

## Culinary 27

Chapter 27 - Mom's Brand Fried Bun! Shen Jiayue: I want to eat six!

After the busy noon had passed, Lin Xu managed to slip back to his rented house.

In just a few hours, the inside of the house had completely transformed.

The originally bare sofa was now covered with a linen-colored sofa cover, making it comfortable to sit, recline, or lounge on. The coffee table was also adorned with snacks and various daily necessities, adding a lived-in feel to the living room.

In the master bedroom, the single set of bedding Lin Xu had spread on the bed the previous night was gone. In its place was a complete set of light blue bedding and a bedspread; even the pillows were part of the set. The previously empty bed in the secondary bedroom was now also made up with bedding, and Chen Meijuan's luggage was placed on the cabinet beside it. Clearly, his mom planned to stay in this room.

As for the toiletries in the bathroom and the various kitchenware and condiments in the kitchen, everything was fully stocked. Even the refrigerator was stuffed with food and essentials.

Having a mom is truly wonderful!

Lin Xu comfortably stretched out on the sofa, feeling like he was back at his old home in Yinzhou.

Chen Meijuan walked out of the kitchen holding a plate of freshly washed fruit. "Tired, huh? Have some fruit. Experts say that eating grapes can relieve fatigue. This bunch is all yours. Eat up quickly, and then take a little nap."

During the noon rush that day, Chen Meijuan had been out shopping when she passed by the front of the store. Seeing her son busily working in the kitchen through the glass window, her heart ached immensely. Having heard that eating grapes could relieve fatigue, she had gone to an import supermarket and bought several bunches of the most expensive, finest imported grapes for her son.

Lin Xu sat up and tried a grape; it tasted quite good.

As he ate, he said, "Mom, tomorrow morning I'm going back to school for the graduation ceremony, so the shop won't be open. I've booked two workers online to adjust the storefront; I'm planning to move the cash register and the cold drinks cabinet to the entrance. Could you help me keep an eye on the shop then?"

Chen Meijuan wiped her hands with a towel. "Sure, you go attend your graduation ceremony without any worries. I'll be here."

She soaked Lin Xu's recently changed chef uniform in a basin of water, planning to wash it for her son shortly. The entire uniform was soaked through, a testament to how exhausting the busy noon period had been.

After soaking the clothes, Chen Meijuan looked at Lin Xu and asked, "Since the shop isn't opening tomorrow, what would you like for breakfast? I'll make it for you."

Truth be told, Lin Xu really did miss his mom's cooking.

Before his parents opened the resort, Chen Meijuan's biggest hobby was experimenting with food at home. And she wasn't limited to Northern dishes. Southern treats like wormwood Sticky Rice Cake, salty rice dumplings, Glutinous Rice cakes, custard buns, and char siu buns—she had tried making them all at home, and they always tasted great.

Every time he came home for the holidays, it was a joyous occasion for Lin Xu. One day it would be washing Gluten to make cold skin noodles, the next grinding rice pulp for flat rice noodles, and the day after pounding Glutinous Rice to make rice cakes—she never made the same thing twice.

Unfortunately, for the past two years, his mom and dad had been busy with the resort and seldom cooked. Even when Lin Xu came home for the holidays, he mostly ate meals prepared by the resort's chefs or ended up eating takeout while holed up in their city apartment.

"Anything's fine. Oh, Mom, there are a lot of ingredients in the shop's fridge that I don't use. Feel free to take them home tonight and use whatever you can."

Chen Meijuan nodded. "Okay, I'll see what's there first and then decide what to make for you tomorrow morning."

「At nine o'clock in the evening.」

After finishing a long day's work, Lin Xu took a shower. He was now sitting on the living room sofa, eating watermelon, while Chen Meijuan was busy in the kitchen preparing for the next day's breakfast.

Earlier in the afternoon, she had rummaged through the shop's fridge and found several bags of frozen Pork Grease and chicken grease. She then went to the supermarket and bought some dried cowpeas and Rice Noodles, planning to make Lin Xu's favorite: Pork Grease buns.

The grease was frozen solid. Chen Meijuan soaked the bags for a few hours, and now it had finally thawed.

Pork Grease and chicken grease are byproducts of rendering oil. Rich in fats and possessing a strong aroma, they are suitable not only for fillings but also for stewing dishes or making soup. Chen Meijuan remembered her childhood when resources were scarce. Every time the family rendered Pork Lard, everyone would gather around the stove. As soon as the Pork Grease cracklings emerged from the pot, still sizzling hot, they would fearlessly snatch them up to eat.

Now that conditions had improved and everyone was focused on healthy eating, ingredients like these types of grease had become increasingly unpopular.

Once thawed, she chopped the grease into peanut-sized pieces. It couldn't be too small. If it were, one wouldn't be able to savor that distinct texture of Pork Grease—yielding yet soft, and rich with aroma.

After she finished cutting the Pork Grease, she also cut some chicken grease.

When rendering Pork Lard, pork leaf lard is generally used. Chicken fat, however, is processed differently; chicken skin is usually employed. Nowadays, chickens raised on farms are fast-growing and have very few internal fat deposits. To obtain chicken fat, one has to find other means, such as using chicken skin, which has plentiful subcutaneous fat.

Lin Xu used chicken skin to render chicken fat. He would wash the chicken skin, blanch it in boiling water to remove any blood and impurities from the pores, then chop it up and render it in a pan, much like rendering Pork Lard.

The rendered chicken skin had a crispy, crackling-like texture and still retained a rich, savory flavor. It perfectly complemented the intense aroma of the Pork Grease.

Chen Meijuan placed the chopped grease into a bowl and then put it in the refrigerator's cold storage. That way, it could be used directly the next morning, which was quite a time-saver.

「At seven in the morning.」

When Lin Xu woke from his sleep, the distinctive, rich aroma of Pork Grease buns was already wafting in from outside.

After getting dressed and freshening up, Lin Xu went out to the living room.

"The buns are steamed. Come eat them while they're hot. I'll make you a bowl of egg soup, then I'll head to the shop."

To ensure her son could enjoy delicious buns, Chen Meijuan had risen before five to start preparing. She had managed her time well, ensuring nothing was delayed.

Lin Xu washed his hands and took a bite of a freshly steamed bun.

Hmm, the outer skin is fluffy and soft, and the filling is intensely flavorful.

The dried cowpeas were chewy, and the Rice Noodles had absorbed the fats, making them oily and delicious. However, the best part was still the Pork Grease inside, with its rich fragrance mixed with a yielding, soft texture. It truly became more flavorful the more he chewed.

As he enjoyed the tasty bun, Lin Xu turned on his phone. He planned to check the day's weather and also see if the buzz around Lin Ji's Food had increased.

Just as his phone turned on, he saw a message from Shen Jiayue:

"Lazy pig, are you awake? What time should I pick you up?"

Lin Xu smiled helplessly. It's only seven, big sister! If you were always this eager for classes, you'd probably have your postgraduate admission secured by now.

With one hand holding the bun and the other tapping rapidly, he texted Shen Jiayue back:

"Just got up. If you're in a hurry, go ahead. I can take the subway there later; it's fine."

No sooner had he sent it than Shen Jiayue's reply came back:

"I won't! I insist on picking you up! [Hmph][Hmph][Hmph]"

Lin Xu chuckled in spite of himself. We've been buddies for four years in school. How has she become so willful and bossy now?

He sent back an "OK" emoticon and was about to continue eating his bun when another message from Shen Jiayue arrived:

"Want me to bring you breakfast?"

Lin Xu snapped a picture of the basket full of Pork Grease buns on the table and sent it. "No need, my mom steamed a lot of Pork Grease buns early this morning, and she's making me egg soup in the kitchen right now, so no need to bring breakfast."

Shen Jiayue: "!!!!!"

Pork Grease buns? They look really tasty!

Soon, she messaged Lin Xu:

"Can you finish all those buns? What will you do with the leftovers? Freeze them or just keep them refrigerated?"

Lin Xu: "..."

Aren't you tired of beating around the bush?

He replied directly:

"Just tell me, how many should I bring for you?"

"Six!"