing about this episode is that it doesn 't try to stuff any outlandish plot mechanics or out @-@ of @-@ character character moments down the viewers ' throats . It sticks to the basics : the family dynamic combined with gentle mocking of a still @-@ current fad . I say ' still @-@ current ' because although it is probably true that food blogging is a bit past its expiration date in some cities , I don 't think that it has been overdone everywhere . "

= = = Response from food critics = = =

Reception of " The Food Wife " from food critics has been mixed . Before the episode aired , Robert Sietsema of The Village Voice disapproved of it for being outdated . He commented that " this show should have been done , say , two or three years ago , when food blogging was hot . By now , many food bloggers of our acquaintance have out @-@ migrated to paying gigs , and the concept of the food blog has been co @-@ opted by every major media outlet , rendering real food blogs ? the old @-@ fashioned kind , where someone stood alone in their kitchen cooking things , or wandered the

hinterlands seeking out unique deliciousness ? nearly obsolete . " Sietsema also criticized the scenes showcasing molecular gastronomy because he thought they were out of date , since molecular gastronomy is , " by now , long past its prime " . Chris Shott , a food critic for Washington City Paper 's Young & Hungry column and blog , wrote negatively about the character that owns El Chemistri and is a parody of José Andrés . He commented that " For one thing , the character seems far more subdued than the kooky , wild @-@ eyed power drill @-@ wielding cook we saw on Conan recently . The satire here , involving a deconstructed Caesar salad of foams , gels and airs , is more a riff on molecular gastronomy in general than a send @-@ up of Andrés ' over @-@ the @-@ top personality . "

Food critic Katharine Shilcutt of the Houston Press ' criticized the episode for giving what she thought was an inaccurate depiction of foodies , as people that are " tacky , snotty , slightly racist , hoarders of food experiences that you gather like rare gems and patronizingly hold over other people 's heads . " Shilcutt added that she found it upsetting that what she believes to be the moral of the episode is that " Educated , passionate people are elitists . It reduces all the hard work that people put into creating good , honest food into a joke , and not a terribly funny one . There was no balance in the episode between smug , arrogant , obnoxious foodies and those who have a genuine , guileless interest in food and all its important permutations in our lives . "

Other food critics have written positively about " The Food Wife " . Lesley Balla of LA Weekly 's Squid Ink blog listed her ten favorite quotes from the episode , placing the entire hip hop song about foodies and food blogging at the top . She commented that " Plenty of insider jokes at foodies ' expense season the episode . So was it as funny to a non @-@ food @-@ world person as it was to someone who could identify each culinary personality in Marge 's dream [...] ? Safe to say , yes ; it is still The Simpsons , after all . For foodists , the whole episode is entirely quotable ? we 're sure it will be in the food blogosphere for years to come . " Laine Doss , a food blogger for the Miami New Times and New Times Broward @-@ Palm Beach , commented that she " loved Lisa Simpson 's list of cutest vegetarians [that appears on the blog] , which included Paul McCartney , Russell Brand , and Edward Cullen . " Doss , as well as Elizabeth Gunnison of Esquire 's Eat Like a Man blog , also commended the hip hop song .