

Fields of Gold Chapter 16

Head Chef Wang had grown up in a family who was well known for producing culinary talents and knew first hand just how cutthroat the culinary world was. In his experience, all famous chefs who had signature dishes guarded and hoarded their recipes zealously. However, this particular little girl in front of him had no qualms in sharing her secrets. The older man rubbed his hands sheepishly before he said, "Miss Yu... might it be a good idea to discuss this with your parents before you make a final decision?"

"No need to ask them. This recipe was personally developed by me; no one else at home knows about it. If you don't believe, ask my older brother right now!" Yu Xiaocao waved her hand dismissively at the head chef's suggestion.

Once Third Young Master Zhou confirmed her statement with Yu Hang, he thought for a bit before making his final decision. "Alright! Then I will take your generous gift graciously. In the future, if you run into any trouble, feel free to come to the Zhou Family residence to find me!"

Yu Xiaocao grinned in delight and thought, 'Whippersnapper, I was just waiting for those words!'

"Oh right! Since the weather is hot now, make sure to store any leftover oyster sauce in the icehouse. It can't be held for more than a month before it goes bad." After leaving her last piece of advice to the two men, she rubbed the pouch containing her hard-earned money and prepared to leave.

"Don't worry! Although it looks like we have a lot of oyster sauce, we have many customers here at Zhenxiu Restaurant. I'd be surprised if this even lasted a week!" Head Chef Wang carefully poured the sauce

into a bottle and cradled it like it was a world treasure before he reluctantly set it down again.

At the same time, the flow of customers into Zhenxiu Restaurant started to increase, and the back kitchen started to bustle with activity. Zhou Zixu ordered the restaurant staff to add 'Oyster Seasoned Green Vegetables' to County Magistrate Wu's banquet menu.

Head Chef Wang took out the abalone and had a pensive look on his face. He needed to figure out the best way to serve this high-quality abalone to awe and impress the magistrate's guests.

Yu Xiaocao couldn't help but give him a suggestion. "You could try making 'Abalone with Garlic Sauce [1]'. If the guests don't like the taste of garlic, you can switch it out for the oyster sauce instead. The sauce can elevate the intrinsic flavor of the abalone. But take your time in deciding, Head Chef Wang."

Under the escort of Third Young Master Zhou and Manager Jiang, the two siblings finally left Zhenxiu Restaurant. Coincidentally, the magistrate's son had come over directly after finishing school and saw the brother sister pair leave.

Third Young Master Zhou was not normally a humble person, so seeing him treat a couple of children who were dressed like street urchins so politely was out of the ordinary. The young man couldn't help but ask incredulously, "Third Young Master Zhou, what are the identities of these two children? They must be extraordinary in order to catch your eye."

Zhou Zixu clasped his two hands together and perfunctorily greeted him. He quickly reverted back to his usual dandy self. "Brother Wu, I see that school must have let out early today? Come in, come in! I just had a new shipment of Clouds and Mists tea come in. This batch has a

strong fragrance and has the color of fresh dew. Very hard to find now!"

Young Master Wu only had one elegant hobby: drinking and comparing teas. Once he heard Zhenxiu Restaurant had received a rare batch, all curious thoughts about the odd sibling pair went straight out of his mind. He followed Zhou Zixu into a private room.

"Let's go shopping, Eldest Brother! Whatever you want to eat is on me today!" Now that Yu Xiaocao had money in her hands, she felt more confident. Her back was ramrod straight as she strode imposingly down the road.

Yu Hang flicked her forehead teasingly but then lowered his voice before he said, "We're still one household right now. Any money we earn has to be handed over. If Grandmother finds out we have so much silver now, she definitely would not be happy. I feel like it's better that we..."

Yu Xiaocao quickly brought her hands up to protect the purse hidden in her clothes. Her eyes glinted with annoyance. "Is the money that our dad brings home not enough? He's the one keeping the whole family afloat, including our uncle who's studying in the town! Let the adults find ways to keep the family running! They don't need to know about this little extra income that we earned!"

Yu Hang opened his mouth to say something but his sister quickly interrupted him. "Hand it over, hand it over! You guys are just encouraging Grandmother's behavior. Just think about! How much money has father given to them? And how much of that money comes back to us? You better not tell anyone about the money we made today, otherwise you're not my older brother anymore!"

Seeing that Yu Xiaocao was adamant, Yu Hang decided it was useless to try to change her mind. Instead, he reminded her, "Then make sure you hide the money well! You can't let grandmother or the other family members find out..."

"Don't worry so much about the stuff I'm in charge of!" Yu Xiaocao slapped her chest to show Yu Hand she had everything handled. Her spirits were up now that she had money in hand. She gleefully pulled her brother along to go shopping for the first time.

As the two of them strolled, Yu Xiaocao checked out all of the prices and stored them for future use. At the grain shop, millet, potato starch, and maize were all two copper coins a catty. White flour was five copper coins a catty. Northern lands didn't plant a lot of rice, so it was seven copper coins a catty.

The price of a catty of high-quality pork twenty copper coins, while one single live chicken was forty copper coins.

Although the imperial court had stabilized prices recently, peace had only recently come to the empire. Most commoners lived similar lives to the fishermen in Dongshan Village: eking out in poverty day by day.

The more she understood the circumstances of this world, the more Yu Xiaocao missed her old world. Modern life was still better! Even though her childhood was not easy, it still wasn't as bad the lives most people led here. After living as the oldest sister in her past life, she had already gotten used to handling all of the responsibilities. Her mind whirled as she started to come up with ideas to get rich. She needed more money in order to help her family live a better life. One where they weren't always worrying about their next meal.

A nearby hawker cried out, "Big meat buns [2]! Delicious and tasty meat buns!!" The sound of his harsh voice neatly cut through her thoughts.

Grumble, grumble....Their stomachs groaned and yowled at thought of food. They both had gotten up early that morning, and neither of them had eaten anything before setting out.

Yu Xiaocao rubbed her shriveled tummy as the smell of the meat buns floated into her nose. She waved a fist in the air and said, "Let's go and eat some meat buns!"

"Give us four big meat buns and two bowls of egg drop soup [3]!" After getting their food, Yu Xiaocao walked over to a low table at the side of the road and made sure to call her brother over to eat food. Although they couldn't afford to eat at a high class restaurant, they could still eat as much they wanted from the food stalls!

Yu Hang had taken trips with his dad before to town. On those trips, neither of them would spend a single copper coin out of frugality. His little sister, on the other hand, had no qualms on spending a handful of coins in one transaction. The amount of money she spent on their meal was almost enough to buy two catties of white rice and three catties of white flour...

"I'll....I'll just eat three plain buns and drink some water instead..." said Yu Hang after looking at all of the prices. He settled on spending just one copper coin for his meal.

Yu Xiaocao knew her brother had thriftiness down to his bones. She silently counted out twelve copper coins and handed it to the hawker selling breakfast foods. The merchant cleverly took out four stuffed buns and had his wife ladle out two steaming bowls of soup up.

"Don't make a fuss! We already bought the food, so just eat it now!" Yu Xiaocao grabbed one of the hot buns and thrust it into Yu Hang's hands. She opened her mouth wide and sank her teeth into another bun.

Mmmmm... these ancient people knew how to make some delicious meat buns. The skins were appropriately thin and there was plenty of filling in the bun. Every bite had the satisfying, rich taste of meat. The savory flavor filled and melted in her mouth. Perhaps she was too hungry but she thought that there was nothing more delicious in the world than these meat buns right here.

She alternated between sips of soup and bites of pastry. Within minutes, Xiaocao had polished off two buns and her bowl of soup. Filled to satisfaction, she let out a happy little burp. So full now! In the past few days, she had never been able to eat as much as she did today. It was good to have money! This experience solidified her desire to save up her own private purse in the future.

Although he was physically older, Yu Hang was still a ten year old child. After seeing his little sister eat so happily, he couldn't help but also take a bite. The rest was history after that first bite. Before he knew it, all of the food had disappeared into his little belly. He rubbed his bulging tummy sheepishly and grinned in embarrassment.

"This stall's meat buns are really too delicious! We need to buy some for mother, father, and Little Shitou too!" Yu Xiaocao was not a stingy person and wanted to share her good fortune with her family. Don't worry little brother, your older sister will always think of you when there's good food around! Aren't I a good sister?

Yu Hang's cute face scrunched up in worry. "I don't mind buying some for our parents, little sister, and little brother but this can't get out to other people! If grandmother finds out, she'll definitely want to know where we got the money from. Wouldn't we be dead meat then?"

[1]

Abalone with Garlic Sauce

[2] Big Meat Bun

[3]

Egg Drop Soup