

## Culinary 131

Chapter 131: Having a Son-in-law and Forgetting the Daughter! Making Almond Tofu!

A grocery car?

Lin Xu, seeing a Wuling minivan parked at the store entrance, wiped his hands and curiously walked outside.

"My mentor called and said he got me a grocery car. I'm going out to check it out," Lin Xu announced.

Upon hearing this, Shen Guofu followed him.

Outside, a young man immediately hopped down from the minivan and asked Lin Xu, "Are you Mr. Lin Xu?"

Lin Xu nodded.

"I am from Fengxing Auto Rental Co., Ltd. One of your elders has arranged for us to rent a small van for you. The vehicle has now been delivered, and as the user, you need to sign your name on this rental agreement."

A rental agreement? Lin Xu took it and flipped through it.

The agreement was straightforward, specifying that the vehicle should not be subleased, overloaded, oversped, or intentionally damaged during the rental period.

Shen Guofu leaned over to check, "Why doesn't it mention the price? Is it free to rent?"

The young man from the rental company replied, "The rental fee has been paid by Mr. Lin's elder. Mr. Lin just needs to use it. Our boss also specifically instructed that if the car feels inadequate to drive someday, you can change it for a new one for free."

Sheesh... This so-called Fengxing Auto Rental must be run by 'Leopard Print Auntie,' right? I guess only she would spoil my mentor like this.

Lin Xu quickly signed his name, then examined the vehicle more and asked about the use of its refrigerated cargo space, among other details.

Once everything was clear, the rental company's young man took a taxi back.

Meanwhile, Lin Xu went back inside the store to continue his work.

Having the grocery car now, grocery shopping would be much easier. But he still needed to think about getting a car of his own.

Unfortunately, Lin Xu didn't have the eligibility to enter the license plate lottery.

If he could enter the lottery with Dundun, he would definitely win on the first try!

「Half an hour later.」

Breakfast in the store was ready. There were the Pork Grease buns that Han Shuzhen was curious about, the sugar triangles that Shen Jiayue liked, and the preserved egg with lean pork congee that Shen Guofu favored.

"Delicious!"

Normally averse to fatty meats, Han Shuzhen enjoyed a Pork Grease bun this time. She even followed her daughter's lead by drizzling some Chili Oil on it with a spoon.

She took a bite. The spicy and fragrant flavors intermingled. It was incredibly delicious.

While enjoying the tasty buns, Han Shuzhen looked at Lin Xu. He had hastily finished his meal and was now busy in the kitchen. She felt a twinge of pity.

"Xu, what is your clothing size?" she asked. "I'm taking the afternoon off, and I plan to go shopping at the International Trade area with your Uncle Shen to buy you some clothes."

Shen Jiayue, who was nibbling on a sugar triangle, suddenly became interested.

Clothes shopping?

"Do I get some too?"

Han Shuzhen originally wanted to tell her to mind her own business. But then, thinking that her son-in-law was here, she said, "Let's see. If we find something suitable, we might buy one or two items for you as well."

HO HO!

New clothes to wear!

Lin Xu didn't want to make such a fuss. However, Han Shuzhen insisted on buying him clothes because she had eaten the store's breakfast, so he provided his clothing size.

After the Shen Family had their fill and left for work, Lin Xu felt it was inappropriate to let them buy clothes for him. He also knew his mother-in-law would certainly not accept money for them. So, he decided to make a small, cooling, and refreshing dessert as a thank-you. This dessert would be the Almond Tofu he had won in last night's draw.

Yes, he would make that. It would also be an opportunity to see how far his mother's cooking was from the Perfect Level.

Almond Tofu is a popular traditional dessert snack found everywhere. It's made with Southern Almonds, milk, White Sugar, and Agar. Known for its simple recipe, delicate taste, and cooling effect, it's a very popular summer dessert.

Lin Xu went to the supermarket next door to weigh some Southern Almonds, and also bought milk and Agar. After purchasing these, he returned to the store to start preparations.

The almonds and Agar were separately poured into a basin, first washed twice, and then soaked in clear water.

Agar is a food thickening agent extracted from seaweed. It is widely used in various food processing and dessert making, regardless of whether the cuisine is Western or Chinese.

Of course, traditional Almond Tofu doesn't use Agar but cornstarch. However, the texture of Almond Tofu made with cornstarch isn't as good as that made with Agar. Its appearance also isn't as translucent. Therefore, starch is rarely used nowadays. It has basically been completely replaced by Agar.

Besides starch, the traditional method of using a Stone Mill to grind almonds has also been upgraded to high-speed blenders and food processors.

Technology has advanced. The methods of cooking must also progress with the times and not blindly follow old practices.

While he was busy, Chezai came over and asked curiously, "What are you soaking so many almonds for, boss?"

"Making some Almond Tofu."

Nearby, Niu Chuan, who was cutting meat, heard and said with a smile, "That's nice. Drizzle some osmanthus honey on it, and it's very delicious. But nowadays, the quality of osmanthus honey is declining. It tastes all sugary and hardly has the fragrance of osmanthus."

That got Lin Xu thinking. Although the process of making Almond Tofu is simple, when it comes to eating, it can't do without osmanthus honey. Good osmanthus honey can make Almond Tofu even more delicious. But poor-quality osmanthus honey can significantly downgrade an otherwise perfect Almond Tofu.

Thinking about this, Lin Xu picked up his phone and called Xie Baomin.

"Senior Brother, I need osmanthus honey for making desserts. Do you know where I can get some good-quality osmanthus honey?"

To buy high-end ingredients, one must consult those who cook high-end dishes. The Fishing Platform, as Beijing's venue for hosting foreign affairs, most likely had all sorts of high-end ingredients.

Xie Baomin said, "I'll have someone send you a couple of bottles of the ones we use at the Fishing Platform in a bit. If you need bulk quantities, I'll contact our Fishing Platform supplier later to inquire."

Lin Xu was making Almond Tofu as a way to thank his mother-in-law for buying clothes. He hadn't planned on offering it in his store. This was because pricing the dessert too low didn't seem right. However, if priced too high, it wouldn't sell well. It was better not to sell it at all, as this would also boost the sales of Sour Plum Soup.

Compared to Almond Tofu, Sour Plum Soup is simpler to make and more suited for mass production.

「Before long.」

A local courier delivered a cardboard box. After opening it, two bottles of osmanthus honey, wrapped in bubble wrap, were revealed. Song Tiantian, who was standing by, took a look and asked curiously, "Eh? Isn't osmanthus honey supposed to be yellow? Why is this red?"

Lin Xu opened the bottle cap and sniffed, saying, "This must be Red Osmanthus. Mmm, the scent is so strong."

「In the afternoon.」

After his lunch break, Lin Xu came to the shop. He pulled out the high-speed blender and began making Almond Tofu. This dessert needed to be chilled for more than an hour to taste right, so he started early to avoid being unprepared when his mother-in-law arrived.

He poured the almonds, after soaking for four hours, along with the soaking water, into the high-speed blender and pressed the juice button. The finer the almonds were crushed, the better the effect. Therefore, he blended them at least three times. He continued until the water in the high-speed blender turned into a slightly thick almond milk before pouring it out.

Next, he poured it into a filter bag to remove the residue. This step was crucial, affecting the texture of the Almond Tofu, so it needed to be meticulously filtered.

After filtering, he took a non-stick pot used for desserts, poured in the filtered almond milk, added a box of milk, then added White Sugar and the completely softened Agar. He turned on a low heat and continuously stirred the mixture in the pot with a spoon to help the Agar dissolve.

While he was busy, at the International Trade Mall, Han Shuzhen, who rarely shopped, went on a spree. Every time she saw clothes that would suit her son-in-law, it was buy, buy, buy. Soon, Shen Guofu was loaded with newly purchased clothes, hanging from his hands and draped over his neck.

While they were shopping, Shen Jiayue called.

"Mom, what new clothes did you buy for me today? I'll come to meet you soon!"

Han Shuzhen looked at her husband, who was laden with big and small packages, and after a moment's thoughtful consideration, said, "It seems like there are two pairs of socks for you... they were free with the men's clothes purchase. I thought the designs were quite nice."

Shen Jiayue: ????????

BOO HOO HOO HOO! I'm running away from home! I'm going to find my real mom and dad!!!!

Chapter 132: Almond Tofu is so delicious! Arrange a dish for Uncle Tan!

「In the shop.」

Lin Xu stirred continuously in the pot with a spoon. This step truly tested one's patience because agar didn't dissolve easily, and the stove still had to maintain a low heat. It felt as if he'd been stirring forever, yet the agar remained unchanged.

"Would using something else be faster?" People in the shop were waiting to eat, so they were quite concerned about the cooking method.

Lin Xu said, "Using Gelatin or Ice Jelly would be easier; cornstarch could also work. It's just that agar dissolves slowly. But overall, agar produces the best texture."

Gelatin results in a springier texture, with a somewhat sticky, jelly-like quality. Ice Jelly results in a somewhat runnier texture. Neither offered the distinct, crisp sensation that agar provided, especially after chilling—that crispness brought an instant cooling sensation.

After bringing it to a boil over low heat, he let it simmer a while longer, until all the added agar appeared to have dissolved. Lin Xu turned off the heat. Holding the non-stick pot in one hand and a fine-mesh sieve over a small basin with the other, he strained the almond milk mixture through it to remove any undissolved agar lumps that could spoil the texture.

After this initial straining, a second filtration was necessary. Lin Xu took two food containers suitable for use as molds. He placed the cleaned fine-mesh sieve into the containers and, holding the basin with one hand, gently poured the mixture into the middle of the sieve. This second filtration was to remove foam from the mixture, making the resulting Almond Tofu smoother, denser, and ultimately more delicious. To achieve better filtration, the sieve had to be submerged to the bottom of the food container, thus completely isolating the foam.

He made a good amount of Almond Tofu today. The two food containers serving as molds were filled to the brim. Once filled, Lin Xu placed them in the refrigerator's cold storage compartment. This not only accelerated solidification but also enhanced the Almond Tofu's cool, refreshing quality.

If one preferred it not cold, it could also be left to set naturally at room temperature. Once set, the still-warm Almond Tofu, drizzled with osmanthus honey, offered a unique flavor particularly suited for seniors with delicate stomachs or women during their menstrual cycle.

After finishing these tasks, Lin Xu began frying small pieces of Crispy Meat for the Crispy Meat Bowls. The shop's signature Crispy Meat featured larger pieces, which weren't easy to steam thoroughly or fit neatly into bowls. So, to facilitate steaming, he had specially fried some smaller pieces of Crispy Meat today. He had steamed about a hundred bowls of Crispy Meat that morning, expecting leftovers. To his surprise, the customers were extremely satisfied. They not only wanted more that afternoon but also asked Lin Xu to add Crispy Pork Soup to the menu. The customers had clearly been anticipating this dish, often part of group meals. Now that he had these smaller pieces of Crispy Meat, Lin Xu thought it was worth trying to offer some.

「At four-thirty in the afternoon.」

Dinner time was about to start in the shop when Shen Guofu, Han Shuzhen, and Shen Jiayue arrived together. Shen Jiayue was pouting, her expression ironically screaming "delighted."

"Xu, the clothes we bought for you are in the car. Give me your house keys later. Your uncle and I will deliver them to your place and see if your place needs any tidying up."

Han Shuzhen was genuinely pleased with him from the bottom of her heart. Furthermore, since Lin Xu's parents weren't in Beijing, she felt an even stronger desire to look after him.

Lin Xu replied, "No need, no need, Che Zi and I can take them later... Oh, Auntie, I made some Almond Tofu for you to try. It's so hot today; it should be perfect for cooling down."

"Almond Tofu? That's wonderful! I was just thinking of having something cool to beat the heat." Han Shuzhen was pleasantly surprised.

I just bought this boy a few clothes, and he's already made my favorite Almond Tofu! He's such a good kid. Not like my own daughter, who only knows how to cause trouble.

As Lin Xu went to retrieve the Almond Tofu from the refrigerator, he saw Shen Jiayue's unhappy face and whispered to her, "I'll give you an extra portion later."

Then Shen Jiayue cheered up.

Haha, Xu is the best to me, unlike Director Han who always plays favorites!

Lin Xu took out the Almond Tofu that had been chilling in the fridge for an hour or two. The white tofu had a slightly translucent appearance, and it trembled slightly when turned out of the container, resembling Ice Jelly but far more visually appealing. Ice Jelly often looks a bit murky, while Almond Tofu is a pure milky white.

Using a small knife, he cut the Almond Tofu into pieces slightly smaller than mahjong tiles. Then he took a stack of plates and arranged the cut pieces on them, forming a pyramid shape. Next, he took the red osmanthus honey given by his senior brother, Xie Baomin. With a spoon, he carefully drizzled it over the Almond Tofu. Once done, he served it to everyone.

"Let's eat!"

The milky-white Almond Tofu, drizzled with a layer of red osmanthus honey, looked increasingly tempting. Holding it, Han Shuzhen was almost in disbelief. "My, this is so pretty."

She scooped a small piece into her mouth. First, she tasted the sweet fragrance of the osmanthus honey, followed by the coolness of the Almond Tofu. No chewing was necessary. With just a light press of the tongue, the Almond Tofu crumbled in her mouth. The almond's sweet flavor and the creamy taste of milk spread throughout her mouth, with the osmanthus fragrance becoming a mere accompaniment.

"Delicious! So tasty!"

"Old Shen, this is so much better than those private kitchens charging three or four thousand per person! Those places are all about gimmicks nowadays, no real skill at all," she remarked.

Having dined throughout Beijing, Shen Guofu was a credible voice on the matter. He nodded after trying a bite. "Absolutely. Last time, Old Tan and I had Almond Tofu for 499 yuan a serving. Apart from the presentation being fancier than Lin Xu's, everything else was lacking. Even their osmanthus honey wasn't as good as this one... Where did you buy this osmanthus honey, Lin Xu? Is there a link?"

Lin Xu replied with a smile, "My senior brother brought two bottles from the Fishing Platform. If you like it, take the rest. We don't serve this dish in the restaurant, so we don't really need the osmanthus honey."

"Hah! From the Fishing Platform, no wonder it tastes so good. Oh, I was just asking. I eat here every day now, so I wouldn't have a chance to use it even if I took it home." After speaking, he whispered to Lin Xu, "Tomorrow afternoon, I'm planning to invite your Uncle Tan to dine here. Could you arrange it?"

"Uncle Tan?"

Yueyue's supervisor, right? He's the one who helped me get the training contract from the Audit Bureau. I absolutely have to arrange this.

"What does Uncle Tan like to eat, and what are his taste preferences?"

Shen Guofu thought for a moment and replied, "Old Tan enjoys chicken, but he doesn't like heavily flavored preparations like braised or dry-fried. He prefers something light and refreshing. Do you have any suitable dishes?"

"Lighter and more refreshing?"

Lin Xu thought for a moment. The only dish in the restaurant that fits that description is Steamed Pork Ribs with Fermented Black Beans. But Uncle Tan likes chicken... What if...

An idea popped into his head, and he said, "Then I'll try making steamed chicken in black bean sauce tomorrow. I'll steam the chicken using the same method as for the Steamed Pork Ribs with Fermented Black Beans. The texture should be quite similar."

"Sounds good, that's settled then. Old Tan and I will be looking forward to it tomorrow afternoon," Shen Guofu said. These days, his main interest was food, with few other desires. He reckoned the steamed chicken in black bean sauce, as Lin Xu described, couldn't possibly be bad.

Wanting his son-in-law to remember the favor from others, Shen Guofu whispered in Lin Xu's ear, "Your Uncle Tan knew about you and Yueyue even before I did. To prevent me from objecting to your relationship, he specifically called me to put in a good word for you. Remember to thank him properly when you see him tomorrow."

After confirming Lin Xu's relationship with his daughter, Shen Guofu finally understood the true meaning behind his previous, seemingly off-topic conversation with Old Tan. That was also why he was inviting Old Tan for a private meal tomorrow.

I really must thank him properly... Lin Xu hadn't expected Uncle Tan to not only help his shop secure a six-figure contract but also to have vouched for him with his future father-in-law. No doubt about it, I have to make this steamed chicken in black bean sauce perfectly and sincerely thank Uncle Tan for his help.

He decided to start experimenting first thing in the morning. If it didn't turn out well, he could ask his master or his senior brothers for advice. After all, he still had an Excellent Level Cooking Learning Card in hand.

He wasn't worried about failing to make a delicious steamed chicken!

Chapter 133: Making Steamed Chicken with Black Bean Sauce! Exchange for Heartless Iron Hand!

「The next morning.」

Lin Xu drove a small box truck, rented with his master's help, to buy groceries.

Upon returning, he first unloaded the truck. Then, he processed the critical ingredients. Once done, he took a freshly slaughtered tender rooster, ready to make steamed chicken.

Last night, he had specifically crammed some knowledge about steaming chicken. For instance, a metal dish that conducts heat better, preferably aluminum or copper, should be used for steaming. This helps the chicken cook faster and results in a more tender and flavorful dish. Also, the chicken's surface moisture needed to be dried before marinating so the seasonings could better infuse their flavor. There were quite a few such tips available online, which gave Lin Xu some confidence.

He placed the chicken on a cutting board and used a Bone Chopper to split it along the spine into two halves. Like steaming Pork Ribs, the chicken pieces had to be laid flat in the dish. They couldn't be stacked; otherwise, the parts touching each other could easily end up undercooked. Therefore, it was best to steam only half a chicken at a time; he knew not to be greedy.

He soaked the half chicken he planned to use in cold water. Then, he washed away the blood clots from the cavity and plucked out any remaining feather roots, cleaning the chicken thoroughly inside and out. Steamed chicken shouldn't be blanched, so it had to be washed as cleanly as possible. That way, the cooked chicken would be tender, delicious, and without any gamey taste.

After washing it clean, he put the chicken back on the chopping block used for raw meat and chopped it into uniform pieces. Then, he placed the chopped chicken pieces back into clean water and rinsed them twice to wash away blood and excess fat. He then lifted them out to drain and used kitchen paper to dry the surface moisture.

Next, he placed the chicken pieces into a bowl to start marinating. First, he added crushed garlic, then drizzled a bit of ginger juice. This was followed by Cooking Wine and Light Soy Sauce, and finally, a touch of Dark Soy Sauce and a little salt. The Dark Soy Sauce was for coloring, so not much was needed. Since Light Soy Sauce and the black bean sauce already contained salt, the amount of added table salt should be minimal, though it couldn't be omitted entirely. This was because salt not only enhances the salty flavor but also boosts the umami, so a little was essential during marination to increase the chicken's savoriness.

After adding the various seasonings, he mixed them well. Then he added the soul of the dish—the black bean sauce. When adding the black bean sauce, both the fermented beans and the oil were necessary. The beans enhanced the characteristic fermented flavor, while the oil not only boosted the fragrance but also helped seal moisture in the chicken, making it tastier.

Once the chicken pieces were marinating, Lin Xu busied himself with other tasks. Judging by how long the Pork Ribs took to marinate, it would take at least twenty minutes for the chicken to be thoroughly marinated.

Lin Xu's parents-in-law and his classmate Shen were not coming for breakfast this morning, so the meal didn't need to be too elaborate. Lin Xu went to the street corner to buy some freshly made crispy pancakes. After returning, he made a Crispy Pork Soup with Crispy Meat, Pork Bone Broth, and baby bok choy. Morning preparations at the restaurant were quite elaborate and demanded significant physical strength. Therefore, it was essential to eat high-carbohydrate, high-calorie foods to meet the body's energy needs.

After the Crispy Pork Soup was ready, Lin Xusheng served it into a bowl. He was just about to carry it to the outside dining table to eat when he accidentally spilled some because the bowl was a bit too full. The hot soup scalded him so badly he almost dropped the bowl.

Damn, this soup is too hot, he complained, carrying it outside using a cloth.

Then he returned to the kitchen and ran cold water over the scalded area, which was already red.

Someone with delicate skin like mine really isn't cut out for the catering business, Lin Xu sighed.

But then he remembered that the special items section of the points mall had a Heartless Iron Hand waiting for his redemption. After so many days, my points must be enough, right?

"System!"

Without a second thought, he called up the system interface in his mind, then opened the points mall. He went directly to the special items section and found the Heartless Iron Hand priced at 888,888 points.

Lin Xu checked his current points. He had already exceeded 500,000. These points, plus the half-price coupon, were enough to redeem the Heartless Iron Hand.

He pressed the redeem button.

A prompt from the system immediately sounded in his mind: "Would you like to use the half-price coupon?"

"Yes!"

"Do you want to redeem it now?"

"Redeem!"

A flash of golden light immediately passed through his mind.

"Host has consumed one half-price coupon and 444,444 points, successfully obtaining the special item—Heartless Iron Hand. Congratulations to the host."

As soon as the prompt ended, Lin Xu felt that the scalded area didn't hurt much anymore. Yet his hands didn't seem to have changed at all.

That was all it took?

He touched the stove he had just used. Before, that would definitely have made him flinch from a burn, but now it just felt warm, lacking the scorching pain of a burn.

Did it sever my pain nerves or something?

Lin Xu pinched his own hand. He felt it; the pain was still there. He couldn't figure out the mechanics of it, so he simply stopped thinking about it.

He reopened the points mall. To his surprise, a new item had appeared in the special items section.

[Eye of Discrimination: A special tool that can accurately judge the quality of ingredients and the level of dishes, exchange price: 1,888,888]

Wow! One million eight hundred eighty-eight thousand? It's even more valuable than two Dunduns; how awesome must this tool be? I need to make money, make money! I must save up enough points to exchange for this tool.

「After browsing again.」

He went outside, drizzled some Chili Oil into the Crispy Pork Soup, and started eating it with the crispy pancakes. He had to admit, it actually tasted pretty good. Lin Xu even felt like he was eating Lamb Soup Noodle.

After delightfully eating two crispy pancakes and a large bowl of Crispy Pork Soup, the chicken in the basin was marinated enough. He grabbed a handful of cornstarch, added it to the basin, and mixed it thoroughly to fully coat the chicken pieces. This would not only lock in moisture but also make the chicken tender and smooth to eat.

After mixing evenly, he poured the chicken pieces into an aluminum dish, spread them out evenly, and placed them into the preheated steaming cabinet to start steaming.

「Before long.」

Niu Chuan and the others arrived for work.

"There are crispy pancakes in the basket and Crispy Pork Soup in the pot. Help yourselves," Lin Xu said, while fiddling with the poultry marinating in the basin.

Niu Chuan sniffed and asked, "Boss, is there meat steaming in the cabinet? It smells great."

"I steamed some chicken. You can try some later if you want, but I can't guarantee it'll be delicious."

After all, this was an experimental attempt made without any system guidance. Lin Xu really couldn't guarantee the taste and had even prepared a backup plan: if it turned out bad, he would wash the chicken, deep-fry it, and then stir-fry it into crispy chicken pieces.

Niu Chuan and the others, however, were full of anticipation.

"How could it not be tasty? We've been here for so many days and haven't had anything bad yet."

Everyone washed their hands or ladled soup as needed. They ate slowly, sipping their soup while waiting for the chicken in the steamer to be ready.

「Before long.」

Lin Xu checked the time. Twelve minutes had passed since the chicken was put in the steamer. He put on heat-resistant gloves, opened the steaming cabinet door, and took out the steamed chicken.

With the Heartless Iron Hand, Lin Xu felt he could do without the heat-resistant gloves. However, he was wary of scalding his arm. After all, he had acquired the Heartless Iron Hand, not a 'Heartless Iron Arm.' If his hand remained unharmed while his arm got scalded, it would be difficult to explain.

The moment the steaming cabinet door opened, a rich aroma, mixing the fragrance of fermented beans with the unique savory scent of chicken, gushed out with the steam.

"Wow! What a delicious aroma!"

"Indeed, it's so savory! This chicken smells delicious."

"The boss made it; how could it be anything but delicious?"

Niu Chuan and the others chimed in like a chorus of hype men, praising the chicken's aroma, which was indeed very appealing.

The chicken on the plate had a slightly reddish, bright color and a shiny surface, looking quite appetizing.

Lin Xu placed it on the dining table. He casually sprinkled some decorative minced Scallion on top.

The system's notification sounded immediately:

"Host has successfully made an Excellent Level dish [Steamed Chicken with Fermented Bean Sauce] based on their understanding of cooking. Rewarded with one Dish Upgrade Card. Congratulations to the host."

What? This delightful aroma is only Excellent Level? How delicious must Superior be?

Lin Xu immediately used the Dish Upgrade Card on this Steamed Chicken with Fermented Bean Sauce. He wanted to see just what the difference was compared to the Excellent Level...

Chapter 134: The Essentials of Steaming Chicken! For fun activities, look to Dundun!

"A Dish Upgrade Card has been consumed. The Excellent Level Steamed Chicken with Soy Sauce has been officially upgraded to Superior. Congratulations to the Host," the system's notification sounded.

Numerous insights about steaming chicken flooded into Lin Xu's mind. After absorbing these insights, Lin Xu realized that the method for Superior and Excellent Level was very similar; even the seasonings used were almost the same. The only difference was the steaming time.

Superior required one to two minutes less steaming time than Excellent Level.

So... was it because I steamed the chicken for too long that it was downgraded to Excellent Level instead of being Superior?

Damn!

That's too much of a loss!

Lin Xu felt that the upgrade had been too impulsive. If he had waited for his master or senior brother to arrive and try it, they would have definitely noticed the issue of excessive steaming time. That would have saved a Dish Upgrade Card.

But this also highlighted the essence of preparing steamed dishes. One must precisely control the steaming time. Even a difference of just over a minute could dramatically reduce the quality of the dish. No wonder some restaurants used stopwatches when making soy sauce pork ribs or Steamed Sea Bass; these ingredients truly needed to be steamed to the exact second for their taste and texture to reach perfection.

"Boss, can we try it?" Niu Chuan and the others were already eager to taste it while he was pondering these things. But since Lin Xu hadn't picked up his chopsticks, they felt it would be improper to start eating first.

"Go ahead, eat up. There are no strangers here, and we need to get back to work after this."

Lin Xu snapped back to reality. He picked up a piece of chicken and tasted it.

Hmm, although it was only Excellent Level, the chicken was still steamed very well. It was fragrant and smooth. The chicken was juicy and tender. Moreover, thanks to the thorough marination, it had a subtle yet pervasive soy flavor both inside and out.

"This is really delicious!"

"It would be perfect with a bowl of rice. Mixing them would taste amazing."

"Boss, are we adding this dish to the menu?"

Lin Xu put down his chopsticks and said, "We'll add it, but not today. Let's wait a bit longer, maybe in a couple of days."

Since he had already wasted a Dish Upgrade Card, he certainly needed to find a way to earn it back. However, the restaurant was currently selling Crispy Meat, and customers were just getting hooked on it. Introducing a new dish now would affect Crispy Meat sales.

It would be better to wait a couple of days. Then, he would introduce the Steamed Chicken with Soy Sauce as a featured new dish in the restaurant. He believed the customers would be very satisfied.

「In the morning.」

After Lin Xu finished his assigned tasks, he set up the action camera on a tripod. He filmed the process of steaming the sea bass for the camera.

The video of stir-fried Fatty Intestines he had shot the day before yesterday had gained him considerable popularity. His personal account's followers had reached 92,000, and the Lin Ji's Food topic, thanks to Dundun, had shot up to eleventh place on the Yanjing Region food trends list.

Indeed, the Lin Ji's Food topic didn't just attract food lovers making their presence known anymore. It had also drawn in many pet enthusiasts. Although some netizens criticized Lin Xu, a chef, for not focusing on his culinary skills and instead relying on a cute pet to gain popularity, such criticisms were quickly drowned out by the sheer volume of other comments.

Those in the know could see just how high Lin Xu's professional cooking standards were. Gaining online popularity was only a matter of time for him; Dundun's knack for amusing antics merely accelerated the process.

"Steaming sea bass is simple. If you don't have caul fat, you can substitute it with lard. This will make the steamed sea bass even more fragrant and delicious... Now for the tasting segment."

After Lin Xu finished filming the preparation, he proceeded, as usual, to film the tasting segment of the Steamed Sea Bass with Dundun.

Just like last time, a plate of steamed chicken breast was placed in front of Dundun, while Lin Xu had the Steamed Sea Bass.

Once filming started, Dundun first lowered his head to take a few bites, then turned his gaze to the Steamed Sea Bass beside him and let out a dissatisfied "MEOW!"

He then raised a fluffy paw and pushed his plate towards the edge of the table, all while grumbling under his breath. His expression clearly conveyed: How can you make me eat chicken breast while you enjoy that delicious fish? This is intolerable!

Lin Xu reached over and rubbed the little guy's big head, "You think yours isn't tasty? How about I get you some fish, then?"

Dundun immediately sat down. He looked the picture of obedience.

Lin Xu used large kitchen shears to cut the spine of the sea bass and carefully served the fish head onto Dundun's plate. The Fatty Intestines from two days ago had been too spicy and salty for the little fellow to eat. But the sea bass was no problem. Steamed Sea Bass contains minimal seasoning, especially the head. It wasn't even drizzled with Steamed Fish Sauce. If Dundun didn't eat it, it would likely be leftover anyway.

"You eat the fish head, I'll eat the body. Fair and square. No more mischief from you, alright?"

After placing the plate back in front of Dundun, the little fellow licked the fish head on his plate, and his eyes immediately widened, as if he couldn't believe how delicious the sea bass was. He then lowered his head and began picking at the meaty parts of the fish head.

「After the filming ended.」

Lin Xu felt that with Dundun's performance, reaching one hundred thousand followers was now practically guaranteed. To reward this little buddy's performance, he disassembled the fish head, carefully picking off the meat and placing it onto Dundun's plate, allowing the little fellow to fully enjoy his fish head treat.

After finishing the fish head, Dundun happily hopped over to the cashier's counter to play with Song Tiantian. Lin Xu then packed up the tripod and filming equipment, washed his hands, and continued with his kitchen work.

「At lunchtime.」

The remaining half of the chicken was made into Steamed Chicken with Soy Sauce by Lin Xu. Shen Jiayue, who came to pick up her boxed lunch, exclaimed with delight as she ate, "Wow, this chicken is steamed so perfectly! It's incredibly fresh and tender—so satisfying to eat. Can I have some more this afternoon?"

She knew her dad was going to treat Uncle Tan to a meal and that Uncle Tan liked chicken, so she wanted to get in on another delicious meal.

Lin Xu smiled and said, "One tender rooster makes exactly two plates. How about one plate for you and one for them?"

"Yes, yes!"

Haha, a whole plate to myself! Just thinking about it makes me so happy!

Lin Xu tasted the Steamed Chicken with Soy Sauce, prepared using the Superior method. Although it was steamed for just a minute less, the tenderness of the chicken had improved manifold. It was truly worthy of the Superior grade. It was a completely different experience compared to the plate from this morning.

While eating, he curiously asked his student Shen, "Why hasn't your cousin come by these last few days?"

Thanks to Dundun, Lin Xu's personal account experienced a surge in followers. Consequently, various MCN agencies relentlessly sent private messages, wanting him to sign with their companies. They even used different accounts when he blocked them. Lin Xu figured, in that case, he might as well sign with his sister-in-law's company. That way, he'd also have someone to help manage the comment section and the live-scrolling comments, preventing the constant spam of advertisements.

"She's given me the cold shoulder! She doesn't even reply to my messages."

Seriously? The two of you, with your combined ages, are practically nearing retirement, yet you're 'giving each other the cold shoulder' like little kids?

Lin Xu said, "Then tell her my account is about to hit one hundred thousand followers, and I'm planning to sign with an MCN company. Several companies have already sent letters of intent."

Upon hearing this, Shen Jiayue immediately whipped out her phone and furiously typed out a message.

Less than a minute later, Chen Yan's call came through. "I'll be right there! Save some food for me. I'm so sick of takeout, I've been eating it for days and I'm about to puke..."

Tsk. Is she here to sign the contract or to freeload a meal?

Chen Yan arrived very quickly. Upon arriving at the shop, she wasted no time, grabbing a bowl of rice and mixing it with the remaining Steamed Chicken with Soy Sauce. All the while, she complained there wasn't enough chicken left for her.

「After the meal.」

She pulled out a contract from her bag and handed it to Lin Xu. "Sign it. Once you put your name down, you'll be a contracted video blogger for my company. You just need to focus on updating videos; we'll handle everything else, like traffic generation and promotion."

Lin Xu nodded and picked up a pen to sign his name.

"Brother-in-law, just you wait. I'll go back and set up the traffic generation for you. You'll break one hundred thousand followers in no time."

「With that said.」

Chen Yan took the contract and left.

Lin Xu had initially thought his sister-in-law was just bragging. However, later, around one o'clock, while he was busy, the system's notification suddenly sounded in his mind:

"The Host has successfully surpassed the one hundred thousand follower mark, completing the side mission [One Hundred Thousand Followers]. You have been awarded one Perfect Level Stir-Fry Lucky Draw. Do you wish to draw now?"

Chapter 135: Perfect Level Stir-fry! Skill Training Mission!

This is...

One hundred thousand followers?

The video of Steamed Sea Bass isn't even out yet, and Dundun's killer move—eating the fish head—hasn't been used. But the task's already complete.

Lin Xu felt a bit like, "I haven't even gone all out and you've already given up."

Still, finishing the task is a good thing.

At least now the restaurant can finally serve a proper stir-fried dish.

Too bad it's super busy right now.

No time for the lottery.

Once the lunch rush is over, he's definitely gonna play with Dundun for a while, then have the little guy help pick a dish that's tasty, sells well, and rakes in cash.

"I want two duck heads, a bottle of beer, and a bowl of Noodles with Braised Eggplant and Pork Sauce. How much is that?"

"I'll have five duck heads, five duck feet, four bowls of braised pork rice, and one Tomato and Egg Rice Bowl."

"One order of Spicy Boiled Pork, two bowls of rice, four chicken feet, two bottles of beer."

"One order of Dry-Cooked Chicken, one Sweet and Sour Pork, two duck heads, four chicken feet, four bottles of beer, two bowls of rice..."

At the entrance.

The customers lining up each told Song Tiantian what they wanted to order.

After paying, they waited for a table to open up inside so they could eat.

Lin Ji's Food only has about fifty seats.

It's not a small number, really, but every mealtime the line of people spills onto the street. The business is so good, even other restaurants are jealous.

Two in the afternoon.

Once the noisy buzz in the shop died down.

Lin Xu swapped into a clean t-shirt, went to the cashier, grabbed the cat-teaser stick that Shen Jiayue bought, and played games with Dundun until the little guy got tired—then scooped him up.

Dundun immediately snuggled in, looking comfy as heck.

Seizing the moment—

Lin Xu silently chanted in his mind:

"Lottery!"

Soon.

The prize wheel popped up in his mind's vision.

When the wheel spun rapidly, Lin Xu hit the draw button.

Soon.

The system's ding rang out in his head:

"Congratulations, you have won Perfect Level stir-fry dish—Stir-Fried Yellow Beef."

What?

Stir-Fried Yellow Beef?!!!

Lin Xu was so overjoyed, he planted a kiss right on Dundun's forehead:

"Good boy, you're seriously awesome!"

He'd originally figured—whatever, as long as he got a meat stir-fry, since those usually sell more and go for a higher price, at least he wouldn't end up with that "all that hustle for a dish priced at twenty-five" awkwardness.

Never thought the little guy would go straight for the premium dish among stir-fries—Stir-Fried Yellow Beef.

This isn't just luck anymore, it's basically sneaking into the system's skills vault and stealing the recipe for me...

Wang Teng's dad said, "My son has the makings of an emperor."

Now Lin Xu also wanted to say:

"My Dundun, got the luck to bring his old man fortune!"

After the draw.

Dundun didn't cling to Lin Xu anymore.

He hopped down from Lin Xu's arms, bounced onto the cashier counter, sprawled on his little mat, and fell right asleep.

Lin Xu didn't stay either.

He grabbed the video footage he'd shot in the morning, went up to the apartment, edited it, and uploaded it.

Originally, he'd planned for this video to push him past the hundred-thousand-follower mark.

But thanks to his sister-in-law's sudden boost, he hit that goal early.

Now Lin Xu didn't even feel hyped to edit the video.

Still, a video's gotta get posted.

He's still chasing the top spot on the food chart and a place in the overall Top Ten—that main quest is waiting.

Main quest rewards are definitely worth looking forward to compared to the side quests.

Like the Cuisine Upgrade Card.

And the Perfect Level Cooking Learning Card.

Those are exactly what Lin Xu needs right now.

After a short break.

He headed back to the restaurant to get back to work.

Right now, the daily sales at the shop are holding steady at fifty thousand; after deducting costs and wages, at least half of that is profit.

So there's no way he'd dare take a day off.

Since resting one day means losing several grand in income.

But being so busy like this isn't a long-term solution, either.

Lin Xu planned to teach the must-do-in-person dishes to the other chefs ASAP—especially the hand-rolled noodles; gotta teach Niu Chuan fast.

That way, even if he wants a day off,

the restaurant won't be stuck with nobody to cook.

While he was mulling this over, suddenly the system prompt sounded in his head:

"Host considers staff development, triggering Side Task[Skill Training]. Please guide Niu Chuan to make hand-rolled noodles a hundred times in ten days. Completing this will reward you with one Excellent Level Basic Cooking Techniques lottery draw, and reward Niu Chuan with Excellent Level Hand-Rolled Noodle Technique (excluding Dough Technique)."

Lin Xu: ??????

This is a thing?

So once this task's done, in the future, if he wants a breather, all he needs to do is help Niu Chuan mix the dough?

Sounds worth trying.

Even if the plan isn't really to slack off, if something urgent ever comes up and he needs to step out, at least Niu Chuan can cover.

Thinking this through,

he said to Niu Chuan:

"Niu Chuan, you've been learning hand-rolled noodles for ages now, it's time for you to get hands-on. From today, let's have employee meals be your noodles. When you have downtime, practice more."

Ten batches a day isn't a hard ask for Niu Chuan.

The key is Lin Xu has to remember to advise him.

Niu Chuan lit up with joy and said:

"You got it, boss! I'll put my heart into it!"

Near five o'clock.

Shen Guofu drove his Bentley and brought Tan Yajun to slowly park in front of the restaurant.

"Old Shen, your son-in-law's honestly flawless; good thing I don't have a daughter—otherwise I'd be fighting you for him."

Tan Yajun opened the door and got out.

Looking at the Lin Ji's Food sign, he was full of admiration.

Shen Guofu hefted a bottle of Moutai and laughed:

"Wouldn't matter if you did fight—Yueyue and Xiao Xu were college classmates for four years, spent every day together. No way you'd stand a chance."

"Look at you showing off. What are we eating today? I've pretty much had everything on your son-in-law's menu."

Ever since Audit Bureau training started, all of Tan Yajun's lunches came from Lin Ji.

He's honestly super familiar with Lin Ji's menu.

Shen Guofu grinned and said:

"No worries, today's dish you definitely haven't had—my son-in-law is making something new just for you, even I haven't tried it yet."

"Is that so? Well, I'll have a proper taste then!"

The two entered the restaurant.

Just two or three customers around at this hour.

Shen Guofu, acting like a total cat lover, cuddled Dundun for a bit before leading Tan Yajun in.

"Xiao Xu, your Uncle Tan's here."

Lin Xu hurried out from the kitchen and greeted Tan Yajun:

"Hello Uncle Tan, please have a seat! Thank you so much for your help."

Doesn't matter if it's the Audit Bureau training orders or talking him up to Uncle Shen, Uncle Tan totally deserves thanks.

Tan Yajun waved him off and said:

"The one you should thank most is Jiayue. Back during campus recruitment, she messaged me to get you a job lined up. If it weren't for my oversight, you'd already be working at the audit office..."

If I were working at the audit office, life would probably be totally different than now, huh?

Too bad I'll never know...

Shen Guofu looked at Lin Xu and smiled:

"Don't just stand there, Xiao Xu! Get the dish you prepared for Uncle Tan out here so we can finally taste it."

Lin Xu agreed.

He had the waiter bring out chicken feet and the other dishes.

When the steamer alarm went off, he opened it up and brought out a dish of Black Bean Steamed Chicken.

When the dish hit the table,

Tan Yajun didn't dig in right away—he first inhaled deeply, looking blissed out.

The fresh aroma of chicken and the intense black bean sauce instantly hooked him.

"Wow, this little aroma—totally different."

He picked up a piece of chicken and popped it in his mouth; the tender texture and savory taste instantly wrote shock all over the face of this poker-faced auditor:

"This chicken is unbelievably tender! Xiao Lin, this dish has totally changed how I think about chicken... Old Shen, you gotta try it too—your son-in-law's seriously a genius in the kitchen!"

"As if I didn't know?"

Shen Guofu tried a piece and found the chicken really was exceptionally tender.

Once Lin Xu headed back to the kitchen to get busy again,

Shen Guofu leaned in and quietly asked Tan Yajun:

"Old Tan, Xiao Xu's mentor helped him buy a shopping car. As a family elder, shouldn't I do something for the kid too?"

Chapter 136: Dundun Goes Viral! The Secret to Delicious Stir-Fried Beef!

This question made Tan Yajun pause.

He asked curiously, "That depends on how you want to help him. Do you want to solve his material needs by buying him a car or a house, or do you want to help him advance further in his career?"

"Definitely in his career," Shen Guofu replied. "He's young; if I buy him a car and a house, what motivation would he have left?"

This...

After thinking for a moment, Tan Yajun said, "Your son-in-law's shop will definitely need to expand. When I got out of the car, I saw that the tutoring class upstairs had a 'For Sublease' sign. Just rent or buy it outright—it'll come in handy later. And the bakery next door isn't doing great business either; you might as well handle that now."

His words suddenly opened up Shen Guofu's mind.

Right. I could buy up the shop next door and the upstairs property in advance. Then, when my son-in-law expands, I could help him right away. It would also prevent others from renting out the space just to throw obstacles in his way later.

Thinking of this, Shen Guofu immediately said, "Tomorrow, I'll get people on this, aiming to get my hands on both sides and the upstairs of Lin Ji's Food. That way, when the storefront expands, it can be seamless."

Tan Yajun ate two pieces of chicken and added, "Additionally, this shop's turnover isn't low, and unorganized tax matters can easily cause complications. You can have someone from the company help him sort out his taxes."

"Exactly, that's also very important," Shen Guofu agreed. "Tomorrow, I'll have our finance team come over to help him with his tax issues."

As the two chatted while eating, the video Lin Xu uploaded finally passed the review.

"Wow! Look what I found!"

"Grandpa! Your favorite uploader has posted an update."

"The last update was just the day before yesterday, so why do I feel like it was a couple of years ago?"

"What years ago? That was last century's news!"

"I purely follow Mr. Lin because of Dundun."

"I follow for the boss's lady."

"I follow for my cashier wife."

"I follow for the food."

"I follow because I'm just as handsome as Mr. Lin..."

"Does anyone know the Pythagorean theorem? Help me calculate how thick the skin of the person who posted above is."

"..."

As soon as the video refreshed, the bullet comments and comment section were immediately filled with all sorts of clever and hilarious comments from the online crowd.

When the cooking segment ended, various "Now the real show starts!" bullet comments began flashing across the video.

For many viewers, what Lin Xu cooked wasn't important; they couldn't replicate it anyway. They followed Lin Xu just to see Dundun and what antics this little cat would pull next.

Finally, the tasting segment began. Lin Xu tried the newly made Steamed Sea Bass, while Dundun ate the steamed Chicken Breast shreds.

However, it wasn't long before Dundun smelled the Steamed Sea Bass on the plate nearby. He'd had enough of his own food and started to push his plate towards the edge of the table.

"Haha! He's not allowed to eat fish, so he's throwing his bowl in anger!"

"Every time Dundun pulls a stunt, he reaches new heights of hilarity!"

"Last time they wouldn't let us eat Fatty Intestines. Are they not letting us eat fish either this time?"

"Ha! Mr. Lin really knows how to fool people, giving the 'kid' a fish head and talking about fairness and justice!"

"Dundun: Listen to me say thank you..."

Following the previous video where he swapped Chicken Breast for Fatty Intestines, Dundun actually threw a bit of a tantrum in today's video. He acted just like a mischievous little child, making many viewers exclaim they wanted to get a cat. Many viewers also turned clips from Dundun's videos into reaction GIFs or memes.

Thanks to this little guy's antics, Lin Xu's follower count and the video's view count reached new highs. By the time he went to sleep, his followers had already exceeded 120,000. Due to viewers sharing it widely, the view count was about to hit 200,000.

「At four-thirty in the morning」

Lin Xu left Dundun at the shop. He then drove to the market to buy the ingredients needed for the day.

While buying meat, Lin Xu also took a look at the fresh beef at Boss Hu's stall.

"Give me a few pounds of beef tenderloin," Lin Xu said.

Boss Hu agreed and promptly took a meat cleaver to slice Lin Xu a quality piece of beef tenderloin. "Boss Lin, are you planning to make Sichuan boiled beef?"

"No, I'm planning to make stir-fried yellow cattle beef."

Upon hearing this, Old Hu immediately became interested. "Are you planning to introduce a new dish? If so, I'm waiting to try it! This tenderloin is so tender, perfect for stir-frying."

Lin Xu smiled and said, "Not yet. I'm just going back to experiment with it. I'll add it to the menu once I've figured out the method."

Currently, the main feature is Crispy Meat in a bowl, followed by chicken steamed with black bean sauce. These new dishes will need to be introduced before stir-fried yellow cattle beef can be added to the menu. It will be at least four or five days.

"Let me know in advance when you decide to add it, and I'll help you source the best quality tenderloin," Old Hu offered.

Lin Xu agreed. He loaded the purchased ingredients into his car and drove off.

「At ten in the morning」

Lin Xu took the beef tenderloin out of the cold storage, ready to make stir-fried yellow cattle beef. This is a classic dish that pairs exceptionally well with rice. The beef is tender and flavorful, with a delicious spicy taste that makes it hard to stop eating—truly a "rice killer."

However, tasty dishes often require careful preparation. For example, beef dishes can easily become tough and chewy if not prepared meticulously. Not only are they hard on the teeth, but crucially, they also won't absorb the flavors well.

Lin Xu held a sharp knife and removed the fascia from the tenderloin. These fasciae harden when heated and are largely responsible for making beef tough to chew.

After removing the fascia, Lin Xu took a cleaver and sliced the beef against the grain into thin pieces, about three millimeters thick. Beef fibers are relatively coarse and difficult to bite through with teeth. Therefore, it's essential to slice against the grain, completely severing the fibrous tissue. This ensures the cooked beef is delicious, easy on the teeth, and has a tender texture.

He placed the sliced beef in clean water and rinsed it twice, washing out the blood. Then, he squeezed out the excess water and put the beef in a bowl to begin marinating.

Into the bowl, he added some Light Soy Sauce, a bit of oyster sauce, half a small spoonful of pepper powder, and a tiny amount of Dark Soy Sauce for color. He mixed them evenly by hand, then started adding Scallion and Ginger water.

The so-called Scallion and Ginger water is made by slicing Scallion and Ginger, then soaking them in cooled boiled water for about ten minutes, allowing their flavors to infuse into the water. One shouldn't add too much Scallion and Ginger water at once. After each addition, he stirred the beef in one direction, encouraging the meat to absorb the liquid gradually. This process not only tenderized the beef slices but also effectively removed any gamey taste.

When the beef in the bowl began to feel sticky to the touch, he added more Scallion and Ginger water and continued stirring until the beef became moist but no longer sticky. Then, he added an egg white and continued to stir. The egg white enhances the smoothness and tenderness of the beef and is an essential ingredient in marinating it.

Next, he added a handful of cornstarch. Cornstarch helps lock in moisture on the surface of the beef, making its texture even more tender. He continued to mix it thoroughly.

Finally, he drizzled in half a spoonful of cooked oil. This helps the beef slices separate quickly when being flash-fried or stir-fried.

While Lin Xu was busy, Grandpa Gao, who hadn't been seen for two days, came into the shop. Seeing Lin Xu marinating beef, he leaned in, sniffed, and asked with interest, "Why didn't you use Cooking Wine?"

"Because Cooking Wine has a fermenting effect," Lin Xu explained. "Adding it to beef would cause the meat to ferment and dehydrate, resulting in it becoming dry and tough."

This answer satisfied Grandpa Gao. He asked further, "In common marinades, what else should not be added directly to beef?"

Lin Xu replied, "Salt. Salt draws moisture out of the beef, which will also make it tough when cooked."

"Not bad, not bad! These are essential points in beef preparation. As long as you understand the principles of marinating meat, the beef you make generally won't turn out poorly," Grandpa Gao said, looking very pleased.

Two days had passed, and his apprentice was already starting to explore beef recipes. Who wouldn't appreciate such a young man?

Lin Xu placed the marinated beef in the refrigerator's cold compartment to continue marinating. This helps the moisture better penetrate the beef fibers, resulting in even tenderer meat. He then started preparing the green and red chili peppers, as well as Ginger and Garlic Mince and other ingredients needed for the stir-fried yellow cattle beef.

While he was busy, Grandpa Gao suddenly asked, "Little Xu, do you think someone my age is still suitable to get married?"

Lin Xu: ??????

What does that mean? Is the Hokage... oh no, is the Fifth Generation Mistress about to make her debut?

Chapter 137: This beef is too tender! Establishing a company!

Lin Xu asked in a low voice, "Master, are you going to be with the leopard-print lady?"

Mr. Gao nodded helplessly, "I can't outplay her, and I can't shake her off. I don't have another choice."

TSK, TSK, TSK... So if you can't beat them, join them, huh?

Lin Xu was actually very supportive of this. He thought his master was getting older and indeed needed someone to take care of him. And not just anyone could handle this old sea king with his frequent tricks; only the leopard-print lady, who was a cut above, could firmly subdue him.

Yeah, I approve of this match!

"Master, I think marriage suits you. I support you!"

Mr. Gao sighed helplessly, "What's the use of your support? The key is that Lucy and the others don't support it..."

Holy shit! You really know how to play the field,

Lin Xu inwardly exclaimed, Good heavens! One Lucy wasn't enough, and now there's a 'they' involved too? Master, you truly are vigorous for your age! Aren't you afraid of throwing out your back? That's a problem you'll have to worry about on your own. I'm just a novice when it comes to romance; I can't give you any good advice.

Lin Xu continued to keep his head down and busy himself, unable to help with his master's troubles.

The dish of sautéed beef requires not only highlighting the tenderness of the beef but also a strong spicy flavor. This makes it appetizing and entices people to eat more. To make the dish even tastier, Lin Xu chose green Erjingtiao and red Erjingtiao peppers. Both kinds of Erjingtiao peppers were sliced diagonally into diamond shapes. This not only allowed the peppers to cook quickly in the wok but also enabled the spicy flavor to rapidly infuse into the beef, making the beef tender and wonderfully spicy.

After marinating the beef for about ten minutes, Lin Xu set up the wok and began to cook. The preparation for sautéed beef is not complicated—in fact, it could be described as simple. The tricky part is controlling the heat. It has to be precise, so that the moment the dish reaches the plate, the beef is just perfectly cooked. Only such beef is succulent and deliciously spicy, whetting the appetite.

Once the wok was heated, a spoonful of oil was poured in, swirled to coat the wok, then poured out. Three large spoonfuls of cool oil were added back in. No matter what dish you're frying, it's always best to coat the wok with oil beforehand. This practice not only prevents ingredients from sticking to the bottom during cooking but also extends the wok's lifespan.

When the oil was sufficiently hot, Lin Xu poured the marinated beef into the wok. He then quickly stirred it with a spatula, allowing the beef to rapidly spread out in the oil. This step had to be fast. Otherwise, the slices of meat would cook unevenly. At this point, the benefit of having added oil to the marinade became evident: all the slices spread out rapidly in the hot wok oil and changed color quickly. Thanks to the Soy Sauce, the beef took on a light reddish-brown hue.

Once all the slices changed color, Lin Xu placed a strainer over a large bowl, lifted the wok, and poured the beef and oil into the strainer, letting the excess oil filter out. That way, the beef tasted less greasy. The filtered oil could be reused for frying other things later on.

After pouring out the oil, the wok was placed back on the stove. First, he used the remaining oil in the wok to stir-fry minced scallion and garlic until aromatic. Then, he poured the sliced green and red peppers into the wok for a vigorous stir-fry, pressing down on them with the spatula as he cooked. This not only cooked the peppers faster but also created a thin layer of 'tiger skin' on their surface, improving their texture and taste.

"Oh, this spicy aroma! Just smelling it makes me crave a big bowl of rice."

As he was busy, Shen Guofu walked in through the door. He was followed by a woman in her thirties, dressed in business attire and wearing rimless glasses.

Seeing that Lin Xu was busy, Shen Guofu didn't disturb him but instead held Dundun in his arms and whispered to the woman beside him, "Little Dou, from now on, you'll handle the tax filing for this restaurant. Right now, the daily turnover is fifty or sixty thousand yuan. What do you think is the best way to handle the taxes?"

This Ms. Dou was Dou Wenjing, the manager in charge of tax affairs in Shen Guofu's company's finance department. She had thought Mr. Shen was taking her out to explore new business opportunities. She certainly didn't expect it was merely to file taxes for a small restaurant. This made Dou Wenjing feel like she was being asked to use a cannon to kill a mosquito. Tax reporting for such small enterprises was very simple; any staff member in her department could handle it.

But a turnover of fifty or sixty thousand?

Dou Wenjing pushed up her glasses and asked incredulously, "Really? That high?"

This small restaurant is at most a bit over a hundred square meters, and it doesn't have that many seats. How did they achieve such high turnover?

"You'll understand why the turnover is so high once you have a meal here later."

Holding Dundun in his arms, Shen Guofu felt as if he was holding his own grandson.

When Yueyue and Lin Xu get married, will their children be this well-behaved? After all, my son-in-law is such a gentle and well-mannered young man, not the mischievous type.

But when he thought of his own daughter...

Shen Guofu mused that it was hard to say if his future grandchild could ever be as well-behaved as Dundun.

"Mr. Shen, this restaurant is...?"

As a working professional, Dou Wenjing quickly switched into professional mode. She wanted to know who owned the restaurant. That way, she could target her planning more precisely.

"My son-in-law's."

Upon hearing it was Mr. Shen's son-in-law's restaurant, Dou Wenjing immediately took interest: "With such high turnover, it no longer fits the national standard for small-scale enterprise reporting. I think the restaurant should transition to a proper company as soon as possible. By reporting taxes through a company, the tax rate is lower. It also makes it more convenient for employees to handle social security payments and for the company to purchase equipment..."

Chapter 138: This beef is too tender! Establish a company!

「In the kitchen.」

Lin Xu didn't yet know that he was about to become the company's general manager.

After stir-frying the chili peppers until they were just tender-crisp, he poured the beef, from which the fat had been filtered, back into the wok. He first stir-fried them briefly to mix the peppers and beef, then drizzled a little Cooking Wine along the edge of the wok. The evaporating alcohol helped remove any gamey odor from the beef.

Then he began to season: a small spoonful of salt, a small spoonful of sugar, and a little Light Soy Sauce.

He continued to stir-fry for another thirty seconds to ensure the seasonings were evenly distributed, then dished it out and plated it.

Elder Gao, who was standing by and worrying about his own love troubles, watched the beef on the plate, his eyes suddenly lighting up. "The flavor is good, and the beef is cooked just right," he remarked.

Slices of richly colored beef lay nestled among the green and red peppers. Both the peppers and beef glistened with oil, yet there was hardly any grease on the plate's bottom. This technique, achieving an oily fragrance without visible grease, was a true test of culinary skill. A slight misstep, with too little oil, could make the beef dry and tough, and even the Green and red peppers could get burnt.

Lin Xu said with a smile, "This is a method I came up with on my own; I didn't expect it to turn out this well."

Elder Gao also said with a smile, "If you can make Stir-fried Beef with Peppers this perfect, then you should be good at cooking other similar dishes like stir-fried pork or stir-fried pork liver. It's all the same technique."

Really?

Then I'll have to give it a try.

Lin Xu said, "I haven't tried those yet, but I'll give them a shot later. I'll still need your guidance then."

As the master and disciple were chatting, Shen Guofu entered the shop after putting Dundun down.

Elder Gao, who hadn't paid any attention at first, promptly came forward to shake hands when he heard that it was Shen Jiayue's father. After all, this was the father of his disciple's fiancée, and he had to show ample respect.

After the pleasantries were exchanged, Shen Guofu, pointing to Dou Wenjing beside him, said to Lin Xu, "Xu, this is Manager Dou from our company, in charge of tax affairs. Seeing you're too busy to handle tax matters yourself, I've asked her to come and help you sort things out."

Lin Xu, upon hearing this, quickly greeted Dou Wenjing, "Hello, Manager Dou. I appreciate your help."

"Oh, no need for 'Manager.' I'm Dou Wenjing. You can just call me Wenjing; Yueyue calls me that too," Dou Wenjing said. Although she held considerable sway in the company's finance department, she didn't dare act haughty in front of the boss's son-in-law. Instead, she tried to build a little rapport.

Lin Xu said with a smile, "Wenjing, how should we handle the taxes here then?"

Dou Wenjing explained her idea.

Open a company?

Lin Xu felt it was somewhat comical to turn his small roadside stall into a company. However, with such high revenue now, not incorporating could indeed become a hidden risk.

While he was contemplating this, a waitress brought over several glasses of Sour Plum Soup.

Dou Wenjing took a sip, and her eyes immediately lit up. The flavor was cool, tart, and sweet. One sip seemed to dispel most of the summer heat, making every pore in her body feel refreshed. This Sour Plum Soup was much better than the one from the shop below their company building.

If this restaurant were near our company, I'd come eat here every day, just for this delicious Sour Plum Soup.

While she was still marveling, she heard Lin Xu ask, "Wenjing, is it troublesome to open a company?"

Dou Wenjing quickly put down her Sour Plum Soup and said, "Not at all. All your permits are in order, so we can probably complete the procedures in a day. If you write me a letter of authorization later, I can handle it for you this afternoon."

This is Mr. Shen's son-in-law; she might be able to latch onto his coattails in the future. So, she needed to get as close as possible now and demonstrate her value. That was the way to win the bosses' favor and be promoted and entrusted with significant responsibilities.

Lin Xu said, "Then I'll have to trouble you, Wenjing."

Dou Wenjing replied, "Not at all, not at all. It's what I should be doing."

Once this was settled, it was almost dinnertime.

Lin Xu brought over the Stir-fried Beef with Peppers he'd cooked, along with Tiger Skin Chicken Feet, steamed chicken with black bean sauce, steamed pork ribs with black bean sauce, and a few other dishes.

Just as they were about to start eating, Shen Jiayue walked in. She was now only responsible for the company's boxed lunches and basic tasks, so she had quite a bit of free time.

"Oh, Wenjing? What brings you here?" Shen Jiayue asked.

"I'm here to help your boyfriend's shop with tax filing. Aren't you working today, Yueyue?" Dou Wenjing replied.

"I am. I just came to pick up the boxed lunches."

Though she said she was there to pick up boxed lunches, the moment she saw the Stir-fried Beef with Peppers on the table, the girl gleefully sat down beside Lin Xu and unceremoniously snatched the bowl of rice from his hands.

Ever since their relationship was revealed, this girl acted more and more like she was part of the family.

Shen Guofu chuckled as he watched. Although he felt his daughter, at her age, was indeed a bit thoughtless, from her perspective, wasn't being 'spoiled' enough to be 'thoughtless'—to do as she pleased and follow her heart—a form of happiness in itself?

Lin Xu got up to get another bowl of rice. Then, everyone sat down and began to eat.

Shen Jiayue unceremoniously picked up a slice of beef, popped it into her mouth, and after a few chews, exclaimed, "Wow, this beef is so tender! Dad, don't just focus on those Chicken Feet; quickly try this! It's fragrant, spicy, and tender. I feel like this is the true way to eat beef!"

After saying this, she quickly shoveled down a few mouthfuls of the perfectly steamed rice. Spicy dishes like this really do go best with rice!

Elder Gao tried a piece and gave his disciple a thumbs-up, saying, "Not bad. The beef is cooked perfectly, tender and fresh... You must have used plenty of Scallion and Ginger water, right? For this kind of beef, Scallion and Ginger water, egg white, and starch are absolutely essential."

Hearing Elder Gao say this...

Chapter 139: This beef is too tender! Establish a company!

Shen Guofu, who was gnawing on chicken feet, picked up his chopsticks and tried a bite too. He was immediately amazed by the delicious flavor of the beef. "Wow, this flavor is truly delicious!" he exclaimed. "It's the first time I've found beef stir-fried to be even more tender than chicken. Wenjing, you should try it while it's hot too. Beef like this is hard to come by outside."

Dou Wenjing had just finished a piece of pork ribs and thought it tasted really good. No wonder Mr. Shen praised his son-in-law so much. But as for beef... She had relatively large gaps between her teeth, so beef often got stuck. Plus, her gums were particularly sensitive, making it uncomfortable if she didn't pick out the food. Therefore, she was not at all interested in beef, a type of meat with coarse fibers.

But the boss had spoken; it would seem impolite not to try it. So, Dou Wenjing braced herself and picked up a slice of beef. After putting it in her mouth, she expected the usual trouble, but after just a couple of chews, she discovered the meat was so tender it seemed to have no fibers at all.

Isn't this too tender? It felt even more tender than the flame-grilled Wagyu beef she'd had at that Japanese restaurant. It was hard to believe it was stir-fried. Delicious! Absolutely delicious!

She ate several slices in a row, each one more delicious than the last.

To think there was such a fantastic restaurant on Yingchun Street! The next time someone claims Beijing has no good food, I'm bringing them here to experience this... Dou Wenjing mused to herself as she ate.

Every dish on the table was a classic. The silky steamed chicken with black bean sauce, the fresh and springy steamed pork ribs with black bean sauce, and dishes like Ginger Lotus Root—it was a veritable treasure trove of delicacies!

She definitely had to bring friends over the weekend to try this. This is too amazing!

As she continued to eat, the rice in her bowl was nearly gone. Dou Wenjing, who usually ate with restraint, felt like she hadn't had enough. She looked at the others; it seemed everyone else had gotten a second helping. Especially Shen Jiayue, whose rice was piled high in her bowl.

If everyone else is having more and I don't get another bowl, wouldn't I seem unsociable? Mr. Shen might even form a poor opinion of me. Right, I'm getting another bowl not because I'm greedy, but because I don't want Mr. Shen to think poorly of me... Yes, that's it!

She rationalized this to herself and cheerfully got herself another bowl of rice.

Time to dig in again!

"Xu, I'm stuffed again... Your food is incredible, and the rice is delicious too," Shen Jiayue said, slumping into her seat. She was already planning to do three sets of burpees when she got home tonight. I can't keep eating like this; my abs will disappear!

Lin Xu affectionately pinched his Shen Baobao's cheek. "Just sit and rest for a bit. Che and I will take the packed meal boxes to the car; they're already packed anyway."

He and Che carried the packed meal boxes to the car. Just as he was about to head back to the kitchen, Dou Wenjing, who was also stuffed, suddenly asked, "Mr. Lin, could I have your shop's documents? I'll head over to the Administrative Services Center now to ask about the procedure for setting up a company... Oh, right, the company will need a name. What are you planning to call it?"

A company name? He hadn't really considered that yet.

While Lin Xu was pondering this, Shen Jiayue, who was nearby, suddenly had her eyes light up. Ha! When it comes to brainstorming, I'm the one for the job! she thought, then said with a grin, "About the company name, I have a great suggestion..."

Chapter 140: The Food Mother-in-Law Likes!

"You?" Lin Xu looked at his classmate Shen and asked, "Do you have any good suggestions? Let's hear them..."

Shen Guofu, who was sipping Nori Egg Drop Soup in small mouthfuls, also looked at his daughter with interest, curious to hear what good company name she would propose.

"I think the company should be called 'That's a Big Household'!"

That's a Big Household? What kind of ridiculous name is that? The others also had puzzled expressions, not understanding what she meant.

Shen Jiayue said, "Yanjing City's 'That's a Big Household' Catering Company, doesn't that name sound impressive? Shen Teng's film and television company has the same name, and it even trended online."

Lin Xu offered a wry smile. Shen Teng is a comedian; the funnier he is, the more attention he gets. But we're opening a restaurant. A name like that feels a bit too much like we're just trying to be clever. He looked at Shen Baobao and asked, "Any other suggestions?"

"Yes, 'The Most Delicious'... Yanjing City's 'The Most Delicious' Catering Company; 'The Number One Market Value'... Yanjing City's 'The Number One Market Value' Catering Company..."

The girl proposed seven or eight company names, all of them in this humorous style.

Dou Wenjing wanted to laugh but dared not. "Yueyue, misleading names like these will be rejected. They can also easily provoke hostility from our peers. Let's go with a different name."

As for Lin Xu, his only thought was: Your suggestion is good; just don't bring it up again. He'd thought his classmate Shen would offer some constructive advice, but who knew the girl was just trying to liven things up. Looks like I still have to figure it out myself!

Thinking of how Wu Kexin and Panda's company was named Xinda Electronic Commerce Company, should I also use both our names? Lin Xu tried to combine them. He found that whether it was called Xuyue Catering Company or Yuexu Catering Company, neither rolled off the tongue easily. They weren't as catchy as Xinda Company.

Just as he was pondering, Dundun, who was taking a nap on the cashier's counter at the entrance, sat up. This little fellow first arched his chubby little bottom and stretched lazily, then elongated his body before jumping off the cashier's counter. Holding a cat teaser in his mouth, he approached Shen Guofu, evidently in the mood to play.

"Oh, you want me to play with you, huh?" Shen Guofu drained the Nori Egg Drop Soup from his bowl, picked up the cat teaser, and went over to an empty area near the cashier's counter to play with him.

As he played, he said to Lin Xu, "Dundun is so adorable, why not use his name for the company? That would also be easy to remember."

Use Dundun's name? That's actually a good suggestion! This little guy is a natural luck-bringer and brings good fortune too. Using his name for the company might just make riches pour in.

With that in mind, he said to Dou Wenjing, "Wenjing, let's name the company 'Chubby Dundun Catering'." Just 'Dundun' by itself would sound a bit too plain, but adding 'Chubby' makes it instantly cute.

Dundun, while playing, glanced at Lin Xu with dissatisfaction, and even flashed the claws hidden in his paw pads. But then he retracted them again. Oh well, I'll cut the poop-scooper some slack...

Dou Wenjing organized the shop's paperwork, put it into a file folder, and prepared to leave. Just then, Dundun also stopped playing. Shen Guofu put down the cat teaser. Having eaten and drunk his fill, it was time for him to go back to work.

Once outside, he said to Dou Wenjing, "Wenjing, you don't need to go to the office for the next few days. After you've finished registering the company, help me buy the shops to the left and right of Lin Ji's Food, as well as those upstairs."

Buy the shops? Dou Wenjing turned to look at the location of Lin Ji's Food. To the left was a bakery; its roller shutter was still down at this hour, a clear sign it wasn't doing well. To Lin Ji's right was a clothing store. It was quite large, about two or three times the size of Lin Ji. There seemed to be customers trying on clothes, but a 'Prime Shop for Transfer' sign was hanging by the door. As for the tutoring centers on the second and third floors of the shops... Ever since the 'Double Reduction' policy began, these kinds of tutoring centers had all gone under. The second-floor windows even had cobwebs, looking like they hadn't been cleaned in at least half a year.

Commercial properties earn money from rent. Shops like these, which clearly couldn't be rented out, shouldn't be difficult to purchase. After all, the landlords still have to cover property taxes and management fees. They'd probably rather get a lump sum of cash. But what was Mr. Shen's purpose in buying these? To surround his son-in-law's shop and create a siege? No, that's not like him! He wouldn't do something so pointless. The most likely thing is... Lin Ji's store is expanding. If all these shops are bought and connected with Lin Ji's Food, then the total area, both upstairs and downstairs, would be almost two to three thousand square meters. That's dozens of times the current size of Lin Ji's Food. Lin Ji's Food would transform almost instantly from a small roadside store into a large restaurant. That must be Mr. Shen's intention, right? As the helmsman of a company worth several billion in market value, Mr. Shen indeed has a far-reaching vision.

As Dou Wenjing was contemplating, Shen Guofu said to her, "Wenjing, take a taxi to the Administrative Services Hall yourself. I have to get back to the company for an online meeting... Oh, by the way, your salary will continue as usual for these days you're helping out at Lin Ji, and you'll also get a daily allowance of one thousand yuan."

After saying that, he drove off.

Dou Wenjing adjusted her glasses and then hailed a taxi to the Administrative Services Hall. To her, the small allowance wasn't a big deal. What mattered was showing Mr. Shen her competence so she could earn further promotion. Besides, this was Mr. Shen's personal business. If she handled it beautifully, she might even be able to join the company's inner circle in the future.