

= Lisa the Vegetarian =

" Lisa the Vegetarian " is the fifth episode of the seventh season of the American television series The Simpsons . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on October 15 , 1995 . In the episode , Lisa decides to stop eating meat after bonding with a lamb at a petting zoo . Her schoolmates and family members ridicule her for her beliefs , but with the help of Apu , Paul , and Linda McCartney , she commits to vegetarianism .

Directed by Mark Kirkland , " Lisa the Vegetarian " is the first full @-@ length episode David S. Cohen wrote for The Simpsons . David Mirkin , the show runner at the time , supported the episode in part because he had just become a vegetarian himself . Former Beatle Paul McCartney and his then wife Linda McCartney guest star in the episode . Paul McCartney 's condition for appearing was that Lisa would remain a vegetarian for the rest of the series . The episode makes several references to McCartney 's musical career , and his song " Maybe I 'm Amazed " plays during the closing credits .

The inaugural airing of " Lisa the Vegetarian " was watched by 14 @.@ 6 million viewers and finished 47th in the ratings for the week of October 9 ? 15 , 1995 , with a 9 @.@ 0 Nielsen rating . It was the fourth highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week . The episode received generally positive reviews from television critics . It has won two awards , an Environmental Media Award and a Genesis Award , for highlighting environmental and animal issues .

= = Plot = =

The Simpson family visit Story Town Village , an amusement park for babies , as a special treat for Maggie . In the village , there is a petting zoo , where Lisa is enamored by a cute lamb . That night , Marge serves lamb chops for dinner , but Lisa is troubled by the connection between the dish and its living counterpart , and announces that she will no longer eat meat . In response , Bart and Homer mock her relentlessly . Reaction at school is no better ; when Lisa requests a vegetarian alternative to the cafeteria food , Principal Skinner labels her an " agitator " . The students are then forced to watch a Meat Council propaganda film , " The Meat Council Presents Meat and You : Partners in Patriotism " , starring Troy McClure , which portrays eating meat as a patriotic duty , and criticizes vegetarianism . Lisa is unimpressed by the film , but her classmates tease her .

Homer and Bart continue to give Lisa a hard time at home , particularly since Homer is preparing to host a barbecue , complete with roast pig . Bart and Homer even form a conga line and sing , " You don 't win friends with salad ! " On the day of the barbecue , Lisa makes gazpacho for all the guests as an alternative to meat , but the partygoers laugh in her face . Enraged and deeply hurt , she climbs aboard a riding mower and drives away with the roast pig in tow . Homer and Bart chase her , but she pushes the pig off a slope and they are too late . The pig rolls through bushes , into a river , and is shot into the air by a dam spillway 's suction .

At home , Homer reprimands Lisa for ruining his party and demands an apology , but Lisa refuses to apologize and chews him out for serving a meat @-@ based dish . They fight and she leaves the house , not wanting to live in a house with a " prehistoric carnivore . " As Lisa walks along , she decides that she can no longer fight the pressure to eat meat , prompting her to grab a hot dog from the grill at the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart and take a bite . However , Apu , himself a vegan , reveals that she has eaten a tofu dog , which he subtly switched out and none of his loyal customers had noticed the change .

Apu takes Lisa through a secret passageway hidden behind the cooler section assigned to non @-@ alcoholic beer leading to the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart roof where they meet Paul and Linda McCartney . The McCartneys explain that they are old friends of Apu from Paul 's days in India , and discuss their interest in animal rights . After a brief discussion , Apu asks Lisa what happened at home that made her upset . She reveals everything and while he understands , Apu warns Lisa that forcing others to accept her views can do a lot more harm than good . She is committed once more to vegetarianism , but realizes that she should tolerate those who disagree with her views .

Inspired , Lisa begins to return home and finds Homer frantically searching for her . Homer

apologizes for his behavior , but Lisa admits she was wrong as well . She apologizes to Homer , admitting she had no right to ruin his barbecue ; he forgives her and offers her a " veggie back " ride home . The final credits play over the still airborne roast pig .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

" Lisa the Vegetarian " was the first full @-@ length episode David X. Cohen wrote for The Simpsons . His most prominent work for the show to that point had been the " Nightmare Cafeteria " segment in the season six episode " Treehouse of Horror V " . The idea for " Lisa the Vegetarian " came to him while he was working on another Simpsons script . Cohen could not concentrate on his task because he was waiting for lunch , and on the back of the script he scribbled , " Lisa becomes a vegetarian ? " Cohen showed the note to Simpsons writer Brent Forrester , who liked the idea . Show runner David Mirkin then approved the story when Cohen pitched it to him . Mirkin had just become a vegetarian himself , and later noted that many of Lisa 's experiences in the episode were based on his own .

Writer Bill Oakley suggested the episode 's barbecue scenes . Cohen 's first draft contained a more philosophical argument between Lisa and Homer about eating meat , but Oakley told Cohen that the story needed something more specific to serve as the basis of Homer and Lisa 's dispute . George Meyer , a writer known among the Simpsons staff for his " bizarre physical jokes " , contributed the idea of the barbecue pig getting caught in the spillway and flying into the air . Cohen credits Simpsons writer John Swartzwelder for inspiring the scene in which Homer finds it impossible to believe that bacon , ham and pork chops could possibly come from the same animal . According to Cohen it was based on a real statement made by Swartzwelder , who was going on and on about how amazing the pig is for the variety of cuts of meat that come from it .

In the episode , Ralph Wiggum coins the phrase , " Oh boy , sleep ! That 's where I 'm a Viking ! " The term caused a point of contention with some fans curious whether or not he meant he was literally a Viking in his dreams or if he meant sleeping was just something he excelled at . Mirkin confirmed on Twitter that the line was meant to be taken literally , stating " We weren 't writing Ralph as capable of metaphor . "

= = = Voice acting = = =

At the time the episode was being written , Paul McCartney was the only living member of The Beatles who had never appeared on The Simpsons . John Lennon died before the show was created , but Ringo Starr and George Harrison had guest starred in 1991 (" Brush with Greatness ") and 1993 (" Homer 's Barbershop Quartet ") , respectively . The Simpsons staff wanted to bring McCartney onto the show , and David Mirkin thought " Lisa the Vegetarian " would be an attractive story , since McCartney is a vegetarian himself . McCartney agreed to appear , but requested that Lisa remain a vegetarian for the rest of the series , rather than revert to meat @-@ eating in the next episode . The Simpsons staff promised that she would remain a vegetarian , resulting in one of the few permanent character changes made in the show . McCartney 's wife Linda was also recruited to appear in the episode . She told Entertainment Weekly that the episode was a chance for her and her husband " to spread the vegetarian word to a wider audience . " Paul and Linda were both long @-@ time fans of The Simpsons .

Mirkin later said that recording with the McCartneys was one of the most " amazing " experiences of his life . He flew to London and met the couple at Paul McCartney 's recording studio , where the McCartneys spent an hour recording their parts . Simpsons creator Matt Groening was supposed to go with Mirkin to London , but missed his plane . Groening commented that having McCartney and the rest of The Beatles on The Simpsons " was a dream come true for all of us . "

Linda McCartney died of cancer at age 56 on April 17 , 1998 . The Simpsons ' season nine episode

" Trash of the Titans " , which aired on April 26 , 1998 , was dedicated to her memory . Simpsons executive producer Mike Scully said , " It just seemed like the right thing to do . Everyone here was surprised and saddened by her death . "

= = = Directing and animating = = =

The episode was directed by Mark Kirkland , who was intrigued by the story because he had not seen many television episodes about vegetarianism . The designs for Paul and Linda McCartney are unusual for The Simpsons in that the characters have brown and blue irises , respectively . Most Simpsons characters simply have black spots in the centers of their eyes .

In one scene of the episode , Homer sprays two bottles of lighter fluid onto his grill , causing viewers to anticipate an explosion when Homer throws a match on it . When he does release the match , however , the grill barely ignites . A similar scene appears in an older episode of The Simpsons , " Treehouse of Horror " , although in that episode , Homer uses a single bottle of lighter fluid and causes an explosion . Mirkin enjoyed the joke enough to reuse parts of it in " Lisa the Vegetarian " , adding new twists to further enhance the comedic effect . The old sketches from the " Treehouse of Horror " episode were used to help the animators animate the scene .

= = Cultural references = =

The episode features several references to The Beatles and McCartney 's solo career . For instance , McCartney tells Lisa that playing his 1970 song " Maybe I 'm Amazed " backwards will reveal " a recipe for a really rippin ' lentil soup " . A modified version of the song plays in the final scene , then over the closing credits of the episode ; when played backwards , McCartney can be heard reciting the recipe in the song . Mirkin had McCartney record the recipe , which was later added in reverse over the original song . McCartney thought it was " very funny " that the staff wanted to " send up the whole cult thing " of backmasking on the Beatles ' songs . " A secret lentil soup recipe seemed a nice parody of that , " he said . One of the backwards snippets says , " Oh , and by the way , I 'm alive , " a reference to the " Paul is dead " urban legend .

When Lisa , Apu , and the McCartneys gather on the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart roof , Apu tells Lisa , " I learned long ago to tolerate others rather than forcing my beliefs on them . You know , you can influence people without badgering them always . It 's like Paul 's song , ' Live and Let Live ' . " Paul corrects Apu and says the song 's title is actually " Live and Let Die " . In the same scene , Apu refers to himself as the " fifth Beatle " , and Linda alludes to a line in the Beatles ' 1969 song " Octopus 's Garden " . The McCartneys later ask Lisa if she would like to hear a song , and Apu sings part of " Sgt. Pepper 's Lonely Hearts Club Band " , to which the McCartneys snap along .

= = Release = =

" Lisa the Vegetarian " originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on October 15 , 1995 . It finished 47th in the ratings for the week of October 9 ? 15 , 1995 , with a Nielsen rating of 9 @. @ 0 , equivalent to approximately 8 @.@ 63 million viewing households . The episode was the fourth highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week , following The X @-@ Files , Fox NFL Sunday , and Melrose Place . " Lisa the Vegetarian " was later selected for release in a 2000 video collection of episodes titled The Simpsons ? Raiders of the Lost Fridge . Other episodes included in the collection set were " Guess Who 's Coming to Criticize Dinner ? " , " King @-@ Size Homer " , and " Burns Verkaufen der Kraftwerk " . " Lisa the Vegetarian " was later included in The Simpsons ' season seven DVD set , which was released on December 13 , 2005 . David X. Cohen , Mark Kirkland , Matt Groening , and David Mirkin participated in the episode 's DVD audio commentary .

The episode won an Environmental Media Award in the " Best Television Episodic Comedy " category , which has been awarded every year since 1991 to the best television episode or film with an environmental message . The episode has also received a Genesis Award in the " Best Television Comedy Series , Ongoing Commitment " category . The Genesis Award is awarded

annually by the Humane Society of the United States to honor works that raise the public's understanding of animal issues .

= = = Critical reviews = = =

" Lisa the Vegetarian " has received positive reviews from television critics and the staff of The Simpsons . Among the show's staff , Mirkin , Kirkland , Groening and writer Ian Maxtone-Graham list it as one of their favorite episodes . In the DVD audio commentary for the episode , Mirkin called the opening sequence at the petting zoo one of his favorite set pieces in the show's history . He thought it was " absolutely hilarious " , and praised Kirkland for his animation . Mirkin also enjoyed the use of Apu in the episode , because Apu shows Lisa that " the way to get people to change is through tolerance and understanding . " Groening considers the joke in which the family forms a conga line one of the " high @-@ points " in the history of The Simpsons .

Television critics praised " Lisa the Vegetarian " for its humor . John Serba of the Grand Rapids Press named it his favorite episode , " because the tale of Lisa's conversion to vegetarianism has more humorous scenes per square inch than any other episode . " The Ventura County Reporter's Matthew Singer thought it was " overflowing with great individual scenes " , particularly Troy McClure's Meat Council propaganda video , which he said " may be the funniest isolated segment in the history of the show . " MSNBC's Patrick Enright , who listed the episode as his second favorite of the series , highlighted the " You don't win friends with salad ! " song as " one of those archetypal Simpsons moments , one in which the writers hit a joke so long that it goes from funny to unfunny and back to funny again . "

Reviewers of the episode have also praised it for its character development . Todd Gilchrist of IGN said he thinks the key to The Simpsons' longevity is its " sentimental but not gooey " approach to storytelling and character development . He took " Lisa the Vegetarian " as an example and said : " Lisa sabotages Homer's barbecue , which results in an unceremonious death for his prize pig . But rather than simply punctuating the episode with an iconic image of the porker soaring through the air , the writers actually develop a story into which the joke fits . The comedic effect is actually intensified because we care about the characters , are invested in the story , and primed for a great gag . " The Niagara Gazette's Phil Dzikiy said that " the character development and storytelling is perfect " , noting that the episode was " equally hilarious , touching and satirical " .

The McCartneys' guest appearance received mixed reactions from critics . Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , the authors of I Can't Believe It's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , called it a " superb " performance . Singer , however , thought their cameo was poorly integrated into the show , and Dzikiy thought it seemed " a little forced " . IGN ranked McCartney's performance in this episode , along with Ringo Starr's performance in " Brush with Greatness " , and George Harrison's performance in " Homer's Barbershop Quartet " , as the tenth best guest appearance in The Simpsons' history . They added that " Although none of these appearances were really large , the fact that the most popular band of all time appeared on The Simpsons is a large statement on the popularity and importance of the show . " Simon Crerar of Times Online named Paul and Linda McCartney's performance in the episode as one of the thirty @-@ three " funniest Simpsons cameos ever " , and Larry Dobrow and Mike Errico of Blender listed it as the eighth best band cameo in the show's history .