

Culinary 111

Chapter 111: The Sea King's Self-Cultivation! These candy triangles are really delicious!

Is this... an acquaintance?

Just now, I heard this leopard-print lady call Master "Gao Xiaoshuai." Could she be a die-hard fan from his stream?

Just as he was wondering, the leopard-print lady stared at Lin Xu and asked, "Who are you? What's your relationship with Gao Xiaoshuai?"

"I..." Lin Xu began. "I'm a chef. I run a restaurant, and he's my master. He teaches me to cook every day... Ma'am, this..."

"Get lost, get lost, get lost! Don't call me ma'am!"

The leopard-print lady looked angrily at Mr. Gao and demanded, "Didn't you say you were a retired pilot? Turns out you're just a cook, PAH! Old liar! You tricked me into gifting you over two hundred Carnivals last night!"

After speaking, she picked up the broken heel of her shoe from the ground and left, her gait uneven.

Lin Xu: "..."

One Carnival is three thousand yuan; over two hundred is more than six hundred thousand.

Goodness gracious.

Has Master run into a sugar mommy?

Just as Lin Xu was wondering, he saw his master quickly walking over to the leopard-print lady. He had barely said a few words when the lady spat at him.

"Stay away from me! I don't want your money, you old scammer!"

After speaking, the leopard-print lady opened the door of a BMW 760 parked by the roadside and sped off.

When she passed by Lin Ji's Food, she didn't forget to lower the window and spit again.

Lin Xu: "..."

Master, what on earth did you do to incur such divine and popular wrath?

Spit it out, let me grab some popcorn... oh no, let me help you analyze the situation.

Mr. Gao straightened his clothes and then, grabbing his cell phone and selfie stick, went back inside the shop.

"I was just idly streaming, who knew these fans could be so fanatical... They even lay in wait for me here on Yingchun Street! It's terrifying!"

You're completely avoiding the main point, aren't you?

Curiously, Lin Xu asked, "Master, why does this leopard-print lady hold such a huge grudge against you? Did you lead her on?"

Mr. Gao stroked Dundun, who was sleeping on a cashmere blanket on the cashier counter, before he finally said, "Didn't Chen Yan say the quality of fans was pretty high, and it would be a pity to lose them? So, last night, since I was free, I started streaming again. This woman kept gifting me Carnivals non-stop. I couldn't persuade her to stop. She actually pushed my stream into the top five on the gifting leaderboard! A lot of other streamers wanted to go live with me for PK battles..."

Can we please fast forward to the part about the leopard-print lady?

The other details aren't particularly interesting to me.

"This woman was afraid I'd lose the PK battles, so she kept gifting. While she was gifting, she kept asking why I was ignoring her. I told her I was just a pilot, one who comes and goes like the wind, and that she shouldn't waste her money on my stream. I don't even show my face, so why would you waste your money like that? I thought that would be the end of it. Who knew she'd use my location to track me down and confront me..."

TSK, TSK, TSK!

Who would have thought that the charming Gao Xiaoshuai on the stream was actually a crummy old man?

That must have been completely unexpected for the leopard-print lady, right?

That's why she blew up like that.

Lin Xu originally wanted to offer his master some comfort, but having never experienced such a situation, he didn't even know where to begin. So, he just washed his hands and continued making Brown Sugar Triangles.

"I read in the group that Dundun can bring good luck. Next time I stream, I need to bring Dundun along; maybe I won't run into such a mess then."

Lin Xu: "..."

He's a lucky cat, not a love-attracting cat.

If you keep tricking people with this fake persona, you'll soon attract other leopard-print ladies, or ladies in black stockings, JK uniforms, or with big wavy hair...

After muttering to himself, Mr. Gao sat to one side and began playing with his phone.

Meanwhile, Lin Xu waited for the lard residue buns and Brown Sugar Triangles to proof properly, then put them in the steamer.

After finishing that, he used some chicken broth to make a savory soup.

Since his classmate Shen Jiayue enjoyed it, he decided to make some for her; it wasn't much trouble anyway.

Before long, the buns and Brown Sugar Triangles were steamed.

The dough had risen perfectly, making each bun plump, white, and incredibly tempting.

Lin Xu pulled the steaming tray out from the steamer and set it on the workbench to cool.

Seeing his master still playing with his phone, he said, "Master, come and eat. I've steamed some buns and made some savory soup today."

With that, he grabbed a takeaway container and started packing breakfast for Shen Jiayue.

Mr. Gao grunted in acknowledgment.

As he stood up, he noticed a BMW 760 parked in front of the shop that hadn't been there before. He immediately went to the kitchen, picked up the breakfast Lin Xu had just packed, and headed outside.

As he walked, he deliberately tore two buttons off his shirt.

He pushed open the door.

He walked up to the BMW and gently tapped on the window.

Quickly, the window rolled down, revealing Leopard Print Auntie's angry face.

"I'm sorry, I didn't know you would gift so much money. Please don't unfriend me on WeChat. I'll transfer it back to you bit by bit... There's a daily limit on WeChat, so it might take several days to complete the transfer... This is the breakfast I just made. Eat something, don't starve yourself."

The two had just communicated again on WeChat.

Both of their emotions had calmed down a little.

After Leopard Print Auntie received the packed meal box, she finally noticed that Mr. Gao's floral shirt was missing two buttons.

"What happened to these buttons? They weren't gone when I left."

Such keen observation?

Mr. Gao felt a chill in his heart, and a hint of bitterness flashed across his face. "Indeed, they were fine when you left, but they fell off right after you did. Perhaps even the buttons despise me for being a liar... You should head back. I need to get back to work at the shop. Just now, my apprentice even said I embarrassed him..."

His half-true, half-false words stunned Leopard Print Auntie. "At your age, you're still working?"

"I have no children of my own, so I'm counting on this apprentice to look after me in my old age and see to my burial. How could I not work? But enough about that, I need to go wash dishes. There are still several baskets left..."

After saying his piece, Mr. Gao turned away with a dejected expression and slowly walked back into the shop.

He was good-looking; despite his age, he still exuded the charm of a handsome older gentleman. Watching his somewhat lonely back, Leopard Print Auntie's expression grew complicated.

Mr. Gao pushed open the door and went back inside the shop.

He didn't look back.

Instead, he asked Lin Xu, "Has the BMW out front left?"

"It's gone..."

"WHEW... Finally, I can breathe a sigh of relief."

Looking relieved, Mr. Gao took a bite of a bun, praising his apprentice's skills endlessly, "The bun filling is seasoned perfectly. With skills like yours, even if you just sold breakfast, you'd never go hungry."

Not only will I not starve, but Leopard Print Auntie won't either, thanks to you. You just snatched the breakfast I'd packed for Shen Jiayue without a word! Luckily, I steamed a few extra Brown Sugar Triangles, or I'd be rushing to steam another pot right now.

Lin Xu grumbled inwardly.

He couldn't quite understand his master's actions.

They had just been fighting, and here he was, less than half an hour later, delivering breakfast.

Are these the tactics of a 'Sea King'?

Aren't you afraid she'll come back and smash your windows with a slingshot...

As Mr. Gao ate his bun, he posted an announcement on his stream:

"Tune in at 7:00 AM sharp! I'll be live from the matchmaking corner in Leisure Park. Don't miss it, everyone!"

After the flood of Carnival gifts last night, the number of followers on Mr. Gao's stream had skyrocketed severalfold, so he had no choice but to start treating it like a real job.

Not far from Lin Ji's Food, in a BMW parked by the roadside, Leopard Print Auntie saw the announcement and couldn't help but spit. "That old scoundrel! Just moments ago, he was talking about washing dishes. He doesn't have an honest bone in his body..."

She opened the takeaway bag. Seeing a few steaming hot Brown Sugar Triangles inside, she couldn't resist picking one up.

The Brown Sugar Triangles were piping hot; they were clearly freshly steamed.

She took a bite.

The dough was soft, and the Brown Sugar filling was sweet and fragrant.

These Brown Sugar Triangles are steamed perfectly!

As she enjoyed the delicious Brown Sugar Triangles, Leopard Print Auntie used her phone to send ten Carnival gifts to his stream.

This is for the breakfast.

This way, I don't owe you a thing!

Chapter 112: Did You Install Surveillance in My Dreams? The First Long-Term Business!

「At 8 a.m.」

Shen Jiayue drove to Dongming Building. After parking, she took the elevator to the audit firm upstairs. Just as she had clocked in, the delivery guy arrived, calling out, "Shen Jiayue, your breakfast!"

"Coming, coming!"

She dashed to the door and took the takeout bag from the delivery guy. "Thank you, bro!"

A breakfast made with love by my Xu Bao!

There are Pork Grease buns, fresh and fragrant egg soup, and of course, the most important part is the sugar triangle I dreamed about all night! Last night, I dreamed about eating sugar triangles all night long. In the dream, no matter how many I ate, a lot of sugar syrup would spill out, soiling my clothes and making me extremely anxious. It wasn't until I woke up this morning that I realized my pillow was wet with drool.

Hush... I mustn't let Xu Bao find out, or he'll tease me!

At this time, not many people had arrived at the audit firm. Some were using the few minutes before work to catch up on sleep, while others were eating breakfast they had bought on the way. But soon, a delicious aroma captured everyone's attention.

They turned to look. Sure enough, Shen Jiayue was eating her love-filled breakfast.

A few female colleagues curiously asked, "Little Yue, did your mother-in-law steam buns for you again?"

The aroma of these buns was just like the ones Shen Jiayue had on her first day of work. She had said then that her mother-in-law made them.

Had her mother-in-law come to Beijing again?

"My mother-in-law is back in our hometown. These were made by my husband!"

HAHA, the buns Xu Bao makes are just as delicious as my mother-in-law's. Now I can have them whenever I want!

The rich aroma of the Pork Grease buns and the fresh scent of the egg soup made the other office workers involuntarily swallow.

Last night, when Yuan Fei was conducting a lunch survey in the staff group, everyone was relieved that once Lin Ji started providing lunch, they wouldn't have to endure Shen Jiayue's "dog food" anymore. This was because everyone's lunch would be provided by Lin Ji and delivered all at once.

However, they hadn't expected her to start receiving breakfast deliveries so early in the morning.

She was truly flaunting her relationship in every way possible.

Shen Jiayue finished the Pork Grease bun with relish and then took a sugar triangle from her lunch box. It was about half the size of her palm, small and exquisite.

Wow! It's exactly like the ones my grandma used to make when I was little! I remember when I was a child, every time Grandma steamed buns, she would make a few delicate sugar triangles just for me. I never expected Xu Bao to make them so exquisitely and cutely. Thank you, Xu Bao, for taking me back to my childhood in an instant. How wonderful it would have been if you were there back then. I would have stolen sugar triangles from home every day to feed you. Yep, feeding you from primary school all the way to university!

Thinking these thoughts, she contentedly took a bite of the sugar triangle.

The white dough was fluffy and soft to the bite. It tasted a bit like bread, which meant the dough had been perfectly fermented, and the ratio of yeast to flour was also perfect.

Inside the dough was dark red sugar syrup. The syrup was thick, exuding the unique sweetness of cane sugar and the fragrance of flour, so she didn't have to worry at all about it leaking from where she bit.

AAAAH, Xu Bao, did you install a camera in my dream? Otherwise, how did you know I'm most afraid of this sugar syrup spilling everywhere?

「In the store.」

Lin Xu and the staff were busy with various tasks when Chen Yan hurried in, holding several pages of a contract for cooperation with an online broadcaster.

"Brother-in-law! Who on earth is Gao Xiaoshuai? Without showing their face or using their real voice, they received over two hundred Carnivals in donations last night. This morning at seven, they got ten more... I need to sign them quickly, otherwise, they'll definitely be snatched up by another company."

This is sure to cause a sensation in the live-streaming circle.

But wait... they donated ten more?

Lin Xu curiously asked, "Were the donations this morning and last night from the same person?"

"The same person. Their name is Die Lianhua, and they're now number one on the patron rankings. Many broadcasters started live-streaming early this morning to greet this big shot Die Lianhua, hoping to win them over and secure a wave of donations."

Lin Xu was speechless.

Leopard Print Auntie had been cursing her master as an old swindler just after six o'clock. Why did she suddenly donate thirty thousand yuan? Is this some new kind of push-and-pull tactic? I really don't understand the minds of these middle-aged and elderly idol fans.

He took the contract and casually pointed to the steamer. "There are buns and sugar triangles inside, steamed this morning. If you want some, you can ask Che Zai to get them for you. I'll look at this contract first."

Buns? Sugar triangles?

Chen Yan, who was usually all business, instantly transformed into a foodie. "Get me two buns and a sugar triangle, please. I rushed here early this morning after printing a contract and haven't eaten anything yet."

Che Zai brought over the buns and sugar triangles on a plate and also served her a bowl of egg soup. Chen Yan sat down at the dining table by the kitchen door and started eating.

Lin Xu carefully read through the contract. After confirming there were no clauses that restricted his master, he said, "Leave the contract here for now. I'll give it to you after it's signed."

A flicker of surprise passed through Chen Yan's eyes. "Why so secretive? Brother-in-law, that Gao Xiaoshuai... it's not you, is it?"

"It's not me; it's my master."

The contract had to be signed with his real name; his master's alias couldn't be hidden anymore. But to suddenly become a major broadcaster right after starting to stream... I reckon Master won't be able to resist showing off a bit, right? They'd just have to cut out the part where Leopard Print Auntie was hitting him; that part wasn't very brag-worthy.

"What? Gao Xiaoshuai is Old Man Gao? My goodness! How many aliases does he actually have?"

This was a question Lin Xu couldn't answer, because he also had no idea how many aliases his master really had.

After placing the contract in the cash register's drawer, Lin Xu went back to the kitchen to get busy again. Today they were making stir-fried chicken pieces, so there were quite a few ingredients to prepare, and the back kitchen was busy.

Chen Yan ate three Pork Grease buns and two sugar triangles, and drank two bowls of egg soup. She was so full she had to walk with her hands on her waist, yet she still coveted the remaining sugar triangles. Worried they might be gone by her next visit, she deliberately packed a few to take back to the office.

Well, there's a microwave at the company anyway. She could just ask someone to heat them up when she wanted to eat. Simple.

Not long after Chen Yan left, Yuan Fei pushed open the door and walked in.

"Boss Lin, I'm here on behalf of the audit firm to discuss some business. Are you interested?"

Business? Lin Xu thought, wiping his hands as he walked out of the kitchen. Are they holding another training session? If it's business, Jiayue could have come. Why is he here to talk to me specifically?

"The people at our audit firm voted to order lunch from you from now on. Do you offer discounts for group orders?"

No wonder... Lin Xu thought. The last training was paid for by the Audit Bureau, so the firm was more generous. But this time, it's coming out of their own pockets, so they want to negotiate a discount. He wasn't averse to this. For long-term business, it's indeed reasonable to offer some discount. After all, these people won't eat in the store and won't interfere with its regular business. This profit is essentially a bonus.

He thought for a moment and said, "How about a 20% discount for you guys?"

"That would be great." Yuan Fei was pleasantly surprised. He'd thought a 10% discount would be good enough, especially since the shop's business was booming, making this long-term deal somewhat non-essential for Lin Ji. "This is all thanks to Shen Jiayue!"

Just as the two had finished signing the agreement, a system prompt sounded in Lin Xu's mind. "Host has signed a long-term business deal, completing the hidden task [Long-Term Order], and received one Excellent Level snack draw. Would you like to draw now?"

A snack? Lin Xu's curiosity was piqued...

Chapter 113: Is this a Lucky Draw or a Gift Package Giveaway?

Another lottery draw?

The new dishes at the shop can't even keep up with the speed of system rewards now.

But snacks...

Probably can't be added to the menu, right?

Lin Xu didn't take action right away.

He waited until Yuan Fei left, then stroked Dundun's head and silently chanted to himself:

"Lottery!"

With Dundun around, there's no need for praying or worshiping the gods during the draw—just a little petting is enough. It's quick, easy, and saves time and effort.

The lottery wheel spun in his mind.

Lin Xu pressed the draw button.

Soon, the system notification rang out in his head:

"Congratulations, host! You have obtained Excellent Level snack-making technique... Duck Goods Braising."

Duck... goods?

Not just one type, but duck head, duck neck, duck wings, duck intestine, duck gizzard, duck leg, duck foot, duck liver, duck heart, duck tongue, and duck collarbone? All of these can be braised?

Oh my god!

This isn't a lottery—more like a big gift bag drop!

Lin Xu rubbed Dundun's chubby, round head.

If he ever goes bankrupt, he'll just take Dundun and help netizens draw prizes.

Even the most unlucky souls can be saved by the luck this little guy brings.

All kinds of lottery games, better get ready to tremble!

"Meow!"

Just as he was thinking that, Dundun, who was lying on the cashier counter, let out a protest meow, then jumped straight into Song Tiantian's arms, expressing his protest in action.

It's not enough for you to use me alone, you even want everyone to get a turn.

What do you think this cat is, huh?

Seeing Dundun hop away, Lin Xu snapped out of it, tidied up the little guy's cashmere sleeping blanket, then headed back to the kitchen.

First, he washed his hands, then starting cooking while pondering when to introduce Duck Goods.

There's already Tiger Skin Chicken Feet among the shop's braised dishes, but that one's mildly spicy and savory—lots of customers who love spicy food complain it's not spicy enough, doesn't go well with beer.

If some Duck Goods are added, that tingling numb-spicy flavor will absolutely impress those customers.

Might even boost beer sales further.

But to offer Duck Goods, he'd need to cook a new pot of braising broth, couldn't mix it with the chicken feet broth, since Duck Goods are much spicier and darker in color than Tiger Skin Chicken Feet.

"Tomorrow I'll buy duck heads, duck necks, duck wings, and duck feet to try first. The other duck goods can wait a bit—a few at a time, not too many..."

Eleven a.m.

The lunch for the audit office was ready.

Shen Jiayue drove over and picked up all the lunch boxes.

This perfect chance to slack off openly and see her dear Xu-bao, of course she wouldn't miss it!

Shen Jiayue just left.

Old Gao wandered into the shop.

He was carrying a crossbody bag, which—if Lin Xu saw right—had a tripod, a selfie stick, and a power bank, all gear for live streaming.

"Xu, get me a bowl of Noodles with Braised Eggplant and Pork Sauce."

Old Gao said, then started fiddling with his phone, managing some comments and updates for his stream.

He used to have no fans, just played around, so didn't care much.

But now that it's become a legit business operation, he had to pay more attention.

Lin Xu agreed.

Then said:

"Master, Yanjie dropped off the live streaming contract this morning. You'll need to sign it later, or she'll keep bugging me."

Old Gao wasn't against signing.

On the contrary, he really needed someone to help manage the comments and the chat barrage right now.

"I'm fine with signing, but I can't show my face!"

He'd just shown his face in Wu Kexin's stream not long ago, as the revered state banquet master beloved by all the netizens.

And now suddenly he's suspected of being a sugar baby, aka Gao Xiaoshuai.

Old Gao couldn't handle that persona whiplash.

"I checked the terms, your stream is super free—company just does some marketing and promo, actual content is totally up to you."

"Alright, I'll sign!"

Lin Xu grabbed the contract from the cashier, along with a ballpoint pen.

Old Gao took them, swished out his signature.

Then stamped his personal seal.

Lin Xu filed away the contract, back at the cashier counter.

Returning to the kitchen.

He picked up the rolling pin, just about to roll the dough.

Old Gao, sitting at the kitchen doorway, suddenly asked:

"Xu, your business keeps growing, your grocery hauls are getting bigger and bigger—shouldn't you get a car?"

This issue...

Yeah, he really needed a car.

But in Beijing, you need a lottery to get a license plate, unless you do it like Shen—register it with your own company. Otherwise, you'll be "waiting for a monkey's birthday" for the plate.

Old Gao said:

"I'll help you get a grocery car in a few days when I have time. We're master and apprentice, and I eat at your shop all the time. If I don't gift you something, I feel bad."

That's too generous!

Really not appropriate.

Lin Xu refused over and over.

It's only right for him to look after his master—heck, even if he ate at the shop for free, all the chef skills master taught him are worth taking care of him for life.

Old Gao waved a hand:

"It's not a fancy car, technically I'm just loaning it to you. Should be no problem for you to go grocery shopping or deliver lunch boxes."

This...

Thinking it over, having a car really would make life a lot easier.

Lin Xu didn't insist anymore.

But he was a little curious.

Master doesn't even have a driver's license—where's he gonna get a car?

After the lunch rush.

Everyone snagged some rest time, plenty more work coming up this afternoon.

Lin Xu pays high wages, but it's all based on how much work you do.

Lin Ji now preps more dishes for one meal than some places do for an entire day, so that high pay isn't easy to earn.

Today, Xu Xinhua was off.

Jack-of-all-trades Ma Zhiqiang took charge of braised dishes.

He made a huge pot this morning—enough to last the whole day.

Strictly speaking, Ma Zhiqiang could take a break now.

But this guy can't sit still: after a quick breather, he cleaned up the stove, then grabbed a kitchen knife and went to help Niu Chuan slice meat.

When Lin Xu came back from a break at his rented place,

Ma Zhiqiang sidled over and said:

"Boss, how about Stew for dinner? Haven't had it in ages, I'm starting to crave."

Lin Xu glanced at him curiously:

"You know how to make it?"

"That's my specialty!"

"Then you do dinner tonight. Make a bunch—so I can learn a bit, too."

Back home, he'd sometimes get Stew at weddings or funerals, but in Beijing, he hadn't really had it. Someone's offering to make it, why not try it?

This dish may be simple, but making it delicious isn't easy.

If you're not careful, it turns out greasy, loses that fine balance of flavor and harmony between the ingredients.

Ma Zhiqiang agreed.

And went back to helping Niu Chuan slice meat.

Lin Xu washed his hands, just about to get busy, when he got a call from Shen Guofu.

After all, he's an old customer of the shop—the two swapped numbers a couple days ago.

"Bro, you got any dishes that flood your mouth with juice as soon as you bite in, the kind that just keeps you craving more? If you do, can you whip some up for me? I'm really craving meat today."

Floods your mouth with juice?

Lin Xu instinctively asked:

"How about Pickled Pork?"

"Oh man, you mention Pickled Pork and I start drooling... That's the dish, bro, make it quick! I'll swing by before 4:30 to pick it up... Give me a big portion, money's no issue!"

Lin Xu agreed:

"No problem, I'll get it ready now!"

Chapter 114: What's Good to Eat, Boss Lin? Braised Pork? I'll Have Two Portions!

I really didn't expect this. The Pickled Pork, originally planned for the menu a few days later, actually needed to be prepared ahead of time. Luckily, I bought a few packs of Dried Vegetable at the dried goods stall this morning. Otherwise, I would have had to make another trip now.

Lin Xu said to Niu Chuan, who was cutting meat, "Leave me a piece of pork belly. A customer wants Pickled Pork. I'm planning to make a few portions—sell one to the customer and keep the rest for us to eat."

This statement stirred a mix of emotions in all the busy staff. The boss was really uncompromising when it came to food. Unlike other restaurants, where you either secretly made something good or waited to eat what the customers left behind.

Lin Xu went to the storeroom, took out two small packs of Dried Vegetable, opened them, and started to soak them in a basin. Dried Vegetable tends to accumulate a lot of dust during processing. Therefore, it needs to be softened in water first and then washed repeatedly to remove all the surface dust.

After the Dried Vegetable was soaking, Niu Chuan also set aside the pork belly needed for the dish. There were three pieces, each weighing more than a pound. The Pork Skin on the meat bought that morning had already been seared, so this step could be skipped.

Lin Xu directly put the pork into a pot, added water to fill it halfway, and then added Scallion and Ginger, and Cooking Wine before turning on the heat.

Pickled Pork was considered an elaborate dish. It involved many time-consuming steps: boiling, frying, soaking, and steaming. The accompanying Dried Vegetable also required soaking, washing, chopping, and stir-frying. From start to finish, this dish took at least three hours to prepare. Compared to this, the other dishes in the restaurant were far less time-consuming and complex—mere child's play, really. In a way, this was the first time the restaurant was preparing such an elaborate dish.

Lin Xu felt a bit sentimental. When the restaurant first opened, it only served noodles, and he worried about attracting customers. To think that in just half a month, they had started preparing major dishes. At this rate, who knows, maybe one day the restaurant could even master those legendary dishes that sound incredibly simple but are fiendishly complex to prepare. I'm really looking forward to that day!

The water in the pot quickly came to a boil. Using a spoon, he skimmed off the foam and then added a few Sichuan peppercorns, some bay leaves, one Star Anise, and a small piece of cinnamon to impart a subtle fragrance to the meat. He let it continue to simmer.

For Pickled Pork, it was essential to use thoroughly cooked meat. This prevented any off-flavors in the steamed dish and ensured the meat would be fragrant and tender.

Half an hour later, when the pork was tender enough to be pierced easily with chopsticks, he turned off the heat and removed the pork from the pot. He then lifted the pork belly out, placed it skin-side up on the cutting board, and while it was still hot, used a Meat Tenderizer to puncture the Pork Skin. This so-called Meat Tenderizer resembled a brush, its head fitted uniformly with steel needles designed to create many tiny, evenly spaced holes in the Pork Skin. During frying, these holes helped the Pork Skin cook through faster and allowed excess fat to escape. This made the resulting Pickled Pork fragrant and not greasy.

Just as he was busy, Ou Hua arrived, bringing a delivery of drinks and beer. Seeing Lin Xu working with a large piece of meat, he asked curiously, "What are you preparing, Boss Lin? Why are you poking it all over with needles like that?"

Lin Xu smiled and said, "I'm making Pickled Pork. Poking it makes the skin taste even better."

Pickled Pork? Ou Hua, whose business was growing by the day, suddenly had an idea. "Could you set aside two portions of that pork for me? My father has weak teeth and loves meat that's steamed until it's incredibly soft. I happen to be going to his place for dinner tonight..."

"Sure, I'll set aside two portions for you."

Upon hearing this, Ou Hua immediately used his phone to scan a payment for two hundred yuan at the front desk, acting as if he feared Lin Xu might refuse to sell it. "Then you continue, Boss Lin. I'll come to pick it up at five o'clock."

"Alright. In that case, I'll steam it a bit longer for you."

After Ou Hua left, the Pork Skin had also been pricked all over. Lin Xu evenly spread a layer of Honey on the Pork Skin, readying it for frying. The Honey was applied so the skin would turn a beautiful red during frying, making the Pickled Pork look more appealing. Besides Honey, Maltose Water, caramelized sugar, or Dark Soy Sauce could also be used to achieve a rich, red hue on the Pork Skin when fried.

After applying Honey to all three pieces of meat, Lin Xu placed the meat under a fan to dry. This allowed the Honey to penetrate the Pork Skin, ensuring the fried skin would be an even more vibrant and beautiful red. While the meat dried, he heated oil in a wok over high heat. When frying meat with skin, it's prone to splattering hot oil. Therefore, it's best to use a generous amount of oil in the wok; this minimizes splattering and ensures effective frying.

When the oil reached medium-high heat, he took the fan-dried meat and carefully placed it, skin-side down, into the hot oil. The meat was already cooked through, so the main purpose of frying wasn't to cook it further, but simply to color the skin.

The meat would need several minutes to fry properly. In the meantime, Lin Xu took a basin and added a few blocks of ice to make ice water.

Before long, the Pork Skin in the wok turned reddish-brown and formed a crisp crust. He then flipped the meat to fry the other sides briefly. Then, using a meat hook, he lifted the pork from the wok and immediately plunged it into the prepared ice water. This shock treatment helped the Pork Skin quickly develop a wrinkled, "tiger skin" texture, which not only enhanced its appearance but also improved its taste.

After the pork was soaking, Lin Xu brought over the softened Dried Vegetable. First, he washed the softened Dried Vegetable twice, vigorously squeezing out the water each time. Then, he soaked it briefly and washed it again, squeezing out all the moisture once more. This thorough cleaning process improved the taste of the Dried Vegetable. Its savory, salty flavor also became purer.

He placed the squeezed-dry Dried Vegetable on a chopping board and minced it. Next, he heated a clean wok, added the minced Dried Vegetable, and stir-fried it over medium-low heat to draw out any remaining moisture. No oil was used during this stir-frying step, as this helps to eliminate any undesirable flavors from the Dried Vegetable. It also rendered the Dried Vegetable thoroughly dry and aromatic. Once all the moisture was fried out, the Dried Vegetable would be able to absorb the excess fat from the pork during steaming. This would make the meat flavorful yet not greasy, and the Dried Vegetable itself would become richly infused with meaty aroma.

The stir-fried Dried Vegetable was then set aside on a plate. By this time, the pork soaking in the ice water was almost ready. The reddish-brown Pork Skin had developed a beautiful, wrinkled "tiger skin" pattern. It looked so tempting.

Lin Xu cut the pork into slices about five millimeters thick and placed them into a mixing bowl. He then took a smaller bowl and added a piece of Fermented Tofu, two tablespoons of Fermented Bean Paste, some Light Soy Sauce, a splash of Cooking Wine, a small spoonful of sugar, and a pinch of White Pepper powder. He first mashed the Fermented Tofu with a spoon, then mixed all the seasoning ingredients into a smooth sauce. He poured this sauce over the pork slices in the mixing bowl. He tossed the slices gently to ensure each piece was evenly coated with the sauce, then let them marinate briefly. After that, he began to arrange the meat in steaming bowls.

The marinated pork slices were arranged neatly in the steaming bowls, skin-side down. He then topped them with the stir-fried Dried Vegetable and ladled a spoonful of the original pork cooking broth over everything. The bowls were now ready for the steamer.

The selection and application of seasonings in this Perfect Level recipe truly exemplified the principle of "less is more" in cooking. Only by doing so could the natural umami and fragrance of the meat itself be brought to the forefront.

Lin Xu was full of anticipation for this batch of Pickled Pork. He had steamed a total of five bowls today: one for Bentley, two for Ou Hua. The remaining two bowls would be just enough for everyone on staff to have a taste.

However, just as he was about to place the bowls in the steaming cabinet, Boss Hu, the owner of the meat stall, arrived. He was delivering some large bones for making pork bone broth. When he saw the bowls of Pickled Pork Lin Xu was holding, his eyes instantly lit up. "Is that Pickled Pork? I'll take two portions! With this dish, you really need two portions to truly savor it!"

Lin Xu: "..."

Bro, are you quoting a chewing gum ad or something?

Chapter 115: Brined Dried Tofu! The Art of Food Pairing in Braised Dishes!

When the announcement was made to prepare Pickled Pork, everyone was very excited. They even wanted to @ Xu Xinhua, who was on his day off, to let him feel the pain of craving something he couldn't have from a distance.

After Ou Hua arrived, the sense of anticipation dwindled significantly. Two fewer servings wouldn't be satisfying at all, but being able to taste it was fine too. Since the boss had made it, there would surely be no shortage of Pickled Pork in the future. Today was just for taste-testing; there would be plenty of time later!

However, as soon as Boss Hu arrived, everyone's spirits plummeted. They couldn't even taste the dish anymore... Like Ou Hua, Boss Hu didn't ask about the price either. He just paid two hundred yuan and left with the food.

Lin Xu smiled helplessly. "We won't make it today. Let's have Pickled Pork tomorrow instead."

It was already after three in the afternoon. Even if they rushed the preparation, it wouldn't be ready until at least five-thirty. By then, the shop would already be busy. Even if it were ready, they wouldn't be able to manage serving it, so it would be better to prepare more tomorrow.

To avoid dampening everyone's enthusiasm, Lin Xu said to Ma Zhiqiang, "Zhiqiang, add some more meat when you cook the stew later. Let everyone have their fill."

Ma Zhiqiang wiped his hands and replied, "Adding too much meat to the stew can make it greasy. I'll go buy some tofu and fry some dried tofu instead. Dried tofu tastes very good in stew. It's better than adding more meat."

"Then go ahead, and remember to have Tiantian reimburse you for the tofu."

Occasionally, they needed to buy things from the nearby supermarket for the shop. Lin Xu's policy was for whoever made the purchase to pay upfront and then get reimbursed by Song Tiantian upon presenting the supermarket receipt. This method didn't interfere with Song Tiantian's work and simplified accounting.

Ma Zhiqiang didn't linger. He went straight to the supermarket next door to buy tofu.

Before long, he returned with a large piece of tofu. At the door, he handed the payment receipt for the tofu to Song Tiantian. After receiving his reimbursement, Ma Zhiqiang immediately went to the kitchen and said to Lin Xu, "Boss, the supermarket's tofu looked really good, so I bought extra. I'm planning to braise it with the Braised Chicken Feet stock. Such perfect stock would be wasted on just Braised Chicken Feet."

This was the advantage of having an experienced chef: they had their own ideas and could create new dishes based on the shop's available ingredients and local conditions. Actually, Lin Xu had also considered braising some dried tofu before. But the shop was too busy, and since dried tofu wouldn't sell for much, he hadn't acted on it. Since Ma Zhiqiang wanted to try it, Lin Xu let him. If it sold well, the shop would have another side dish to go with drinks.

Ma Zhiqiang set up a wok, poured in the oil previously used for frying meat, and lit the fire to heat it. When the oil reached medium-high heat, he took a block of tofu in his left hand. He dipped his knife in water to prevent the tofu from sticking, then swiftly began slicing the tofu he held. As the knife neared his hand with each cut, a deft flick sent a slice of tofu, about half a centimeter thick, sliding off the blade and into the hot oil. His speed was incredible. With a few swift strokes—SWISH, SWISH, SWISH—he sliced the entire block of tofu he was holding.

"Chef Ma, your Knife Skills are impressive!" Che Zai had never seen anything like it and found it fascinating.

Ma Zhiqiang smiled. "For chefs who regularly work banquets, this is just a basic skill. I once fried over two hundred pounds of tofu in a single session—so much that my hands grew too tired to even hold the tofu properly."

Over two hundred pounds? Goodness! Just cutting and frying all that tofu would take half a day, wouldn't it? No wonder banquet chefs are paid so well. With such a heavy workload, no one would do it if the salary weren't high enough.

Soon, the wok was full of tofu slices. Ma Zhiqiang set down his knife and gently stirred the tofu with a large spoon to prevent the pieces from sticking together. Among deep-fried ingredients, tofu is relatively simple to cook. Due to its high water content, you can fry it directly over high heat without worrying about it burning. Once the tofu slices turned golden brown and floated lightly to the surface, he scooped them out with a strainer, let the oil drain, and then started frying the next batch.

After all the tofu slices were fried, Ma Zhiqiang moved the oil wok aside and switched to a clean wok. He poured in some of the stock from the Braised Chicken Feet. Once it was hot, he set aside the fried tofu needed for the stew and added the rest to the simmering stock. The surface moisture of the fried tofu had completely evaporated, leaving them like small sponges. Upon being submerged, they rapidly began to soak up the stock. Once the stock in the wok came to a boil, Ma Zhiqiang turned the heat down to low, maintaining a gentle simmer just below a rolling boil. Dried tofu braised this way over low heat would become infused with rich flavor from the stock. Each piece would be incredibly juicy, almost bursting with savory liquid at every bite—truly delicious.

While the dried tofu was braising, Ma Zhiqiang grabbed a handful of glass noodles from the storage room and soaked them in warm water. A good stew is incomplete without glass noodles. Delicious glass noodles not only add a finishing touch to the dish but also enrich its overall texture. Slurping up glass noodles that had absorbed the flavorful broth offered a mouthful of rich taste.

Then, based on the appetites of the staff, he chopped two heads of Cabbage. The best vegetable for stew is napa cabbage, but since it wasn't in season, he had to use Cabbage as a substitute. Lastly, he sliced some Crispy Meat and also diagonally cut the dried tofu (the portion set aside earlier for the stew) into smaller pieces. He cut it diagonally because this made it easier for the tofu to absorb the broth, enhancing its flavor.

Next, he began to prepare the stew. He heated some oil in a wok and added half a spoonful of lard. Once the oil was hot, he added the sliced pork belly and stir-fried it over high heat. When the pork belly slices became translucent and began to render their fat, he added Scallion and Ginger and dried chili. He stir-fried them for a moment before adding salt, Light Soy Sauce, Dark Soy Sauce, and white sugar. After stir-frying the seasonings until evenly distributed, he added several bowls of Pork Bone Broth. He brought it to a boil, then added the Cabbage, dried tofu, Crispy Meat, and glass noodles. After simmering for a while, he added some Celery sticks, Carrot slices, and wood ear mushrooms as complementary ingredients. When the broth in the wok thickened slightly, he seasoned it with a little more salt and drizzled in some Seasoning Oil. After a final stir to combine everything, the stew was ready.

"It looks so easy," remarked Che Zai, whom Song Tiantian had dubbed the 'floor tile of back kitchen culinary skills'. He thought there was no real trick to making stew; you just threw in good ingredients. What was so hard about that?

But Lin Xu knew better. This dish might appear simple, but it had its intricacies. For example, Ma Zhiqiang had used several rich ingredients: pork belly, lard, Pork Bone Broth, and Crispy Meat. Therefore, he deliberately included Celery to balance the dish's richness. Furthermore, Cabbage can have a slightly bitter taste compared to napa cabbage, so Ma Zhiqiang had added some naturally sweet Carrot slices to counteract this. Additionally, adding salt at the end ensured that both the ingredients and the broth were properly seasoned. If the salt were added too early, all the saltiness would concentrate in the broth, leaving the vegetables bland.

Indeed, making stew wasn't difficult, but pairing the ingredients correctly was an art form. Master that, and even a simple vegetable stew could be incredibly appetizing.

As Lin Xu was contemplating this, a system notification suddenly sounded in his mind: "Congratulations to the Host for comprehending the Qualified Level cooking Technique—Mix & Match. This Skill can aid the Host in making mixed stews, braised dishes, and 'hog-killing dishes'."

Holy moly! There's a reward for this too?

Just as he was feeling joyful, Shen Guofu, the Bentley owner, pushed open the shop door. "Brother Lin, is the Pickled Pork ready yet? Hmm? What's that delicious smell? Is there another surprise today besides the Pickled Pork?"

Chapter 116: Isn't this Braised Pork Too Fragrant? The Daughter Has Gotten Smarter!

Other surprises? Bro, just how much do you crave meat!

Lin Xu said, "Our staff meal this afternoon is the Stew. We just made it. The aroma you're smelling is probably from the Stew, right?"

Shen Guofu's eyes lit up instantly. "Brother, how about you serve me some as well? I really like this kind of dish, but the nanny at home makes it too refined, and restaurants don't quite capture this flavor. You guys have amazing staff meals."

Lin Xu hadn't expected this Bentley bro to have a taste for it and didn't refuse. "You're a regular customer, Bro. Wait a moment, and I'll serve you some, on the house."

"No need, no need. You guys work so hard; I can't just eat for free."

After saying that, Shen Guofu paid two hundred yuan using the payment QR code at the cash register.

I'm Old Shen, a man of some standing. How could I sponge off meals and drinks? If word of this got out, wouldn't Old Tan and the others laugh their heads off?

Lin Xu didn't refuse the payment.

He put on thermal gloves and opened the steamer.

As soon as he opened it, a rich fragrance mixed with the unique savory, salty aroma of Dried Vegetable wafted out.

"Mmm, that's the scent!"

At lunchtime, Shen Guofu had a sudden whim and asked his secretary to prepare a low-fat meal. He didn't think much of it while eating; it tasted fine. But afterward, with nothing to do, he idly browsed some food-related short videos on his phone.

That was a mistake.

He was instantly captivated by all sorts of meat dishes. The more he watched, the more he craved; the more he craved, the more he wanted to watch.

Finally, unable to bear it any longer, he called Lin Xu and ordered a serving of Pickled Pork.

Actually, the pork was still a bit under-steamed. It would have been more flavorful and tender after steaming for another half hour. However, since the Bentley bro was in a hurry to leave, Lin Xu took the Pickled Pork out.

After taking it out, he didn't immediately pour it into a takeaway container. Instead, he carried the bowl to the stove and carefully poured the rendered broth and fat from the bowl into a pot. Then, he took a takeaway container and inverted it over the steaming bowl.

After quickly flipping it over, he lifted the bowl.

Only then did the Perfect Level Pickled Pork reveal its true form.

The ruddy, tender pork skin quivered, neatly stacked layer upon layer, a sight utterly satisfying to anyone with obsessive-compulsive tendencies. The rich aroma emanating from the meat continually teased the taste buds.

"Damn, that smells incredible!"

The garage crew, being nearby, found their craving for the Pickled Pork intensifying.

If Ou Hua and Boss Hu hadn't shown up, everyone could have had a taste. But those two bosses each ordered two servings, completely buying out the Pickled Pork. Alas! We'll have to wait until tomorrow!

Lin Xu turned on the stove and brought the reserved broth to a boil. He then drizzled in a bit of Water Starch. When the broth thickened into a sauce, he added a little Seasoning Oil.

Then he lifted the pot. Using a spoon, he carefully ladled the rich, glossy red sauce over the Pickled Pork in the takeaway container.

Drizzled with this sauce, the Pickled Pork's appearance became even more tempting. Under the light, the rendered fat on top glistened.

"Beautiful! Brother, your skills are truly impeccable!"

Shen Guofu watched eagerly. If not for the crowd, he would have grabbed chopsticks and snatched a couple of slices to satisfy his craving on the spot.

Lin Xu closed the lid of the takeaway container and placed it inside a thermal bag. Pickled Pork is a dish best enjoyed hot, so keeping it warm was essential.

After packing the Pickled Pork, Lin Xu filled another takeaway container with the Stew. He also added a few slices of freshly braised dried tofu and four bowls of rice for the Bentley bro.

"Ah, little bro, you really get me! Both the Stew and the Pickled Pork are perfect with rice. Two bowls really wouldn't have been enough. Thanks so much, brother!"

Shen Guofu hastily departed with the takeaway bag. He still had to put on an act at home to trick his daughter into eating whole grains and couldn't afford to be late.

After Shen Guofu left, dinner service at the restaurant began.

Lin Xu dished up more than half a bowl of Stew and started eating it with rice.

The Stew was exceptionally well-made. The glass noodles were coated in fat, giving them a smooth texture. The meat slices had been fried to render their fat, making them aromatic without being greasy. The dried tofu had absorbed the broth, becoming juicy, tender, and flavorful. As for the Cabbage, Celery, Carrots, and other ingredients, each contributed its own delicious quality.

It could be said that this was a Perfect Level Stew; even a master chef specializing in banquet cooking could do no better.

Lin Xu thought he should add the Stew to the menu for future group meal orders. That way, the restaurant's costs would be lower, and customers would have more dishes to choose from—a win-win situation.

After tasting the Stew, he tried the braised dried tofu. The outer layer, fried to a golden brown, was still pleasantly firm to the bite, while the tofu inside had become soft and juicy. The spicy and savory braising sauce was incredibly delicious.

After finishing a piece, Lin Xu said to Song Tiantian, "Add Braised Dried Tofu to the menu, three yuan a piece. If it sells well, we'll increase production starting tomorrow."

After their meal, customers began to trickle into the restaurant.

Yue Liyue and Professor Xu, who were a couple, ordered a dish of spicy boiled meat slices together. Meanwhile, Elder Zhou and Madam Liang ordered Steamed Sea Bass and dry-fried chicken pieces.

Everyone sat together, eating and drinking. Professor Xu even chatted with Yue Liyue, sharing some amusing anecdotes about Zhong Huairen's time at Beijing University.

While everyone was enjoying their meal, Boss Hu and Ou Hua arrived at the restaurant, one after the other.

"Boss Lin, is the Pickled Pork ready?"

"Ready, ready! I'll bring it out for you right now."

The moment the Pickled Pork was brought out, every customer in the restaurant couldn't help but turn to look.

"Wow! Pickled Pork!"

"Boss Lin, do you have any more of this Pickled Pork?"

"Could we have two servings?"

"My table wants three servings!"

"Boss Lin, you added this new item so suddenly! It wasn't even on the sign outside."

"Exactly! Are you playing favorites?"

...

Upon seeing the Pickled Pork, the customers were immediately overcome with craving.

Lin Xu explained, "Originally, this was just for us to eat. But Boss Ou and Boss Hu came and insisted on buying it, so I sold it to them. We don't even have any for ourselves... Pickled Pork will officially be on the menu tomorrow. If you want some, please come back then."

Understanding that the dish was labor-intensive, the customers didn't press further. However, they repeatedly urged Lin Xu to make extra so it wouldn't be snatched up by early arrivals again.

「At the same time, at the West Fourth Ring Villa.」

After sneaking the takeout into his room, Shen Guofu changed into his loungewear, carried a teacup, and leisurely settled into the living room on the first floor to wait for his daughter to get off work.

The whole grains for dinner were already prepared in the kitchen. He and his wife had also rehearsed their excuses and the plan for retreating to their room later.

Now, all he had to do was wait for his daughter to come home.

After a few sips of tea, he glanced at his watch, his brow furrowing slightly. His daughter usually got off work at 4:30 PM, but today it was nearly 5:30 PM, and she still hadn't returned.

If she didn't arrive soon, the Pickled Pork upstairs would get cold!

He thought for a moment and then called his daughter. "Yueyue, why aren't you home yet? Your mom and I are here waiting for you to have dinner."

Shen Jiayue's sweet voice came through the phone, "Dad, I'm at Grandma's house. I had some really delicious sugar triangles today, so I brought some for Grandma. You and Mom go ahead and eat. Grandma is making me Crystal Sugar Pork Elbow right now..."

Shen Guofu was utterly flabbergasted.

Chapter 117: Shen Family's Elbow Complex! Grandma, I'm in a Relationship!

In a quiet Siheyuan along the South Third Ring.

A lush sycamore tree covered most of the courtyard, bringing a hint of coolness to the scorching summer days.

Shen Jiayue sat on a stone bench under the tree, happily playing with her phone.

In the nearby kitchen, an elderly woman with silver hair was stewing Crystal Sugar pork knuckle in a clay pot.

She was Shen Jiayue's grandmother, Grandmother Shen.

Grandmother Shen's husband had passed away when she was thirty, leaving behind a nine-year-old daughter, Shen Guofang, and a five-year-old son, Shen Guofu. Back then, their family was extremely poor, but she clenched her teeth and raised the two children to adulthood.

Today, her son, Shen Guofu, had become a billionaire.

Her daughter, Shen Guofang, also married into the Chen Family, which was involved in the department store business, and gave birth to Chen Yan.

Yes, Shen Jiayue's grandmother was Chen Yan's maternal grandmother as well, making the two girls cousins.

"Grandma, is the pork knuckle ready yet?"

After hanging up the phone with her dad, Shen Jiayue stood up and walked to the kitchen doorway.

Hehe, trying to trick me into eating coarse grains, but I, sharp as ice, will not be fooled!

Grandmother Shen said with a smile, "Is my sweet granddaughter hungry? The pork knuckle isn't tender enough yet; it needs to stew a little longer."

After receiving her granddaughter's call at noon, Grandmother Shen, despite the scorching sun, went to the supermarket at the entrance of the alley to buy a front pork knuckle and a bag of Crystal Sugar to make Crystal Sugar pork knuckle for her granddaughter.

This was a signature dish of the Shen Family.

After Father Shen's death, which coincided with the Spring Festival, five-year-old Shen Guofu saw other children wearing new clothes and eating meat, and he too clamored for meat.

To not disappoint her son, Mother Shen worked various jobs for others and finally exchanged her earnings for a meat ticket on New Year's Eve.

However, by the time she got to the state-owned store, only a pork knuckle was left.

Buying meat in the past was different from now; back then, nobody wanted meat with bones because the weight was fixed, and more bones meant less meat.

Grandmother Shen bought the pork knuckle.

Once home, she stewed it in a clay pot. The only seasoning available was coarse salt, but to enhance the flavor, she added some Hawthorn berries planned for the New Year and a handful of Crystal Sugar. Unexpectedly, the stewed pork knuckle turned out to be delicious.

It was fragrant and tender, melting in the mouth with a hint of sweetness. The two children ate until their mouths were greasy.

Since then, the Shen Family had formed a bond with this dish of Crystal Sugar pork knuckle.

When they earned money from their street stall, they stewed a pork knuckle. For a child's birthday, they stewed a pork knuckle. When relatives visited, they stewed a pork knuckle. Even at Shen Guofu's wedding feast, the main course was still Crystal Sugar pork knuckle.

Hmm... No wonder my dad is chubby. He must have eaten too many pork knuckles as a child. And he tells me to eat coarse grains to lose weight! I think he should be the one eating more of them!

The kitchen was hot, and Shen Jiayue fanned Grandmother Shen with a palm-leaf fan, then asked, "Grandma, why don't you move to the villa? I even dream about you."

Grandmother Shen asked with a smile, "Did you dream about the sugar triangles I made for you? Otherwise, you wouldn't have brought these over today..."

Lin Xu had made quite a few sugar triangles in the morning. Besides those eaten by everyone and those packed by Chen Yan, there were over ten left, which Shen Jiayue brought all the way here.

As a child, she ate the sugar triangles her grandmother made; as an adult, she also brought sugar triangles for her grandmother to eat. These sugar triangles were made by my boyfriend. Grandma eating them would mean she acknowledges the fact that my Xu is my boyfriend. That makes sense, right?

"I've lived in this courtyard for half my life and have grown accustomed to it... Your dad and your mom have also asked many times for me to move there, but I'm not comfortable living in a villa. I prefer it here; all the old neighbors know each other."

Before long, the pork knuckle was ready.

Grandmother Shen carefully placed the tenderly stewed pork knuckle on a plate lined with lettuce leaves. Then, she ladled out two spoons of the original broth, boiled it on the gas stove, added some starch to thicken it, and poured the thickened sauce over the pork knuckle.

The Crystal Sugar pork knuckle was ready.

"You can eat now, my sweet granddaughter."

The elderly lady placed the pork knuckle on the stone table under the tree, along with a freshly stir-fried dish of garlic water spinach and a plate of fermented bean curd. Meanwhile, Shen Jiayue helped her grandmother bring out a basket of freshly warmed sugar triangles and two bowls of rice.

The pork knuckle had been simmered over low heat for much of the afternoon and had become tender, achieving Bone Removal. As for the skin, it was stewed to be jelly-like and could easily be cut through with chopsticks.

Once seated, Shen Jiayue picked up a piece of the meat skin with her chopsticks and put it into her mouth.

She didn't even need to chew. With a gentle press of her tongue, the fragrant and sweet skin, with a hint of Hawthorn flavor, melted in her mouth, truly achieving that melt-in-the-mouth quality.

For someone who enjoys a sweet and sour taste, this flavor and texture were simply irresistible.

Seeing how much her granddaughter enjoyed eating, Grandmother Shen smiled affectionately, then picked up one of the freshly warmed sugar triangles from the basket.

After taking a bite, the elderly lady commented with a smile, "Mmm, these sugar triangles are made well. They knew to use cooked flour to mix the Brown Sugar, so it's sweet and fragrant, and the dough has risen perfectly. The craftsmanship is indeed good."

Seeing her grandmother happy, Shen Jiayue took the opportunity to say, "Grandma, I've started dating someone, and I'm afraid my parents won't agree..."

Grandmother Shen smiled. "If they don't agree, then let them be. In matters of the heart, parents often disapprove, but what does it matter if they do? When your aunt was dating your uncle back then, I was strongly against it. But now, isn't your cousin Yan almost thirty?"

The elderly lady took a bite of a sugar triangle and continued, "And your dad... back when he was dating your mom, your granddad chased him down several streets with a shovel. He threatened to break his legs if he came any closer to your mom. Now look at you, all grown up, and your granddad even brags about having a good son-in-law."

Huh? My dad was actually chased by my granddad? It's hard to imagine my cultured and easygoing granddad doing such a thing. But then again, back then, Dad was just a street vendor, while Granddad's family was a well-known medical family in Beijing. They weren't even in the same social class. Yet Dad still proved himself through his efforts. Even Granddad is proud of him. If Dad could do it, then my Lin Xu definitely can!

[In the small dining room on the second floor of the West Fourth Ring Villa.]

Shen Guofu tasted the Pickled Pork on the table, his face instantly filled with delight, "Oh my, this pork is steamed so deliciously! I should buy two portions for Grandmother later—she loves this kind of tender meat that doesn't require much chewing."

Han Shuzhen tasted it and nodded, "It's truly nice, but I still prefer the Crystal Sugar pork knuckle Mom used to make... I remember the first time I went to your house, your mom cooked a pork knuckle, and I still remember that taste."

Shen Guofu picked up a couple of dried tofu slices from the large communal meal's container and placed them in his wife's bowl, "I remember too. Right after we finished eating the pork knuckle, Yueyue's granddad chased me for several streets with a shovel and even said he'd break my legs... It really scared me back then!"

"You're still talking about it! Back then, you were running around shouting that I was the only one you'd marry, making everyone in several streets aware of our affair. Even the matchmakers stopped visiting."

My dad had no choice but to grit his teeth and let me marry you. If Yueyue starts dating someone, would you go after him with a shovel like my dad did?"

Shen Guofu laughed heartily, "That would depend on the person. If it's someone like Brother Lin... Oh, why do I keep thinking only of good scenarios? Let's drop it, let's eat!"

「At the same time.」

Outside Lin Ji's Food on Yingchun Street, the leopard-print lady who had visited in the morning now appeared again at the entrance...

Chapter 118: Auntie, my master is a libertine! Really? I like such people!

"Boss Lin, that marinated dried tofu is really well made. Can you make more tomorrow?"

"Indeed, it tastes amazing. I regret only buying two slices."

"You did better than me—I only bought one slice to taste first, planning to buy two more if it was good. But by the time I turned around, it was all sold out!"

"Make more tomorrow, Boss Lin. It's seriously a divine artifact for pairing with drinks!"

"..."

The customers couldn't stop praising the newly introduced marinated dried tofu.

Initially, some hesitated at the price of three yuan per slice when tofu in the market cost less than three yuan per pound. A single slice selling for three yuan seemed rather outrageous.

But after tasting it, they understood.

It was worth the price.

The flavor, the texture—it was even better than meat.

Especially the rich marinade in the dried tofu; it tasted just like the Tiger Skin Chicken Feet, but with even more of the delicious sauce.

It was tastier and more satisfying.

"Today, Master Ma bought too much tofu, so we marinated some to try it out. Since everyone likes it, we'll definitely make more tomorrow."

If it were a more difficult dish, Lin Xu would have to give it some thought.

But making marinated dried tofu is simple.

As long as the customers love it.

He'd give it his all!

To further ignite the customers' enthusiasm, Lin Xu announced, "Tomorrow, we won't only have marinated dried tofu and Pickled Pork, but also Braised Duck Heads, Braised Duck Necks, Braised Duck Feet, and Braised Duck Wings. If you like spicy food, definitely don't miss out!"

This immediately sparked the customers' interest.

"What? You're going to have duck heads and necks?"

"I love spicy snacks. Paired with beer, I can never get enough."

"Make sure it's really spicy, Boss Lin. That's what makes these duck treats delicious."

"I can't wait to try them."

"Me neither! I'm coming early tomorrow to avoid them selling out again!"

While everyone was chatting excitedly, Lin Xu caught a glimpse of Leopard Print Auntie entering the shop with her Hermès handbag.

Huh? What is she doing here? Is she here to tear into Master again, that old lothario?

"Welcome, please place your order!" Song Tiantian's greeting stopped Leopard Print Auntie as she was about to walk further inside. She casually glanced at the menu posted on the cash register and paid a thousand yuan with her phone.

"I'm not hungry right now," she said. "I'll just pay first and decide what I'd like to eat later when I'm inside."

After saying that, she proceeded inward without looking back.

Song Tiantian was speechless. If you're not eating, why come to a restaurant? Are you here to see our boss?

She glanced in the direction the auntie headed. Sure enough, she was making her way toward the kitchen.

In the kitchen, Lin Xu wiped his hands and took the initiative to greet her. "Good day, Auntie. Is there something I can help you with?"

Leopard Print Auntie, with her makeup impeccably done, hair piled high, and wearing a youthful, figure-hugging dress, looked far better than the disheveled state she was in during her tussle with Master that morning.

Approaching Lin Xu, she didn't mince words and said, "I just want to get to know Gao Xiaoshuai. He is your master, right?"

Get to know him? Lin Xu curiously asked, "Are you planning to sue him or something?"

I need to get this straight. I can't have just finished praising Master as the retired head chef from Fishing Platform, only for this auntie to go there and stir up trouble. Wouldn't that make me responsible for harming Master?

His question made Leopard Print Auntie chuckle. "No, no, no. Why would I sue him? I just want to get to know him, become friends. But the more I try to get close to him, the more he keeps his distance."

Lin Xu remained silent. He was just casually livestreaming for fun, and you single-handedly turned him into a major streamer, making his hobby a career. How could he possibly be nice to you?

Looking at Leopard Print Auntie's frustrated expression, a thought crossed Lin Xu's mind. Since Master doesn't want anything to do with her, I, as his disciple, should throw some cold water on this situation to cool Auntie down. It's a good chance for her to see Master's true colors, so she doesn't come back raising hell after getting played, disrupting the whole shop.

With that in mind, Lin Xu said, "My master is nothing but a playboy who flits through life, faithful only to cooking; he takes everything else as a game..."

That should be clear enough, right? It's just short of me outright saying, 'He's a scumbag, run!'

However, as soon as he finished speaking, Leopard Print Auntie, who had been looking distressed, suddenly brightened up. "Really? I love that kind of person, living a playful life, that's what it means to live for oneself! Thank you, young man, I'm going to go find your master now."

After saying this, she hurriedly left the store with her purse in tow, as if she were pursuing her own springtime.

Lin Xu stood dumbfounded, astonishment written all over his face.

What in the world? I was clearly trying to put out the fire. Why does it feel like I just poured a bucket of gasoline on it instead?

「Four-thirty in the morning.」

Lin Xu came to the store, carrying Dundun.

After placing the little guy on the cashmere blanket at the cash register, he locked the door and headed off to the market to buy groceries.

Today, he needed to prepare Pickled Pork, marinated dried tofu, and various duck products, requiring noticeably more ingredients than usual.

The duck products alone required about twenty different spices. These included Chili King dried chilies, Devil's Pepper, and the more aromatic Lantern Pepper for better flavor enhancement.

"Boss Lin, everything's ready for you: two boxes of duck heads, two boxes of duck necks, two boxes of duck wings, and two boxes of duck feet, all of the highest quality."

Lin Xu opened the cardboard boxes to check the ingredients.

Assured they were of good quality, he then loaded them onto Boss Hu's electric tricycle.

Given the current volume of ingredients Lin Ji's Food used, Lin Xu could have simply stayed in the store and had Boss Hu and Uncle Shen deliver. However, he was concerned about quality, so he insisted on going to the market to select them himself. This also allowed him to snap up any good ingredients he found.

Like now.

After selecting the duck products and the meats he needed, just as he was about to leave, he noticed that Boss Hu's Pork Large Intestine also looked quite good.

He bought about ten pounds, planning to make some stir-fried Fatty Intestines for lunch.

He also intended to take advantage of any lulls during the busy morning to shoot a food vlog.

He had been busy the last couple of days, making do with videos of Dundun playing games to keep content flowing.

Although his number of fans was increasing, he couldn't forget his main focus.

After all, he was a food vlogger, not a pet vlogger.

To improve the video quality, Lin Xu had also specially spent sixty thousand points to exchange for the Basic Shooting Technique.

With this Technique, combined with the action camera and other shooting equipment Chen Yan had given him, the video quality should take a qualitative leap.

After getting back to the store, he started by soaking the duck products in a basin of water.

This would remove impurities and blood, making them taste better when cooked.

Next, he soaked Chicken Feet and blanched Pork Skin, kicking off a busy day.

「Eight in the morning.」

The employees were all busy with their tasks.

Lin Xu brought out the Pork Bone Broth that Ma Zhiqiang had simmered during his downtime the day before.

He was preparing to make a marinade for the duck products.

While he was busy, his senior apprentice brother, Xie Baomin, strolled into the store.

"Senior Brother? What brings you here?"

"Oh, I came to take Master home. He said there was a water and power outage in his community last night, so he stayed at my place..."

Lin Xu was utterly bewildered.

There hadn't been any water or power outages in any Ying Chun Street community last night. If there had, the community group chat would have exploded. Why would Master tell such a lie? Could it be...

A thought suddenly flashed through Lin Xu's mind: Could it be that this old lothario was cornered by Leopard Print Auntie, who's chasing her 'springtime,' and couldn't go home?

Chapter 119: The Stewing Process of the Black Duck! Panda, Are You Here to Show Off Your Love?

Lin Xu had originally thought that with Master's acting skills, the leopard-print auntie would definitely be no match.

But who would have known that the mighty Sea King... that's it?

What a pity Master isn't here to enjoy the show.

"Junior Brother, why are you soaking so many duck parts? Planning to make marinated duck heads and necks?"

Lin Xu came back to his senses and nodded. "The customers were saying that the chicken feet weren't spicy enough, so I'm planning to marinate some duck parts for them to try, and also to help boost beer sales."

"You're really multi-talented, Junior Brother!"

Not only skilled in savory dishes, pastries, and steamed items, but now he's even started making marinated snacks. Cooking seems to have no barriers for him at all. I'm so envious!

"If Senior Brother isn't busy, why not stay and help me keep an eye on things?"

Xie Baomin waved his hand. "Some other day. I have to go back for an administrative meeting later, and after that, I still have to deal with an inspection, so I have a lot to do."

After saying that, Senior Brother Xie took his car keys and left.

Lin Xu continued preparing the marinated duck parts.

Today, he was making Black Duck.

Black Duck is not only a brand name but also a type of spicy and slightly sweet flavor profile in marinating duck parts. Compared to a purely spicy flavor, the slightly sweet Black Duck is more popular with a wider range of consumers, boasting many fans throughout the country.

In reality, Black Duck isn't actually black in color but rather so intensely ruddy that it creates a visually dark, almost black, appearance. To achieve this effect, one must not only add caramelized sugar to the marinade but also Dark Soy Sauce and sweet bean paste to enhance the color.

Lin Xu first poured Pork Bone Broth into the stockpot, then began to prepare the marinade for the Black Duck.

He started by soaking over twenty types of spices—including Sichuan peppercorns, star anise, bay leaves, cinnamon, tsaoko, Angelica dahurica, cloves, and fennel—in warm water to clean off any surface dust and reduce their potent medicinal properties. He then divided them into three spice packets and added them to the marinade. Among these spices, a generous amount of Sichuan peppercorns was required, with a particular emphasis on the more numbing variety, needing almost a large bowlful. Since it was the first time making this marinade, the quantity of spices needed to be doubled or even tripled to ensure the numbing spiciness in the duck parts would stand out.

Next, he soaked a small basket of King Chili, Devil's Pepper, and Lantern Pepper—three types of dried chili—in warm water until soft. He cut half into chili sections and kept the other half whole, adding them directly to the marinade. Whole chilis are slow to release their spiciness, so for the first batch of marinade, chili sections were used to quickly infuse the heat into it.

Finally, he chopped some scallion segments and about three pounds of ginger, then packed them into two large spice bags. For a richer flavor, halved onions and a small handful of knotted scallions were also added to the spice packets. Ingredients like Scallion and Ginger need to be replaced after each use, so they were packed separately. The other spices, however, could be used two or three times before replacement to fully extract their flavors. As for the dried chili, it could be left in the marinade indefinitely, with a little more added each time to maintain the spiciness.

After adding all these ingredients to the marinade, he brought it to a boil over high heat, first drawing out the flavors of the various spices, Scallion and Ginger, and chili. Then, he added a large bowl of caramelized sugar, half a bottle of Dark Soy Sauce, most of a bottle of Light Soy Sauce, a whole packet of sweet bean paste, half a packet of salt, two handfuls of Crystal Sugar, and a ladleful of Maltose. He stirred the marinade with a spoon until it was well mixed. Then, he let it simmer over low heat for more than half an hour, allowing the flavors of the marinade to be thoroughly extracted and the ingredients to meld together, improving the overall taste.

While the marinade was simmering, Lin Xu took out all the soaked duck parts from the water. He removed any fine feathers from the duck heads and wings, chopped off the nails from the duck feet, and tore off excess lymphatic tissue and blood clots from the duck necks, among other things. After cleaning all the ingredients thoroughly, he rinsed them several times with clean water.

Next, he set up a large stockpot for blanching. Duck itself is an ingredient with a particularly strong gamey taste, and since these duck parts are often the less choice cuts, removing the gaminess during blanching is crucial. Lin Xu poured these ingredients into the stockpot. Then he added a small bowl of ginger slices and scallion segments, pouring in just under half a bowl of Liquor. Liquor, as it evaporates, carries away many off-flavors, making it more effective than cooking wine when dealing with ingredients with strong odors.

Before long, the water in the pot boiled. Lin Xu skimmed off the scum with a spoon and continued to boil the parts for several more minutes. Only then did he scoop out all the ingredients and place them on a bamboo basket, using a fan to dry the surface moisture.

For all marinated duck parts, regardless of the cut, a firm and chewy texture was desired. To achieve this, one needed to briefly boil the duck parts and then air-dry them to tighten the surface meat. This way, after marinating, the meat would naturally become firmer.

By the time the fan had dried off all the moisture on the surface of the duck parts, the marinade he'd started in the morning was also nearly done simmering. Lin Xu added these duck parts to the marinade. He turned down the heat. He also poured two large spoonfuls of Seasoning Oil and one large spoonful of lard into the pot, increasing the fat content of the marinade, which would make the marinated ingredients richer and more succulent. He kept the pot at a gentle simmer, just below a rolling boil, for half an hour, then let the parts soak for another hour. After that, these Black Duck pieces would be ready to serve.

Just as he was busy, a black Audi Q7 slowly pulled up to the entrance.

Panda, who hadn't visited the restaurant for several days, stepped out of the car. Different from his previous image of wearing hip-hop clothes and a curly instant-noodle hairstyle, Panda now had a more youthful cropped haircut and wore well-fitting, smart casual attire.

When he pushed open the door and entered the store, Song Tiantian, who was sitting at the cash register tallying the accounts, didn't even recognize him. "Sorry, we haven't opened yet. Please come back after eleven o'clock..."

Panda gave a wry smile. "It's me, Panda!"

"You're Panda? Did you get plastic surgery?"

Panda chuckled. "No, I just changed my hairstyle and clothes. I need to discuss something with Boss Lin inside. We'll chat later."

Having said that, he walked further in.

Song Tiantian gazed at his retreating figure, dumbfounded.

Damn, he actually looked kind of handsome! Now, Anchor Wu surely won't reject him, right?

In the kitchen, Lin Xu glanced at Panda, who had come in from outside, and at first, didn't recognize him either.

It couldn't be helped; Panda's previous image had been too deeply ingrained in people's minds. It was as if, with his new look, he had really undergone plastic surgery.

"Long time no see, Brother Pan. What have you been up to lately? You haven't been to the restaurant for a while."

Panda replied with a smile, "I've converted my studio into an e-commerce company these past few days. I've been busy looking for a location and hiring staff. I finally managed to squeeze out some time today, so I rushed over."

After speaking, he took out a business card and handed it over.

Lin Xu took it and saw that the name of Panda's company was: Yanjing City Xinda Electronics Trading Co., Ltd.

Xinda... Wu Kexin and Panda, huh? You're laying it on a bit thick, bro... If Anchor Wu ends up not accepting you, won't you have to go to the Bureau of Industry and Commerce to change the name?

Lin Xu involuntarily thought of those guys who had tattooed the names of their secret crushes on their bodies, only to undergo the pain of getting them removed shortly after. As intense as the moment of getting the tattoo was, so was the agony of having it removed. He wondered if President Pan would feel the same when the time came to change his company's name.

As he mused, he glanced at the card again and noticed that the title printed after Panda's name was Vice General Manager.

Vice General Manager? Then who's the General Manager?

"It's... Wu Kexin."

Lin Xu: ?????? I get it now, bro. You're just here to flaunt your relationship, aren't you?

Chapter 120: The Black Duck is So Delicious! The Master Has Arrived, and So Has the Melon!

"You two... are together now?" Lin Xu looked at Panda in surprise.

I couldn't believe it. The big panda who insisted on being a bachelor during discussions at Lin Ji's Food had rebelled against the cause so quickly.

"No, Xinxin and I haven't officially started dating because we both believe that whether it's love or marriage, it's a very serious matter, and we shouldn't rush into it blindly."

Lin Xu: "..."

You're already calling her Xinxin, yet you're not officially together. Instead, you've become business partners. I really don't understand you two.

"Actually, the relationship between a man and a woman is just like forming a business partnership. Doing business together is just us getting used to it in advance. If we can't even get along in this, it shows we aren't suited to be together."

TSK... As expected of a boss, his words have become so philosophical.

Curious, Lin Xu put away the business card and asked, "When will the company start operating?"

"We aren't going to have any grand opening ceremony. Everyone is quite busy, and both Xinxin and I are pretty practical people. We don't see a need to go through all those pointless formalities."

He keeps calling her Xinxin. Why don't they just get married before starting the company? That way, we could give double the wedding gifts.

The new company Panda and Wu Kexin started focuses on live-stream sales. Wu Kexin has a huge fan base, which they can monetize this way.

"Isn't your Xinxin a contracted live-streamer with Sister Yan's company? Wouldn't this count as job-hopping?"

"No, it doesn't. Joyful Media, managed by President Chen, acts like Xinxin's agency. As long as our company pays the live-streaming sales commission and the agency fee, President Chen even welcomes us to expand the business."

Oh, so that's how it is. After all, Lin Xu was a graduate of Finance University, so he understood the intricacies once Panda explained a bit.

"Then, do you have any other business here today?" After learning about Panda's new company, Lin Xu asked curiously.

Panda was so busy; surely, he hadn't come to the shop just to chat. And indeed...

Panda smiled somewhat sheepishly and asked, "Well, it's like this. We're going to start broadcasting tonight, but our merchandise isn't fully stocked yet. I wanted to include your family's scenic area, but I was afraid your uncle and auntie might not like this approach..."

Before he could finish, Lin Xu said, "Just contact my parents directly. They've wanted to try online marketing for a while now, and it's convenient since you and Anchor Wu have both visited the scenic area."

Marketing for a scenic area was simply a matter of discounting tickets. The Longqi Mountain Scenic Area's 4A certification hadn't been approved yet, so the ticket price was only 29.9 yuan. While there wasn't much room for further reduction, they could sell package deals for tickets and accommodation, bundling the Cliff Hotel and Starry Camp.

Anyway, if you wanted to do marketing, there were plenty of avenues. Lin Xu believed that Panda, being a professional, would surely devise a reasonable plan.

"Besides this, I came here to order lunch. Our company isn't far from here; I'll drive over and pick up the food later."

Yo, another long-term client! Lin Xu figured they would need to increase the amount of rice for lunch. Otherwise, just selling boxed lunches would use up a lot of rice, and over time, customers would complain.

After briefly signing a meal supply agreement with Panda, Panda took his car keys, bid farewell, and left.

Lin Xu was just about to go to the supermarket next door to buy baking soda, so he left the store with him.

Only after stepping outside did Lin Xu notice the Q7 parked by the entrance.

Lin Xu asked curiously, "Is this your car?"

"It's company-issued. Xinxin said that with my tall and large frame, driving ordinary cars would be too cramped. She insisted on buying this one, and I couldn't persuade her otherwise, so I agreed."

Lin Xu: "..."

Bro, just go. I can't take any more of this public display of affection you're dishing out. No wonder his sister-in-law always had such a disdainful expression whenever she saw him interacting with Shen Jiayue. Turns out, being on the receiving end of PDA is this annoying.

After buying the baking soda and returning to the store, Lin Xu finished his tasks, set up the tripod, and, using the kitchen workstation, filmed the process of making Dry-fried Fatty Intestines.

This dish, much like other dry-fried dishes, simply involved the extra initial steps of cleaning and braising the Fatty Intestines. For Lin Xu, who already had a certain culinary foundation, these steps weren't difficult.

After filming the cooking process, Lin Xu added a tasting segment. He dished out a plate of the finished Dry-fried Fatty Intestines, carried it to a dining table outside, and also lifted Dundun onto the table. Then, he placed a plate of steamed beef tenderloin in front of Dundun.

One human, one cat, each began to eat.

While Dundun was eating, it suddenly turned its head to sniff at the Dry-fried Fatty Intestines in front of Lin Xu, its expression filled with confusion and curiosity, as if wondering why the two plates of meat were different. It approached Lin Xu's plate, sniffed, then turned back to taste the tenderloin from its own plate before pushing its plate a little closer to Lin Xu.

Is it... wanting to trade with me?

Lin Xu chuckled and rubbed the little fellow's round, fluffy head. "This is spicy and salty; it's not suitable for you. You should stick to your beef."

"MROOOW."

Dundun reluctantly hopped away.

Lin Xu stood up and turned off the filming equipment.

Filming complete!

Next was to find some time to edit it and upload it to the short video platform.

At ten-thirty in the morning, Lin Xu, holding a skimmer, carefully fished out the duck heads, duck necks, duck wings, and duck feet from the richly aromatic and spicy braising liquid, placing them on a tray.

After being braised and soaked, the originally white duck parts had all turned into the signature dark brown of 'black duck' style products, looking incredibly tempting.

"Wow! These look even more appetizing than Zhou Hei Ya's products! Their duck heads sell for over ten yuan each! Boss, what are we charging for these?"

As he took them out, Song Tiantian and the others all rushed over with their phones to take pictures. This would garner a wave of likes and also help promote the restaurant.

What price should I set?

Lin Xu thought for a moment and said, "Duck heads and duck feet will be eight yuan, duck wings ten yuan, and duck necks fifteen yuan each."

With the six-yuan Tiger Skin Chicken Feet as a baseline, the price of the duck items could only be set higher, but not too much higher. Otherwise, customers would all opt for the Chicken Feet, and who would buy the duck?

Right then, the duck items were still hot and not ideal for eating. They needed to cool down for the aroma to fully permeate the meat. That's when their flavor would be at its best, and the meat texture would become firmer. Eaten with ice-cold beer, it would be an absolute delight.

Not long after, Shen Jiayue arrived by car to pick up lunch. It happened to be lunchtime at the restaurant, so the girl seized the opportunity to sit down and freeload a staff meal.

Today's staff meal was particularly sumptuous, featuring Pickled Pork, Dry Pot Fatty Intestines, and a platter of chopped duck wings, necks, heads, and feet.

"Wow! This duck wing is so delicious! It's spicy with a hint of soy sauce fragrance, and it's so chewy. I'm really craving a gulp of ice-cold beer!"

Lin Xu picked up a slice of the Pickled Pork, placed it in her bowl, and said, "What's a kid like you doing drinking beer? Don't you still have to drive?"

Who's a kid? I'm already twenty-two! Not only can I drink beer, I can get married and have kids too! Hmph, that annoying Xu Bao! Always treating me like a child... If you've got the guts, then dote on me for a lifetime!

After finishing the spicy duck wing, Shen Jiayue picked up a duck head and began to gnaw on it. Compared to the wings, the head had more parts to nibble on, and the textures were also richer. For instance, the soft and delicious duck brain, the tender and juicy duck eyes—all these parts were wonderfully spicy and flavorful. She ate with such relish, exclaiming repeatedly how satisfying it was.

"A slice of ice-cold watermelon would be perfect right now."

He won't let me drink beer, but watermelon should be fine, right?

Watermelon, huh? Lin Xu was just about to ask Chezai to go to the supermarket to buy one when he suddenly saw his master walk in, looking dejected.

Ha! Master's here! Looks like we'll get some juicy news after all!