

Culinary 251

Chapter 251: Baked Lobster with Egg Yolk! Madam Shen's Signature Snack—Fried Sausage!

BOO HOO HOO... How could you guys do this to me!"

In the kitchen, Chen Yan wept as she mixed leftover rice with leftover pork knuckle soup, lamenting her family and relatives' outrageous behavior.

I simply took a nap in the small living room upstairs.

To think they just started eating downstairs without a care for me.

Didn't you notice that a cute, beautiful, and sexy beauty was missing?

"This is outrageous! I will not forgive you... BURP!"

"Have some water, Sister Yan. Don't talk while eating; you might choke," Shen Baobao thoughtfully poured Chen Yan a glass of water, but Chen Yan was far from grateful.

"With such a large spread of dishes, and I only get to eat leftovers..."

As she spoke, Lin Xu placed a freshly prepared Nori Egg Drop Soup in front of Chen Yan. "Let me see what else is in the fridge, and I'll make you something more."

Opening the fridge, he spotted a massive Boston lobster, an oversized swimming crab, a Grouper that had been overlooked at lunch, and more.

Lin Xu had no interest in the swimming crab and Grouper.

But the Boston lobster...

Hmm, I've long wanted to try dishes baked with egg yolk. Lin Xu thought for a moment, then took the lobster out.

He also found some salted duck yolks, which he placed in a bowl and set on the stove to steam.

Now that I have a lobster and salted duck yolks on hand, I have to give it a shot. Even if it turns out badly, my starving sister-in-law will probably finish it all.

He removed the lobster's tail and shelled the meat. He also extracted the meat from the claws and body, dicing all of it with the tail meat into fingertip-sized pieces.

He marinated the pieces with a little Scallion-Ginger water and Light Soy Sauce. Then, he mixed in cornstarch until they were evenly coated. Finally, he added a touch of cooking oil so they would separate easily when fried.

Once ready, he poured oil into a wok to fry the lobster meat.

Once the oil was hot, he scattered the marinated lobster pieces into the wok to deep-fry them. While frying, he stirred them a few times with a ladle to ensure the pieces separated and didn't stick together.

When the surface of the lobster meat turned golden brown, he removed it and drained the oil.

Next, he fried the lobster head and tail sections. Although there wasn't much meat on them, frying them made for a beautiful presentation on the plate.

Once fried, the head and tail sections were removed.

He then poured out the oil from the wok, leaving just a tiny bit at the bottom.

By this time, the salted duck yolks steaming on the other burner were ready.

Lin Xu took them out and pressed them with the flat of his knife until they were powdery.

After preparing them, he relit the burner under the wok.

Once the oil in the wok was hot, he added the powdered salted duck yolks and stir-fried them constantly over low heat.

Soon, the powdered salted duck yolks began to foam, creating more and more bubbles. Lin Xu seized the moment to sprinkle a tiny bit of White Sugar into the wok.

The White Sugar helps to balance the saltiness of the duck yolks, enhancing their fragrance and umami flavor.

He stir-fried for another half minute, then added the fried lobster meat to the wok and continued to stir-fry.

Once the egg yolk mixture evenly coated the surface of the lobster meat, he turned off the heat and plated the dish.

Lin Xu arranged the yolk-coated lobster meat on a plate, then garnished it with the fried lobster head and tail sections.

Just as he finished, the system's notification sounded in his mind:

"The host has created a Superior-grade lobster baked with egg yolk using existing techniques and is rewarded with an Excellent Level Technique for Garlic Paste. Congratulations to the host."

This worked?

I can't believe just improvising a dish triggered a reward, and for Garlic Paste too, a Technique I'm currently short on! Lin Xu hadn't expected this.

What a pleasant surprise!

In Chinese cuisine, Garlic Paste has a wide range of uses. It's not only used for steamed dishes like steamed split-back shrimp with garlic or steamed loofah with garlic, but it also has broad applications in barbecuing, braising, and stir-frying.

I'll definitely have to make some soon to try it out.

"Brother-in-law, what's that you made?"

While Lin Xu was still lost in thought, Chen Yan, drawn by the aroma wafting from the kitchen, couldn't sit still any longer. She came over, saw the lobster baked with egg yolk, and immediately took the plate.

"Thanks, brother-in-law. You're the only one with a conscience left in this family."

Shen Jiayue was currently in the family group chat discussing Chen Yan's plight. However, upon seeing the dish on the table, she couldn't resist grabbing her chopsticks to taste some.

"WOW! Lobster baked with egg yolk is surprisingly delicious! Xu Bao, I think there's more lobster in the fridge? Could you make another batch tonight?"

"Sure!"

We're having crawfish tonight, and now she wants lobster baked with egg yolk too.

This is going to send Dad's uric acid levels soaring!

Lin Xu picked up a piece of lobster meat with his chopsticks and tasted it.

Mmm, it's savory and fragrant. The egg yolk coating is soft and sandy, rich in aroma. The lobster meat inside is crispy on the outside and tender on the inside, succulent and juicy, even carrying that unique sweetness characteristic of shrimp.

Delicious!

But why isn't it Perfect Level?

Is there still something lacking in my method?

Lin Xu felt somewhat puzzled.

Meanwhile, Chen Yan was thoroughly enjoying her meal.

"My brother-in-law's cooking skills are truly impeccable, but why do I still feel so wronged!"

Shen Baobao quickly comforted her cousin, "Alright, alright, look at my poor Yan Bao, so upset, like a thirty-something-year-old kid. Eat less of the staple food for now, just enough to tide you over. We're having crawfish for dinner."

Chen Yan, who was still feeling aggrieved, instantly brightened up at the mention of 'crawfish.'

"Really?"

"Yeah, Dad didn't get to eat his fill last time, so he wants to have it again today. Besides, Xu Bao is free this afternoon. Of course, if you don't want any, that's fine too."

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Upon hearing this, Chen Yan could no longer dwell on her grievances. She finished the lobster meat with her rice and then began to look forward to the crayfish in the evening.

"Today I've been so wronged, so it wouldn't be excessive for me to eat fifty, right?"

"Not excessive, not excessive at all."

"No, fifty is too few; make it sixty. Tonight I'll eat sixty crayfish. Who's in favor, and who's against?"

No one objected. After all, not many people would be eating crayfish tonight, so they could eat as much as they wanted without restraint.

After eating her fill, Chen Yan had initially wanted to go to the audio-visual room on the basement level to watch an old movie, but she worried she might fall asleep and miss the evening crayfish. So, after Lin Xu finished cleaning the kitchen, she returned to the small living room on the second floor.

"You two go on in and do whatever you need to do. Just remember to keep it down. I'll keep watch for you, but if I fall asleep, you absolutely must not forget to call me for dinner!"

Good heavens. Chen Yan was close to developing a stress disorder.

"What nonsense are you spouting, Stinky Yanzi? I'm just going to chat with Xu Bao for a bit."

Shen Jiayue pulled Lin Xu back into her room. Although she said she just wanted to chat, she locked the door immediately.

They had been interrupted several times before. Now I can finally give my Xu Bao a proper kiss!

She turned around, just about to reenact the scene of a female seal ambushing a male seal, when Lin Xu pulled her into a tight embrace and proactively kissed her.

Hmm, I can't always be on the defensive. I need to take the initiative and attack occasionally. That's the only way to firmly grasp the upper hand in this battle.

"Xu Bao, do you know how much I miss you every day? When I can't see you, I feel so anxious."

Kissing, they soon tumbled onto the bed. Shen Jiayue hugged Lin Xu, pouring out her longing for him.

When they first opened the shop, they would see each other twice a day. But now that Lin Xu had gone to the Fishing Platform, she could only see him once a day, and each meeting was a hurried farewell. This was excruciating for Shen Baobao.

Lin Xu said, "After this cooking competition is over and we're engaged, I'll take you back to my hometown's scenic area to stay for a few days. Then we can be together every day. How does that sound?"

"Great, great! I'll start packing right now!"

As soon as Shen Baobao heard they were going to Longqi Mountain Scenic Area, she immediately prepared to get out of bed and pack her bags.

Haha! I don't just want to stay at that tent campsite where you can see the starry sky; I also want to stay at the cliff hotel and in that old house where Xu Bao lived back then. I remember the fans even named that house the Demon Cave. Hehe, I never imagined I'd get to stay in the Demon Cave myself!

But she had barely sat up when Lin Xu pulled her back. "It's too early to pack now. We probably won't be able to leave for about a week."

As he spoke, they hugged each other again.

"Yueyue, your clothes are so smooth."

"That's my leg..."

"Your clothes are so slippery; my hand slid right onto your leg."

"Stop it..."

「At four o'clock in the afternoon.」

Old Lady Shen sat on the living room sofa, holding the chubby Dundun, while Han Shuzhen was telling her about Dundun's amusing antics.

"When Guofu snores in his sleep, Dundun jumps onto the bed and tries to cover his mouth with his paw. He almost got his paw bitten! I woke Guofu up, and he said he dreamed he was gnawing on a Pork Trotter, one that wasn't even cleaned properly and still had all the hair on it..."

The old lady couldn't stop laughing. She quickly hugged Dundun and asked which paw had almost been bitten.

「Meanwhile, in the kitchen.」

Lin Xu, who had taken a nap in Shen Jiayue's bed, was now preparing the premium crayfish Aunt Liu had bought.

Last time, they had bought green crayfish from Uncle Yu's supermarket, which had slightly harder shells. This time, however, Aunt Liu had bought red crayfish, which were larger. These crayfish had already been washed several times with an ultrasonic crayfish washer.

Lin Xu skillfully used scissors to cut off the crayfish heads and remove the innards. Then, he pinched the middle scale on the tail, twisted it, and with a gentle tug, pulled out the vein. After preparing one, he tossed it into a basin and continued with the next.

Aunt Liu had bought around ten pounds of crayfish. Since they hadn't eaten their fill last time, Shen Guofu had specifically instructed Aunt Liu to buy more this time. The basin held at least ten pounds of crayfish. This would definitely allow his father-in-law to experience the satisfaction of eating crayfish to his heart's content.

Just as he was busy, Old Lady Shen walked in. "Xiao Xu, are you tired? I'm thinking of making some Beijing snacks. Would you like to try some?"

Hm? Beijing snacks? Are we talking about those visually stunning and appetizing treats like pea flour cakes, donkey rolls, Mung Bean Rolls, and green bean cakes?

Lin Xu was immediately interested. "Grandma, what are you going to make?"

"Fried Sausage!"

"Fried... Sausage?"

The names of Beijing snacks are certainly bold and intense-sounding.

However, Lin Xu was quite interested in trying it, as he had never had it before.

"Then I'll look forward to eating it, Grandma."

He continued preparing the crayfish, while Old Lady Shen took a long, grayish, cylindrical ingredient from the refrigerator.

Is this the 'sausage'? It looks nothing like Pork Large Intestine, does it?

Old Lady Shen, having grown up in Beijing, was quite familiar with these kinds of local snacks. As she busied herself, she told Lin Xu about the history of Fried Sausage, explaining how it evolved and transitioned from a dish for royalty and nobility to a common folk snack.

Fried Sausage originally derived from fried deer tails during the early Qing dynasty. Deer tails were considered a rare and delicious ingredient, always tasty no matter how prepared; "steamed deer tail" is even a dish mentioned in traditional crosstalk comedy routines. However, deer were uncommon, and their tails were exceedingly hard to come by in Beijing at that time. So, clever chefs stuffed pork filling into Pork Large Intestines, then sliced and fried them to imitate deer tails. Surprisingly, this imitation was also very well-received, and this became the earliest form of Fried Sausage.

Chapter 253: Egg Yolk Baked Lobster! Mrs. Shen's Specialty Snack - Fried Sausage!

By the mid to late Qing Dynasty, the lives of people in Beijing had declined drastically. Using meat was considered too extravagant, so Fried Sausage evolved into a new form. Ingredients such as starch and red rice flour were filled into Pork Large Intestine, which was then sliced, fried, and served with a garlic dipping sauce. The taste was quite good, and the key was the reduced cost. Many households could afford it, and this type of sausage spread quickly, becoming known as Large Sausage.

"Large Sausage? What does that mean, Grandma? Is there also a Small Sausage?"

Mrs. Shen laughed and said, "Indeed, there is. By the time of the Republic, Pork Large Intestine had also become expensive, and many people couldn't afford it, so they used the cheaper Pork Small Intestine instead. This kind, made with small intestines, is called Small Sausage."

As a chef, Lin Xu had a strong interest in the development and changes of cuisines. He looked at the sausage Mrs. Shen was slicing and asked, "Grandma, why doesn't this one you're cutting even have Pork Small Intestine? Isn't this just starch lumps?"

"Later on, during hard times, Pork Small Intestines weren't even available. However, the people of Beijing still craved it. So, they directly wrapped starch and red rice flour in cheesecloth to mimic the look of sausages and then fried them in cheap Pork Intestine Oil. This became the Fried Sausage we know today."

Lin Xu hadn't realized the dish's fate had been so rocky. In just a short century, it had undergone several transformations, with costs becoming ever lower and its popularity among the common people growing.

While he was reflecting, a system notification suddenly sounded in his mind: "Host listened to the process of Beijing's culinary changes, triggering the side quest 'Beijing Snacks': Please master more than ten Beijing snacks within six months. Upon completion, receive one chance to draw a Perfect Level lost Beijing snack."

Lost snacks?

He remembered triggering a similar task about lost dishes when he was learning original creations from his master before.

It seemed he had triggered another similar task now.

It looked like he'd have to study more about Beijing's snacks in his free time.

Fortunately, the difficulty of Beijing snacks wasn't high.

This task should not be difficult to complete.

He wondered what snack he would draw then.

Maybe he could even introduce new items to sell in the shop.

As he was muttering to himself, he noticed that the task details on the system page had been updated.

[Task Progress: 1/10]

What's this?

"Detected that the host has mastered Almond Tofu, which is classified as a Beijing snack recipe. Task progress +1."

It could work like this?

The task had just become a bit easier.

In front of the stove, after Mrs. Shen finished cutting the sausages, she brought over a specially designed slanted flat-bottomed pan and placed it on the stove, adding some lard to it. Before long, the lard melted, pooling in the lower part of the pan, yet the higher area had not a drop of oil.

Lin Xu felt that making Fried Sausage should not be difficult, so he rose from his seat while drinking water to come over and learn. Seeing the situation in the pan, he curiously asked, "Grandma, why is the pan set up like this?"

"Actually, frying the sausage isn't just about frying. After it's fried, it needs to be placed in the higher part of the pan to sear a bit more. This renders out the fat, making the sausage even more crispy and fragrant."

Was there such a technique?

He was lucky he took a glance; otherwise, he might not have been able to make authentic Fried Sausage.

He looked again at the sausages Mrs. Shen had cut. All were thin on one side and thick on the other.

Was there a reason for this as well?

"Cutting them this way enhances the texture. The thin side is crispy, and the thick side is soft. A single piece of sausage offers two textures. Old Beijing folks certainly knew how to enjoy their sausage with such flair."

Lin Xu quietly committed this to memory.

Soon, the oil in the pan was hot. Mrs. Shen placed the sliced sausages into the hot oil one by one. While she was frying, Aunt Liu put a garlic mortar on the workbench, grabbed a handful of peeled and washed garlic cloves, sprinkled some salt, and began to pound the Garlic Paste. Garlic sauce is a must when eating Fried Sausage. Only then could this otherwise ordinary ingredient become delicious.

While busy, Aunt Liu said, "Mr. Lin, you haven't tried the Old Madam's Fried Sausage yet, have you? It tastes really good."

Mrs. Shen said cheerfully, "This simple snack is just a way for poor people to satisfy their cravings. When Guofang and Guofu were young, they craved it often, so I frequently made it for them. That's how I gained experience."

The sausages sizzled and fizzled in the pan. When the surface turned golden brown, she used chopsticks to flip them over and continued to fry. The process was slow; it required some patience. Lin Xu watched and took notes, planning to try it at home once he was back. If he could make it, wouldn't that advance the task even further?

Before long, both sides of the sausages were fried. Mrs. Shen used chopsticks to move the sausages to the oil-free area of the pan and continued to sear them. By that time, Aunt Liu had already prepared the Garlic Paste. The old lady then took the bowl with the Garlic Paste, poured some cold boiled water into it, and stirred it evenly. The garlic sauce for dipping the sausage was ready. No Light Soy Sauce, no vinegar—it was unbelievably simple.

After both sides of the sausages in the pan were seared, the Old Madam took them out, placed them on a plate, and handed it to Lin Xu, saying, "Try it while it's hot, see if you like it."

Lin Xu didn't stand on ceremony. He took the plate and, using his chopsticks, picked up a piece of sausage that was emitting a rich aroma of pork fat. He dipped it into the sauce before bringing it to his mouth.

CRUNCH!

The first bite was incredibly crisp, followed by the rich aroma of pork fat. It should have been greasy, but the pungent garlic sauce immediately cut through the richness of the pork fat, making it surprisingly appetizing.

"Mmm, it's delicious. Grandma, your skill is really good. Could you teach me sometime? I'd like to learn."

Mrs. Shen was somewhat surprised. "This is too simple," she remarked. "Why don't you fry the rest?"

Lin Xu didn't stand on ceremony. He washed his hands and started frying. After he had fried a pan of sausages, he noticed that the task progress on the system page had been updated.

[Task Progress: 2/10]

Damn!

Does that count as mastering it?

I just helped by frying a little.

If that's all it takes to master it, this task should be completed pretty quickly, right?

Lin Xu suddenly became full of anticipation for the lost Beijing snacks.

What kind of snack would he get from the draw once this task was completed?

As he was daydreaming, his phone rang. He pulled it out and saw that it was his Senior Brother, Xie Baomin, calling. He had just answered when Xie Baomin's voice came through the earpiece. "Junior Brother," Xie Baomin said, "if you're not busy tomorrow, try to come to Fishing Platform before six o'clock. I have a surprise for you."

A surprise?

Lin Xu became curious.

What surprise could his Senior Brother have for him?

Chapter 254: Senior Brother, Is This the Surprise You Mentioned? The Secret to Delicious Garlic Sauce!

Upstairs in the small living room.

Shen Jiayue was lying on the sofa playing with her phone, her two fair, long legs indelicately propped up on the back of the sofa.

"What were you two doing locked up in the room earlier?" Chen Yan asked, lifting the hem of her skirt as she leaned over with a mischievous smile, looking at Shen Baobao.

"Nothing much, just hugging and kissing."

"I don't believe you!"

"Experts say that people with small breasts are suspicious and paranoid. Looks like it's true..."

"Yueyue, you just wait, I'll get you for that!"

After a bit of playful roughhousing, Shen Baobao opened up the Lin Ji's Food topic and posted the food photos she took before lunch in the image section.

At this time, most people hadn't had dinner yet, and lunch was long digested, leaving their stomachs rumbling.

No spies around, perfect time to drop some food bombs!

The moment the photos were posted, various replies came flooding in.

Liang Mountain's Drought: Is this something a crane operator like me should be seeing?

A Fist Big as a Sandbag Ever Seen: My takeout will be here in three minutes. Perfect timing to eat while looking at these pics.

Great Mahayana Stage cultivator: I can't quite approve of ingredients that haven't been cryogenically preserved in a cosmic black hole.

Urgently Hiring Part-timers (No Online Writers Please): Saw the lobster and POP! I clicked right in, so fast!

Meow Meow Sect High Priest: WAKAKA, I saw Dundun's photo! He's even wearing a little bow tie!

Host Wu Kexin: Heard Boss Lin went to the missus's place today. Not sure what to say except, hope you have a baby soon!

Zhi Shen Burial Flowers: Hope you have a baby soon!

Why Can't Boys Wear Dresses: Hope you have a baby soon!

Lin Daiyu Plucks Weeping Willows: Hope you have a baby soon!

Blind Taxi Driver: Hope you have a baby soon!

...

Seeing these messages, Shen Jiayue cheerfully liked every one of them.

While she was busy, Lin Xu sent over a photo of Fried Sausage.

She immediately sat up. "They're making Fried Sausage downstairs! I'll go taste some for you. You keep sleeping, Yan Bao!"

Upon hearing this, Chen Yan also promptly got up from the sofa. Hurriedly fastening her high-heeled sandals, she said, "Wait for me!"

Shen Jiayue looked helplessly at her cousin. "Why wear high heels at home? Isn't it better to wear slippers like me?"

"No way!"

"Why not?"

"Because my legs aren't as long as yours..."

After putting on her high-heeled sandals, Chen Yan carefully adjusted the hem of her long dress before heading downstairs with Shen Jiayue.

When they arrived in the kitchen, all the Fried Sausage had already been cooked. The enticingly fragrant Fried Sausage was fried to a golden color, its surface even showing some bubbles from the hot oil, looking utterly tempting.

The two sisters each took a plate and started eating, dipping the Fried Sausage in a saltwater garlic sauce.

As children, the sisters often ate Fried Sausage together. Back then, Chen Yan had tricked Shen Baobao into believing it tasted better cold. Shen Baobao actually tried it and discovered it was practically impossible to bite into...

「In the evening.」

The Shen Family's dining table was laden with several trays piled high with crayfish. Besides the spicy crayfish made by Lin Xu, Auntie Liu, eager to prove herself, had also prepared garlic crayfish and thirteen-spice crayfish.

Mm, the competition was on.

To do justice to these delicious crayfish, Shen Guofu opened a 3-liter container of draft beer, thoroughly enjoying the exhilarating feeling of "crayfish and beer, gout, here I come!"

「After dinner.」

Lin Xu sat in the living room chatting with the Shen Family for a while before picking up Dundun and taking his leave. His senior brother had asked him to come to the Fishing Platform early tomorrow, so he needed to go home, bathe, and sleep to avoid being late.

「The next day.」

At five forty in the morning, Lin Xu drove through the gates of the Fishing Platform.

Upon reaching Building No. 2, he parked his car in a shaded spot. Carrying the drowsy Dundun, he entered the restaurant in Building No. 2. The restaurant was still empty at this hour, completely dark. He placed Dundun on a cushion at the reception desk, letting the little fellow continue his slumber, then walked through the spacious restaurant and into the kitchen.

Just as he entered, he saw flour, dough, and various fillings laid out on the worktable. His senior brother, Xie Baomin, was busy beside it.

This... is the so-called surprise?

"You're here, Junior Brother? Come, come, quickly help me take a look at these."

With that, Xie Baomin put down the dough he was working on, opened the steamer, and took out a steaming tray. It was filled with a variety of Cantonese dim sum: custard buns, barbecued pork buns, siu mai, and more. It gave Lin Xu the distinct impression he had walked into a Cantonese restaurant for morning tea.

"What's all this for, Senior Brother?"

Is he planning to serve morning tea at Building No. 2? If I'd known this was the surprise, I would have slept in a little longer.

"I used to think these kinds of pastries weren't much to learn," Xie Baomin said. "Unexpectedly, it's become a weak point for me, so I want to improve in this area. Help me out, see how they taste."

Sheesh... Senior Brother, you're already at the pinnacle of the culinary world, why are you still pushing so hard? It must be chefs like you who start this kind of intense industry competition, right?

Lin Xu had initially been somewhat disappointed with the day's "surprise," but the aroma wafting from the steaming tray suddenly made him hungry. Last night, he'd been too focused on the crayfish and had barely eaten any staple foods. This morning, he'd woken up just after five and hadn't had a bite to eat.

So, while Xie Baomin was talking, Lin Xu picked up one of the barbecued pork buns—steamed so perfectly it had split open at the top—tore off a piece of the dough, and tasted it.

Gotta say, this barbecued pork bun was exceptionally well-made. The incredibly soft dough had a slight sweetness, making it fragrant and delicious. Lin Xu figured he could eat two or three of them even without the barbecued pork filling.

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As I pulled apart the char siu bun, the thick and aromatic char siu filling revealed itself.

Taking a bite, the salty-sweet flavors intertwined. The texture was rich and moist but not greasy, and the chunks of char siu within made every chew rich and delicious.

Combined with the dough, it was nothing short of perfect.

"Not bad, very tasty!" Lin Xu remarked.

In the past, Lin Xu had often gone to Finance University's Cantonese cuisine window and had char siu buns and lava buns like these.

Compared to what his senior brother made, the Cantonese cuisine window at Finance University was slightly lacking.

"It's on par with our school's chefs now," Lin Xu added.

Hearing his junior brother's compliments, Xie Baomin immediately felt somewhat deflated.

"Just on par with the school chefs' skills?"

Lin Xu took another bite of the char siu bun.

"It's already good. Don't forget you were completely defeated when it came to Braised Eggplant."

Well, this char siu bun is truly great, Lin Xu thought. Senior brother is Fishing Platform's champion chef, after all. Even if he doesn't specialize in pastries, the char siu buns he makes have already surpassed those of many professional chefs.

The mention of Braised Eggplant instantly made Xie Baomin lose his indignation.

"Now that you mention it, that's indeed an improvement."

He pointed at the steamer and said, "Try them all later. There are other snacks in the steamer. You can help me taste each one."

Am I just a taste tester now? Lin Xu mused. If I had known, I would have called Yue Liyue over. Having someone from Lingnan taste them would probably make it easier to discern the difference from a master's, right? But then again, considering there's a Cantonese cuisine master in Building Number Ten, it seems like a hassle to find Yue Liyue.

"Senior Brother," Lin Xu asked, "why don't you ask Chef Guo to help you evaluate them?"

"Him? What standing does a defeated opponent have?"

Xie Baomin sounded stubborn, but Lin Xu heard a hint of insecurity in his words.

Tsk... Senior Brother is quite a competitive person, Lin Xu thought. Too bad I can't afford the Eye of Discrimination special item right now. Otherwise, I'd definitely grade Senior Brother's skills and pinpoint the gap between him and a ranked Pastry Chef.

After finishing the char siu bun, Lin Xu picked up a lava bun to try.

The lava bun filling was made with salted egg yolks, Butter, sugar, and Wheat Flour. The 'Wheat Flour' mentioned here is flour that has had its gluten washed out. Cold skins are a typical product made from this Wheat Flour. Furthermore, due to its smooth and non-sticky texture, this Wheat Flour is widely used in various pastries.

He bit into the lava bun.

The texture changed completely.

The char siu bun was soft and mildly sweet, but the lava bun's dough was slightly chewier. The dough wasn't as thick as the char siu bun's, only a little over a centimeter.

Upon biting through, the golden, semi-liquid filling inside was exposed, exuding a rich, eggy aroma that was incredibly tempting.

In Cantonese morning tea, the lava bun has always been very popular. Not only because it looks good and is aesthetically pleasing, but most importantly because it tastes good. Savoring it carefully, one could even feel the sandy texture of the salted egg yolk. That's precisely where the name 'lava' comes from, referring to its flowing, sandy texture.

Lin Xu tasted the filled dough. The semi-liquid filling was rich and unctuous, its fragrance mixed with sweetness instantly whetting his appetite. The saltiness of the salted egg yolk made the filling's flavor even more complex and rich.

As he tasted it carefully, his tongue could clearly feel the sandy little granules in the filling. These granules carried the unique salty-savory flavor of salted egg yolk, not only enriching the filling's taste but also adding an element of fun to eating the lava bun.

Delicious. Senior Brother's lava buns are even tastier than his char siu buns. This flavor is absolutely incredible!

After eating both the char siu bun and the lava bun, Lin Xu was already half full, but he still tried the other pastries.

Senior Brother's talent is truly undeniable. With just a little effort, the pastries he makes are so delicious. It's no wonder Master took him as an apprentice back then and brought him to Fishing Platform. With talent like this, anyone who saw it would be impressed.

After eating and drinking his fill, Lin Xu said, "Senior Brother, your skills are unquestionably great. I don't even think the head chef of Building Number Ten is as good as you. You could definitely go compete with Chef Guo."

Xie Baomin was currently making Dough with duck eggs. Next to him lay a cleaned bamboo pole.

Is he preparing to make Bamboo Noodles? Lin Xu wondered.

Xie Baomin kept busy as he spoke, "The time isn't right yet. Your competition really set the internet ablaze. I've heard the head chefs from the other buildings are eager to restart the middle-aged group competition. They seem to have completely forgotten the fear of being dominated by me. So, I plan to show them once again the gap between them and a five-time champion."

Oh? So all this hard work was for that! Lin Xu's interest was piqued.

"How do you plan to make them face reality, Senior Brother?"

Normally, Senior Brother can be quite prickly even when others don't provoke him. Now that other head chefs are issuing challenges, he must be preparing something big, right? I didn't expect there would be such entertainment before the competition. Worth it!

Xie Baomin kneaded the duck egg dough into a ball, covered it on the board to let it rest, and said, "I'm planning to compete against Guo Weidong again, to knock him down once more."

????? Lin Xu was dumbfounded. What kind of move is this? Making an example out of him to warn the others? Chef Guo hasn't provoked you, so why are you going after him?

Suddenly, Lin Xu felt a bit sorry for Chef Guo. It seems like knowing Senior Brother has never brought him any good luck.

With a laugh, Xie Baomin said, "That Guo Weidong fellow is quite proud. He always needs to vent his frustrations somewhere. For example, back when I won five championships in a row, he went and thrashed the other head chefs pretty hard."

Chapter 256: Senior Brother, Is This the Surprise You Mentioned? The Secret to Delicious Garlic Sauce!

So you're planning to defeat Chef Guo and let him, full of fury, deal with those other chefs who've been provoking you, right?

Lin Xu didn't know what to say for a moment.

He always felt his senior brother's tactic of using one enemy to defeat another was just too "silver coin."

The world of middle-aged people is really too complicated.

Luckily, I'm still young.

He sighed reflectively and, at the same time, offered a silent tear of sympathy for Guo Weidong before going to the cold storage to cut a small piece of Mackerel and put it in the steaming cabinet.

Ever since adopting Dundun, the little guy had been feasting on tenderloins and chicken every day, so Lin Xu decided it was time for a change of taste. Lin Xu wanted to see if it would eat these large chunks of Fish. If it ate them, he could start rotating through the fresh meat in the cold storage. Moreover, it also needed to eat some offal, as offal provides the taurine cats need. Not getting enough could lead to hair loss and illness.

Once the Fish was steamed, Lin Xu carried it to the front desk to feed Dundun.

About ten meters away from the front desk, a certain adorable little one who was sound asleep suddenly scrambled to its feet, eyes full of surprise. Clearly, it liked the smell.

Lin Xu placed the disposable plate he was holding onto the table.

Dundun approached, about to taste it.

Then, from the direction of the kitchen, came a CLANG and Xie Baomin's screams of agony, scaring Dundun so much that it instantly sought refuge in Lin Xu's arms.

"Don't be afraid, I'll go see what happened. You keep eating."

He hurried to the kitchen and saw his senior brother hobbling as he got up from the ground.

"Junior Brother, come help me."

"What happened?"

"I was using my thigh to press down on bamboo to flatten noodles, and I slipped and fell..."

TSK, could it be that even the heavens are tired of Senior Brother's "silver coin" actions?

Lin Xu helped him to the side.

"Why didn't you just use the noodle machine to press it a few more times? Why go through all this trouble?"

"Isn't this just to look professional?"

You're quite the professional when it comes to taking a tumble.

Xie Baomin moved around a bit to loosen up, washed his hands, and then took the prepared duck egg noodles to the equipment room to press them with the noodle machine.

Lin Xu, having nothing else to do, remembered he hadn't yet used the "Garlic Sauce Technique" he acquired yesterday. He decided to make some to taste. If it turned out well, he would jar it, give some to his father-in-law, and keep some for the house. That way, the next time he wanted to eat dishes like garlic oysters, he could get started right away.

There was already peeled garlic in the cold storage. Lin Xu took out a small basin of it. This garlic had been individually peeled by the kitchen helpers, not the pre-peeled kind bought from the market. That kind of garlic is treated with chemicals on the surface and can't be used. Otherwise, the garlic sauce made from it would be bitter and astringent, incomparable to the taste of fresh garlic.

He washed the garlic twice, drained it, and poured it onto the cutting board to chop with a kitchen knife.

For making garlic sauce, the best Garlic is chopped with a kitchen knife; this makes for a delicious sauce. Garlic processed in a blender is too finely minced. When cooking the sauce, it can easily burn and turn bitter, spoiling the entire batch. The Garlic doesn't need to be too finely chopped; about the size of mung beans is perfect. Pieces this size are less likely to burn during frying and also maintain a good texture.

Lin Xu roughly chopped the garlic cloves first. Then, taking a lighter slicing knife in his left hand, he used both knives to go over the garlic on the cutting board, as if mincing meat. Now, the larger garlic pieces had been replaced by mung bean-sized minced Garlic. As he chopped, the pungent and strong smell of garlic wafted through the kitchen.

He used the knife to transfer the finely chopped Garlic into the basin. Then he poured a generous amount of fresh water into the basin. The chopped Garlic needs to be rinsed to remove the surface slime, preventing the sauce from sticking and burning to the bottom of the pot during cooking. Additionally, washing it removes the Garlic's pungent and raw taste. This way, the garlic sauce will be more fragrant and even more enticing to eat.

After rinsing twice, he laid a clean white cloth in the basin. He scooped the rinsed Garlic onto the cloth in the basin using a fine sieve. Once it was all in, he gathered the cloth, tied it shut, and squeezed it tightly to wring out the excess water from the Garlic. Then, he poured the Garlic back into the basin.

He measured out one-third of the Garlic and set it aside for later.

Next, Lin Xu also prepared a few chopped bird's eye chilies and placed them in a bowl. Bird's eye chilies could enhance the spicy fragrance of the garlic sauce and also improve its appearance. However, this wasn't essential and could be adjusted according to individual taste.

Once the bird's eye chilies were ready, Lin Xu grabbed a handful of dried shrimp and finely chopped them on the cutting board. To achieve a deliciously fragrant garlic sauce, adding a handful of chopped dried shrimp during simmering would have an unexpectedly good effect, especially when steaming seafood, as it notably enhances the umami taste.

Once everything was set, Lin Xu poured two large spoonfuls of Seasoning Oil and another large spoonful of peanut oil into the pot, basing the amounts on the quantity of Garlic. Frying solely with Seasoning Oil would cause its strong aroma to overpower the garlic. However, it was indispensable, so he added some peanut oil to balance it out.

When the oil was heated over medium heat until it was about 30 to 40 percent hot, Lin Xu, holding the basin with two-thirds of the Garlic in one hand and a spoon in the other, added the washed Garlic to the pot, one spoonful at a time. The Garlic couldn't be added to the pot all at once. Hot oil reacts violently upon contact with Garlic, and it could easily overflow from the pot, causing a safety hazard. It needed to be added to the pot one spoonful at a time. After adding each spoonful, he stirred it in the pot and paused, waiting for the bubbling hot oil to subside slightly before adding the next. This step required patience and couldn't be rushed.

Once all the Garlic was in the pot, he reduced the heat to medium-low and stirred it continuously with a spoon. This ensured the Garlic heated evenly and prevented it from sticking or burning at the bottom of the pot. He continued to simmer it over medium-low heat until the Garlic turned golden brown, then added the chopped bird's eye chilies. The bird's eye chilies shouldn't be added too early. If added too soon, their moisture would fry out, and they would lose their fresh spiciness. However, they shouldn't be added too late either; otherwise, the chilies would remain raw and could easily cause the garlic sauce to spoil.

When the fragrant and spicy aroma wafted from the pot, Lin Xu poured in the chopped dried shrimp and stirred them a couple of times. Then he added the remaining one-third of the Garlic to the pot, turned off the heat, stirred it a couple of times, covered the pot with a lid, and let it steep to allow the aromas to infuse into the garlic sauce.

A few minutes later, he lifted the lid. The last batch of Garlic, though cooked through, still retained its white color, creating a stark contrast with the golden-brown Garlic already in the pot.

This was the origin of "gold and silver garlic."

The golden garlic was thoroughly fried, with a rich garlic aroma, while the silver garlic was just cooked through and was extremely spicy. Only when these two types of garlic, one aromatic and the other spicy, were combined could a high-quality garlic sauce be achieved. When making this sauce, it was essential to let the silver garlic steep until just cooked through. This way, the garlic sauce retained the spiciness of fresh garlic and was less prone to spoiling; it could be stored in the refrigerator for a month without issue.

After confirming the silver Garlic was cooked through, Lin Xu added salt, granulated sugar, and some oyster sauce to the pot, giving the garlic sauce a base flavor. After mixing everything evenly, he scooped it out of the pot. It had to cool completely before being put into jars; otherwise, the residual heat would overcook the silver garlic, causing the garlic sauce to lose its spiciness.

While Lin Xu was busy with this, Xie Baomin walked out from the equipment room carrying the freshly pressed Bamboo Noodles. He suddenly smelled the garlic sauce Lin Xu was making.

"Hmm, this garlic sauce is well made. It'll be perfect to mix with some noodles later... Junior Brother, you cook the noodles. I'll go get a few oysters to steam. With such a delicious garlic sauce, we absolutely need a side dish to go with it, right?"

Lin Xu: "..."

Eating this so early in the morning? Senior Brother, aren't you afraid of gout?

Chapter 257: This Garlic Sauce is Really Good! Ingredients Needed for Crystal Sugar Pork Knuckle!

While Lin Xu was boiling water to cook noodles, Xie Baomin soaked some glass noodles in warm water before heading to the seafood section, where he netted several oysters.

Upon returning, he swiftly pried open the shells, smeared some garlic sauce on the oyster meat, arranged them neatly on a steaming tray, and slid it into the steamer.

After a while, when the glass noodles were about half-soft, he took them out and placed them on a plate, pouring in some garlic sauce and mixing well to marinate.

Next, he went to the storeroom for two baby cabbages. After removing the tough outer leaves, he cut each cabbage in half, and then each half into three pieces. Following that, he boiled a pot of water and blanched the cut baby cabbage.

This not only reduced the steaming time but also effectively removed the raw taste of the baby cabbage.

He then removed the blanched baby cabbage, drained it, and drizzled it with garlic sauce, mixing evenly. Finally, he arranged it neatly on the plate with the marinated glass noodles.

More garlic sauce was poured over the cabbage leaves before he started the steaming process.

By the time Lin Xu had cooked the noodles and served them into a bowl, Xie Baomin had also finished steaming the garlic oysters and the garlic glass noodles with baby cabbage.

When the steamer was opened, the aroma of garlic immediately filled the entire kitchen.

Lin Xu, who had been somewhat full, felt hungry again.

The two apprentice brothers brought the food to the small staff dining room and first sampled the oysters themselves.

The oysters were large, their meat plump, white, and tender. The rich umami flavor mixed with the fragrance of garlic was enough to evoke a night market stall.

But these freshly caught live oysters were far superior to the frozen ones sold at street stalls.

Holding an oyster shell carefully, they sipped the steamed broth. The umami flavor was so intense, it was hard not to marvel at how incredibly delicious such an ingredient could be.

After sipping the broth, they carefully picked up the oyster meat with chopsticks and ate it.

The plump, rich texture and delicious flavor, complemented by the intensely aromatic garlic sauce, were enough to make one instantly fall in love with this taste.

The delicious oyster meat made the garlic sauce seem even more fragrant, while the garlic sauce, in turn, elevated the umami of the oysters. The two flavors enhanced each other, a perfect pairing.

The subtle spiciness further whetted their appetites, inevitably making them crave another.

Unfortunately, it was morning, and they still had to work later. Otherwise, Lin Xu would have definitely opened a beer. This flavor is just perfect with a chilled beer!

After finishing an oyster, Lin Xu wiped the splashed juices from his hands and then spooned some garlic sauce into the freshly cooked noodles.

He had been full from the noodles Xie Baomin had made earlier. But after just one oyster, this delightful umami flavor unexpectedly rekindled his appetite.

As soon as he added the garlic sauce to the bowl, the heat from the noodles instantly released its aroma. He stirred with his chopsticks until the noodles were evenly coated.

After mixing them well, he took a bite. The firm and springy texture of the Bamboo Noodles immediately captivated Lin Xu, who was accustomed to Northern-style noodles; he found himself instantly falling in love with this popular noodle dish from the Lingnan Region.

He truly hadn't expected noodles could be so incredibly springy and firm! And his senior brother hadn't even used a bamboo pole to press them. Wouldn't they be even more delicious if he had?

The springy noodles, when chewed, brought a profound sense of happiness.

And the garlic sauce coating made the noodles even more delicious.

The occasional spicy kick from bits of silver garlic in the sauce further boosted his appetite.

This really is an all-purpose sauce!

"Hmm, these noodles are really good," Lin Xu remarked. "Next time, let's use duck egg noodles to make some wonton wrappers. Then Building Two can start serving Wonton Noodles too."

The so-called Wonton Noodles consisted of duck egg noodles served with wontons made from duck egg noodle wrappers. This way, one could enjoy both noodles and delicious wontons. Two delightful foods meeting in the same bowl allowed the diner to experience double the joy.

After a few more bites of noodles, Lin Xu tried the garlic glass noodles with baby cabbage.

This dish, also featuring garlic sauce, tasted completely different from the oysters. During steaming, the fresh, crisp essence of the baby cabbage was released. When this unique vegetable freshness met the garlic sauce, it instantly evoked a marvelous sensation, like the poetic line: "When golden wind and jade dew encounter, their meeting surpasses countless others in the mortal world." Every bite felt like pure bliss, as if life itself was complete.

As for the glass noodles nestled beneath the cabbage leaves, they were steamed to perfection, having absorbed the garlic sauce's flavor, making them richly aromatic and incredibly delicious.

After the meal, Lin Xu had a new appreciation for garlic sauce as a seasoning. He decided to pack it up later: half to take home, and the other half for Shen Baobao to take to his father-in-law, so he too could experience this garlic-steamed seafood. However, he'd have to remind him not to eat too much. Though delicious, seafood and beer are prime culprits for gout, and one couldn't afford to be careless.

「After breakfast」

Lin Xu went to the front desk. Dundun, the little fellow, had already finished his mackerel and was now meticulously licking his paws and washing his face. Lin Xu didn't disturb him; instead, he picked up the used disposable plate and headed outside, intending to find a trash can for it.

Just then, Bai Pengbo, assistant to Liao Jinming from the Dining Department, drove up to Building Two's entrance in an internal electric shuttle. Niu Chuan and several others were with him.

"Good morning, Master Lin," Bai Pengbo said cheerfully. "I saw them just entering the main gate as I was coming to work, so I gave them a lift on the shuttle."

Ever since tasting the legendary Qingshui Furong, Bai Pengbo had developed a new appreciation for Building Two. He'd heard that Building Two offered many dishes not permitted for sale in the main dining hall. What a score it would be to get a taste!

Chapter 258: This Garlic Sauce is Really Good! Ingredients Needed for Crystal Sugar Pork Knuckle!

"Thank you, Assistant Bai. Have you eaten yet?"

"Not yet. I was just about to find a building with breakfast to grab a bite."

"Then look no further. Our kitchen just made some Bamboo Noodles. You're welcome to try some if you don't mind."

Upon hearing this, Bai Pengbo immediately switched off the electric shuttle's ignition.

If it were anything else, I might be polite, but since there's food... sorry, my dictionary doesn't have the word 'polite.'

With the car keys in hand, he headed towards the restaurant.

"Dundun, do you recognize me? My surname is Bai, Bai Pengbo."

Dundun rolled its eyes at him and continued to lick its paws.

Outside, Chezi and the others got out of the car, smiling as they greeted Lin Xu. They had spent a few days in an internal training class right after arriving at Fishing Platform, learning some theoretical culinary knowledge.

Now they could finally come to the kitchen.

Though they all worked in the kitchen of Building Two, they were assigned to different departments.

Niu Chuan went to the pastry department, whose head chef was skilled at making Noodles With Black Bean Sauce. Lin Xu had told Niu Chuan to learn more from him. He didn't need to master Noodles With Black Bean Sauce, but his skills at making hand-rolled noodles definitely needed improvement.

Ma Zhiqiang joined the stewing department, where he aimed to learn a couple more dishes from the head chef to enhance his culinary skills.

Xu Xinhua found his perfect fit in the roasting and braising room, where he finally found joy in making roasted and braised dishes.

As for Chezi, he was quite lucky. Cheng JianShe, the head chef of the stir-fry section, needed an assistant and, seeing Chezi was quite clever, decided to keep him by his side.

"You guys haven't eaten either, right? Come on, I'll cook some noodles for you."

If it were someone else, Lin Xu would have let them prepare their own meal. But these were the future backbone of Lin Ji's Food. Since he happened to be free at the moment, he not only cooked noodles for them but also steamed some oysters, letting them enjoy the same delicious meal he had earlier.

「In the morning.」

Just as Lin Xu had finished stewing the pre-ordered Braised Pork Belly in a clay pot, he received a call from Dou Wenjing.

"Boss, Zheng Xiaoguang has finished designing the shengjian shop. I've sent the images to your email. Take a look when you have time. If it's all good, the construction team will start work."

After deciding to invest in a shengjian shop, Dou Wenjing had swiftly gotten things moving.

She first took over a milk tea shop on the brink of closing near the Yingchun Street subway station entrance. With an area of five to six square meters, it was perfect for a shengjian shop.

After securing the location, she urged Zheng Xiaoguang to hurry up with the design.

Zheng Xiaoguang had initially found the job too small. However, upon hearing Geng Lele's eagerness, he adopted the spirit of "You can insult my personality, but not my professionalism." He not only produced the design overnight but even designed the staff uniforms, packaging bags, takeout boxes, and other related supplies.

It was truly a one-stop service.

Lin Xu opened his mobile email.

He downloaded the attachment and opened it, revealing Zheng Xiaoguang's design.

The storefront was predominantly wine-red. On the sign, 'Ziqiang Shengjian' was written in white, brush-style regular script, exuding an antique vibe. Other items, like the aprons, were also primarily wine-red. The overall design complemented the store's style perfectly.

After viewing it, Lin Xu sent a message to Dou Wenjing:

"It's good. Start the renovation with this style. Also, notify the printing factory to produce the packaging bags and other materials. Aim to open this week."

"Understood, Boss," she replied.

After receiving Dou Wenjing's message, Lin Xu was about to put his phone back into his pocket when Xie Baomin approached.

"The date for the competition has been set for this Friday. It will be held in the banquet hall of Fishing Platform Building One. The other nine foreign-affiliated hotels are sending three contestants each, all under twenty-five years old."

Heh... Quite the choice of venue. Last time, I won the championship in Building One's banquet hall. Now, if someone beats me there, wouldn't that be like knocking Fishing Platform off its pedestal? I guessed the contestants from the other nine hotels would all be sharpening their knives, eager for that moment.

"Director Liao actually agreed to this?" Lin Xu found it a bit strange. Regardless of the reasoning, this competition shouldn't be held at Fishing Platform. After all, it was too easy for people to make an issue out of it.

Xie Baomin said, "The venue was determined by Liu Zhengyu, president of the National Tourism Association. He is also the chief judge for this competition. The other judges were also appointed from departments such as China Travel Service and China International Travel Service, so their professionalism and impartiality are beyond doubt."

Wow... That's quite the grand gesture, Lin Xu thought. He then asked, "What's Fishing Platform's stance on this?"

Xie Baomin sighed. "The leaders have only one demand: win the championship! No matter what, we must win. If you succeed, Fishing Platform will give you a surprise."

A surprise? It's not going to be more of those pork buns or custard buns, is it? After the surprise this morning, that word doesn't excite me anymore.

Xie Baomin finished speaking and then added with regret, "It's a pity the age limit was set at twenty-five. If it had been extended to forty-five, I wouldn't even flinch at a hundred competitors, let alone ten."

Lin Xu also felt regretful. What a pity... I'll have to find a way to egg on Zhen Wensheng later. Get him to hold a competition for chefs under fifty, and let those accomplished chefs out there also experience the fear of being dominated by Senior Brother.

After they finished talking about this, Lin Xu suddenly remembered his task of cooking Crystal Sugar Hock.

He looked at Xie Baomin and asked, "Senior Brother, my girlfriend's grandmother wants to eat the Crystal Sugar Hock I make. How should I cook it? Are there any tricks?"

"Of course, there are. Banquet dishes like this always have their tricks." Xie Baomin thought for a moment and said, "We don't have all the ingredients right now. I'll find them and make it for you later. Although there are tricks, it's not very difficult; you'll be able to master it easily."

Lin Xu wasn't in a rush. He had two weeks to complete the task, after all. Waiting a bit longer would be fine.

Afterward, everyone got back to their own business.

In the afternoon, Bai Pengbo came over again in the electric shuttle, using the excuse of visiting to see if there was anything good to eat. But upon entering and seeing everyone idling, disappointment immediately spread across his face.

Xie Baomin was drinking tea. The moment he saw Bai Pengbo, he promptly asked, "Little Bai, do you know where to find green sugarcane? I heard we have some planted here at Fishing Platform, but I've forgotten in which building exactly."

"Green sugarcane?" Bai Pengbo scratched his head and said after a moment of thought, "I think it's in Building Fifteen. I've heard that Chef Song over there likes sugarcane and specifically planted some in the courtyard. What do you need it for?"

Xie Baomin replied with a smile, "Nothing important, nothing important. Hand me your car keys; I'll just take the shuttle for a spin."

Bai Pengbo didn't mind. He tossed the keys to the electric shuttle to Xie Baomin.

Soon, Xie Baomin was out, cruising in the electric shuttle.

When he returned, two stalks of green sugarcane had appeared in the shuttle. The sugarcane looked like it had been pulled straight from the ground, roots still caked with dirt.

As he got out of the shuttle with the sugarcane, Xie Baomin's phone began to ring.

"Old Xie, you son of a bitch, why did you steal my sugarcane?" As soon as he answered, the irate voice of Chef Song from Building Fifteen blasted through.

He had watched Xie Baomin drive the electric shuttle over to the courtyard of Building Fifteen, thinking he had come for a visit. Instead, the guy had furtively pulled up two growing stalks of sugarcane, sped off, and almost crashed into the flower bed outside Building Fifteen.

"Old Song, you really should work on that temper of yours. I take a couple of your sugarcane stalks, and you react like I've pulled out your tendons. How can your blood pressure not be high when you get like this?"

Chef Song: "... Damn it, so now I'm the one at fault?"

He calmed himself and asked, "That sugarcane isn't even ripe yet! What the hell are you going to do with it, you damn scoundrel?"

Holding the sugarcane, Xie Baomin arrived in front of the flower bed of Building Two. He shook off the dirt from the roots and said as he walked towards the restaurant, "I need the ones that aren't fully grown. If they were ripe, I wouldn't have bothered with them."

These words piqued Chef Song's curiosity. "What do you mean? Are you using it for a dish?"

"Exactly, for cooking. Old Song, why don't you come over and we can compare notes? You'll see the effect of using green sugarcane to make Crystal Sugar Hock."

Chef Song, who had a keen interest in sweet dishes, was instantly intrigued. "You son of a bitch, you should've just said something earlier and let me ride with you! Wait for me, I'll be right over!"

Chapter 259: An Extremely Labor-Intensive Dish to Impress—Crystal Sugar Pork Knuckle!

Xie Baomin entered the kitchen carrying sugarcane and casually tossed his car keys to Bai Pengbo.

"This shuttle cart accelerates so slowly; Old Song almost caught me."

Bai Pengbo looked as if to say, 'I knew it,' remarking, "Chef Xie, that wasn't very cool of you. If Chef Song finds out tomorrow that I was the one who provided the ride, how will I ever be able to freeload meals at his place again?"

"Forget about tomorrow; Old Song is almost here."

With that, Xie Baomin handed the sugarcane he was holding to a nearby assistant chef, instructing, "Remove the leaves, wash the roots thoroughly, and scrape off the root hairs; I need it for cooking later."

Song Dahai, the executive chef of Building 15, was notorious at the Fishing Platform for his short temper. Hearing he was on his way, Bai Pengbo immediately wanted to leave.

But when he heard Xie Baomin mention cooking with the green sugarcane, he instantly stopped in his tracks and asked, "Chef Xie, what are you planning to cook?"

"Crystal Sugar Elbows!"

"Then I'm not going anywhere. Even if Chef Song hits me, it'll be worth it just to have some of those elbows."

They were making Crystal Sugar Elbows? Lin Xu was a bit slow on the uptake. He hadn't realized his senior brother had gone as far as to 'steal' two stalks of sugarcane just for him.

You should have said so earlier! If you had, I could have driven. That would have been much better than taking the shuttle cart, right? But do you even use sugarcane in Crystal Sugar Elbows? I've never heard of that method.

「Soon after」

A man in his fifties entered the kitchen. He was short and stout. His scalp shone where his hair had thinned, leaving only a sparse ring around his temples and the back of his head. He had diligently combed these remaining strands towards the center, creating a rather comical effect.

"Hello, Chef Song!" Bai Pengbo quickly greeted Song Dahai. He also shoved the shuttle cart keys into his pocket, terrified the chef would discover he had provided the transportation.

However, unexpectedly, Chef Song barely acknowledged him upon entering, his eyes fixed on Xie Baomin as he asked, "Since when do Crystal Sugar Elbows require green sugarcane? Old Xie, you're not pulling my leg, are you?"

No matter their individual temperaments or personalities, all the chefs at the Fishing Platform got fired up when it came to cooking.

Xie Baomin smiled and said, "Just wait and see. This is one of my signature dishes, one I usually keep under wraps. If my junior here wasn't eager to learn it, I wouldn't even be showing it off."

Your junior? Song Dahai turned his gaze towards Lin Xu.

Ever since winning fame at the last cooking competition, Chef Lin had become a celebrity at the Fishing Platform. His fame had even surpassed that of Director Liao of the Dining Department.

Seeing Song Dahai look over, Lin Xu hurriedly greeted him, "Hello, Chef Song. I truly didn't expect my senior brother to go to your place and 'borrow' sugarcane just to teach me how to cook. I'm really sorry about that."

Deliberately calling it 'borrowing' instead of 'stealing'... you two are a real pair of master and apprentice brothers, aren't you... Song Dahai muttered inwardly. Then, he said with a smile, "No worries at all. I was just growing them for fun. You're welcome to use them whenever you need."

Xie Baomin immediately seized the opening, saying, "Did you hear that, junior? Next time you want sugarcane, just go directly to Building 15 and help yourself. Remember to pick the ones that have been watered; those are easier to pull out."

Song Dahai: "..."

Damn it, you really make yourself at home, don't you?

Soon, the sugarcane was cleaned. Xie Baomin cut it into sections, tasted it for sweetness, then set aside the pieces near the root—about four or five sections.

Having done that, he began preparing the ingredients needed for the Crystal Sugar Elbows.

Since there were many people today, Xie Baomin went straight to the cold storage and took out four uniformly sized pork elbows. He also prepared scallions, ginger, star anise, Sichuan peppercorns, bay leaves, cinnamon, Angelica dahurica, and a whole bowl of crystal sugar.

Whoa! That much crystal sugar?

Although the Crystal Sugar Elbows Lin Xu had eaten at the Shen Family's home were quite sweet, seeing such a large bowl of crystal sugar still left him incredulous. Is this dish about eating crystal sugar or eating elbow?

Xie Baomin said, "Crystal Sugar Elbows is a classic Shandong dish and one of the renowned Jinan Three Elbows. It uses a significant amount of sugar; you could say it relies entirely on crystal sugar for its flavor."

Just as he finished speaking, Song Dahai chimed in, "The amount of sugar used differs between the northern and southern regions. In the northern style, one elbow uses 200 grams of crystal sugar; in the southern style, it's even more, about 250 grams."

Seeing that Xie Baomin was genuinely teaching Chef Lin how to make Crystal Sugar Elbows, Song Dahai put aside his earlier thoughts and joined in the explanation. In a few days, Chef Lin would represent the Fishing Platform in a cooking competition. If this dish happened to be featured, this knowledge would certainly be useful. However, the chances of an elbow dish appearing in the competition weren't very high. After all, this dish is incredibly time-consuming to prepare.

Meanwhile, Lin Xu was still internally amazed. My goodness. Half a jin of crystal sugar for one elbow. Wouldn't one bite of that send your blood sugar into double digits?

Xie Baomin boiled a pot of water. Once the water boiled, he placed the elbows in. When the water returned to a boil, he skimmed them out with a slotted spoon.

Lin Xu watched, somewhat bewildered, not understanding this step. Is this blanching? It seems a bit too casual, doesn't it?

Song Dahai explained, "This is to tighten the pork skin. Briefly scalding the skin in hot water makes the bristles stand out, so they're easier to remove."

Lin Xu recalled that before the elbows were put into the pot, their skin had been smooth. After being scalded, he saw that fine bristles had indeed appeared on the surface of the elbows, like a two- or three-day stubble.

Another little trick for preparing elbows learned.

Xie Baomin used paper towels to pat the surface of the elbows dry, then took a kitchen torch and began to scorch the pork skin.

Chapter 260: An Extremely Labor-Intensive Dish to Impress - Crystal Sugar Pork Knuckle!

This is actually the process of scorching the skin. It involves using high flames to char the surface hair follicles and sweat glands of the pork knuckle. This method not only reduces odors but also makes the skin of the knuckle firmer and more appealing.

But with an extra step of tightening the skin, the effect of scorching the skin became even better.

Soon, all four knuckles were scorched to a pitch-black color, and they also emitted the smell of burning hair.

Xie Baomin placed the knuckles into mildly hot water and grabbed a newly unwrapped steel wool to start scrubbing.

Quickly, the knuckles, once covered in black ash, were washed clean.

Then he began to heat oil in a pot, getting ready to deep-fry the knuckles.

The oil needed a little more time to heat up. With nothing else to do, Xie Baomin took a sharp knife and trimmed the fascia at the joint of the thinner end of the knuckle, where it connects to the Pork Trotter.

Song Dahai couldn't help but exclaim in admiration, "Old Xie's technique is really meticulous."

"Meticulous?" Lin Xu asked curiously. "Is there something special about this step?"

Song Dahai explained, "After removing the fascia at the lower joint, the meat shrinks when stewed. This exposes a section of the bone, which not only looks appealing but also allows you to easily pull out the leg bone when eating."

Lin Xu then understood. So that's how those handle-like knuckles were processed.

"What if the fascia weren't cut?"

Song Dahai answered, "If not cut, the bones won't be exposed. During stewing, the fascia at both ends pull simultaneously, easily tearing the knuckle apart. Many people's homemade knuckles lose their shape because those fascia are the culprits."

So that was it! He had found the culprit for why his mother's knuckles always fell apart into several pieces each time she cooked them.

While busy with this step, Xie Baomin said to Lin Xu, "With knuckles, the odors are all in the skin. Once the skin is thoroughly cleaned, there are hardly any odors left, and it can be deep-fried directly."

Song Dahai couldn't resist adding his explanation, "After deep-frying the Pork Skin, it cooks more intact and doesn't spoil the appearance. If you're worried about oil spatter at home, you can also use a blowtorch to sear the Pork Skin. This creates fine bubbles and achieves the same effect as frying."

These were all experiences they had summarized after spending half their lives in the kitchen. To others, it might just be a topic of conversation, but for those in the culinary industry, these are invaluable treasures.

Lin Xu silently committed them to memory. He would definitely encounter many dishes involving knuckles in the future. Remembering one more processing method could certainly come in handy.

Xie Baomin used a deeper, larger pot for frying the knuckles.

The larger the pot and the more oil, the lower the chance of oil splattering. When the oil was ready, Xie Baomin casually tossed in the four knuckles. The pot didn't splatter; in fact, the oil only bubbled for a moment. It was very safe.

Before long, when the skin of the knuckles bubbled, Xie Baomin scooped them out.

"A quick fry is to make the Pork Skin stretch, not to create 'Tiger Skin,' so it shouldn't be fried too long, or else it becomes Tiger Skin Pork Knuckle."

After scooping the knuckles from the frying pot, he set them aside to drain the oil.

Then he put a pot of water on the stove.

He placed the drained knuckles into it, added ginger slices and scallion segments, poured in a ladle of Cooking Wine, and began to blanch them.

"Blanching knuckle-type dishes is different from other dishes. Because they are hard to cook through, they need about half an hour to be completely cooked until no longer raw. Then, stewing afterwards will yield a better flavor."

After finishing, Xie Baomin wiped the sweat from his forehead with a towel.

Once the water in the pot boiled, he skimmed off the froth with a spoon and continued cooking.

Seeing this, Song Dahai understood a bit more. "Is the sugarcane added during the stewing later?"

"Yes, adding some green sugarcane during stewing enhances the fresh taste of the knuckle. Old sugarcane works too, but it doesn't have the same flavor as green sugarcane."

After responding, Xie Baomin took a sip of tea and casually checked the time.

It was just past three in the afternoon.

It looked like they wouldn't be eating the knuckle until after five o'clock.

And that was with the help of a pressure cooker. Using a regular pot, just stewing would take about three hours, and then reducing the sauce would take at least another half hour.

This dish, when well-made, is really delicious.

But it also requires quite a bit of effort.

After a short break, Xie Baomin began preparing the braising liquid needed for the knuckles.

He poured two ladles of oil into the pot. Once the oil heated up, he added two large handfuls of Crystal Sugar, making it look like he was deep-frying the Crystal Sugar in hot oil.

"Watch closely, Junior Brother, today I'm teaching you a different method of caramelizing sugar."

While speaking, Xie Baomin stirred continuously in the pot with a spoon to speed up the melting of the Crystal Sugar.

With plenty of oil, the sugar melted quickly.

Before long, the Crystal Sugar chunks turned into syrup. Under the heat of the oil, the syrup began to mix with the oil. Soon, the oil in the pot turned light brown and started to bubble vigorously.

Xie Baomin immediately poured in the prepared Scallion and Ginger, along with the rinsed Sichuan peppercorns and other spices, and began to stir-fry.

"Add the aromatics when it bubbles vigorously. It's easier to manage the timing this way and is suitable for beginners. Once the Scallion and Ginger are almost done, the caramel is also ready. Moreover, the Scallion and Ginger, and the rinsed spices, help lower the oil temperature, preventing the caramel from overcooking."

Hearing his Senior Brother's explanation, Lin Xu felt this method of caramelizing sugar was quite suitable for beginners. The online tutorials for caramelizing sugar are more challenging, with details like distinguishing large bubbles turning into small bubbles, or achieving a 'date-red' color, which are completely baffling to a novice.