

## Culinary 18

Chapter 18 - New Employee Reporting! The Secret of Chicken Feet with Tiger Skin!

"Yes, yes, yes, I'm super interested! I even dream of working at your restaurant!" Che Mingxin excitedly sent a string of fireworks emoticons.

He had just been dreaming of switching jobs to Lin Ji. Little did he expect that less than five minutes later, Boss Lin would message him. This was truly a surprise in his life.

"Boss, what time should I arrive tomorrow?" he asked, unable to wait to start working at the new store.

Lin Xu asked curiously, "Aren't you going to deal with your resignation?"

Che Mingxin replied, "There's nothing much to handle. I just received my salary, and there are no benefits or anything. A WeChat message to the head chef will do."

Is it really that casual? Lin Xu thought. He then sent Che Mingxin a message, "Then come to the store with your health certificate tomorrow morning. That's it. I need to sleep now; I have to get up at four in the morning to buy groceries."

Lin Xu set his phone aside, then turned off the light and went to sleep.

「On the other side.」

After the excitement had died down, Che Mingxin posted a new status under the Lin Ji's Food topic: "Guys, from now on, I am a member of #Lin Ji's Food#! Thanks to Boss Lin for providing me with this job. I hope everyone supports my work and supports Lin Ji's Food!!!"

Soon, the post was flooded with replies. Everyone congratulated Che Mingxin on finding a job that suited him, and they were happy that Lin Xu had found help.

「The next morning.」

Lin Xu bought the necessary vegetables from Uncle Shen's stall. He then went to the dried food store for the chili powder he needed. Next, he arrived at yesterday's meat stall.

"Yo, Boss Lin is here! Do you want the same pork belly and bones as yesterday?"

Having been punctual at the market for several days, the vendors there all recognized Lin Xu.

Lin Xu picked out some pork belly and bought a few large bones, asking the owner to crack them open. The chicken soup and Pork Bone Broth from yesterday hadn't been used up. He mainly bought these large bones for making the braising liquid. The braising liquid for Tiger Skin Chicken Feet couldn't just be water, or the taste would be too bland; it had to be made with Pork Bone Broth. This way, the Chicken Feet would turn out more aromatic, and the texture would be richer and oilier.

After picking the large pork bones, Lin Xu asked the plump butcher, "Do you have fresh frozen Chicken Feet here?"

"Yes, yes, we have all grades—high, medium, and low. Which grade would you like, Boss Lin?"

"I want the best."

"This type of Chicken Feet comes in twenty-pound boxes. How many do you want, Boss Lin?"

"Ten boxes!"

After Lin Xu bought everything, the butcher, eager to please, drove him and all the purchased ingredients to Lin Ji's Food. A big customer like this, who could buy twenty boxes of Chicken Feet at once, had to be courted. Otherwise, if he switched to another vendor someday, the loss would be too great.

「Back at the store.」

Lin Xu organized the ingredients systematically. He then grabbed a large iron basin, filled it halfway with water, and poured the purchased Chicken Feet into it to soak. Although the frozen Chicken Feet looked quite clean, they still needed soaking. This was not only to soak out residual blood and impurities but also to relax the skin, making it easier to create the tiger skin pattern. Lin Xu soaked a total of five boxes of Chicken Feet, approximately nine hundred pieces.

While the Chicken Feet were soaking, he set up a large pressure cooker. He blanched the purchased large pork bones with Liquor, then put them in the pressure cooker to start simmering the Pork Bone Broth needed for the braising liquid. He then soaked the vegetables for the morning, split the pork belly in two, soaked half in water, and put the other half in the refrigerator's chiller compartment to chill.

After he finished all that, he sat down next to the large iron basin and began to use scissors to trim the toenails of the soaked Chicken Feet. When preparing dishes like Chicken Feet, it's important to trim off the toenails as much as possible. This not only improves the texture but also prevents the outer skin of the Chicken Feet from being torn by the toenails during the braising process.

Before he acquired the Skill, it could take Lin Xu a whole day to trim a basin of Chicken Feet. But with the Perfect Level Cooking Technique, Lin Xu trimmed quickly and well. He didn't even need to look. As soon as his left hand fetched a chicken foot, his right hand, with a few quick SNIPS, would trim it clean. The whole process was done in one go, as smooth as if he had been a master chef for decades.

「At 6:30 in the morning.」

When there were still about a hundred untrimmed Chicken Feet left, the door was pushed open. A young-looking man, seemingly under twenty, entered. He was about five feet nine inches tall, with a dark and lean face, but appeared very spirited and lively. Upon seeing Lin Xu, he grinned, revealing a set of white teeth. "Boss, I'm Che Mingxin. I've come to report for duty. Here are my ID, health certificate, and temporary residence permit."

While speaking, he fished a stack of documents from his pocket and handed them over. Lin Xu stood up straight, casually stretched his back, then took the documents Che Mingxin handed him and started looking through them seriously.

Che Mingxin was eighteen years old, hailing from the land of Qi Lu. Two years ago, after graduating from a culinary crash course at his local vocational high school, he was recommended by the school's job

placement office to work in a restaurant in Beijing. In that restaurant, he started as a general worker, progressing through roles like preparing side dishes, chopping, apprenticing, and finally becoming an assistant cook two months ago. However, his salary had remained at the previous year's apprentice level and showed no signs of increasing. Additionally, the constant deception and scheming in that restaurant's kitchen had made him consider changing jobs.

After understanding the situation, Lin Xu returned the documents to Che Mingxin. "Have you had breakfast?"

Che Mingxin scratched his head a bit embarrassedly. "Not yet. I rushed over by subway as soon as I woke up."

Lin Xu said, "First, wash your hands and get to work. Help me finish preparing these Chicken Feet, and then we'll go get some lamb offal soup from that old-brand place down the street."

"Alright!" Che Mingxin exclaimed.

I thought the shop didn't provide breakfast! he mused. Who knew the boss would treat me to lamb offal soup? He was so delighted that he almost posted another update under the Lin Ji's Food topic.

The two of them finished preparing the remaining Chicken Feet. They then strolled down the street, where each had a large bowl of lamb offal soup and two griddle cakes. Afterward, they returned to continue working.

Che Mingxin began blanching Tomatoes and cutting them into dice. Meanwhile, Lin Xu scooped out the soaked Chicken Feet. He started boiling water in a pot. Into the pot, he added Scallion and Ginger, Cooking Wine, and a large piece of Maltose, then began to blanch the Chicken Feet. The purpose of adding Maltose was to enhance the color of the Chicken Feet, making them look reddish-brown and glossy when fried, thus increasing their aesthetic appeal.

After blanching, he placed the Chicken Feet aside to drain. Then he set up a wok for frying. He began to deep-fry the Chicken Feet.

Deep-frying is an essential step in making Tiger Skin Chicken Feet. The collagen in the Chicken Feet forms fine pores and bubbles when deep-fried at high temperatures. These pores and bubbles, upon soaking and rehydrating, expand into various irregular folds, resembling tiger stripes. That's why it's called "tiger skin." In Chinese cooking, besides Chicken Feet, there are also other "tiger skin" dishes like Tiger Skin Pork Knuckle and Tiger Skin Pork Belly.

To achieve a better tiger skin effect on the surface of the Chicken Feet, the freshly fried pieces should be immediately plunged into ice water to soak. This causes the skin of the Chicken Feet to expand more thoroughly, making the tiger skin effect more prominent.

After deep-frying all the Chicken Feet, Lin Xu fetched the Pork Bone Broth he had previously simmered in the pressure cooker. He then began to prepare the soul of Tiger Skin Chicken Feet—the braising liquid.