

= Soulmates (Parks and Recreation) =

" Soulmates " is the tenth episode of the American comedy television series Parks and Recreation 's third season , and the 40th overall episode of the series . In the episode , Leslie is disappointed when Ben rejects her romantic advances , and is surprised when she is matched with Tom in an online dating service . Meanwhile , Ron and Chris have a cook @-@ off to determine which is better : red or lean meat . The episode was written by Alan Yang and directed by Ken Whittingham .

After it aired , NBC launched a website for HoosierMate.com , the fictional online dating site featured in " Soulmates " . The episode featured a guest appearance by stand @-@ up comedian Kirk Fox as sewage department employee Joe , who previously appeared in the second season . Josh Pence , who appeared with Parks co @-@ star Rashida Jones in the 2010 film The Social Network , also appeared in " Soulmates " as a man wearing cowboy clothes who dates Ann .

According to Nielsen Media Research , the episode was seen by 4 @.@ 89 million household viewers , a slight decrease from the previous original episode , " Andy and April 's Fancy Party " . It received generally positive reviews , with several commentators particularly praising the performance of Aziz Ansari as Tom Haverford .

= = Plot = =

Chris (Rob Lowe) enacts a government @-@ wide health initiative in Pawnee , starting by banning red meat from the city hall commissary , much to the displeasure of Ron (Nick Offerman) . He challenges Chris to a burger cook @-@ off to prove red meat is superior to Chris ' preferred lean meat , with red meat staying on the menu if Ron wins . Meanwhile , Leslie (Amy Poehler) invites Ben (Adam Scott) out to dinner , but he turns her down , leaving Leslie confused because she was sure Ben was attracted to her . Ann (Rashida Jones) , who is now dating multiple men after taking Donna 's (Retta) advice to be more adventurous , tells Leslie to join an online dating website called HoosierMate.com and helps set up her profile (after Leslie 's original description of herself was " yellow haired female ; likes waffles and news ") .

Leslie finds a match that is 98 percent compatible with her ? a " soulmate " rating ? but is horrified to discover that it is Tom (Aziz Ansari) . Additionally , the crude sewage department employee Joe (Kirk Fox) makes a romantic advance toward Leslie , prompting her to launch a " douche @-@ vestigation " to find out why she attracts the wrong type of man . Meanwhile , Chris takes Andy (Chris Pratt) , April (Aubrey Plaza) , and Ron to a health food market called Grain ' n Simple , where he gathers numerous ingredients for the perfect turkey burger , but Ron is unfazed , simply buying a pound of red meat from his favorite food market , Food and Stuff .

In her investigation , Leslie quickly learns Joe merely hits on any woman as long as she is not elderly . She takes Tom out to lunch to learn more about him . He responds to all of Leslie 's questions with his usual chauvinistic answers , annoying her to the point that she admits she took him out because they matched on HoosierMate . A delighted Tom teases Leslie the rest of the day by pretending they are a couple , but she finally silences him by kissing him . Chris notices the kiss and warns Leslie that he has a strict policy against workplace dating .

At the cook @-@ off , Chris prepares his meticulous turkey burgers for the judges : Tom , Donna , Jerry (Jim O 'Heir) , and Kyle (Andy Forrest) . They all love it , but give much higher praise to Ron 's simple hamburger on a bun . Initially surprised , even Chris comes to admit the burger is superior after trying it , so he agrees to reinstate red meat on the commissary menu . Chris later tells Leslie his dating policy has affected others , explaining that he earlier warned Ben not to ask out a co @-@ worker . Leslie realizes that is why Ben rejected her and is glad when Ben asks her to eat in front of her favorite city hall mural . Leslie deletes her profile on HoosierMate , and is relieved to learn that Tom has 26 different profiles on the site to match himself with any type of woman , although the one Leslie matched with was his " nerd " profile .

= = Production = =

" Soulmates " was written by Alan Yang and directed by Ken Whittingham . The idea of Chris ' no @-@ dating policy stemmed from real life policies in small town governments . Parks and Recreation co @-@ creator Michael Schur said although romantic obstacles between two characters are difficult to make effective and genuine , he believed the policy was realistic and fitting with the type of show . Schur said : " The ' no dating ' thing is a very big deal in government ? these people are handling taxpayer money , so relationships are even more frowned upon than they are in the private sector . "

The episode features a fictional online dating service called HoosierMate.com , inspired by the nickname Hoosier for residents of Indiana , where Parks and Recreation is set . After the episode aired , NBC started a fake website on an actual HoosierMate.com domain , which included fake accounts for Leslie and Tom similar to those featured in " Soulmates " . Stand @-@ up comedian Kirk Fox made a guest appearance in " Soulmates " as Pawnee sewer department employee Joe , who he previously played in the second season episodes " The Camel " and " Telethon " . Josh Pence , who appeared with Parks co @-@ star Rashida Jones in the 2010 film The Social Network , also appeared in " Soulmates " as a man wearing cowboy clothes who dates Ann .

During one scene in " Soulmates " , Ron misunderstood a turkey burger to be " a fried turkey leg inside a grilled hamburger " . After the episode aired , the cooking website Eater.com created and posted a recipe for that exact food .

= = Cultural references = =

When Leslie asks Tom what he would ask for if given three wishes , one of them is to star in a remake of the 1991 action film Point Break playing the roles of both main characters , who are played by Keanu Reeves and Patrick Swayze . During one scene , while on hold during a telephone call , Tom sings badly out of tune to the hold music of " Forever Young " , by the German synthpop group Alphaville . At one point , Tom describes the nicknames he has for various foods , and describes sandwiches as " sammies , sandoozles or Adam Sandler " , the latter of which refers to the comedian and actor Adam Sandler . Andy tells Chris his favorite food is Skittles sandwiched between two Starburst , which he calls " Andy 's Mouth Surprise " . When Leslie describes her ideal date as a dark and mysterious man who can play the organ , Ann says she believes Leslie is describing the title character from The Phantom of the Opera , a story about a deformed man who haunts an opera hall .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

In its original American broadcast , " Soulmates " was seen by an estimated 4 @.@ 89 million household viewers , according to Nielsen Media Research , with a 2 @.@ 9 rating / 5 share among all viewers and a 2 @.@ 4 rating / 6 share among viewers between ages 18 and 49 . A rating point represents one percent of the total number of television sets in American households , and a share means the percentage of television sets in use tuned to the program . The " Soulmates " rating constituted a slight decrease from the previous episode , " Andy and April 's Fancy Party " , which was seen by 5 @.@ 16 million households .

In its 9 : 30 p.m. timeslot , " Soulmates " was outperformed by the Fox crime drama series Bones , which was seen by 10 @.@ 96 million household viewers , and the CBS forensic crime series CSI : Crime Scene Investigation , which was seen by 8 @.@ 47 million households . It outperformed a repeat of the ABC medical drama series Grey 's Anatomy , which was seen by 3 @.@ 86 million household viewers , and an original episode of the CW Television Network drama series Nikita , which was seen by 2 @.@ 013 million households .

= = = Reviews = = =

" Soulmates " received generally positive reviews , with several commentators particularly praising the performance of Aziz Ansari . The Atlantic writer Scott Meslow said Ansari " has somehow found a way to make Tom petulant , sexist , and materialistic without ever being unlikable " . Meslow also complimented the " slight but charming " subplot about the burger cook @-@ off , and said Rob Lowe stood his own against the show 's reliable comedic stars Nick Offerman and Chris Pratt . Zap2it writer Rick Porter called " Soulmates " one of the " out @-@ and @-@ out funniest episodes of the season " and provided Ansari with the " best sustained bit of comedy he 's had in a long time " . Porter also said he appreciated how the script " wisely didn 't make much " over Ann 's dating many men , claiming the subtlety of the joke was effective . Andy Douglas of ChicagoNow also said Ansari " stole the show " and that " Soulmates " was an excellent showcase for his character , who had largely remained on the sidelines throughout the season . Douglas said the scenes with Tom mocking Leslie were effective not only due to Ansari 's performance , but also because of the genuine loyalty and admiration that had been built between the two characters .

The A.V. Club writer Steve Heisler called " Soulmates " one of the best Parks and Recreation episodes , and praised it for advancing its character relationships and finding " tons of natural , free @-@ flowing comedy in something incredibly mundane " , such as a conflict over burgers . Matt Fowler of IGN said he enjoyed seeing Offerman and Lowe pitted against each other , which he described as an " epic " pairing . Fowler also said he enjoyed that the script introduced " mini @-@ mysteries " that took some time to reveal , like why Ben seemed uncomfortable around Leslie , and why Leslie and Tom were a match on the dating website . Nick McHatton of TV Fanatic said he is enjoying the slow and deliberate pace at which the Leslie and Ben relationship is progressing . He also said Ansari " delivered just the right amount to creep out Leslie (and) keep me in fits of laughter " , and said Tom 's slang nicknames for food were " some of the funniest Tom @-@ isms he 's doled out yet " . New York magazine writer Steve Kandell said the episode demonstrates how , even several months after the addition of Lowe and Adam Scott to the cast , their presence allows for excellent new story opportunities , like the Ron and Chris cook @-@ off and Ben 's infatuation with Leslie .

Eric Sundermann of Hollywood.com said " Soulmates " demonstrates how Parks and Recreation is superior to other comedy shows because it " invests in its characters and really allows the audience time to get to know them " rather than depending solely on gags . Alan Sepinwall said he " laughed louder and more frequently at it than any episode so far this season " except for " Flu Season " and called the Ron and Chris subplot as " predictable as hell but perfectly @-@ executed " . Sepinwall objected to the introduction of a no @-@ dating policy simply to slow the budding romance between Leslie and Ben , and said " so much of this season has been so perfect that the rare imperfections stand out even more than they would on a weaker overall comedy " . Joel Keller of TV Squad said the no @-@ dating policy felt like a plot contrivance meant strictly to keep Ben and Leslie apart , which he felt was not good for the story . However , he complimented Leslie and Tom 's scenes together , and said the subplot was even funnier , which he called a " Ron Swanson classic " . Entertainment Weekly writer Hillary Busis said the episode was " a little too disjointed for me " , particularly because the two plots were barely associated with each other . However , she said the show included funny individual jokes , and enjoyed the moment when Leslie kissed Tom .