

= Lard of the Dance =

" Lard of the Dance " is the first episode of The Simpsons ' tenth season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on August 23 , 1998 . Homer discovers he can make money by stealing and reselling grease , but eventually stops after negative encounters with Groundskeeper Willie and the Springfield Grease Company . Meanwhile , Lisa becomes jealous that a new student ( voiced by Lisa Kudrow ) is distracting all her friends by using her fashionable personality . The episode was written by Jane O 'Brien and directed by Dominic Polcino .

= = Plot = =

After going back @-@ to @-@ school shopping , Homer learns from Apu that he can sell grease to make a profit . At breakfast , Homer begins frying up various amounts of bacon to use the grease to make money and decides to have Bart help him with his " grease business " which forces Bart to quit school . Meanwhile , on the first day back at school , Lisa volunteers to help Alex Whitney , a fashion conscious new student , by showing her around the school . To help her make new friends , Lisa takes Alex , Sherri , Terri , Allison Taylor and Janey for lunch in the cafeteria after the two groups meet up , but shortly after abandon Lisa after seeing that Alex has adult items like a cell phone , a purse and perfume .

Homer and Bart begin their grease business and make sixty @-@ three cents worth of grease from twenty @-@ seven dollars ' worth of bacon , much to Homer 's glee and Bart 's disappointment . After Bart points out that they need larger amounts of grease , the pair drive to Krusty Burger , where they attempt steal grease from the fryers . After loading it into Marge 's car , two employees of The Acne Grease and Shovel Company steal it , claiming they control the grease and shoveling business in the city .

Alex convinces Principal Skinner to have a school @-@ dance rather than the regular yearly event of apple picking . Skinner agrees , so Alex and Lisa , accompanied by Sherri , Terri , Janey and Allison visit the mall to purchase party supplies , but the girls detour and begin trying on outfits for the dance , despite Lisa 's protests . The group leave the mall , none speaking to each other . Lisa decides not to attend the dance , but changes her mind and goes to the school to take tickets at the door , but later arrives and discovers the boys and girls are standing on different sides of the room , and explains to Alex that it is like this because they are only children , not adults .

Homer and Bart arrive at the school during the school @-@ dance to steal the grease in the school 's kitchen which Bart told him about . They sneak into the kitchen and plants a hose in the fryer to suck it in to the car , but Willie spots them and attempts to stop them , claiming the grease to be his retirement plan . Homer tries to escape , but Willie grabs his legs and strangles him with the hose sucking the grease , which explodes due to the increased pressure , causing the grease to flood into the dance hall . A grease fight begins among the students , where Alex eventually joins in after being told by Lisa to act her own age .

= = Production = =

The origins of the episode come from a conversation between Jane O 'Brien and Mike Scully , when the two were talking about how girls always want to grow up so fast , as Scully has five daughters ; so they decided to produce an episode with a storyline based on this . The idea behind the episode plot came from Jace Richdale , who came up with the idea of Homer stealing grease and the grease business , having read about in a magazine . Several aspects of the characters used throughout the episode had been improvised significantly by Lisa Kudrow . Ron Hauge , a writer for The Simpsons , came up with the initial character of Alex , and Jane O 'Brien named the character after her best friend . The scene showing Homer 's hemorrhaged eye as Groundskeeper Willie strangles him got a big laugh in the studio . Mike Scully comments that he now uses it in college clip shows .

= = Cultural references = =

The title of the episode is a play on the hymn and later Irish musical Lord of the Dance . Marge sings her own , altered version of 1990 song " Gonna Make You Sweat ( Everybody Dance Now ) " when attempting to persuade Lisa to attend the dance . Much of the shop where the girls enter to buy clothes is based on Wet Seal . In the same mall is a party supply store , called Donner 's Party Supplies which has a window sign saying " Winter Madness Sale " , a reference to the Donner Party . Alex tells Lisa to not be " such a Phoebe " , a reference to Lisa Kudrow 's character Phoebe Buffay on the series Friends .

= = Reception = =

" Lard of the Dance " finished 31st in the weekly ratings for the week of August 17 ? 23 , 1998 with a Nielsen rating of 7 @. @ 2 . It was the third highest rated show from the Fox Network that week . The episode aired during the summer so that it could serve as a lead @-@ in for the early premieres of That ' 70s Show and Holding the Baby . While That ' 70s Show would receive higher Nielsen ratings than The Simpsons , Holding the Baby was a ratings flop .

In a 2008 article , Entertainment Weekly named Lisa Kudrow 's role as Alex as one of the sixteen great guest appearances on The Simpsons . Lisa Kudrow refers to her self in the episode , stating " Your name 's Lisa ? Shut up , I love that name ! " The authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood commented that " The idea of Lisa being unpopular in the light of a new girl in the school hallways is not new ( see " Lisa 's Rival " ) but it is done here with such class , " concluding of Homer 's treatment that " this is an episode which shows that even he can find interesting ways to do things . " Wesley Mead noted , in a review of the tenth season that the episode " might deal with familiar territory ( " Lisa 's Rival " , anyone ? ) , but it doesn 't feel like a retread , and is also home to a superbly realised subplot that sees Homer and Bart go into the grease business . "

In 2012 , The New York Times highlighted this episode in an article about grease theft from restaurants : " An episode of The Simpsons from 1998 has Homer Simpson trying to make a quick buck selling grease , but for years , law enforcement authorities seemed unaware that fryer oil was being stolen by unlicensed haulers , causing millions of dollars ' worth of losses each year for the rendering industry that collects and processes the grease . "