

= Secret Santa (30 Rock) =

" Secret Santa " is the eighth episode of the fourth season of the American television comedy series 30 Rock , and the 66th overall episode of the series . The episode was written by series ' creator Tina Fey and directed by Beth McCarthy @-@ Miller . It originally aired on the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) in the United States on December 10 , 2009 . The episode featured appearances by actors Cheyenne Jackson as Danny Baker , Julianne Moore as Nancy Donovan , and Larry Wilcox playing himself .

The episode centered on a gift @-@ giving contest between Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) and Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin) , Jenna Maroney 's (Jane Krakowski) jealousy over new TGS with Tracy Jordan cast member Danny Baker 's (Jackson) singing skills , and the writers ? Frank Rossitano (Judah Friedlander) , James " Toofer " Spurlock (Keith Powell) , and J. D. Lutz (John Lutz) ? coming up with a fake religion to get out of NBC page Kenneth Parcell 's (Jack McBrayer) " Secret Santa " scheme .

Critical reception of the episode was generally less than favorable . According to the Nielsen ratings system , " Secret Santa " was watched by 7 @.@ 54 million households during its original broadcast . The night the episode premiered , it was immediately preceded by an episode of The Office with the same title .

= = Plot = =

Jack and Liz decide to exchange gifts for Christmas . Meanwhile , Jack reconnects with a friend from high school , Nancy Donovan (Julianne Moore) , and ponders the possibility of romance as Nancy 's marriage is falling apart . When Liz ends up buying an expensive necktie that Jack already owns , they agree to spend zero dollars on their gifts . Jack gets Liz a program from her performance of The Crucible framed in wood from her high school stage ? and does not reimburse his office assistant , Jonathan (Maulik Pancholy) for fuel costs . In return , Liz calls in a bomb threat to Penn Station , keeping Nancy in New York , and finally Jack arranges for Liz to fulfill her dream of meeting Larry Wilcox as Officer Jon Baker from the show CHiPs .

TGS producer Pete Hornberger (Scott Adsit) learns that the new actor on the show , Danny , is a talented singer . Despite Danny 's lack of interest in singing on the show , Pete gives him the Christmas solo as revenge for Jenna not chipping in to tip the cleaning ladies , which is a yearly source of frustration for Pete . Jenna is outraged when she hears Danny was assigned the solo , and tries to get Subhas the janitor to punch Danny in the throat . But when the agreeable Danny learns of Jenna 's hurt feelings , he arranges for them to perform a duet , in which he sings off @-@ key to make Jenna look good .

Meanwhile , Kenneth is throwing his rule @-@ filled " Secret Santa Fun Swap " , much to the writers ' chagrin . Frank , Toofer , and Lutz proclaim they are strict adherents of " Verdukianism , " a religion they make up on the spot , and have Kenneth give them things they claim to need for " Merlinpeen , " the Verdukian Holiday of Mouth Pleasures (such as meat @-@ lover 's pizza and having their teeth flossed by a blonde virgin) . Their famous holiday song is , " Oh , Meatbowl of Verduke , you bring me such pizza . Meatbowl . " When Tracy Jordan (Tracy Morgan) tells Kenneth that they made up their religion , he goes into shock at the idea that all religions are made up by man . His faith is restored when the three are arrested for the bomb threat Liz called in , using their phone .

= = Production = =

" Secret Santa " was written by series ' creator , executive producer and lead actress Tina Fey . The director of this episode was Beth McCarthy @-@ Miller , a long @-@ time television director who worked with Fey on the sketch comedy show Saturday Night Live . This was Fey 's nineteenth writing credit , and McCarthy @-@ Miller 's ninth directed episode . " Secret Santa " originally aired on NBC as the eighth episode of the show 's fourth season , and the 66th overall episode of the

series , in the United States on December 10 , 2009 . It was filmed on November 5 and November 20 , 2009 .

In November 2009 , it was announced that actress Julianne Moore would guest star on 30 Rock as a love interest for Alec Baldwin 's character , Jack Donaghy . Moore would later guest star in the episodes " Winter Madness " , " Lee Marvin vs. Derek Jeter " , " Emanuelle Goes to Dinosaur Land " , and " I Do Do " . In an interview with USA Today in October 2009 , Fey said that Jack would find more enduring love in the upcoming season . " As we move into the back half of the season , we 'd like to get [Jack] into a real adult relationship with some hurdles . " In the same interview , Baldwin noted , " Fifty @-@ year @-@ old Jack running around still using women like a drug is not where I 'd like him to end up . " Actor Larry Wilcox made a cameo in this episode , though , he was in character playing Officer Jon Baker from his old days in the drama show CHiPs , as Liz Lemon had a teen crush on Wilcox . In one scene of this episode , Liz says " shark farts " , and when asked about it in an April 2010 interview , Fey revealed that the term " was one that we ad @-@ libbed that we ended up leaving in . The studio asked us not to leave it in , but we left it in . "

This was actor Cheyenne Jackson 's second appearance as Danny on 30 Rock . He made his debut in the November 12 , 2009 , episode " The Problem Solvers " . Fey had seen Jackson in the Broadway musicals Xanadu and Damn Yankees , the latter that starred Jane Krakowski , who plays Jenna Maroney on the show . According to Jackson in a November 2009 interview , Fey set up a meeting to interest him in a role on the program . In an interview with the Los Angeles Times , it was revealed that it was Krakowski who brought Jackson to the attention of the 30 Rock producers . In the episode , Danny sang off @-@ key during a duet with Jenna , in order to keep her happy . In regards of his off @-@ pitch performance , Jackson said in an interview , " It 's actually harder than you might think . I worked on it a lot to make it sound real and to make it sound believable . But I got some good , funny feedback from it , so I 'm glad it worked out . "

One filmed scene from " Secret Santa " was cut out from the airing . Instead , the scene was featured on 30 Rock 's season four DVD as part of the deleted scenes in the Bonus feature . In the scene , Liz goes to Vattene , a men 's dress apparel retailer . She is there to buy a gift for Jack for Christmas but is shocked at the prices . She then sees a red neck tie and purchases it .

= = Cultural references = =

Jack tells Liz about YouFace , " an up @-@ and @-@ coming social @-@ networking site " , similar to that of MySpace and Facebook . Jack promises actor Larry Wilcox an appearance on the reality show Dancing with the Stars , if he visits Liz , until she tells him that the show airs on ABC . Liz revealed that she played John Proctor " in a gender @-@ blind " high school production of The Crucible . In one scene of " Secret Santa " , Kenneth has multiple arrangements of multicultural holiday decorations in his desk page , which includes a portrait of U.S. President Barack Obama " for the Muslims . "

= = Reception = =

According to the Nielsen ratings system , " Secret Santa " was watched by 7 @.@ 54 million households in its original American broadcast . It earned a 3 @.@ 5 rating / 9 share in the 18 ? 49 demographic , the season high in the 18 ? 49 rating . This means that it was seen by 3 @.@ 5 % of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds , and 9 % of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds watching television at the time of the broadcast . ABC had an all @-@ repeat evening on December 10 , 2009 , which helped increase numbers for the other networks . The night this episode broadcast , it was immediately preceded by an episode of The Office ? another NBC program ? with the same title .

Critical reception of the episode was not entirely favorable . Nathan Rabin of The A.V. Club noted a general decline in the show 's quality in the fourth season , and after a return to form in its previous episode , " Dealbreakers Talk Show # 0001 " , he found " Secret Santa " disappointing , and gave it a grade B ? . " It was cute and nicely plotted " , he wrote " but it felt a little rote and familiar . " IGN contributor Robert Canning was more positively inclined . He appreciated Julianne Moore 's

appearance , but he found that some of the story lines , " though sprinkled with funny moments , were more successful as sweet tales made for the holiday . " Bob Sassone of AOL 's TV Squad was glad to see Cheyenne Jackson 's Danny back on 30 Rock , and noted that the plots concerning Jack and Nancy and Kenneth and the TGS writers , respectively , were " home runs " . He liked that Tina Fey 's character Liz " was more of a supporting player " in " Secret Santa " . Sassone also enjoyed Moore 's appearance on the show , commenting that she was " wicked good " as Jack 's new love interest . Entertainment Weekly 's Margaret Lyons wrote that this episode " had some awesome Liz / Jack moments , a nice little storyline for Pete and Danny , and the invention of a whole new pizza @-@ loving religion . "

Meredith Blake , writing for the Los Angeles Times , found that television Christmas episodes generally tended to bring " an awkward shift in tone : All of a sudden , everyone 's being nice to each other . " She also complained about the invented holiday , which she found to be an overused cliché of Christmas programming : " See also : ' Chrismukkah ' or ' Festivus . ' " Also , television columnist Alan Sepinwall for The Star @-@ Ledger found that the episode compared unfavorably with the preceding one , but still enjoyed the showcasing of several minor characters , and the " tender holiday spirit " . What he appreciated most of all , however , was the Alec Baldwin ? Julianne Moore angle . Mark Graham of New York magazine opined that the three plots in " Secret Santa " could not be considered as " A @-@ material " for 30 Rock . Michael Anthony for TV Guide worried about the kiss between Jack and Nancy , as Nancy is married , and experiencing marital troubles . " The Nancy kiss kind of troubles me ; is Jack going to become the ' other woman ? ' "