

Culinary 151

Chapter 151: The First Challenge of the Competition: Knife Skills Showcase!

"I heard the clothing store sold for a pretty penny, but it's still not enough to fill the hole their kid dug. Raising such a child is more troublesome than having a cat, I tell you."

Wednesday morning.

Yu, the head of the Yingchun Street Information Station, had finished his bean juice and arrived at the shop. As he played with Dundun using a cat teaser, he shared the latest intelligence gathered by the station.

Online gambling and borrowing are things one should never touch. But now, with consumerism reigning supreme and many people harboring get-rich-quick dreams, such incidents are increasingly rampant. Lin Xu could only heave a sigh at this. He too had once fantasized about striking it rich overnight. But after opening the restaurant and being busy all day to the point of not having a moment to rest, he no longer had time to entertain such idle thoughts. Even his bad habits like staying up late, sleeping in, gaming, and idly browsing his phone had all improved. So, as they say, keeping busy solves a myriad of problems.

"Will there be a new dish at noon today?" After sharing his report, Yu began to think about food. The stir-fried beef he had tried the day before yesterday was his favorite. He'd never expected beef could be made so tender. It led him, a devoted noodle-eater, to unprecedentedly consume two bowls of rice for the first time.

Lin Xu said, "Today I need to go to the Fishing Platform, and I won't have time to cook. But don't forget to come for lunch, because several chefs from the Fishing Platform will be here to help with the cooking."

What? Chefs from the Fishing Platform are going to cook here?

Having had Xie Baomin's cuisine, Yu knew about the standard of chefs at the Fishing Platform State Guesthouse. So upon hearing Lin Xu's words, he quickly phoned his daughter who taught at the high school and his son who was a police officer, instructing them both to make sure they came to eat at the supermarket during lunchtime. Indeed, his first thought upon encountering good food was always his children. Yu was truly a considerate elder.

"Lin, have your parents send over more wild mushrooms through express delivery sometime. I've been craving them ever since I tasted them last time."

Chen Meijuan had made wild mushroom noodle soup that day, and Yu was fortunate enough to have a bowl. He was then completely won over by the delicious flavor of the wild mushrooms. He had been waiting for the shop to make it again, but the mushrooms were given away—some to his father-in-law, some to Tan Yajun, and some to Xie Baomin—until they were all gone.

"You have to wait a few more days. Right now, the mushrooms are fresh and need to be dried before they can be sent by mail, otherwise they would just rot during transport."

Wild mushrooms are delicate. They need to be dehydrated within a few hours of picking. Once turned into dried products, they can then be mailed or transported.

As they were talking, a business vehicle with a Fishing Platform State Guesthouse pass slowly stopped at the door. The door slid open, and several people in their thirties, dressed in chef's uniforms, stepped out of the vehicle.

Xie Baomin got out from the passenger side and said to the chefs, "Let's go, this is my junior brother's store. You'll be cooking the dishes exactly as they are on the menu today."

Seeing the relaxed expressions on everyone's faces, he reminded them, "This place serves over five hundred bowls of rice and two to three hundred bowls of hand-pulled noodles every meal. The workload is enormous, so prepare yourselves mentally. Don't let the Fishing Platform down."

The customer flow here was far greater than at the Fishing Platform. The first time Xie Baomin helped at Lin Ji, he too was caught off guard by the sheer volume of work in the kitchen.

The group pushed the doors open and entered.

"Junior brother, I've brought the people. Give them their instructions and organize the division of labor, so that Niu Chuan and the others can also coordinate well."

Lin Xu nodded, walked into the kitchen, and began to assign tasks to the visiting chefs. Niu Chuan and the others were very cooperative. After all, they were excited to work with these industry experts from the Fishing Platform, hoping to learn a thing or two from them.

「Half an hour later.」

Lin Xu, holding Dundun and accompanied by Shen Jiayue who had taken time off to come, got into the business vehicle parked at the entrance.

After closing the doors, Xie Baomin, sitting in the passenger seat, smiled and said, "Junior brother, today's competition will be live-streamed, and not just by one broadcaster. While you're competing, you also need to watch your manners, so you don't end up as a meme by the netizens."

Live-streaming? The Fishing Platform is really going all out for promotion. But the trouble with their occupancy and seating rates being low is the high barrier to entry, not a lack of fame. When it comes to recognition, what other restaurant in the country could compare with the Fishing Platform?

Lin Xu said, "I'll be careful... Is Master also going today?"

"Yes, he'll go. He is the special advisor for cuisine at the Fishing Platform, and he must attend such a significant event."

Master hasn't shown up for several days. I wonder how his romantic endeavors are progressing and how his relationships with Lucy and the others are faring... I'm so eager for some gossip!

The car headed toward the Fishing Platform. Dundun straightened his plump body in Lin Xu's arms, paws against the car window, staring blankly outside. It seemed this was the first time he'd attentively watched the scenery pass by. He had ridden in Shen Jiayue's car when he was first adopted, but at that time, he was in a cat carrier and couldn't see anything.

When they passed by the high school where Geng Lele studied, Lin Xu caught sight of the mushroom-headed figure standing by the roadside. He asked the driver to pull over.

Before the car fully stopped, Shen Jiayue rolled down the window and shouted to Geng Lele at the school gate, "Lele, you're skipping school again!"

"I'm not! I have a leave slip sanctioned by the head teacher!"

PFFT! Everyone knows by now that the leave slips from your head teacher are forged by you.

Geng Lele bounced over, and upon seeing Dundun also peering out the car window, she got even more excited:

Chapter 152: The first competition task: Knife Skills demonstration!

"What are you guys up to? I was going to take you to Fishing Platform for some fun."

Lin Xu replied with a smile, "We're heading to Fishing Platform too... Why aren't you in class?"

"My grandpa is going to be the main judge at Fishing Platform today. He said he'd take me to see the world, and I thought I'd bring you two along. Maybe you could learn a new dish. Who knew you were also going."

Main? Judge? Xie Baomin's ears perked up instantly.

He never would have guessed. The cultural circle's main judge, known for causing headaches among all the chefs at the Fishing Platform's eighteen buildings, was actually the grandfather of the mushroom-haired girl they often saw in the shop. It was like finding something you've looked for everywhere right under your nose.

He looked at Geng Lele and asked, "Little girl, who's your grandpa?"

With the competition not yet started, it was the perfect time to cozy up to him. When the time came, even if he didn't directly favor anyone, he might still show a little bias, right? After all, his junior brother was quite familiar with this mushroom-haired girl.

Geng Lele said, "My grandpa is Geng Lishan. Have you heard of him?"

Geng... Lishan?

Xie Baomin's mouth fell open. What were the leaders at Fishing Platform thinking? To invite this eccentric calligrapher to be the main judge?

"Senior brother, why that look? Do you know Lele's grandpa?"

Xie Baomin managed a wry smile, "That would be Mr. Lishan, renowned in cultural circles. He despises brown-nosers the most. I heard that in last year's calligraphy competition, a top seed asked him for a high score before the competition. He ended up giving the guy a zero during the contest and even cursed out all the participants..."

If it had been any other cultural celebrity, you'd want to suck up for a higher score. But now that this deity was the main judge... forget it. The more you try to cozy up, the lower your score. You might be eliminated by this quirky calligrapher even before reaching the finals.

Lin Xu, on the other hand, thought it was a good thing. This kind of skill competition should have an upright main judge; otherwise, a proper contest turns into a networking competition. Now, with a main judge who'd score lower the more you sucked up to him, let's see true abilities speak for themselves.

"I don't know when my grandpa will come over, but since we're all going to the Fishing Platform competition, I might as well ride with you. It'll give me a chance to play with Dundun too."

Lin Xu opened the car door and let the girl in. As he closed the door, the car slowly started, heading straight for the Fishing Platform State Guesthouse next to the Summer Palace.

Before long, the car drove under the archway of Fishing Platform. Continuing on for a while, it finally slowed to a stop before an imposing building.

"Junior brother, this is Building Two where I work. Each of the eighteen buildings at Fishing Platform has its own style, both Chinese and Western. If you're interested, I'll take you on a tour from Building One to Eighteen someday."

Lin Xu was really interested. But what intrigued him more was how much it would cost to hold a wedding here.

After he asked, Xie Baomin said, "You know, weddings are often held here. People rent out a whole building—a bigger one for more guests, a smaller one for fewer. It includes accommodation, catering, and wedding services all in one package, and the price isn't particularly high."

Not particularly high is how high? Surely a wedding here would still cost at least hundreds of thousands, right? But a wedding here would certainly be dignified. After all, the guards at the door are upright armed police, not those slack-belted security guards.

Once inside Building Two, the group toured around a bit and then enjoyed some incredibly tasty Snacks and refreshing high-quality tea.

As the competition time approached, Xie Baomin brought a chef's uniform for Lin Xu to put on. Together with a few other young chefs participating in the competition, they headed to the huge banquet hall of Building One. The cooking competition was to take place there today.

As they entered, Lin Xu didn't see the contestants but instead ran into a sweating Panda.

"Brother Panda? What are you doing here?"

"Chen's company won the live broadcasting rights for the cooking competition, and I'm here to help set up the equipment... But why are you wearing their chef's uniform?"

Lin Xu replied with a smile, "I'm here to compete. Make sure to catch me on camera later."

"No problem, I'll mention it to Xinxin in a bit!"

Walking into the banquet hall, smoke hoods, stoves, workbenches, and other culinary equipment had already been set up, each bearing a LOGO, presumably for product placement during the live broadcast.

Hmm, even the prestigious Fishing Platform has been infiltrated by the internet. But this competition was destined to be watched by many. With such high traffic, it really would be a waste not to earn some advertising revenue.

Before long, chefs from other buildings also arrived in twos and threes.

Each held a cleaver, many of which, like Senior Brother Xie Baomin's, came with a sheath, making them look more like warriors attending a martial arts congress than chefs.

The most ostentatious was from Building Ten, which unfurled a banner as soon as they entered:
[Congratulations to Building Ten for achieving their third consecutive victory in the 2022 Young Chefs' Cooking Competition!]

Lin Xu hadn't seen their cooking skills, but they'd definitely maximized their hate score. He saw young chefs from the other buildings pointing and gossiping about the banner. Clearly, everyone found that banner quite objectionable.

If you're already celebrating the championship, why not just proceed to the award ceremony and skip the competition?

"Ha, this Mr. Zhong Guo, really useless at everything else but always first in stirring up trouble."

Chapter 153: The First Competition Task: Knife Skills Demonstration! A mocking expression appeared on Xie Baomin's face when he saw the banner.

"Mr. Middle Guo?"

Lin Xu looked in the direction of the banner, his curiosity piqued. Weren't the stories of Mr. Dong Guo and Mr. Nan Guo just fabrications from history? So, there really are people with that surname?

Xie Baomin said with a smile, "The previous head chef of Building No. 10 was Guo Jichang, a senior chef on par with our Master. The current executive chef is Guo Jichang's youngest son, Guo Weidong. The one participating in today's competition is Guo Weidong's nephew, Guo Xinghai... The elder in their family is Old Guo, the younger is Young Guo, so Guo Weidong, being in the middle, became what we call 'Mr. Middle Guo.'"

TSK... Hearing the distinct mockery in his Senior Brother's voice, Lin Xu had a sudden thought: "Senior Brother, during the middle-aged group competition, were you the one who defeated this Guo Weidong?"

Xie Baomin stretched out his hand, spreading all five fingers as he said, "Thanks to me, Guo Weidong took second place for five years straight. Just when he had painstakingly practiced various lost culinary arts to defeat me, the middle-aged group competition was canceled. Isn't that infuriating?"

Senior Brother, you know that look on your face is just asking for a beating, right? No wonder those guys are so obsessed with the three-peat, always trying to suppress Building No. 2. It must be because Senior Brother offended them too deeply in the past.

While the two chatted, Shen Jiayue and Geng Lele, carrying Dundun the cat, found Chen Yan, Wu Kexin, and the others, who were adjusting the live broadcast equipment at the venue.

"Why are you guys here?"

"My Xubao is representing Senior Brother's Building No. 2 in the competition today. Dundun and I came to cheer him on."

"TSK, TSK, TSK, you sound just like those young wives who bring their children to cheer on their husbands... With such a great atmosphere today, why don't you two just get married already?"

Chen Yan always looked helpless whenever her younger cousin flaunted their public displays of affection. But I have to admit, they're so lovey-dovey, they really have the capital to show off. Unlike me, just a fair-skinned, beautiful, single older sister with a beauty score of *only* 97. SIGH! When will I ever find my destined one?

"Dundun, quick, call me 'Auntie'!"

Since Chen Yan couldn't find her own true love, she could only take it out on Dundun. She grabbed the chubby cat's head, gave it a couple of ruffles, making the little fatty perfectly embody the classic internet saying: "If you don't work hard, you'll end up as a pretty woman's plaything."

Watching Ms. Chen's antics, Geng Lele really wanted to tell her: If you keep bullying the Holy Master of our Meow Meow Sect like this, you might just stay single for life, you know!

「Not far away.」

At the location of Building No. 10, Guo Xinghai looked helplessly at the middle-aged man beside him and said, "Third Uncle, please take down that banner. It's so embarrassing! The competition hasn't even started, and you're already proclaiming victory. Aren't you implying there's some foul play involved?"

He was tall and robust, wearing a well-fitted chef's uniform, but his face was filled with helplessness. Why does Third Uncle always insist on these cringeworthy antics? If I'd known it would be like this, I wouldn't have come to this competition today even if you beat me to death. It's too humiliating!

The somewhat gaunt Guo Weidong glanced at Xie Baomin in the distance, his eyes filled with bitter resentment. "What foul play? This banner just shows our confidence, that's all. Wait, there's another banner we haven't hung up yet."

With a wave of his hand, several young chefs next to him hung another banner.

"Building No. 10's Food and Beverage Department wishes the young competitors from all our fellow buildings the best of luck in competing for second place!"

Seeing this, Guo Xinghai immediately covered his face. Third Uncle, oh Third Uncle. Do you think you're Wu Shansheng, so unafraid of offending people? What good will offending the head chefs from all the other seventeen buildings do you?

"HA! They've put up another banner."

Seeing the situation, Xie Baomin waved to the two young chefs beside him, and Building No. 2's banner was also unfurled:

"Congratulations to Building No. 10 for being eliminated from the 2022 Young Chefs Cooking Competition without achieving the three-peat!"

At both ends of the banner, there were even emoji of middle fingers sticking up.

"You really know how to stir things up, Senior Brother!" Lin Xu didn't know whether to laugh or cry as he looked at the banner beside him.

Building No. 10 had started by taunting the entire assembly, earning everyone's disdain. In contrast, Senior Brother only targeted Building No. 10 and instantly won cheers from the other buildings:

"Nicely done, Head Chef Xie! That's how you deal with Building No. 10."

"Exactly! Claiming a three-peat before the competition even starts? That's way too arrogant!"

"We should also spare a thought for Head Chef Guo. He was defeated by Head Chef Xie for five consecutive years. In the sixth year, he started preparing more than half a year in advance, painstakingly practicing his unique skills, only for the competition to be canceled..."

"PFFT... I laugh so hard my stomach hurts every time I think about it!"

「Close to ten o'clock.」

When the invited media began testing the live broadcast signal, Buildings No. 2 and No. 10 tacitly took down those banners.

Well, internal squabbles were one thing. But in front of outsiders, they still had to project an image of harmony and mutual respect among brothers.

「At ten o'clock sharp.」

The judges for the competition arrived on the scene. There were eight judges and one chief judge, a total of nine people, with Geng Lele's grandfather, Geng Lishan, standing in the very middle.

He was dressed in a Tang suit and wasn't particularly tall. He had a rather scholarly air, making it difficult to reconcile him with the image Senior Brother had painted of someone who would furiously berate people at a competition.

After the judges took their seats, the consultants from Fishing Platform entered.

These were all elderly men with white hair, also dressed in immaculate chef's uniforms, each embroidered with the national emblem, signifying that they had all participated in State Banquets.

Among these elders, Lin Xu spotted his Master, who hadn't shown himself for several days. He, too, wore a chef's uniform embroidered with the national emblem, his face bearing an unprecedented air of solemn dignity.

Chapter 154: The first competition task: Knife Skills demonstration!

But the master maintained his playful nature despite his dignity, sometimes gently elbowing the chubby old man next to him, and sometimes sneakily tripping the bald old man on the other side.

It seems he really enjoyed hanging out with Leopard Print Auntie.

After a series of tedious steps, including leadership speeches and guest addresses, the 2022 Young Chefs Cooking Competition at the Fishing Platform State Guesthouse was officially underway.

In the live broadcast room, the fans were quite speechless about the previous proceedings.

"Can we just fast forward to the competition?"

"What era is this? Still following these old procedures, can't they change it up?"

"It's finally starting! If it doesn't start soon, I'm going to watch some girls shake their hips. Much more interesting than this."

"Upstairs, show me the way! Where are these hip-shaking girls?"

"Kind sir, share the link, and may you be blessed with a peaceful life!"

"Same here!"

"Stop asking. Damn, that's a dude! He was live-streaming shirtless while gathering seafood at the beach yesterday."

"Seriously? Send me the live stream link privately, I beg you!"

While everyone was discussing, the contestants entered the venue.

There were fifty contestants in total. The first round would eliminate twenty, the second round fifteen, and the third round seven. The remaining eight contestants, along with two from a revival round, would advance to the top ten. From there, they would compete for the top five, top three, and ultimately, the championship.

Lin Xu had already figured out the competition's format. The first three rounds appeared to be tests of Basic Techniques. Only those who reached the top ten would be able to cook at the stoves, which explained why there were only ten sets of kitchen equipment on site.

As he arrived at the venue with the crowd, a system notification sounded in his mind:

"Host has entered the cooking competition, triggering side mission: [Win The First Place]. Please utilize your culinary skills to become the champion of this cooking competition. Upon completion, you will be rewarded with one Special Item Experience Card and one draw for a Perfect Level White Boiled Dish."

(Special Item Experience Card: Allows the host to experience special items for a duration of ten minutes.)

Wow! Those rewards are quite generous!

Lin Xu, who had originally planned to just gain some experience, instantly felt motivated to compete.

Seeing all these benefits, he decided he would go all out to win the championship.

In Wu Kexin's live broadcast room, while fans were discussing, the camera shifted, and they saw a familiar figure.

"No way? Boss Lin is also here?"

"He's not from the Fishing Platform, how can he participate in a Fishing Platform competition?"

"Fun fact: Boss Lin was appointed as a culinary consultant for the Fishing Platform a few days ago."

"Wow, Boss Lin is awesome!"

"Can I see my lady boss then?"

"You upstairs, Cao Zei, scram! The lady boss is mine, Aman's!"

"..."

At the competition venue, Lin Xu stood before a prepared cutting board.

Soon, a man in his thirties walked in pushing a cart. On it were two large plastic baskets: one filled with various kitchen knives, the other with different ingredients.

He pushed the cart to a table that held tools leftover from setting up the venue, such as cutting machines, impact drills, and polishing machines.

Chief Judge Geng Lishan stood up and announced, "The first round is a display of Knife Skills. Contestants, please select one kitchen knife and one ingredient within ten minutes. Use them to demonstrate your Knife Skills. Alright, the competition starts now!"

What? It's starting just like that?

Those contestants who had just gotten into position rushed frantically towards the two plastic baskets.

Ten minutes wasn't a lot of time, nor was it too little. They needed to quickly grab a usable kitchen knife and an ingredient suitable for showcasing their culinary abilities to best demonstrate their Knife Skills.

They swarmed around the two plastic baskets, packed several layers deep.

But soon, cries of dismay rippled through the crowd:

"Why are all these kitchen knives' edges curled?"

"They even have big notches! How can anyone use these?"

"Can we use our own knives? These ones are completely unusable."

"Without a decent knife, we can't demonstrate our Knife Skills!"

"What kind of brain-dead idiot came up with this competition rule?"

"Has the Fishing Platform fallen this low?"

"..."

By the time Lin Xu squeezed through the crowd, only one rusty kitchen knife remained in the basket. Its blade was curled upward, with a large notch in the middle.

And in the other basket, only a box of Lactone Tofu remained, an ingredient notoriously time-consuming to cut.

Whoa! What a start...

Lin Xu frowned, looking at the kitchen knife in his hand. Suddenly, he remembered the knife-sharpening Technique Dundun had helped him draw a few days ago.

Should he try to sharpen it first? But no matter how incredible the knife-sharpening Technique was, it couldn't possibly fix a blade curled up like an egg roll.

He glanced at the cutting machine on the adjacent table. A sudden idea struck him...

Chapter 155: As a chef, it's normal to be skilled in metalworking, right?

"PFFT, this guy is so pitiful, actually picking a box of Lactone Tofu."

"With so little time and such a poor-quality knife, choosing Lactone Tofu is practically asking for trouble, isn't it?"

"He had no choice but to go with the Lactone Tofu since it was the only thing left."

"Somehow, that makes me feel a bit better."

"Me too, let's see how this guy performs."

A few contestants who were just there to participate all laughed upon seeing Lin Xu holding the knife and the Lactone Tofu.

If it were any other time, Lactone Tofu would be an exceptional choice to showcase Knife Skills. After all, Wensi Tofu is so famous. If cut properly, it could certainly impress. But now, with the knife edge as curled as a twisted dough stick, choosing Lactone Tofu seemed a bit...

Everyone was ready to watch a spectacle when they saw Lin Xu place the knife on the table next to him. He then picked up the portable cutting machine on the table and started cutting at the curled edge of the knife.

Sharpening the blade back to its original form, given how it was curled like an egg roll, posed some difficulty for Lin Xu, even though he had mastered Excellent Level knife sharpening techniques. But cutting off the curled part and re-edging the blade was still easy for him. This was because it was included in the Excellent Level knife sharpening techniques.

In Wu Kexin's live broadcast room, the fans were stunned by Lin Xu's move.

"Holy cow! What is Boss Lin trying to do?"

"Metalworking during a cooking competition, did you enter the wrong field, bro?"

"Is he about to pioneer a 'welding culinary' school?"

"Boss Lin: 'Cooking while welding a big iron gate, just for fun!'"

In the live broadcast rooms of other media and streamers, many were curiously watching this scene.

"Did this guy come here to cause trouble?"

"Using a cutter at Fishing Platform, isn't he afraid the armed police will drag him out?"

"This looks so fun, the other contestants are all flabbergasted."

"Didn't the preview say there'd be a surprise at the competition? Is this the surprise?"

"I'm from the neighboring broadcast. This Boss Lin, he has a very beautiful girlfriend and also owns a restaurant..."

"Upstairs, please, I beg you, tell me the name of the restaurant."

"Same, I want the restaurant name too! I, Cao Aman, am definitely in!"

"Me too, me too (rubs hands together)."

A bunch of Cao Zeis just managed to derail the tone of the live broadcast room.

「At the competition venue.」

Guo Xinghai was lucky. Being close to the plastic basket, he managed to grab the only Carp while everyone else was scrambling for knives. Among all the meat ingredients, fish is relatively good for showcasing Knife Skills. Evenly cut slanted slices of Carp, butterfly slices as thin as cicada wings, and flat slices suitable for rolling – they all exhibit the exquisite craftsmanship of Knife Skills. However, these techniques require a good knife to achieve, and the knife Guo Xinghai got was slightly curled at the edge. Forget the complex slices; even removing the flesh from the fish was out of the question.

What was he to do now?

Just as he was worrying, he saw the young chef from building No. 2, who had picked his knife and ingredients last, actually cutting a knife with the cutting machine.

The blade was already curled. Wouldn't cutting it with the cutting machine make it completely unusable?

However, he soon found himself at a loss for words. Because after Lin Xu cut off the curled part, he immediately switched to a polishing machine and began grinding the edge of the knife. First, he ground off the rough edges of the cut, then angled the machine to forge a new edge, and in passing, polished off the rust on the knife's surface – much faster than slowly grinding off the rust with a whetstone.

「At the judges' table.」

Geng Lishan watched Lin Xu's operation with interest. Others, upon receiving their knives, either questioned the selection or complained, but this young man didn't hesitate to pick up the cutter.

Just this courage and ability alone put him far ahead of the other contestants. He had to score him highly. He absolutely had to give a high score.

What's more, this contestant had chosen the ingredient that awarded the most points: Lactone Tofu.

Geng Lishan recalled that he himself had personally selected the ingredients in the baskets. These included relatively simple vegetables to cut, slightly more complex meats, and various soybean products, all linked to points. Ingredients easy to cut started with low base points; only by creating something truly special with them could one score well. Conversely, difficult ingredients started with high base points, where even a basic presentation could earn a high score. Among all of them, Lactone Tofu was the most challenging.

Geng Lishan felt that as long as Lin Xu's Knife Skills were passable, he would give him full points for this round. It was rare to see young people who were not only clever but also willing to tackle tough challenges.

As Lin Xu was polishing the rust off the knife with the polishing machine, he saw "Little Guo" from building No. 10, Guo Xinghai, approach with a knife as well. But he didn't use the cutter; he was waiting for the polishing machine. His knife's curl was lighter, and a little polishing would allow him to keep using it.

"Do you need to use this?"

"Yes, I plan to sharpen my knife. Is this how it's done?" Guo Xinghai was completely unfamiliar with the polishing machine.

Lin Xu didn't hold back any secrets and said with a smile, "Just grind against the part that's near the edge, and angle the polishing machine slightly to reach the edge. Don't tilt it too much, or you'll curl it to the other side."

As he spoke, he picked up a few of the whetstones lying next to him and began to choose from them. These stones included a 400-grit for forming an edge, a 6,000-grit for fine sharpening, and even a 10,000-grit for polishing. The 'grit' of the whetstones refers to the roughness of their surface. A lower grit number means higher efficiency, while a higher grit number makes sharpening more time-consuming.

Chapter 156: As a chef, being proficient in hardware processing is normal, right? _2

Lin Xu felt that placing a 10,000-grit whetstone here was purely to trap the contestants. Because if anyone were to use such a fine-grit whetstone, they wouldn't even be able to achieve a gleam on the cutting edge in ten minutes, let alone get it sharp.

He took a 400-grit whetstone, braced it against the edge of a step, dribbled some clean water on it, and began to rapidly sharpen the kitchen knife.

Time was too tight. He could only focus on honing the cutting edge first.

If there had been more time, Lin Xu would have definitely used a 6,000-grit or even finer whetstone to polish the entire kitchen knife to a mirror finish.

Ugh, as someone with obsessive-compulsive tendencies, I really can't stand these rust pits on the knife's surface.

After getting the edge reasonably sharp, he polished the blade until it was clean. Then, he washed the kitchen knife, wiped it dry with a towel, and picked up the sole remaining box of Lactone Tofu from the basket.

At that moment, the smiles of the contestants who had been waiting to see him make a fool of himself froze on their faces.

When everyone was using a bad kitchen knife, it was a case of the pot not calling the kettle black. Since the knives were terrible, no one could display their true skills, so they might as well just go with the flow.

But now, a contestant had managed to transform a terrible kitchen knife into what looked like a new one.

Everyone's spirits were suddenly lifted. Those who needed to sharpen their knives did so, while others grabbed cutting machines—everyone was now following Lin Xu's lead.

The online viewers watching the livestream found this scene hilarious.

"Who would have thought that Chef Lin, whose food is so delicious, is also this knowledgeable about hardware!"

"His technique with the cutting machine and the polishing grinder is even more professional than Old Wang from our village who welds large iron gates!"

"The competition in the culinary world is truly intense, no doubt about it!"

"It's so intense they're practically stealing jobs from the hardware industry!"

"Hardware workers: 'Can you chefs please stop encroaching on our field?'"

「In the audience area.」

Chen Yan, holding her cat, said to Shen Jiayue, "Is your Xu Bao really a finance major? How is he so familiar with hardware? If I didn't know better, I'd think he owns a hardware machining shop."

Shen Jiayue was also dumbfounded. Her Xu Bao was truly full of surprises, one after another.

She said with a grin, "He's so smart, forget hardware—even 'eight-ware' wouldn't be a problem for him!"

Chen Yan was speechless. "..."

Why can't I control this mouth of mine? I knew asking this cheeky girl would just result in another public display of affection, yet I still couldn't resist. AARGH! I've given her another chance to flaunt it!

No way, tonight I'm going to my brother-in-law's restaurant and eating my fill. The kind where I dine and dash! I'll use the bliss of free, delicious food to soothe my wounded soul! Yes, that's settled!

「At the competition site.」

Lin Xu, kitchen knife in hand, didn't immediately open the lid of the Lactone Tofu. Instead, he first placed the box of Lactone Tofu upside down on the table and carefully sliced off its four corners with the knife.

Then, he flipped the box right side up and poured some clean water onto the cutting board. Next, he tore open the film seal on the front and inverted the box onto the cutting board. A perfect block of Lactone Tofu slid out.

Containers of Lactone Tofu are usually vacuum-packed. If you just tear open the surface film, the tofu can stick to the container due to the vacuum effect. This stuff is notoriously delicate, and it's very easy to break the tofu. Therefore, you need to make small cuts in the container beforehand to let air in. This allows a complete block of Lactone Tofu to slide out undamaged.

Once the Lactone Tofu was out, Lin Xu drizzled some clean water over it with his left hand. He then pressed down on the tofu with his fingertips, curling his fingers. He dipped the kitchen knife in his right hand into some water and then rested the side of the blade against the knuckles of his left hand.

He took a deep breath and then began to slice with swift, smooth strokes.

The freshly sharpened knife sliced rapidly into the Lactone Tofu and was quickly lifted. It shifted ever so slightly—a hair's breadth—to the left before slicing down again.

Even for someone with Excellent Level Knife Skills, cutting Lactone Tofu was somewhat challenging. But it wasn't impossible.

Lin Xu tried to clear his mind, focusing solely on slicing the Lactone Tofu on the table.

Xie Baomin, also seated in the audience, smiled. Although he didn't know if his junior could ultimately win the championship, this round of the competition was undoubtedly his.

Old Man Gao, sitting in the consultant's seat, also smiled. When Lin Xu had first received the Lactone Tofu, he had been a little worried, fearing Lin Xu would attempt to cut it directly with the damaged edge of the knife.

But now, he proudly watched the handsome young man intently slicing the Lactone Tofu, as if seeing his younger self.

"Wow, who is this young man? Not only did he re-edge his knife in such a short time, but his Knife Skills are also so genuine!"

"Exactly! Which building is he from? If he doesn't have a mentor, then I might just..."

"Old Qiu, your legs aren't what they used to be; you should rest more at home. This kind of thing is better left to me. After all, I'm used to handling these matters and can't stay idle at home anyway."

"Hey, Old Dai, your legs are hardly any better than mine! Who are you to talk? After this, I'm going to ask around. If he's from our Building No. 6's kitchen, then none of you will stand a chance!"

"Pfft! With that sorry lot in your Building No. 6, could you possibly produce a young man of this caliber? I'd say he's from our Building No. 18. What do you think, Old Man Gao?"

Seeing such a talented young man, the elders' eyes lit up with a hunter's excitement upon spotting prized game. The urge to take on an apprentice became irresistible.

Old Man Gao, noticing the conversation had turned to him, pretended to glance at Lin Xu again. "This young man you're talking about? I'm quite familiar with him. Are you perhaps looking for his details?"

Chapter 157: As a chef, it's normal to be skilled in metalworking, right?

Having finished his statement, he pulled out his mobile phone, opened the WeChat payment QR code, and showed it to the few elderly men nearby,

"Each of you transfer a thousand yuan to me, and I'll share his detailed information with you."

"How can you have the nerve to charge us?"

"This is intellectual property; why shouldn't I charge for it?"

After all the elderly men had transferred a thousand yuan each, Old Gao said with a teasing smile,

"That young man's name is Lin Xu; he's my newly accepted apprentice... Do you guys need him for something? Oh, and on behalf of my apprentice, thank you for the welcoming gifts."

Everyone was speechless. Old Gao, can't you stop being so infuriating? After all these years, he still has that same cheeky, infuriating look on his face.

But since he was Old Gao's apprentice, there was no question of anyone else snatching him away. After all, Xie Baomin, generally acknowledged as the most talented of their generation, had also been this tricky old man's apprentice. Now there was Lin Xu. How is Old Gao's eye for apprentices so consistently accurate?

「In the arena.」

Lin Xu finished cutting the tofu and flexed his slightly sore wrist. He then dipped the knife in water again and carefully tilted the cut Lactone Tofu, making the whole block slant.

Then he poured a little more water over it and began to slice it thinly.

「Meanwhile.」

Having honed his knife blade, Guo Xinghai successfully cleaned the fish. He then sliced horizontally from the Fish Tail towards the head, cutting through to just behind the gills, and removed a whole fillet of Fish.

Then he removed the Fish Skin.

He picked out the fish's rib bones.

Next, he rinsed the piece of Fish in clean water, washing off any blood and surface mucus. He then used his kitchen knife to trim the fish, creating a flat surface on one end.

Then, using the kitchen knife, he sliced down along this flat surface, stopping just before cutting all the way through. He shifted the knife slightly and made another cut, this time slicing completely through. A piece of Fish, cut using the Continuous Cutting technique, was thus produced.

He rinsed the Fish in water again, spread it out, and arranged it on a black plate.

A beautiful butterfly shape emerged on the plate.

Geng Lishan nodded approvingly.

This young man's Knife Skills are not bad at all.

The butterflies he cut using the butterfly knife technique looked almost real, a true testament to his Knife Skills. It wasn't just about slicing thinly; one also had to consider the overall shape of the butterfly, the symmetry of its wings, and other details. You couldn't expect to master it without cutting hundreds of pounds of Fish.

But he learned how to sharpen the knife from that other young man earlier. I can't give full marks for that.

As for the other contestants, they also had noteworthy skills.

For example, the young man who had snatched the Carrots was now using them to create a "Hundred Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix" pattern on his plate.

The one who had grabbed the Winter Melon was using his knife tip to carve Su Shi's "Red Cliff Nostalgia" onto it.

And the contestant who had secured the cucumber was using a rectangular plate, cutting the cucumber into bamboo shapes to arrange a "Bamboo Reports Safety" scene.

As expected of the Fishing Platform. Even the younger contestants possessed impressive skills. Perhaps this is the underlying strength that allows the Fishing Platform to be a State Guesthouse?

Beijing actually had several State Guesthouses, such as the Jianguo Hotel and the Yanjing Hotel, but in the hearts of the people, the Fishing Platform remained the most important.

It couldn't be helped; its heritage was just too profound.

After Lin Xu finished cutting the tofu, he carefully lifted it with his kitchen knife and placed it into a basin of water.

Just then, the competition time was up.

"All contestants, please put down your chef's knives. Anyone who fails to comply will be disqualified."

All participants laid down their knives.

The judges stepped down from their platform and began scoring the contestants.

However, the online viewers in the live-streaming room had already made their choices:

"This first place has to go to Boss Lin, the pioneer of Hardware Cooking, right?"

"Exactly! He first did that hardware demonstration, then cut the Lactone Tofu. Logically and emotionally, he deserves a high score."

"I pick Boss Lin because his girlfriend is beautiful!"

"Damn! I can't find a reason to refute that right now."

"I'm an electric welder; I support Boss Lin."

"I work in hardware processing; I support Boss Lin too!"

After stepping down from the judges' platform, Geng Lishan headed straight for Lin Xu.

Wu Kexin, who was live-streaming, immediately followed with her phone. It was time to showcase the contestants' Knife Skills, and she couldn't get close-ups from too far away.

Arriving at Lin Xu's station, Geng Lishan picked up a pair of chopsticks, casually stirred the contents of the basin, and then, with the chopsticks, lifted out some tofu threads as fine as hair, a smile never leaving his face.

"Young man, your basic skills are quite solid!"

He said to a staff member beside him,

"Bring me a needle."

Soon, a sewing needle was brought over.

Geng Lishan handed it to Wu Kexin,

"Try to thread these tofu strands through it."

Despite being known as the 'queen of mishaps,' Wu Kexin was quite skilled at threading needles. In front of the live camera, she threaded one tofu strand through the eye of the needle. Seeing there was still space, she picked up another strand and threaded it through. In the end, she managed to thread four tofu strands through the needle's eye, thoroughly impressing both the on-site audience and the online viewers with Lin Xu's exquisite Knife Skills.

Awesome! In such a short time, he first deliberately chipped his knife's edge and then resharpened it, before cutting an entire block of Lactone Tofu into such fine strands. This demonstrates not only incredible Knife Skills but also exceptional mastery in other areas. More importantly, one must have an excellent mentality to pull it off.

After the scoring was completed, Lin Xu rightfully became the first-place winner of this round with a perfect score of ten points.

Meanwhile, Guo Xinghai received a high score of 9.5 points, with a 0.5 point deduction for his knife sharpening.

As for the other contestants, most scored between eight and nine points.

Soon, twenty contestants were eliminated.

It was now time for the second round.

A group of staff members came in, cleared the cutting boards in front of each contestant, and placed a small basket in front of them. Each basket was filled with various seasonings, dry starch, garlic, Scallions, and Ginger.

Once everything was set, Geng Lishan stood up and announced,

"The second round will test your seasoning skills. Contestants, you have five minutes to prepare a dipping sauce suitable for plain boiled mutton. Your time starts now!"

A dipping sauce? I've never practiced making one before, and the system hasn't provided any related Techniques for it.

Remembering the expectant look in his senior brother's eyes before the competition, Lin Xu reluctantly opened the Skill exchange section of the points shop and began searching for Techniques related to dipping sauces.

It's hard to refuse when you've received so much help. After all the assistance from my senior brother, today's the day to repay him...

Chapter 158: This Dipping Sauce is Too Wasteful for Lamb! Leveling Up Again!

There were many condiment techniques available in the Points Mall.

In addition to the universal condiment seen last time, there were also various specialty condiments for different dishes, such as spicy beef tallow hot pot condiment, mutton shabu-shabu condiment, grilled meat condiment, dry dip condiment, and oil dip condiment.

Lin Xu browsed through the condiment section for a long time before he finally found the Plain Boiled Lamb condiment.

[Qualified Level Plain Boiled Lamb Condiment: 40,000 points]

[Excellent Level Plain Boiled Lamb Condiment: 100,000 points]

[Superior Level Plain Boiled Lamb Condiment: 200,000 points (accompanied by a Skill Task)]

[Perfect Level Plain Boiled Lamb Condiment: 350,000 points (accompanied by a Trial Task)]

Holy moly! Isn't that way too expensive? Dundun only cost eight hundred eighty thousand points; the Perfect Level is almost half a Dundun! The System seems to be finding ways to force me to do tasks. Moreover, not only do the Superior and Perfect Levels require an exorbitant amount of points, but they even come with Skill Tasks and Trial Tasks. You're just a condiment, buddy. Why do you have the arrogance of a main course?

Lin Xu had originally planned to exchange for the Excellent Level. But he was curious about the Superior Level Plain Boiled Lamb Condiment, so after some thought, he decided to make the exchange.

"The host has spent 200,000 points to obtain the Superior Level Plain Boiled Lamb Condiment Technique and has triggered a Skill Task: Please ensure the condiment you make receives praise from more than ten people within ten minutes, or the Superior Level Plain Boiled Lamb Condiment Technique will be downgraded to the Excellent Level Technique."

Lin Xu was stunned. There are only nine judges on stage, and you want me to get praise from ten people? Am I supposed to conjure someone out of thin air right here, right now?! Two hundred thousand points for a one-time use Skill. What a rip-off!

However, with things having come to this, he had no choice but to swallow his pride. Everyone had already started to busy themselves with preparing their dipping sauces.

After Lin Xu absorbed the details of the Technique, he also began to work.

However, when he saw the items in the basket on his table, he realized some ingredients were missing.

A delicious Plain Boiled Lamb Condiment required eight kinds of food ingredients and eight kinds of seasonings. The eight food ingredients were: garlic, onion, apple, tomato, cilantro stems, ginger, Thai chili, and green onion. The eight seasonings were: salt, Flavoring, sugar, Soy Sauce, Rice Vinegar, sesame oil, Sichuan peppercorn powder, and toasted sesame. These sixteen food ingredients and seasonings had to be mixed in specific proportions to create a condiment suitable for Plain Boiled Lamb.

Currently, although the baskets provided by the staff contained many ingredients and seasonings, they did not include the apples and tomatoes required for his recipe. Raw apples had the effect of removing gaminess, while peeled tomatoes enhanced freshness and flavor. These two items could impart an indescribably wonderful flavor to meat dipping sauces, making them essential. Without them, the quality of the dipping sauce would be greatly diminished.

More importantly, Lin Xu couldn't substitute them with other ingredients or seasonings. This was because the higher the Level of the Technique, the stricter the requirements for the ingredients, and none could be missing.

What should he do now?

He looked up, scanned his surroundings, and then noticed a fruit plate on the judges' table. It held apples, tomatoes, lemons, pears, and other fruits.

Should I just go up and grab one? Would that get me dragged out by the security guards at the door?

Lin Xu carefully recalled what Geng Lishan had said before this round of the competition began. It seemed he had only mentioned preparing a dipping sauce suitable for Plain Boiled Lamb, without restricting them to using only the ingredients and seasonings in their baskets.

With that in mind, he raised his hand and asked, "Excuse me, are we only allowed to use the ingredients in the basket to make the condiment?"

Geng Lishan glanced up at him and said with a smile, "There are no restrictions. You can use any ingredient available in the entire venue. But... there aren't many other ingredients to choose from, are there? Do you need any special ingredients?"

Lin Xu pointed to the fruit plate in front of Geng Lishan and asked, "Can I have that fruit plate?"

The fruit plate?

The audience members below were curious. He's making a condiment; what does he need a fruit plate for?

Several contestants beside him chuckled. Buddy, this is a condiment for Plain Boiled Lamb, not fruit salad. Besides, you only have five minutes. Are you planning to munch on an apple before you start?

Geng Lishan's interest was piqued. "Alright, take it," he said. "I have a sensitive stomach and can't eat fruit anyway."

The audience and the contestants preparing their condiments all burst into laughter. The judges on the panel also whispered among themselves, remarking on Mr. Lishan's good humor.

Lin Xu didn't stand on ceremony. He walked right up to the judges' table and took the fruit plate from in front of Geng Lishan.

The viewers in the live stream chat exploded with laughter:

"Isn't he supposed to be making a condiment? Why does it feel like Lin Boss is about to make a fruit salad?"

"He can't resist going into a different field again, can he?"

"After becoming a hardware welder, Lin Boss has now crossed over into the fruit salad circle!"

"Everyone else is here to compete with their culinary skills; he's just here to show off his breadth of knowledge!"

"I really want to taste what a fruit-based dipping sauce for lamb tastes like."

"Probably fruit-flavored lamb?"

"..."

「At the competition venue.」

Watching Lin Xu return with the fruit plate, many contestants couldn't help but grin, while a few others stared at the fruit plate, lost in thought.

For example, Guo Xinghai approached Lin Xu after he returned to his station and whispered, "Buddy, what fruits are you using? Could you spare me half a lemon? I'm planning to try adding half a lemon to my condiment."

Lemons?

Lin Xu shook his head. "I'm only using apples and tomatoes, not lemons. If you want the lemon, feel free to take it."

"Thanks, buddy! PHEW... I hope adding lemon doesn't end in disaster."

Seeing Guo Xinghai take the lemon, another chubby contestant also came over. After a brief, polite exchange, he took the pear from the fruit plate.

Chapter 159: This Dipping Sauce is Too Wasteful for Lamb! Leveling Up Again!

With the apples and tomatoes ready, Lin Xu grabbed a large bowl to begin preparing the dipping sauce required for the plain boiled lamb.

He peeled the tomatoes and apples, diced them into small pieces, and placed them in the large bowl.

Next, he added chopped garlic, ginger, onions, scallions, and small fiery peppers.

Once everything was in place, he began to season it.

Into the bowl went four spoonfuls of Soy Sauce, two spoonfuls of Rice Vinegar, two small teaspoons of salt, one small teaspoon of Flavoring, three small teaspoons of white sugar, two spoonfuls of sesame oil, one small teaspoon of Sichuan peppercorn powder, and one small teaspoon of toasted sesame seeds.

He stirred everything with a small spoon until it was evenly mixed, then set it aside for a moment.

「Over at the advisors' area.」

Some of the elders initially thought that this round would surely be won by the Guo Family's kid. But after Lin Xu incorporated the fruit, they began to favor the young man even more.

"Incorporating apple and tomato, impressive! Old Gao, your disciple's talent is quite remarkable. Would he be interested in working at Fishing Platform? We can offer him a head chef position in Building Number Seven."

Elder Gao immediately shook his head. "Even if you offered the overall head chef position, he wouldn't come. Just for this dipping sauce, does Fishing Platform even allow fruit to be added like this?"

The others all fell silent. This was because State Banquet regulations, designed to prevent guests from getting upset stomachs, prohibited the use of raw or cold ingredients in dipping sauces. His own eldest disciple was already constrained by these numerous rules and regulations. How could Elder Gao allow his younger disciple to fall into the same trap?

「In the audience.」

Shen Jiayue, who knew nothing about cooking, curiously asked Xie Baomin, who was sitting beside her, "Senior Brother, how is the dipping sauce my Lin Xu made?"

Xie Baomin said meaningfully, "This dipping sauce, you see, it has one significant flaw..."

A flaw? Shen Jiayue's heart instantly leaped into her throat.

Chen Yan and Geng Lele couldn't help but glance over. "What flaw?"

"It's too good; it'll make you eat too much lamb! I reckon I could eat two pounds of it myself!"

The women: "... Senior Brother, could you not joke at a time like this?"

But there was no helping it; Xie Baomin was truly delighted. His junior brother had done him proud. From the moment Lin Xu took the fruit plate, Xie Baomin knew that his dashing junior brother had this round of the competition in the bag. Adding a bit of fruit to dipping sauce genuinely made it delicious. Although Fishing Platform didn't allow it, that didn't mean such methods didn't exist or weren't effective. He was really looking forward to the judges' expressions after they tasted it.

With that in mind, he couldn't resist glancing at Guo Weidong, the executive head chef of Building Number Ten, who was sitting not far away.

Just then, Guo Weidong was also looking at him.

When their eyes met, Xie Baomin extended his fist and then deliberately straightened his middle finger.

Guo Weidong was speechless. How old are you, still flipping me the bird! For the past two years, he had managed to suppress Building Number Two twice, finally getting some breathing room. Who knew that this Xie Baomin would find some youngster from who-knows-where. It was truly difficult to guard against something like this.

His nephew Xinghai was about to turn twenty-five, and this was his last year to participate in the youth cooking competition. He had been on track for a three-peat victory. But now, with that young man on the scene, the three-peat had become uncertain.

He sighed silently to himself. Then, he shot Xie Baomin a glare and continued watching the competition.

"Time's up!"

Following the timekeeper's announcement, all the contestants stopped what they were doing.

A line of waiters entered from outside, each carrying steaming dishes of plain boiled lamb, instantly making the mouths of everyone present water.

Wow! I thought the judges were only tasting the sauces; I didn't expect the lamb to be ready as well!

Whether it was the audience on-site or fans in the live stream, everyone was swallowing hard.

The judges stepped down from their seats. Using chopsticks, they picked up pieces of the piping hot lamb and began dipping them into the sauces the contestants had prepared, eating and murmuring to one another.

"Hmm, this dipping sauce is well-seasoned, but there's a bit too much cilantro."

"Adding pear is creative; it really brings out the lamb's freshness and gives it a unique flavor. You all should try this; this sauce is excellent."

"Your sauce is too spicy; you should have used less chili!"

"Too much garlic, young man. My mouth is filled with the taste of garlic; I can't appreciate the lamb's deliciousness anymore."

"..."

The panel of judges included gourmards and retired master chefs from other restaurants. All of them possessed profound culinary knowledge. With just a small taste, they could discern the differences between the various dipping sauces.

Geng Lishan tasted his way down the line. When he tried the sauce made by Guo Xinghai, his eyes lit up. "Young man, your sauce has a distinct Cantonese cuisine flair! Although the flavor is light and fresh, it significantly enhances the lamb's aroma and flavor, adding considerable character to the meat. The lemon is an inspired touch."

He clearly remembered this young man had won second place in the first round. To be able to craft such a fine dipping sauce now showed he possessed genuine skill.

After trying Guo Xinghai's sauce, he made his way over to Lin Xu.

Just as he was about to try Lin Xu's sauce, he was surprised to see Guo Xinghai follow him. "Teacher, may I try his dipping sauce?"

Geng Lishan was taken aback for a moment, then replied, "Sure, go ahead and taste it. I can't finish this plate of lamb myself... Get him a pair of chopsticks."

A nearby waiter brought over a pair of disposable chopsticks. Guo Xinghai smiled at Lin Xu and said, "I saw the ingredients you used were quite interesting, and I really wanted to taste it. Sorry for the intrusion."

In cooking competitions, contestants tasting each other's dishes is often seen as a provocation or a questioning of the judges. However, Guo Xinghai was genuinely curious about the taste of Lin Xu's dipping sauce, so he braced himself and came over.

Lin Xu, however, didn't particularly mind. Want to taste it? Go ahead. A Superior-grade dipping sauce has nothing to fear from being tasted.

Chapter 160: This Dipping Sauce is Too Wasteful for Lamb! Leveling Up Again!

Guo Xinghai picked up a small slice of mutton and dipped it into the sauce. As soon as he put it in his mouth, his face showed a shocked expression, instantly arousing Geng Lishan's curiosity:

"How does it taste, young man?"

Guo Xinghai slowly chewed, savoring the taste of the mutton. After eating, he looked longingly at the sauce on the table:

"Good! Really good, this flavor... Teacher, may I try another piece?"

"Yes!"

Geng Lishan nodded. He also picked up a piece of mutton, dipped it in the sauce, and put it in his mouth. His expression turned exactly like Guo Xinghai's.

The fresh and fragrant flavor sent a shiver through his body.

This sauce perfectly enhanced the mutton's delicious flavor and texture.

The lean meat was fresh and exquisite, while the fatty part was rich and fragrant.

The semi-fatty, semi-lean mutton from the leg, paired with this savory and appetizing sauce, had everyone exclaiming its deliciousness.

"It's indeed delicious. All of you should try it. This young man's dipping sauce is something ordinary chefs can't match. It's like what a seasoned master chef would make."

After speaking, Geng Lishan picked up another piece of mutton with his chopsticks and tasted it with the sauce in his bowl:

"The more I eat, the tastier it gets. Sour, sweet, numbing, spicy, savory, salty—these flavors are wonderfully interwoven. It feels so amazing! I think I could eat a whole plate of this mutton myself."

The other judges came over after hearing this.

After tasting it, they felt that Mr. Lishan was indeed correct.

The sauce truly seemed like something a seasoned master chef would make. It had a great taste and rich flavor, yet it didn't overpower the mutton's own freshness; instead, it made the mutton even more delicious.

Hearing everyone's praise, Lin Xu quickly heard the system's prompt in his mind:

"Host has received praise from more than ten people within the allotted time and has officially acquired the Superior Plain Boiled Mutton Dipping Sauce Technique. Congratulations, Host."

PHEW... Luckily, Guo Xinghai was curious about the dipping sauce I made; otherwise, I might not have been able to complete this task.

Superior dipping sauce Technique acquired. Maybe I should also cook some mutton to try when I get back?

Lin Xu planned to buy some mutton to try when he got back.

It's a shame I don't have many points. Otherwise, I absolutely would have exchanged them for that Perfect Level sauce to see what Trial Task it could trigger.

"Seeing these judges eat makes me hungry."

"Watching food competitions on TV, those judges just take a bite and then babble on for ages. Why do the judges at Fishing Platform eat like they're at a feast?"

"Exactly, I'm almost drooling here."

"Why not give me some of that sauce? I want to eat it with a steamed bun."

"Can you only use it with mutton? We don't have mutton at home, but I really want to try the flavor."

"Pork and chicken would definitely work. This sauce is so versatile; it would taste good even with plain boiled vegetables."

"I hope Boss Lin releases a complete tutorial."

"Yes, yes, I also want to know the exact proportions and tutorial."

"..."

The fans in the live stream were completely captivated by the way the judges were eating.

How delicious must it be to make the judges eat like that?

And the live audience was even more tantalized.

The fans in the live stream could only watch the video, but those sitting in the venue could smell the rich, savory aroma of the mutton.

That delightful fragrance was making everyone's mouths water and hearts itch with longing.

But the judges just couldn't stop eating.

While eating, they also discussed the focus of each contestant's dipping sauce.

Some contestants made sour and spicy sauces, some made numb and spicy sauces, and others made clear and savory sauces. Each chef's dipping sauce was unique, broadening the judges' horizons.

When the mutton was almost finished, the scoring began.

Lin Xu received the highest score of 9.9 points, Guo Xinghai scored 9.7 points, and the chubby contestant who had asked for the Sydney pear also scored a high 9.5 points.

Clearly, after adding fruit, the enhanced fresh flavor of the dipping sauces provided the judges with a new experience.

So they couldn't help but give high scores.

How come I'm second place again?

Sitting in the audience, Guo Weidong sighed softly. He recalled how he had finished second for five consecutive years in the middle-aged group competition years ago.

Our Guo Family... are we destined to only be second place?

He eagerly watched his nephew, Guo Xinghai, hoping he would push harder in the competitions to come. He wanted him to strive to surpass that young man from Building Two and achieve Building Ten's third consecutive championship!

Now, it all depended on the content of the third round of the competition.

The Guo Family had built its reputation on Cantonese cuisine; it was their core strength.

Guo Weidong was hoping for a Cantonese culinary challenge, which would be a fatal blow to that young man from Building Two.

After all, among the eighteen buildings at Fishing Platform, none understood Cantonese cuisine better than Building Ten.

Another fifteen contestants were eliminated from the competition.

The third round of the competition was about to begin.

Just as the judges were sipping tea and chatting, a few staff members entered. They were pushing a cart with a large iron basin containing freshly slaughtered suckling pigs.

Seeing this, Guo Weidong almost leaped up and shouted.

HAHA! It really was a Cantonese cuisine ingredient after all! My nephew, Guo Xinghai, could roast suckling pigs independently when he was just a teenager. These little suckling pigs would be child's play for him!

He proudly turned his head and shot Xie Baomin a glance. However, Xie Baomin's response was still a raised middle finger.

Fifteen suckling pigs were placed on the chopping boards in front of each of the fifteen contestants.

Geng Lishan stood up and announced, "We have many guests this afternoon, so a lot of ingredients are needed. To help relieve pressure on the main kitchen, the third round's challenge is this: using the cooking techniques you've learned, butcher the suckling pigs in front of you, separating them into their different parts. The person who does this most cleanly and in the shortest time will be the winner of this round."

"Butchering pork?" The fans in the live stream and the audience on-site were all a bit dumbfounded. Wasn't butchering pork the job of a meat seller? Wasn't asking chefs to do this a bit too much to ask?

Some contestants also wore troubled expressions. Although they had handled a lot of pork, they had never dealt with a Whole Pig Slaughter before, and some didn't even know where to begin.

But while they hesitated, some contestants had already sprung into action.

For example, Guo Xinghai, who had been immersed in Cantonese cuisine since childhood. And, of course, the star of the show, a certain king of crossover skills...