

Culinary 121

Chapter 121: The Tearless Sea King! Duck Goods Brining Technique Upgrade!

"Hello, Master!"

Upon seeing Old Gao, Shen Jiayue hurriedly greeted him.

Old Gao nodded weakly and then sat down at the dining table.

Che Zai put down his chopsticks and asked, "Old Gao, what would you like to eat? I'll get it for you."

"Just half a bowl of rice..."

Seeing his master hanging his head like a sick chicken, Lin Xu curiously asked, "What's wrong, Master? Did that leopard-print lady bully you?"

He was initially just watching the drama unfold.

But seeing his master like this, Lin Xu started to worry. Might that leopard-print lady have become so enraged after being rejected that she found someone to beat his master up?

"Sigh... A single misstep can cause lifelong regret."

Old Gao sighed deeply and said to Lin Xu, "Xiao Xu, you must never mess with those wealthy older women in the future. They have too many tricks up their sleeves!"

Lin Xu: "..."

What about wealthy young ladies? There's one sitting right next to me, and she's pretty cute too.

Shen Jiayue, who had been focused on nibbling the duck head in her hand, immediately raised her head after hearing Old Gao's words. She first glanced at Old Gao, then at her darling Xu.

Something's up! Something definitely happened when I wasn't around.

Lin Xu figured that the leopard-print lady might come to the restaurant often in the future. It would be better to clarify things upfront rather than let the staff speculate negatively.

So, he explained everything in detail.

Everyone listened, agape with astonishment, even forgetting to eat the Pickled Pork and Fatty Intestines on the table.

The renowned Gao Xiaoshuai from the live-streaming community was actually Old Gao?

The dignified lady who visited the restaurant yesterday was actually the mysterious tycoon Die Lianhua?

No wonder she casually spent one thousand yuan and chatted with the boss yesterday; that really fit Die Lianhua's persona of someone who saw money as dirt yet fiercely guarded her riches.

Although Shen Jiayue had already learned about Old Gao's latest alter ego in the group chat yesterday, she didn't watch live streams and wasn't much interested in the dynamics of the live-streaming world.

After hearing Lin Xu's explanation, she was also slack-jawed, finding it hard to believe that a middle-aged female fan could possess such formidable strength.

While Lin Xu was explaining, Old Gao also added some details.

Lin Xu was stunned. "You said she gifted how many Carnivals in total?"

"Five hundred and twenty. She said she wanted to gift me 'a 520.' I thought she meant a brand of cigarettes, so I didn't pay much attention..."

Five hundred and twenty Carnivals?

Each Carnival costs three thousand yuan, so 520 would amount to...

$3,000 \times 520 = 1,560,000.$

That was equivalent to the price of a brand-new Range Rover.

WOW, Master's charm is truly something else!

Meanwhile, Shen Jiayue felt secretly relieved:

Does pursuing a boy cost so much money? Lucky I snagged my darling Xu with just some snacks back in school and saved a lot of pocket money. I'm really good at managing a household... That being the case, treating myself to a piece of Fatty Intestines isn't too much, right?

She picked up a piece of Fatty Intestines with her chopsticks and put it in her mouth.

YUM...

These Fatty Intestines seem to be braised and then fried. They have a crispy outer layer blended with an appetizing spicy flavor, and upon biting into them, the taste of the braising sauce mingles inside. Soft and fatty, they're truly satisfying to eat.

As she enjoyed the delicious Fatty Intestines, she couldn't help but shovel a couple of mouthfuls of rice.

AHHH, these Fatty Intestines are so delicious, I can't stop eating them!

Nearby, Lin Xu was still engrossed in getting the juicy details.

Seeing that his master's mood had stabilized somewhat, he curiously asked, "Master, what happened last night? Why did you end up staying at Senior Brother's house?"

As soon as this was mentioned, Old Gao sighed deeply again. "Yesterday, I was live-streaming at the recreational park. She said her phone was out of battery, so I let her use my phone to call her assistant to bring a charger. After that, I pocketed my phone and left. Little did I know, she followed me wherever I went. It wasn't until I went to a phone repair shop that I discovered she had installed a tracking app on my phone..."

TSK! Is this what he calls 'underhanded'? It's really hard to guard against.

Lin Xu had thought that was the end of it, but he didn't expect there was more to come:

"After uninstalling the software, I thought everything was settled. Just as I was about to head home, I saw her standing at the entrance of my residential complex. I then took a taxi to a hotel. As soon as I checked in, she showed up again. I rummaged through this bag and found that a tracking device had been slipped into it at some point."

Shen Jiayue was so shocked that she stopped eating her rice. "Is that leopard-print auntie a secret agent or something?"

She can track phones and even has tracking devices; this is just like a plot from a spy movie.

Old Gao shook his head. "No, she's in the car rental business."

Car... rental?

Lin Xu's face showed a look of realization.

Car rental companies are experts at GPS tracking to prevent vehicle theft.

The leopard-print auntie used this on Master; that's her using her professional expertise, alright.

A simple GPS locator forced the great 'Sea King' to hide at his disciple's place. Rich people really do rely on technology!

After speaking, Old Gao, looking disheartened, began to eat his rice.

Seeing the Pickled Pork with Dried Vegetable on the table, he picked up a piece and tried it.

His eyes then lit up. "This steamed pork is nicely done—tender and flavorful. The seasoning is just right; it doesn't overpower the natural taste of the pork but also highlights the salty-umami flavor of the Dried Vegetable. It's quite perfect!"

Although life had thrown a series of bewildering incidents at him, when it came to cooking, Old Gao suddenly seemed like a different person. He was not only full of energy but also able to make very astute comments on the entire dish.

"Not bad at all. I definitely couldn't have achieved this flavor when I was your age. Your talent truly puts me to shame."

He had lived a freewheeling life, but he had always held a devout heart towards cooking. Tasting his disciple's skills now, his gloomy mood instantly cleared!

Lin Xu hadn't expected his master to praise him so much. He smiled and said, "It's all thanks to your guidance, Master. Ever since you told me last time that cooking is an art of subtraction, I've been pondering the profound meaning behind it."

Old Gao's interest was piqued.

After shoveling down a couple of mouthfuls of rice, he pointed to the duck dishes nearby and said, "Not all cooking is about subtraction. Braised dishes like this require addition. And when adding, you need to find the proper hierarchy among the main and supporting spices, as well as their pairing with other ingredients."

He picked up a duck foot and tasted it.

Then he said, "The braising time is spot on, and the color is fine too. However, you should use fewer Sichuan peppercorns. The numbing flavor is too strong; it's more suited to the palate of people from Sichuan. As for the spiciness of the chili, it's adequate, but it lacks aroma. I suggest you change the type of chili. What kinds of chili did you use?"

"Chili King, Devil's Pepper, and Lantern Pepper."

Upon hearing this, Old Gao immediately said, "Switch the Devil's Pepper with Northwest Line Chili. This will make the spiciness slightly milder, but the aroma will be richer. It will better suit the taste preferences here in Beijing."

As soon as he finished speaking, the system's notification tone sounded in Lin Xu's mind:

"Host has listened to the advice of the State Banquet-level Master. 'Excellent Level Duck Braising Technique' has been upgraded to 'Superior Level Duck Braising Technique.' Congratulations to the Host!"

Master is truly Master! Even if the system hadn't upgraded it, Lin Xu felt that following Master's advice would likely elevate the flavor to another level.

While he was lost in thought, Old Gao caught sight of a BMW 760 slowly stopping at the door. He quickly shoveled two pieces of meat into his bowl, grabbed his bag in one hand and the bowl in the other, and crouched as he headed towards the storage room.

While walking, he didn't forget to call out, "Just say I'm not here!"

Chapter 122: It's you single dogs who know more! New rewards!

Lin Xu watched his Master's retreating figure heading to the storage room, unsure whether to laugh or cry. He's dodging so deftly. He must have done this many times before, right?

He moved the stool his Master had been sitting on to the side and then picked up his own bowl of rice. The show's over, the Skill's upgraded; time to fill my stomach and earn some money.

Shen Jiayue asked in a low voice, "When that leopard-print auntie comes in later, should we call her 'Auntie' or 'Master's wife'?"

"Just call her 'Auntie,'" Lin Xu replied. "Who knows how far these two nemeses will actually go."

Lin Xu took a bite of the Pickled Pork. The flavor was indeed good. But compared to the pork belly slices, he preferred the Dried Vegetable tucked underneath the meat. He spooned some of the oily Dried Vegetable over his rice, stirred it in, shoveled a mouthful, and savored the delicious bite. It was so comforting! The rich, savory, and flavorful Dried Vegetable, along with the rice grains coated in fat, were a perfect match. It was appetizing, went incredibly well with rice, and the more he ate, the more he craved. Soon, his bowl of rice was empty.

As Lin Xu got up to get more rice, he realized, Why hasn't Leopard-Print Auntie come in yet? He turned to look out the window. The BMW 760 was gone. Has she... given up?

"Master, you can come out now! Leopard-Print Auntie is gone."

Hearing this, Old Gao immediately came out of the storage room with his bowl, a joyful smile on his face. "Luckily, I'm clever!"

He finished the rice in his bowl and added, "I need to stop by the bank first to schedule a large transfer and pay her back. When I get back, I'll teach you how to adjust the braising liquid. The one for the duck items could taste even better with some tweaks."

With that, he grabbed his briefcase and hurriedly left.

Not long after, Shen Jiayue, having eaten her fill, loaded the boxed lunches for the audit firm into her trunk and drove back. As her car turned off Yingchun Street, she saw a BMW 760 blocking an elderly man. That man was Old Gao.

TSK... He's been cornered again! Shen Jiayue found it hilarious. That Leopard-Print Auntie is pestering Master like a thug, while Master is hiding like a wronged little wife. HA! Lin Xu was right. Those two really are nemeses!

But Old Gao looks a bit pitiful. Should I get out of the car and intervene?

After pondering for a moment, she called her cousin, Chen Yan, via Bluetooth and explained Old Gao's situation in detail.

When she finished, she asked, "Old Gao looks a bit pitiful. Do you think I should get out and try to talk to them?"

On the other end of the line, Manager Chen said, "You think Old Gao is pitiful, but maybe he's enjoying it. Don't get involved. Just go about your business."

Hm? What does that mean?

Chen "Emotion Expert" Yan said insightfully, "Haven't you heard the saying? A high-level Hunter often appears in the form of its prey."

Shen Jiayue: "!!!!!!!!!"

Good thing my cousin gave me a heads-up. Otherwise, I might have actually disturbed those two.

She patted her chest and said, "Thanks, Cousin. You single people really understand so much more. I don't get these emotional issues at all..."

The voice on the other end of the phone immediately shot up eight octaves, "SHEN! JIAYUE! I'M GOING TO END OUR FRIENDSHIP!!!!"

「In the store.」

The employees had just finished their lunch when Yue Liyue and his roommates walked in. The group first ordered two servings of the Pickled Pork they had missed out on yesterday. Then, they started ordering other dishes. Just as they were debating whether to have spicy boiled beef slices or dry-fried chicken, Panda came into the store to pick up his boxed lunches.

"WOW! Is that you, Panda bro? You look so much thinner! We ordered Pickled Pork; want some to build yourself back up?"

Panda: "..."

My so-called 'friends' truly are the biggest obstacle on the road to weight loss. I've worked so hard, dieting and exercising to get this far, and you're actually tempting me with Pickled Pork? But wait... the restaurant is serving Pickled Pork now? I've been so busy lately, working day and night, that I haven't even had time to eat at the restaurant, let alone keep up with Lin Ji's Food topics. I had no idea they were serving Pickled Pork today.

Since they have a new dish, I should get a portion for Xinxin later. Besides being busy with company matters, she also has to stream regularly. She needs some nourishment even more than I do.

Thinking of this, Panda said to Song Tiantian, "Tiantian, I'd like to order a portion of Pickled Pork and a side of rice, to go."

While scanning the payment QR code, he glanced at the menu and saw braised duck heads. He immediately recalled Wu Kexin gnawing on duck heads on the high-speed train and quickly added, "And two duck heads... two duck necks... Do you have duck wings and duck feet? If so, give me two of each of those too. And five slices of spiced tofu... How much is that altogether, Tiantian?"

Yue Liyue, standing nearby, was dumbfounded. Bro, aren't you supposed to be dieting? If you keep eating like this, you'll end up as round as a ball lightning, won't you? People online say those on diets

tend to binge eat, and it seems they're right. TSK TSK TSK... Luckily, I, whose looks are on par with Boss Lin, don't need to diet. I don't have such worries.

After Panda paid, he said to Yue Liyue, "Wu Kexin and I started a company. We're preparing to do live-stream sales. Let's collaborate when there's an opportunity. I've already spoken with Manager Chen; our two companies can aim for a win-win partnership later."

"NO PROBLEM!" Yue Liyue replied.

By now, the kitchen had prepared the boxed lunches Panda had come for, and Yue Liyue helped him carry them to his car. Back in the restaurant, the duck items and Pickled Pork were also packed. Panda took them, said goodbye to everyone, and drove away from Yingchun Street towards the nearby Huixuan Building, where the company he and Wu Kexin had started was located.

"WOW! This meat is so tender; it's delicious!"

"It really is. It melts in your mouth, and the best part is, it doesn't feel greasy."

"When I used to go back to my hometown, I loved eating it stuffed in steamed buns. Fluffy, warm steamed buns with a few slices of this pork, eaten hot—that's what I call truly delicious!"

"With steamed buns? Is it good?"

"Good? You can't just call it 'good.' It's one of mankind's supreme culinary pleasures!"

"..."

Yue Liyue's roommates were from the Northeast, Shandong, and Hubei; people from different regions have different eating habits. Take the Pickled Pork they were eating today, for example—the way it's enjoyed varies from place to place.

Yue Liyue had never tried eating it with steamed buns. Hearing his roommates discuss it so enthusiastically, he couldn't help but want to try.

He asked Lin Xu, "Boss Lin, do you have steamed buns? My roommates say Pickled Pork is especially delicious with them, and I'd like to experience it..."

Steamed buns? Yue Liyue, you're acting less and less like a Southerner. Although the restaurant often made breakfast items in the morning, they hadn't actually steamed plain buns before. Still, he wants to try eating it stuffed in something...

Lin Xu thought another way of eating it was even more refined. He asked a waiter to buy some Lotus Leaf Cakes from the nearby supermarket. After heating them in the steamer, he served them to Yue Liyue and his friends.

"We don't have steamed buns, but you can try it with these Lotus Leaf Cakes."

Steamed buns were too large; two or three could easily fill an adult. In contrast, the small, delicate Lotus Leaf Cakes were much more suitable for eating with the Pickled Pork. One cake per slice of meat. This way, it wouldn't prevent them from enjoying other dishes while still allowing them to experience eating the pork tucked into a bun. Plus, the remaining Dried Vegetable at the bottom of the plate could still be eaten with rice. It was a solution that satisfied all needs!

"These are great! I love eating meat with Lotus Leaf Cakes like this."

"Mmm! Eating it this way is definitely different from having it with rice."

As Yue Liyue and his friends ate, other customers wanted to try it too. So, when Lin Xu served the Pickled Pork, he simply arranged a circle of Lotus Leaf Cakes around the dish.

Just as a waiter served one such platter to a table, a system prompt sounded in Lin Xu's mind:

"Host has added a new profit growth point, completing the Hidden Task [Increase Profit]. Received one Excellent Level Basic Cooking Techniques lucky draw. Draw now?"

Chapter 123: Useless Skill +1! Dundun: Say that again?

There's a reward for this too?

Lin Xu was somewhat surprised.

However, after adding the Lotus Leaf Cakes, the price of the Pickled Pork could be increased by about fifteen yuan, and indeed, the profit margins had improved.

Even so, he was still buying the Lotus Leaf Cakes from the supermarket.

If he were to wholesale them or steam them himself using a steaming cabinet, the cost could be further reduced.

Right now, the kitchen was too busy. With people coming and going at the entrance, it wasn't suitable to pet Dundun and try for the lottery. So, Lin Xu planned to wait until after the midday rush.

After all, with Dundun, the king of luck, on his side, winning the lottery was hardly a difficult task.

Because they had started promoting the dishes yesterday, the restaurant was exceptionally busy this noon.

Whether it was the various duck dishes, the Pickled Pork, or the marinated dried tofu, everything was very popular.

Especially those duck dishes. Eating the fragrant and spicy food, then washing it down with a cold beer—the sensation was unbelievably satisfying.

"This duck head is marinated so well! It's perfectly numbing and spicy, and the texture is fantastic to chew. It's amazing with beer. If there were a game on, I could eat this all night."

"For me, the joy of gnawing on duck heads and necks comes from the sense of achievement when you pick out the meat bit by bit. Those tiny morsels hidden in the crevices of the bones, you have to meticulously search for them. This sense of achievement is incredibly satisfying for someone with OCD."

"Me too, me too! I only play scavenging games on Steam, just for that kind of joy."

"Ha! I only play scavenging games too. I'm tired of Skyrim and the like. Bro, let's add each other on WeChat later and exchange some gaming insights."

"Sure, sure..."

Several customers, discussing the art of gnawing on duck necks, found themselves hitting it off more and more as they chatted.

Eventually, they simply created a group chat, and everyone joined.

「Two o'clock in the afternoon.」

The bustle in the restaurant finally subsided.

Lin Xu wiped the sweat from his forehead, walked over to the cash register, and scratched Dundun under the chin—his favorite spot. Each time, Dundun would squint his eyes, thoroughly enjoying it.

However, today Lin Xu was preoccupied with the lottery draw. After just a couple of scratches, he couldn't help but silently think:

Lottery draw!

Instantly, the lottery wheel appeared on the mental screen.

It was filled with the names of various Basic Cooking Techniques.

As the wheel spun rapidly, he pressed the draw button.

Soon, a notification from the system sounded in his mind:

"Congratulations to the Host for obtaining the Excellent Level Basic Cooking Technique—Knife Sharpening."

Sharpening... knives?

Lin Xu glanced down at Dundun.

What's the matter, little buddy? Why so unhelpful today?

Dundun shot him a look, leaped haughtily off the table, and squeezed into the Shengjian bao-shaped cat bed Shen Jiayue had bought for him near the entrance, looking quite miffed.

I was too careless, Lin Xu then realized.

Previously, when he used Dundun for the lottery, he would hold him or play with him for a bit.

Today, he had gone straight for the draw.

The little guy must be unhappy.

He was too impatient. Otherwise, he wouldn't have ended up with such an underwhelming technique.

Although the Knife Sharpening technique wasn't completely useless, compared to the Dough Technique, the Filling Adjustment Technique, and the Filling Technique, it was significantly inferior.

Alas! A lottery chance wasted!

He squatted beside the Shengjian bao-shaped cat bed and played with Dundun for a while. Then, he took the video footage he had shot in the morning back to his apartment in the residential complex behind the restaurant and edited it on his computer.

After checking it once to confirm there were no issues, he chose to upload it.

Then he lay on the couch and took a brief nap before going downstairs to return to work at the shop.

The shop was still bustling in the afternoon.

The marinated dried tofu had sold out, and a new batch needed to be fried and then braised.

The duck dishes were also running low; not only did new batches need to be braised, but the braising liquid also needed adjustment.

Additionally, some Lotus Leaf Cakes had to be steamed.

Although the supermarket-bought Lotus Leaf Cakes were convenient, they were expensive. Their taste was also mediocre, nowhere near worthy of the shop's Perfect Level Pickled Pork.

Upon arriving at the shop, Lin Xu first proofed some dough, and then began preparing the Pickled Pork.

In the morning, when he was making Pickled Pork, he had purposely cooked the meat chunks for the afternoon. He had also soaked the pork skin until it achieved the tiger-skin pattern. Now, he could just slice it, marinate it a bit, and then it was ready to be steamed.

「One hour later.」

The dough had risen. Lin Xu kneaded it once more and started making Lotus Leaf Cakes.

The Lotus Leaf Cake, a type of half-moon-shaped small bun, seemed to be available nationwide. It's generally eaten paired with meat dishes, and one can easily tear it open in the middle to stuff it with meat.

Dishes like Cumin Lamb, Pickled Pork, and Fermented Tofu Meat are all commonly eaten with Lotus Leaf Cakes.

Making Lotus Leaf Cakes is quite simple.

Knead the risen dough again to expel the air inside.

Roll it out into a long, thin strip with a rolling pin, brush a thin layer of oil on the surface, then fold it in half. This makes it easy to separate when stuffing with meat.

After folding, evenly score a striped pattern on the dough with a scraper.

This makes the resulting Lotus Leaf Cakes more attractive.

Finally, holding the open edge of the dough with one hand, gently pinch a small fold at the crease with the other hand to resemble a lotus leaf's stem.

This is the origin of the name "Lotus Leaf Cake."

Arrange the prepared Lotus Leaf Cakes evenly on a steaming rack, let them rest for fifteen minutes, then steam them in the cabinet for eight minutes.

The Lotus Leaf Cakes, perfect for serving with the Pickled Pork, were ready.

Compared to supermarket prices, the cost of making them with a steamer was less than 0.1 yuan each.

But when paired with Pickled Pork, each cake could sell for one yuan or one and a half yuan.

This profit... It's no wonder the system sent a reward specifically for this.

「At the same time,」

At the Fishing Platform State Guesthouse.

Xie Baomin was busy in the kitchen when Assistant Bai from the Dining Department suddenly appeared at the kitchen entrance.

"Bro Xie, Director Liao asked me to collect your discarded chef knives. I'll report them and get new ones issued. Do you have many discarded knives?"

"Not too many... Xiao Wang, give Assistant Bai those unused chef knives from the storage cabinet."

After saying that, he nudged Assistant Bai with his shoulder and whispered, "I heard they're setting the competition rules today. What are they? Come on, give your bro a heads-up. I'll treat you to some grilled lamb kidneys later."

Assistant Bai, in his thirties, had a good relationship with these executive chefs.

He chuckled and said, "The folks at Building Ten are offering to treat me to roasted suckling pig. Don't you think your Wangjing grilled kidneys are a bit lacking in sincerity?"

After a pause, he added, "I can't reveal the details, Bro Xie, so don't keep dwelling on it. Isn't second place good enough? I heard Building Ten has already made a banner for their third consecutive championship; they're dead set on winning this time."

Xie Baomin smiled, "What a coincidence. I've also made a championship banner. We'll see whose gets to be hung up in the end!"

Soon, Assistant Bai had collected ten or so chef's knives that were either dull-edged or nicked.

He took these knives back to the Dining Department office and placed them on a storage rack, already densely packed with discarded knives collected from every building.

Nearby, Geng Lishan, who was there to establish the competition rules, was quietly sipping tea.

"Mr. Lishan, why did you ask us to collect all these knives?" Liao Jinming, the gray-haired director of the Dining Department, asked curiously.

Geng Lishan put down his teacup and said calmly, "As a chef, knife sharpening is a fundamental skill. Later, select the knives with the most severely damaged edges and largest nicks and bring them to the competition site. If a contestant doesn't sharpen their knife or doesn't know how, I'll deduct points on the spot!"

Chapter 124: The Video Went Viral! Shen Guofu: Have to Go to Lin Ji for a Couple of Drinks Tonight!

Three o'clock in the afternoon.

Lin Xu's uploaded video had passed the review process. His social media followers received immediate notifications for the video update.

Everyone originally thought it was another video of Dundun playing games. But upon seeing the video cover, they discovered that it was actually a cooking tutorial, teaching how to make Dry Fried Fatty Intestines, which happened to be a favorite among many followers.

"Boss Lin finally remembered he's a chef."

"Dundun fans in tears, BOO HOO HOO, are we not going to see my Dundun today?"

"Dundun~~ my Dundun~~~"

"I like Dundun, and I like Fatty Intestines too, so can Dundun perform an act of eating Fatty Intestines?"

"Got my notebook out, planning to learn a trick to show off over the holiday when I go home!"

"Showing off +1!"

"Showing off +2!"

The video had just started, and fans began sending barrage comments right away.

Lin Xu's followers were a mixed bunch. There were pet fans, foodies, fans of his looks, and fans of the 'Lady Boss', among various other groups and types.

Moreover, some were specifically waiting for Song Tiantian in Lin Xu's video updates. Whenever this strong, youthful-looking cashier appeared, a group of netizens would call her their "wife" in the comments.

"Have you noticed that not only has the editing of Boss Lin's videos improved a lot, but the filming has changed too? There were at least three camera angles switching back and forth this time."

"Now that you mention it, I noticed it too."

"Did Boss Lin hire a professional team?"

"Hard to say, given that he has a wealthy girlfriend."

"AHHHH my Lady Boss... Draw your sword, Boss Lin!!!"

The video continued to play smoothly. In just a few minutes, Lin Xu had filmed the methods for washing Fatty Intestines, the techniques for braising them, the tricks for frying, and the final dry-frying process.

After covering these topics, it moved on to the tasting segment. The camera switched to the dining table.

Lin Xu sat behind the table with the freshly made Dry Fried Fatty Intestines in front of him. Beside the table, the plump Dundun was also sitting, with its own plate before it.

The followers who had been clamoring to see Dundun eat Fatty Intestines were immediately ecstatic. Two mukbangers eating at the same time—what a pleasant surprise!

However, what surprised them even more was that Dundun seemed rather interested in the Fatty Intestines. After taking a few bites of the beef on its plate, it sniffed near the dish.

Then it pushed its plate closer to Lin Xu.

"Is this... an exchange?"

"Quick, let it eat!!!"

"OMG, it actually knows how to swap! Isn't this little guy too smart?"

"Watching Boss Lin is just for fun; the real show is all about Dundun."

"AHHHH, truly worthy of being my precious Dundun!"

"It's so well-behaved! I really want to pet it."

"Working on South Third Ring. No matter what, I'm going to Lin Ji's Food for a meal tomorrow and pet Dundun's big head."

"Pet it for me too; this little darling is just too adorable!"

"Damn it! What use are these Coins to me? Give them to Dundun!"

"I gave Coins too! Hit like, favorite, and share! Let's get Dundun popular fast!"

The followers were melted by Dundun's action of swapping for the Fatty Intestines. Everyone started forwarding, liking, and commenting, and the views on the video skyrocketed.

However, the oblivious Lin Xu in the shop knew nothing about this.

At that moment, he was slicing the freshly fried Crispy Meat into strips and placing them into a steaming bowl. He added a couple of slices of ginger and a Star Anise, then ladled in a spoonful of the pork's original broth, planning to put it into the steamer.

The newly bought steamer still had plenty of unused space. So, Lin Xu decided to try making a few Steamed Crispy Meat Bowls. If they tasted good, he would specifically fry some smaller pieces of Crispy Meat tomorrow for these bowls. This would add a new item to the restaurant's menu and simultaneously increase the steamer's utilization rate.

Additionally, he wanted to see if this would trigger a bonus. If it did, that would be a neat profit. Well, I can't always passively trigger bonuses; I also need to actively figure out the system's reward rules. This way, I can better 'shear the wool'.

After putting all the Crispy Meat into the steamer, Lin Xu received a message from Shen Jiayue:

"The Pickled Pork you made was so delicious! I'm planning to bring some to my grandma this afternoon. She has trouble with her teeth. Do you have anything else in the store that she can eat?"

Trouble with her teeth? That doesn't leave many options.

Tiger Skin Chicken Feet and Chicken Feet in Black Bean Sauce would work. Both these chicken feet dishes are cooked to be fragrant and tender. One is braised, while the other is steamed until the bones are soft and the meat falls apart, making them manageable even for those with dental issues.

But other dishes... Either they're too tough to chew or not suitable for takeout.

Just as Lin Xu was about to reply, he suddenly thought of the Steamed Crispy Meat Bowls he had just prepared and replied:

"I just steamed some Crispy Meat. You can take a portion when you come."

"Really? Then I'll take both the Pickled Pork and the Crispy Meat. I'll come by around four or five this afternoon. Take care of yourself, and don't overwork yourself! [Hug][Hug][Hug]"

「In the auditor's office.」

After replying to this message, Shen Jiayue put down her phone.

Normally, Lin Xu wouldn't reply anymore. But today, just as she put down her phone, another message popped up on WeChat:

"To be able to marry you, no amount of exhaustion is too great!"

WOW!

So touching! This must be the most moving thing Xu Bao has ever said, right? Screenshot, screenshot! I'm going to look at it every night before I sleep!

Shen Jiayue felt so thrilled she wanted to scream. Today, when I get to Lin Ji's Food, no matter what Xu Bao is doing, I'm going to hug him tightly. HUMPH! Let others laugh if they want! I just want to hold tight the man I've lovingly fed for the past four years!

After her initial excitement, Shen Jiayue suddenly felt melancholic again.

It felt like her mom and dad were huge mountains standing between her and Xu Bao. How frustrating! How can I get Mom and Dad to approve of Xu Bao?

As she was fretting over this, she received a message from Shen Guofu:

"Sweetheart, don't forget to come home for dinner this afternoon!"

Shen Jiayue pouted and immediately refused:

"I won't! I'm going to see my grandma, and I'm not coming home for dinner."

HUMPH, don't think you can trick me into eating coarse grains.

Sitting in his office, Shen Guofu saw his daughter's message and excitedly slapped the table.

HAHA, I was just waiting for you to say that, sweetheart!

He picked up his phone and called Han Shuzhen:

"Honey, our daughter is going to eat at her granny's place tonight. How about we go eat at Lin Ji's? I didn't get enough of that tofu dish yesterday and want to try it again today. Plus, I heard they're introducing a new dish."

"Sure. Why don't you pick me up after work? I'll let Sister Liu know in a moment that she doesn't need to cook tonight."

Han Shuzhen was still at her clinic seeing patients at this time. After speaking, she quickly hung up the phone.

Shen Guofu put down his phone and opened the filing cabinet, which was stocked with various brands of Liquor. After scrutinizing them as if inspecting soldiers, he picked out a small, half-jin bottle of Wuliangye.

You're the one!

Although he had eaten at Lin Ji's several times, he had never drunk there because he drove. Today, his Bentley was sent for maintenance, so he didn't have to drive in the evening. Therefore, he decided to have a few drinks at Lin Ji's tonight.

Hmm, with such excellent dishes to go with drinks, not having a little something would be a terrible waste! It's a pity Brother Lin is too busy. Otherwise, I'd definitely have to drag him over for a few drinks, discuss hosting a family banquet, and let my relatives and friends taste his cooking.

It was just past four in the afternoon.

Shen Guofu tidied up his desk, then shoved the Wuliangye into his bag.

Time to leave work! Off to Lin Ji's for drinks!

Chapter 125: Embrace my Xubao! Old Shen, isn't this our Yueyue?

"Boss, you seem to have gone viral!"

At the restaurant, while Lin Xu was busy, Song Tiantian held up her phone and blurted out to him.

Gone viral? What's there about me to go viral?

Lin Xu took the phone and saw that it was the video of making Dry-fried Fatty Intestines that had gone viral, or rather, exploded.

From the time it was approved at three o'clock until now, in just one hour, it had garnered over one hundred thousand views, and the likes, comments, and Coins had all reached new highs.

He briefly scanned the comment section.

Everyone was discussing why Dundun was so well-behaved and sensible, and they were also curious about how delicious the Dry-fried Fatty Intestines were that Dundun was so eager to trade for them.

WHEW...

I've ridden Dundun's coattails again!

Lin Xu handed the phone back to Song Tiantian, then walked over to the cash register and rubbed Dundun's big head, feeling very grateful for the cat.

It was supposed to cost 880,000 points. However, this little guy hadn't cost a single point; Lin Xu had managed to lure him away. Dundun continuously helped the store attract business and increase Lin Xu's followers.

"Thanks, little buddy!"

Dundun was still a bit upset about the lottery, but after hearing Lin Xu's words, it meowed softly, then rolled over, showing its belly.

Lin Xu rubbed it a few times, and the "father and son" made up.

"Wow! We made it to the homepage, Boss!"

Song Tiantian held the phone again, scanned it a few times, and after seeing all the "homepage notifications" in the comment section, she knew these new followers had found them through the homepage.

She opened the homepage.

Sure enough, she saw the video's thumbnail featured on the page.

There was even a promotional phrase:

"The Dry-fried Fatty Intestines so delicious that a cat would trade meat for them—don't you want to learn how to make them?"

Lin Xu wasn't interested in being on the homepage.

He was only concerned about the number of followers.

"How many followers does my account have now?"

"Let me check... 72,000 now, Boss."

With several days left until the end of the task, the follower count had already soared to 72,000, making the completion of the task a certainty.

This made Lin Xu quite happy.

Because reaching 100,000 followers would earn him a Perfect Level stir-fry dish lottery.

He would definitely spend some quality time playing with Dundun then, aiming to win a delicious and popular stir-fry dish!

Before long, the dinner service at the restaurant began.

Lin Xu ended his father-son interaction with Dundun, went to the kitchen to wash his hands, then put on heat-resistant gloves, opened the steamer door, and brought out a bowl of perfectly steamed Crispy Meat.

After nearly two hours of steaming, the Crispy Meat had softened completely and was giving off a rich aroma.

He took a plate and placed it over the steaming bowl.

Quickly, he flipped it over.

He removed the bowl, and a round serving of Crispy Meat appeared in the center of the plate.

He pinched two cilantro leaves and placed them on top.

This dish of small Crispy Meat was ready.

"Host has successfully made Superior Crispy Meat in a Bowl using mastered Cooking Techniques and has earned an Excellent Level Cooking Learning Card. Congratulations to the host."

Cooking Learning Card? Haha! Time to learn another dish!

Lin Xu was initially worried that the Crispy Meat he made wouldn't taste good, and he had even prepared to lie that it was sold out when Shen Jiayue came.

But since it's Superior... I'll let her deliver it to the elderly person then. This kind of steamed, tender Crispy Meat in a Bowl, an elderly person should like it a lot, right?

He brought the Crispy Meat to the dining table.

Dinner began.

Lin Xu picked up a piece of Crispy Meat and took a bite; the exterior, originally crispy from frying, was now soaked with meat broth, becoming fragrant and smooth, richly juiced.

The inside of the Crispy Meat also had a completely different texture. The fatty part melted in the mouth, while the lean part was tender and delicious. It was slightly chewy but not tough on the teeth.

Yum! Worthy of being Superior Crispy Meat. It truly is extraordinary.

Meanwhile, outside the People's Hospital, Han Shuzhen, who had just gotten off work, pulled open her car door only to find that Shen Guofu wasn't driving his Bentley but was sitting in the backseat of a Toyota Alphard.

"Why did you switch cars? Where is your car?"

"My car is being serviced, so I had driver Xiao Zou give me a ride... Hurry and get in, sweetheart. Lin Ji is going to get crowded soon, and we might have to share a table."

Han Shuzhen got into the car.

Seeing her husband's bulging handbag, she scoffed, "No wonder you sent the car for maintenance. You're planning to drink at the restaurant, aren't you?"

Shen Guofu replied with a sheepish smile, "Those dishes are just perfect with drinks. I couldn't drink when I drove the last few times, so let me enjoy myself this time!"

Seeing his wife frown, he quickly added, "I promise, I won't drink a single drop until Yueyue finds a boyfriend!"

These words left Han Shuzhen both amused and annoyed. "You're a grown man, yet you still act like a child. Fine, have a little drink, but don't overdo it."

"I knew you're the best to me, honey!"

They arrived at Yingchun Street.

The couple got out of the car and approached the restaurant's entrance.

It was not yet five in the afternoon, and the restaurant was sparsely populated.

They pushed open the door.

Dundun, who had been lying on the cashier counter, sprang up and gently called out to Han Shuzhen and Shen Guofu, "MEOW~~ PURR~~~"

"Oh, my little Dundun, come let me hug you!"

Han Shuzhen hugged Dundun as lovingly as a grandmother greeting her dear grandchild.

Dundun affectionately rubbed its head against Han Shuzhen's face, bringing such joy to the Director of Gastroenterology that all traces of her work fatigue vanished.

"What would you two like to eat?" Song Tiantian turned on the cashier computer to start their order.

Shen Guofu briskly ordered four dishes and rice.

After ordering, he found an empty table inside and pulled a bottle of Wuliangye liquor out of his bag.

After so many days, I can finally sit down in the restaurant and have a drink. Before Yueyue finds someone, this will be my only chance to drink, so I have to cherish it.

He opened the liquor bottle and poured a generous amount into a disposable paper cup.

It wasn't long before their ordered dishes were served.

As more customers started to trickle in, Han Shuzhen set Dundun down and sat opposite Shen Guofu, picking up her chopsticks to eat. While eating, she praised Lin Xu's excellent cooking skills.

Just as they were enjoying their meal, a white BMW X1 slowly parked in a spot right in front of the store.

"Coming to work just before closing time really is annoying!"

Shen Jiayue, still in her 'office drone' mindset, got out of the car, slinging her bag over her shoulder and muttering continuously.

She could have seen Xu Bao at four-thirty, but an audit task had come in at the auditing office, and her team leader had asked her to sort out that company's basic data. This task had delayed her.

Pushing open the door, she ruffled Dundun's head twice. Finally, I get to see Xu Bao! She was very happy.

"Hello, Boss Lady!" Song Tiantian greeted her proactively.

"Hello, Tiantian!" Shen Jiayue returned the greeting and headed straight for Lin Xu at the kitchen door.

Boss Lady? Han Shuzhen, who was sitting inside eating, was just about to see what the restaurant's proprietress looked like when she saw her own little turncoat dash like a gust of wind toward the kitchen door and hug Lin Xu.

"You said you're going to marry me, you can't back out now!"

Han Shuzhen watched this scene dumbfounded and instinctively nudged her husband, who was sipping his liquor, "Old Shen, isn't... isn't that our Yueyue?"

Chapter 126: Shelf feeling!

Tomorrow at noon.

Our book "I Teach Cooking at Qidian" will officially launch on the VIP section.

Getting this book to this point was really not easy. After signing the contract, I was going solo. I had no recommendations and no readers. I continued writing until I reached 120,000 words before finally getting a test promotion.

Then, with the support of my foodie readers, we fought our way through the fiercely competitive urban channel all the way to the Sanjiang.

I never expected to make it to Sanjiang. I even doubted the editor's message when he informed me, wondering if he sent it to the wrong person.

Here I want to thank my editor, Qilin. When I reached 100,000 words, I originally wanted to drop the novel, but he told me to keep writing well, assuring me there would definitely be a promotion next week. And then, the test promotion truly came.

I really want him to tell me my book can achieve 10,000 orders. I wonder if it would come true? (laughs)

Launching means we'll start charging.

I hope all my dear readers will hit the auto-subscribe button. Only with a high subscription rate will I have the motivation to continue writing. My family is dirt poor, and with the ongoing heatwave, I'm counting on this month's manuscript fee to buy an air conditioner.

To show my sincerity, tomorrow at noon, after the VIP Chapters are available in the system, I will upload 10 Chapters at once.

I've kept you in suspense for so many days. Tomorrow, you'll get to binge-read to your heart's content!

Chapter 127: Brother Lin, would you like to reconsider? [Subscribe Please]

Shen Guofu was contentedly gnawing on Chicken Feet. Upon hearing his wife's words, he subconsciously looked up and saw his own little rascal of a daughter hugging Lin Xu like an octopus at the kitchen entrance, about three meters away.

This... He held the Chicken Feet, staring blankly at the scene. His brain seemed to have crashed. What's going on? Wasn't my daughter supposed to go to Grandma's place? Why did she show up at the restaurant? And she seems very intimate with Lin Xu, too.

He exchanged a look with Han Shuzhen. Could it be... his little rascal's boyfriend is Lin Xu?

The couple stood up, about to ask for clarification, when they heard Lin Xu say, "How could I possibly go back on my word? I'm working so hard right now to save up for a house in Beijing and then marry you... Just make sure you don't go back on *your* word."

GASP... He really is my little rascal's boyfriend. What should we do? Stop them?

While the couple hesitated, they heard their little rascal say, "I'd never go back on my word! I'm just worried Mom and Dad won't agree. They're both so old-fashioned, always going on about us needing to have matching social statuses... I've got it figured out! If they don't agree, I'll just steal the household registration book and elope with you. I found out where the household registration book is kept last month..."

Old-fashioned? Stealing the household registration book? Eloping? Shen Guofu and his wife watched their daughter three meters away, their faces ashen. Keep talking! That way, it'll be even more satisfying when we deal with you later!

Lin Xu patted Shen Jiayue's back. "I'll just have to work hard and prove myself to your parents. We can't elope; that would hurt them so much. Alright, alright, let me pack up the Crispy Meat and braised pork for you. Aren't you supposed to visit your grandma? Don't keep her waiting..."

These words somewhat softened Shen Guofu and Han Shuzhen's expressions. Although our daughter has completely become a little rascal, this son-in-law seems quite good. Not only does he care about us,

but he even cares for Grandma. Hmm, not bad. He truly deserves to be my, Shen Guofu's... cough, son-in-law, son-in-law. Calling him 'brother' now would mess up the family hierarchy.

Just as the couple breathed a sigh of relief, they heard their daughter grumble, "They wouldn't be upset at all! Remember the Chicken Feet you packed for me last time? They sneakily ate them all while I was at the gym and then denied it!"

Shen Guofu: "..."

Han Shuzhen: "..."

We originally wanted to save some face for our daughter in front of our son-in-law, but now it seems... we might as well give her a good scolding first. That's the only way to vent this frustration!

Lin Xu found this amusing; Shen Jiayue's parents sound quite interesting. He was about to speak when he suddenly noticed the other customers had all turned to watch him and Shen Jiayue. Especially the Bentley-owning couple—they had even stood up. Do they enjoy drama this much? Wait... why do the Bentley couple look so upset?

An idea flashed through his mind, and he curiously asked Shen Jiayue, "What do your parents look like?"

"My dad's a chubby guy, not super fat, who likes wearing those polo shirts with collars. He thinks they're cool, but they're actually really old-fashioned. Nobody wears that stuff anymore."

Lin Xu glanced at the polo shirt the man from the Bentley was wearing, a sinking feeling in his gut. "And your mom... I mean, my future mother-in-law? What does she look like?"

"Oh, she's quite beautiful, but it's a shame she's gotten older. She has a fair few wrinkles and is always using face masks and beauty gadgets. She's so obsessed with her looks..."

Lin Xu watched the Bentley-owning man and his wife approach, sighing inwardly. "Does your dad happen to own a Bentley?"

"Yes, yes, yes! He's always cruising around in it. His driving skills are just so-so, and he refuses to get a driver. He's always scratching or denting the car; it stresses me out just thinking about it..."

It's over! It really is the Bentley couple. No wonder they stood up earlier. They weren't just watching the drama; they were preparing to star in it!

Lin Xu greeted the approaching couple with a wry smile. "Hello, Uncle. Hello, Auntie!"

Shen Jiayue, still clinging to Lin Xu, looked puzzled. "Uncle and Auntie? Who are you talking to?"

Curious, she turned her head and saw two incredibly familiar faces. The air around her instantly froze... AAAAAHHH! I'm not dreaming, am I? How could Mom and Dad be at Lin Xu's restaurant? Shouldn't they be at home drinking millet porridge and eating whole-grain bread right now?

Shen Jiayue's heart leaped into her throat. Remembering what she had just said, she instantly ducked behind Lin Xu.

Shen Guofu's face was grim as he watched his daughter's antics. He patted Lin Xu's arm. "Brother Lin, you're so talented, and your cooking is amazing. How did you end up falling for my silly daughter? Maybe you should reconsider?"

Shen Jiayue: "!!!!!!!!!"

I really am adopted, aren't I? But why is Dad calling Lin Xu 'Brother Lin'? Could it be... they've known each other for a long time?

As Shen Jiayue's mind reeled, she heard Lin Xu say, "Yueyue and I were university classmates. We studied and spent time together for four years. She brought me all sorts of snacks almost every day. We've had feelings for each other for a long time, but we only officially got together after I opened the restaurant. I actually still owe Yueyue a proper confession of my feelings... Uncle Shen, may I formally date Yueyue?"

Shen Guofu was momentarily speechless. Just a moment ago, I was worried that Yueyue, having just graduated, might have been sweet-talked by this young man. But if they were university classmates, they've known each other for more than just a day or two. As for my own little rascal... "Brother Lin, are you absolutely sure you won't reconsider?"

Just as Shen Guofu finished speaking, Han Shuzhen nudged him sharply. "Why are you still calling him 'Brother'?"

Director Han was now looking at her son-in-law with the classic "mother-in-law appraising her daughter's choice" expression, and the more she looked, the more pleased she became. I'd always wondered which family's daughter would be lucky enough to find such a perfect young man. Who knew it would be my own silly girl! No wonder she kept bringing home food all the time. It must have been our son-in-law packing it for her, right? If Lin Ji hadn't changed its packaging, Old Shen and I might have been kept in the dark for who knows how much longer!

Seeing her daughter hiding behind her son-in-law like an ostrich, Han Shuzhen couldn't help but remember when she and Old Shen were caught dating back in their youth. It was exactly the same!

Noticing the other customers still watching their family, Director Han quickly said, "Don't just stand there, everyone, please continue eating. Yueyue, come here. Mom has something to ask you."

"Oh... but you can't hit me!"

Han Shuzhen chuckled. "When have your father and I ever laid a finger on you? Come over quickly. The customers are laughing at you."

Indeed, the customers were all smiling. But it wasn't ridicule; they were genuinely happy for Lin Xu. When they realized the Bentley-owning couple were the young lady's parents, everyone had been on edge for Lin Xu. According to typical drama plots, the girl's parents would vehemently object, berate the young man, and maybe even trash his restaurant. Unexpectedly, the couple was extremely supportive of their relationship.

No wonder they can afford a Bentley. Their mindset is truly on another level.

Knowing his daughter had a boyfriend, and one he was very satisfied with, made Shen Guofu quite emotional. He put his arm around Lin Xu's shoulder and said softly, "I'll call you 'Brother' one last time. Treat my daughter well. We've spoiled her, so if she acts up or doesn't understand things, please be patient with her..."

"Don't worry, Uncle. I won't mistreat Yueyue."

Even though my future father-in-law called me 'Brother,' I wouldn't dare call him 'Old Brother' anymore. Lin Xu respectfully stuck to "Uncle."

Shen Guofu was increasingly pleased with this son-in-law. I even want to post on my Moments to show him off! But this 'chef' identity... Even though Shuzhen and I don't care about such things—as long as our daughter is happy, that's all that matters—the people in our circle still place a great deal of importance on social class and status. If only my son-in-law had a more impressive title.

Just as he was thinking this, the door pushed open, and Xie Baomin walked in, clutching a document case. He strode up to Lin Xu, smiling. "Junior Brother, Junior Brother! The consultant appointment letter from the Fishing Platform has arrived! Starting today, you are officially the culinary consultant for the Fishing Platform State Guesthouse!"

Shen Guofu: "!!!!!!!"

What? My son-in-law is a consultant for the Fishing Platform?!

Chapter 128: Getting Approval from Girlfriend's Parents Comes with Rewards?

Lin Xu took the appointment letter Xie Baomin handed him and looked it over.

This appointment letter was somewhat similar to a typical honorary certificate, but it was of higher quality. The velvet cover was embossed with the golden words "Letter of Appointment," and below that, in a handwritten script, were the small, gilded characters for "Fishing Platform State Guesthouse."

He opened the letter.

Inside, it read, "We hereby appoint Mr. Lin Xu as the culinary consultant for Building 2 of the Fishing Platform State Guesthouse..." and similar, rather straightforward content. After all, it was honorary and didn't list any detailed rights or obligations.

But having this letter of appointment meant he had a certain status. Whether inside or outside their circle, it was impressive enough.

Just as Lin Xu closed the letter after reading it, the system's notification sounded in his mind:

"The host has become a culinary consultant at the Fishing Platform, triggering the side mission [Gaining Fame at the State Guesthouse]: Please gain a certain degree of renown at the Fishing Platform State Guesthouse within two weeks. Upon completion, you will be awarded one lucky draw for a Perfect Level braised dish recipe."

Gain a certain degree of renown at the Fishing Platform State Guesthouse?

Lin Xu frowned, not particularly pleased with such cryptic missions. The mission content wasn't clear, and there were no hints.

Just "gaining fame"... theoretically, if I run around bare-chested inside, would that achieve the purpose of gaining fame and completing this mission?

However, if I really did that, I guess the system wouldn't award me a single penny.

The Riddler should get out of Gotham... no, wait, the Riddle System should get off Earth!

While Lin Xu was examining the letter of appointment, Shen Guofu and Xie Baomin had already introduced themselves to each other.

Learning that Xie Baomin was the head chef of Building 2 at the Fishing Platform, Shen Guofu said with some regret, "I've eaten at the Building 2 restaurant a few times, but unfortunately, I never had the chance to meet Chef Xie. Next time I go, I'll be sure to mention your name."

"No problem at all, Mr. Shen! We'll line up to welcome you then!"

As they were exchanging pleasantries, Shen Guofu saw Lin Xu close the letter and immediately reached out his hand. "Xu, let me see your letter of appointment."

After Lin Xu handed it over, Shen Guofu first inspected the cover, then the content inside. Then, he took out his phone and, KACHA! KACHA! KACHA! snapped several photos of both the cover and the content.

He then posted them on his Moments: "My daughter Yueyue's boyfriend was officially appointed as a culinary consultant by the Fishing Platform today! Wonder if we'll get discounts when we eat there in the future? [image][image][image]"

His WeChat friends were almost all real-life acquaintances. No sooner had he posted it than likes and comments poured in.

"Your daughter has a boyfriend now?"

"When did this happen? Weren't you trying to set her up on blind dates just the other day?"

"Whose son is he? Do you know his family background?"

"My nephew just returned from abroad specifically to meet Yueyue; he's in quarantine right now. Old Shen, pick a time to arrange for them to meet. It wasn't easy for the boy to make the trip back..."

"To be appointed by the Fishing Platform, his skills must be incredible, right?"

"Old Shen, can we get a taste of your son-in-law's cooking?"

"..."

Ever since his daughter had graduated from university, people had been continuously approaching Shen Guofu with marriage proposals, involving all sorts of unsuitable nephews and incredibly distant relatives, which annoyed him immensely.

He posted this update precisely to tell everyone: My daughter has a boyfriend now, so everyone can stop pestering us.

「Soon.」

The news spread through Shen Guofu's circles, and several of his WeChat groups were abuzz with discussion. Everyone wanted to know just what kind of young man could win Old Shen's approval and, at the same time, be accepted by his daughter.

"I really want to see what the Shen Family's chosen one looks like."

"I don't care about his looks; I just want to know how good his cooking is!"

"Being appointed as a consultant by the Fishing Platform? His skills must be something most people don't get to taste, right?"

「Just then.」

Tan Yajun, who had always been lurking in the group, was suddenly active.

"What? Little Lin was appointed as a consultant for the Fishing Platform? That young man's skills truly deserve such recognition!"

His words immediately piqued the curiosity of the group members.

"Old Tan, you know Shen Guofu's son-in-law?"

Know him? More than just know him; he almost became a key player under my command... Tan Yajun sat in his office, holding his phone and typing rapidly, TAP-TAP-TAP, as he sent a message, "Of course, it's true. Shen Guofu's son-in-law is a collaborator with our audit firm. All our lunch orders come from his place now, and I'm totally addicted."

"Wow!" the group chat exclaimed.

Even Old Tan, who's always so picky, is saying that. Just how good must it be?

Everyone eagerly chimed in:

"Old Tan, give us the address! No matter the cost, I have to try it."

"Yeah, let's go try it too! And we can see Shen Guofu's son-in-law while we're at it."

"Quick, quick, quick! I haven't had dinner yet. It's the perfect time to go try it out. As the young people say, let's go 'explore the shop'!"

Tan Yajun did not reply immediately. Instead, he first @mentioned Shen Guofu in the group chat: "Can Little Lin's shop location be publicly shared?"

Shen Guofu replied, "Certainly. More customers are always welcome."

Seeing that Shen Guofu agreed, Tan Yajun then posted the location of Lin Ji's Food.

Then he asked, "Old Shen, it seems you're quite satisfied with Little Lin?"

Shen Guofu sent a laughing emoji and replied, "After observing him for so many days, the more I see him, the more I like him. I never expected Yueyue to find such an excellent son-in-law. My wife and I are both very satisfied."

As soon as he sent this message, the system's notification tone sounded in Lin Xu's mind:

"The host has gained the approval of Shen Jiayue's parents, completed the hidden task [In-laws' Approval], and won a Perfect Level Chinese dessert lucky draw. Do you want to draw now?"

Huh? What a stroke of luck! Too bad I can't hug Dundun and do the lucky draw now. I'll have to wait, at least until my future parents-in-law leave. Otherwise, hugging a cat while I'm supposed to be working would just make me look like I'm slacking off.

「Meanwhile.」

Han Shuzhen pulled her daughter back to their seats and asked quietly, "Have you already met Lin Xu's mother?"

Shen Jiayue picked up her chopsticks, unceremoniously speared a piece of Pork Ribs in Black Bean Sauce with crispy cartilage, and said while crunching, "Yes, I have. Lin Xu's mom really likes me. On my first day at the audit firm, she even specifically hired a delivery person to bring me Pork Grease Buns. It made all my colleagues at the firm drool."

What? Not only had her daughter met her future mother-in-law, but she'd also eaten buns she made? No wonder she's already taking his family's side. She was bribed in advance! But Pork Grease Buns...

"Are they tasty? They sound like they might be a bit greasy."

"They're super tasty, Mom! I'll bring some for you to try from the shop when they make them next. The shop often makes all sorts of amazing breakfast items, really substantial stuff, but they're not for sale to outside customers."

Really? Hearing her daughter say this, Han Shuzhen felt a little tempted to try them. But she couldn't focus on that now. She needed to gather as much information as possible about Lin Xu's mother—her personality and preferences—to prevent her own daughter from unwittingly offending her.

She continued to ask, "What do you think of Lin Xu's mom?"

"She's super nice! She dotes on me. And Lin Xu's mom is an amazing cook. Before I left their place once, she packed over twenty kinds of dumplings for me, all boxed up and frozen in their fridge, ready to cook whenever I want."

Listening to her daughter's excited words, Han Shuzhen said with a hint of apology, "I'm sorry, my dear. I'm not a great cook, and I was always too busy with work in the past. I never managed to cook you any decent meals. Things like 'Mom's Special Dumplings' or 'Mom's Handmade Noodles'—I don't know how to make any of them. I feel like I've wronged you!"

In the past, Han Shuzhen and Shen Guofu had both been consumed by their careers, one busy with professional work and the other with earning money. Shen Jiayue was mostly raised by her grandmother. Thinking about her own absence during her daughter's childhood made Han Shuzhen feel a pang of guilt. She always felt she had let her daughter down.

Shen Jiayue waved her hand magnanimously. "It's okay, it's okay, I've already forgiven you both... You have no idea how happy I was as a child without you two hovering over me. I could go days without doing homework, and it was totally fine..."

Han Shuzhen: ????? You little rascal! Are you deliberately trying to make your mom and dad punish you?

Chapter 129: Junior Brother, you must help me! [Three more updates, please subscribe]

Shen Guofu's family of three didn't stay in the restaurant for long.

Because Shen Jiayue had already called her Grandma when she arrived, and her Grandma was still waiting at home for the dinner Yueyue was bringing.

Shen Guofu neatly packed up all the dishes on the table, including the dishes Lin Xu had packed for Grandma, and they took Yueyue's car to Grandma's place for dinner.

Well, they brought wine with them, so it doesn't matter where they drink.

They also had to give Grandma a heads-up.

Yueyue has a boyfriend now, and he's a fantastic guy.

"I told Grandma about it yesterday, and she told me to go ahead with the relationship, saying your opinions aren't important, because when you got married, you didn't listen to your parents either..."

Shen Jiayue repeated her Grandma's words while driving.

Hearing this completely deflated Shen Guofu, who had been about to assert his parental authority.

No wonder the girl visited Grandma yesterday; she was seeking her powerful support.

Sitting in the passenger seat, Han Shuzhen curiously asked her daughter, "What will Little Xu make for breakfast tomorrow?"

Back at the restaurant, her daughter had mentioned dishes like Pork Grease Buns. Though they sounded rather oily, Han Shuzhen couldn't help but want to try them.

While driving, Shen Jiayue shook her head. "He's very casual; he cooks whatever comes to mind... If you want to eat something specific, just say so. I'll tell him when we get back so he can prepare in advance."

"Isn't that too troublesome?"

"Not at all. He has to get up around four to buy groceries, and after he gets back, he starts preparing breakfast."

"He gets up that early?"

Han Shuzhen started to feel sorry for her son-in-law.

No wonder her daughter comes home early every day without going on dates. It must be because her son-in-law needs to rest early, right?

While she was feeling sympathetic, Shen Jiayue suddenly asked, "Just as we were leaving, I asked Xu Bao. He said Dad has been going to the restaurant every afternoon to pack a bunch of dishes and food... So, all that talk about coarse grains at home was just to trick me, right?"

Han Shuzhen fell silent. Shen Guofu had nothing to say. The air crackled with sudden, awkward silence.

Shen Guofu and his wife exchanged glances.

Maybe it's better to just give our daughter a good talking to, and while we're at it, ask her about secretly taking the household registration book to elope...

「In the restaurant.」

After seeing off his parents-in-law, the evening rush at Lin Ji's Food also officially began.

Lin Xu was incredibly busy.

The Perfect Level dessert raffle had to be postponed.

By his side, Senior Brother Xie Baomin hadn't left.

Instead, he stayed in the restaurant to help.

When he saw the duck dishes Lin Xu had made, he immediately leaned over to sniff them. "Did you adjust the seasoning? The base flavor seems a bit overpowering..."

Lin Xu said, "I made the marinade this morning. When Master came for lunch, he pointed out some shortcomings, so I tweaked it this afternoon. The flavor is gentler now."

Xie Baomin chuckled and said, "Master is an all-rounder; it's just a shame he loves to fool around so much... He was messing with live streaming at my place last night. Can that stuff even make money?"

Make money? Money is the least of his worries. Master is about to be sponsored by a wealthy woman!

Lin Xu recounted the whole complex love-hate relationship between Grandmaster Gao and the leopard-print lady.

Xie Baomin suddenly felt like he missed an excellent drama. "Ah, why didn't you tell me earlier, Junior Brother? Something like this, I'd skip an administrative meeting to see it! It's so rare to see Master get put in his place..."

He said, while inwardly muttering, The date for the competition has been set for next Wednesday, but how can I get Junior Brother to participate? It's a bit hard to bring up!

Lin Xu, too, was pondering. How can I subtly ask Senior Brother about making a name for myself at the Fishing Platform? This task is tied to a braised dish. The sooner it's done, the sooner the restaurant can feature a new braised dish. These types of dishes are usually great with rice and would definitely boost business.

The two of them, Senior Brother and Junior Brother, continued chatting, each lost in their own thoughts.

Finally, at seven in the evening, Xie Baomin took a deep breath and said to Lin Xu, "Junior Brother, I need you to do me a favor."

Lin Xu's mind raced. A favor? This is perfect! Now I'll have a chance to ask about making a name for myself at the Fishing Platform!

Lin Xu immediately said, "Senior Brother, just ask! If it's something I can do, I definitely won't refuse!"

Seeing his Junior Brother's enthusiasm, Xie Baomin felt a wave of relief. "It's like this: we at the Fishing Platform hold a culinary competition for young chefs every year. All chefs under the age of twenty-five can participate..."

Upon hearing this, Lin Xu's eyes immediately lit up.

A cooking competition? Isn't this the perfect opportunity for me to make a name for myself?

With that thought, he looked at Xie Baomin and asked, "Can I participate in this competition, Senior Brother?"

Xie Baomin was momentarily startled, then replied, "That's exactly what I was hoping! I want you to represent Building No. 2 in the competition. Our training in Building No. 2 is based on a master-apprentice system. It's very difficult for anyone to complete their apprenticeship before twenty-five, so they can't produce truly exquisite dishes. That's why we've been stuck in second place for the last few years... If the age limit were just a few years higher, Building No. 2 would undoubtedly dominate!"

The advantage of the master-apprentice system is meticulous instruction and a solid foundation. A master can flexibly adjust their teaching methods based on each apprentice's temperament, but the drawback is that apprentices take too long to complete their training.

Curious, Lin Xu asked, "Can I really represent you in the competition?"

Although he was very tempted, he had to be sure. He didn't want to become famous at the Fishing Platform for cheating rather than for his culinary skills.

"Yes, you can. Advisors are eligible to compete. Building No. 10 won the championship for two years straight thanks to their advisor. So, this time, Junior Brother, you absolutely have to help me!"

With things laid out like this, and the reward practically in his grasp, why not go for it? But if he went to the competition, what about the hand-pulled noodles at the shop?

Perhaps sensing Lin Xu's concerns, Xie Baomin said, "Don't worry about the shop. When the time comes, I'll send a few chefs from Building No. 2 to cover for you. Hand-pulled noodles, steamed fish—they can handle it all!"

Since that was settled, Lin Xu nodded. "Alright, I'll represent you in this culinary competition!"

After he finished speaking, he suddenly thought of a question. "Senior Brother, why is there a competition for young chefs but not for middle-aged ones?"

Xie Baomin said with a laugh, "There used to be one. But then one chef won the championship five years in a row. The leadership felt it was becoming meaningless, so they canceled the middle-aged category..."

Holy crap! That good? Lin Xu was astonished. "Who was that, Senior Brother? That's incredible!"

Xie Baomin pointed at himself. "Me!"

Lin Xu was dumbfounded. You've been waiting for me to ask that for ages, haven't you?

「After 8 PM.」

The customers in the shop gradually left.

Xie Baomin, who had helped out for a few hours, also said his goodbyes and left.

Lin Xu went to the storage room to change into a short-sleeved shirt, then came to the cashier's desk, picked up Dundun in one swoop, and carried the cat on his shoulder to the entrance to look at the night scene for a while.

When he returned to the shop, he rubbed the little cat's head and silently commanded in his mind, Lottery draw!

A lottery wheel immediately appeared on the screen in his mind.

As the lottery wheel spun rapidly, Lin Xu pressed the draw button.

"Congratulations to the host for obtaining Perfect Level Chinese dessert—Almond Tofu."

Almond Tofu?

He was not unfamiliar with this dessert at all.

Because during the summer vacation of his freshman year, before his mom, Chen Meijuan, became obsessed with taking out loans to develop tourist attractions, she had experimented endlessly to make delicious Almond Tofu. She had filled the refrigerator's cold compartment with it so many times that Lin Xu practically burped almond fragrance.

Unexpectedly, he had drawn this dessert.

He'd have to make it for Mom soon and let her taste what Perfect Level Almond Tofu was like.

While he was mulling this over, Lin Xu saw his Master, Gao Daye, push open the shop door. Gao Daye looked somewhat listless, carrying his live-streaming bag, and sporting a bright red lipstick mark on his face.

Huh? What's this...? Lin Xu wondered.

Chapter 130: Masters Duel, Every Move is Lethal!

After entering the door, Old Man Gao immediately asked Song Tiantian, "Do you have any wet wipes?"

"Yes, yes, yes..." Song Tiantian quickly rummaged through her bag and handed over a small pack of wet wipes.

Old Man Gao pulled out a wet wipe, then fished a small mirror from his pocket and carefully wiped the lipstick mark from his face.

While wiping, he muttered, "She just had to kiss my face with lipstick and then not let me wash it off! Am I supposed to look like one of those stamped pigs at the market? Women are such a hassle. I really shouldn't mess around anymore..."

Why do I feel like you're enjoying this more and more? Lin Xu was about to speak when he noticed his master raising his head and pulling open his collar, revealing several hickeys on his neck.

"Look at what they did to me! This won't fade for two or three days. Why are older women so overbearing nowadays?"

TSK TSK...

Master, are you bragging now? You say you want to keep your distance from Leopard Print Auntie and return her money, but then you end up with lipstick and hickeys. No wonder you're such a seasoned player. You have your ways.

Old Man Gao finished wiping the lipstick from his face and placed his live-streaming tote bag on the counter. He took out the power bank and asked Song Tiantian to charge it, casually adding, "Today's streaming task is complete. Tiantian, can you put my tote bag in the cabinet? I'll come and get it tomorrow morning."

Obviously, he was worried there might still be a tracker inside. So, he left the bag in his apprentice's shop and even had the power bank charged there. That way, if Leopard Print Auntie tried to track him, she could only trace him to this location.

After Song Tiantian had put the power bank on to charge and placed the tote bag in the cabinet, Old Man Gao casually tossed the used wet wipe into the paper recycling bin and said to Lin Xu, "Banks are so inefficient these days. I waited all afternoon just to make an appointment for a large transfer... Have you adjusted the brine? Do you need me to help you tweak it now?"

Ha, do you really think I believe that? Lin Xu said, "I've adjusted it. I'll try cooking it again tomorrow morning. If the flavor is still too strong, then you can help me adjust it."

Seasoning the brine sounds simple, but it actually needs to be boiled and then simmered for half an hour for the flavor to stabilize. Once adjusted, it needs to continue simmering so the flavors can merge.

Upon hearing that it was adjusted, Old Man Gao didn't say anything further. "Alright, then I'll head back. I've got to handle some things in Sanlitun later on. We'll talk about the brine tomorrow morning when I come in..."

Going to Sanlitun to handle some things? I bet you're planning to hit the bars and dance with some foreign girls, aren't you? Lin Xu felt that his routine of bathing and going to bed right after work meant he was living a healthier life than most seniors. In contrast, his master, who should have been early to bed and early to rise, had such a colorful nightlife. No wonder people who enjoy playing around rarely settle down.

「Half an hour later.」

The shop closed for the day. When Lin Xu was leaving work carrying Dundun, he saw his master standing by the roadside.

Compared to before, his master looked like a completely different person. His graying hair was impeccably styled, and gold-rimmed glasses rested on his nose. He wore a summer silk suit over a light-colored shirt, its top button undone to reveal a dark gold cravat that neatly hid the hickeys on his neck. This outfit, coupled with trousers that matched the suit and sparkingly polished cap-toe Oxfords, exuded the aura of a British gentleman.

His master really did have good looks. Dressed like that, people would easily believe he was an elderly overseas Chinese who had returned home.

"Master, you're..."

"Oh, I called a DiDi. Just waiting for the car. You're off work, right? Hurry home, wash up, and rest. You must be exhausted after a whole day's work." Old Man Gao hadn't expected to run into his apprentice. A flicker of embarrassment crossed his face.

As he was speaking, a Passat slowly pulled up to the curb. Old Man Gao checked the license plate, opened the car door, and got in. He was just fastening his seatbelt when he realized the driver was none other than Leopard Print Auntie.

This...

"Handsome, did you think leaving your bag at your apprentice's shop would stop me from finding you? Why are you all dressed up?"

Old Man Gao stammered, "Oh, I was just thinking of asking you out for a drink... What a coincidence, huh?"

Leopard Print Auntie sneered. "Ask me out for a drink? Then why is your destination a bar in Sanlitun? Going from the North Fourth Ring Road to the East Third Ring Road isn't exactly a short trip."

Old Man Gao was speechless. Did she install another app on my phone?

He resignedly reclined his seat. "What's with this car? I don't believe you'd drive for a ride-hailing service, and I certainly don't think you picking up my ride was a coincidence."

Leopard Print Auntie didn't hide it from him. "I installed monitoring software on your phone, so I can see all your messages and activity. After you booked the ride, I contacted the car's owner through 114, gave him 50,000 yuan, and booked the car for myself."

Money truly is omnipotent. Old Man Gao had nothing more to say.

But Leopard Print Auntie wasn't finished. "So... who's this Lucy that texted you? In English, no less. You have foreign friends, Handsome?"

TSK TSK TSK... Truly a duel between masters, every move lethal... Watching this dramatic pair from a distance, Lin Xu cheerfully carried Dundun home to rest.

「Morning.」

After returning from buying groceries, he chopped some Pork Fat and Pork Lard, blanched them, and began to render the Pork Grease. Last night, Shen Jiayue had mentioned that her mother-in-law wanted to try Pork Grease buns. Lin Xu naturally wouldn't refuse. But the Pork Grease at the store had run out yesterday morning, so he had to make more. This was timely, as the store's supply of Pork Grease was also running low and needed replenishing.

While rendering the Pork Grease, he wasn't idle. He proofed the dough, soaked the ingredients for the buns, washed some rice to put in the freezer, and planned to cook some rice porridge.

After finishing these tasks, he began preparing the ingredients for the day: charring what needed charring, soaking what needed soaking, and cleaning what needed cleaning. It was the same routine every day, and he was used to it.

Around six o'clock, just as he finished rendering the Pork Grease, the three members of the Shen family walked in, yawning.

"Little Dundun, come let me hug you!" Han Shuzhen had always liked Dundun. Now that he was officially their cat, she loved him even more, scooping the little fellow into her arms as soon as she entered.

Dundun kindly nuzzled her, making Shen Jiayue, who was standing beside her, green with envy.
"Dundun has never been this nice to me. He always glares at me."

It's because you're always testing his patience, practically begging for a scratch...

Shen Guofu, sleepy-eyed and obviously just woken up, sat on a chair. He was about to doze off when an enticing aroma wafted his way. He opened his eyes and saw his son-in-law approaching with a bowl of Pork Grease.

"These are freshly made Pork Grease from the pot, sprinkled with a bit of powdered sugar. Try them; they're quite good." With that, Lin Xu went to make the buns.

Pork Grease with powdered sugar? Is that tasty? As a doctor, Han Shuzhen had never eaten them this way; they always seemed too greasy.

Shen Guofu, however, didn't hesitate. If his son-in-law said they were delicious, they must be. Last night, their old friends who had eaten at the restaurant had praised his son-in-law's cooking to the skies, their words clearly tinged with envy. This had made Shen Guofu immensely happy.

The Pork Grease were crispy and seemed to melt in his mouth, paired with the powdered sugar that melted instantly. He had to admit, they were surprisingly sweet and fragrant, instantly dispelling his morning grogginess.

Shen Jiayue took a bite and also exclaimed, "Wow, these are really delicious! Mom, you have to try them. They're absolutely delightful."

Han Shuzhen hesitantly picked up a piece and put it in her mouth. After chewing a couple of times, her eyes lit up. These seemingly greasy Pork Grease tasted unexpectedly different.

She hadn't yet settled on a topic for her chief physician paper this year. Maybe she could write about Pork Grease? It was related to her specialty, gastroenterology.

While they were eating, a brand-new Wuling panel van slowly parked at the door.

At the same time, Lin Xu received a call from Old Man Gao. "Lin Xu, I've got the grocery van for you. All the paperwork is complete. Come to the front of the shop to sign for it and take delivery..."