

## **Culinary 311**

Chapter 311: The Magic Circle Exploded! A Well-Deserved Champion! Big Surprise in the Reward!

A collective gasp swept through the Banquet Hall of Building One as the flower bloomed; it was the only sound that remained.

Everyone had thought this dish was a disaster.

Those familiar with Lin Xu were racking their brains, wondering how to comfort him later.

Shen Baobao was already prepared to throw herself into Lin Xu's arms the moment he stepped down from the stage.

Even the chief judge on stage, Liu Zhengyu, was planning to rise and gently remind the young man to keep his composure. For an exceptionally talented individual like him, a setback could mean never recovering, so immediate psychological guidance was crucial.

As for the fans in the live stream, they couldn't bear to watch.

However, no one expected what happened next. After Lin Xu's heartfelt declaration of love, he casually snapped his fingers. The flower bud in the pot, previously motionless, suddenly bloomed.

The pristine white petals unfolded, seeming to blossom directly in everyone's hearts.

Everyone quietly watched the flower in the pot.

No one had ever imagined a dish could be so artistic.

No, this was no longer just art.

It was simply magic!

What kind of technique could make a flower bloom on command with just a snap of the fingers?

In the audience, Shen Jiayue stared blankly at Lin Xu on stage, crystal-clear tears streaming down her fair cheeks. She was utterly oblivious, her mind filled only with Lin Xu's words, that snap of his fingers, and the blooming white flower...

All along, she had thought her Xu Bao was a man who disliked romance and lacked a sense of ceremony. But unexpectedly, at this critical moment in today's competition, this rascal had not only spoken such loving words to her but had also put on such a spectacular performance.

I can't live without you, Xu Bao. My heart panics if I don't see you for even a second. In our next life, let's still be together, okay? I'll even sneak imported snacks from home for you...

In the live stream, after their initial shock, the bullet chat from the fans exploded.

"Holy crap, Boss Lin is absolutely slaying it!"

"AAAAHHH, he's too smooth!"

"I'm literally crying my eyes out!"

"Who was it that said Boss Lin wasn't romantic and had no sense of ceremony?"

"How does he manage to make us single folks cry from emotion while mercilessly rubbing it in our faces at the same time?"

"All of you who slammed your phones down, get back here quick!"

"I'd willingly choke on this level of public affection!"

"Dude, I'm a guy, and even I want to marry Boss Lin!"

"Someone take me out, as an offering to Boss Lin's triumph!"

"Another day of envying the boss's wife!"

Beside Shen Jiayue, Chen Yan wiped the tears from the corner of her eyes. Where on earth did her brother-in-law learn such a move? Flaunting his relationship while also wringing tears from everyone.

As she took out a tissue, she noticed Shen Baobao beside her had already dissolved into a sobbing mess. She quickly passed a tissue to her, saying, "Don't cry, wipe your tears. If your brother-in-law sees you like this, he'll think you're being silly."

Shen Baobao took the tissue, clutching it in her hand. Instead of wiping her tears, she buried her face in Chen Yan's shoulder. "Sister Yan, I regret it so much... I regret not pursuing him during college, just foolishly giving him snacks every day... BOO HOO HOO!"

Chen Yan was speechless. I understand all that. And I get that you two are excited about your public displays of affection. But what's with wiping your snot and tears all over my clothes? BOO HOO HOO, this dress cost over ten thousand! I'm a single woman, stuck here being force-fed all this PDA, then metaphorically slaughtered, and now my dress is ruined on top of it all! I... I... I... Who am I supposed to complain to?!

In the back seats, Han Shuzhen wiped the tears from the corners of her eyes. After worrying for so long, it turned out to be just a little romantic surprise from her son-in-law. Her daughter must be overjoyed right now.

She patted Chen Meijuan beside her, who was also wiping away tears, and said, "Meijuan, you've raised such a good son!"

"No, it's your Yueyue who's wonderful."

The parents from both families, initially the most worried, were now laughing through their joyful tears.

What could be more uplifting than seeing your children do so well?

Shen Guofu said to Lin Hongqi, "Old Lin, we must have a drink tonight."

"Absolutely! Our children are making us proud; we definitely need to have a few extra glasses!"

On stage, while Lin Xu was speaking, Wu Kexin kept her camera on him. She didn't dare focus too much on the dish that seemed to be a failure, fearing the online audience would connect it to her, the 'queen of disasters.'

Just as Lin Xu snapped his fingers, she aimed her camera at the flower bud. She then watched, up close, the entire process of the flower blossoming.

The breathtakingly beautiful effect was deeply etched into her heart.

After the flower had fully bloomed, she suddenly felt an impulse to put down her live-streaming equipment and run backstage to hug Panda.

He has his love, and I have mine! I'm not envious of their love; I just want to cherish my own.

However, for the sake of her work, she restrained this impulse. There would be plenty of time after the live stream ended. There was no need to rush.

Gazing at the fully bloomed flower in the pot, Wu Kexin grew curious. How exactly had Lin Xu made the flower bloom with just a snap of his fingers?

Was there some kind of voice-activated device hidden inside? That couldn't be it; the judges still had to taste the dish. If he had tampered with the dish by adding foreign objects, his score would surely plummet into the negatives. So, how did he do it?

She wasn't the only one curious. Everyone present, having recovered from the initial shock, was pondering the same question.

What kind of culinary technique could possibly achieve such an effect?

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Lu Lu nudged Zhu Yong and asked, "What's the principle behind this? You're a chef at Fishing Platform; you should know, right?"

Zhu Yong replied with a bitter smile, "If I knew, I wouldn't have jumped ship to work at Boss Lin's place... You all keep saying Boss Lin is crossing into other fields; well, now he really has crossed into the circle of magicians."

He opened his cell phone to check. Someone had already turned the live stream video into a GIF.

Below, comments from netizens poured in.

Liang Mountain's Drought: "No way! Oh my god, how did he do that?"

Spring Breeze Cannot Blow You: "Wow! I'm so jealous of those who saw it live; it must have been heartbreakingly beautiful."

Among the Fields of Reeds: "I knew I should've bought a scalped ticket to get in and see it."

Great Mahayana Stage cultivator: "Thanks for the invite. I was there live and watched the whole thing. The moment Boss Lin snapped his fingers, my heart forgot to beat."

Lin Daiyu Pulling Willows: "Does anyone know the principle behind it?"

Human High-Quality Garbage: "I asked a friend who performs magic. He can't do this yet and asked me to help inquire which great magician Boss Lin studied under."

I'll be a dog if I stay up late: "LOL, several magicians have spoken out online, seriously analyzing the steps."

What Bad Intentions Could a Little Kitty Have: "Boss Lin's image as the King of Crossover is now firmly established."

...

「At the competition venue.」

After watching the entire flower bloom, Liu Zhengyu even forgot this was a competition. Luckily, a nearby judge nudged him, and only then did he realize it was time for the judges to enter the tasting area. No matter how beautiful or spectacular a dish is, if it tastes bad, all the effort is for naught.

He stood up and said, "I never expected to witness such a wonderful performance at a culinary competition. I doubt I'll ever forget the scene of that flower blooming. Thank you, Lin Xu, for giving me a new perspective on cooking."

Before this dish, who could have imagined that cuisine could be so eye-catching?

Lin Xu said with a smile, "I'm sorry for delaying the competition; I hope the judges don't mind."

Liu Zhengyu checked the time and said, "There was no delay; we're right at the cutoff time. Alright, everyone, please compose yourselves. Let's begin the critique."

As the judges rose and walked down from the judges' panel, the audience members also composed themselves somewhat and began discussing the principles behind the dish.

Was it a physical or chemical reaction? Why could a snap of the fingers control the flower's bloom?

So magical!

Shen Baobao had finished crying and wiped her face clean. She looked bashfully at Chen Yan, who was on the verge of tears, and said, "Sorry, I was too excited..."

After speaking, she took the tissue in her hand and wiped Chen Yan's shoulder. Seeing her cousin still looking upset, she said, "Come on, don't be mad, Yan Bao. How about this? For your eighteenth birthday this year, I'll ask Xu Bao to make this dish for you again, okay?"

Upon hearing this, Chen Yan immediately turned her left shoulder towards her. "Why don't you get this shoulder too, then you can book next year's birthday as well."

Shen Baobao: "..."

You mean you still won't have found someone to spend your birthday with by next year?

Just then, Chen Meijuan, who was in the back row, said to Chen Yan, "Xiao Yan, change your clothes later. Give me your dress, and I'll wash it for you."

My daughter-in-law got someone's dress dirty. As her mother-in-law, it's only right for me to wash it clean for her, isn't it?

Chen Yan quickly said, "No, no, it's quite alright. We have a housekeeper at home. How could I possibly let an elder do laundry?"

「On stage.」

The judges gathered around the table and started tasting the four dishes.

First up was Zhuang Yizhou's Wensi Tofu. As a soup, it naturally had a disadvantage compared to more substantial dishes. However, the craftsmanship was undeniable: the tofu was cut as fine as hair, and the soup was full of rich ingredients.

When tasted, the texture was smooth but not greasy. The chicken broth was fresh and delicate, and the shredded tofu, ham strips, and other ingredients were perfectly balanced. The skill involved was truly impeccable.

While the judges were tasting, Lin Xu and the other three contestants also held small bowls, sampling Zhuang Yizhou's Wensi Tofu.

Indeed, Wensi Tofu wasn't as time-consuming as the other three dishes; only the cutting was somewhat laborious. However, for those who had reached the finals, preparing a dish like Wensi Tofu, which primarily requires straight knife cuts, was second nature. It wasn't considered particularly difficult. Therefore, Zhuang Yizhou had made some extra. He even considered letting Lin Xu's family try some later.

Yes, it's always good to build relationships in advance; it would make working at Lin Ji smoother.

Lin Xu tasted it and commented, "This soup is truly excellent. No wonder it's served at state banquets."

The person who invented this dish was an absolute genius. To cut tofu so finely, blanch it in chicken broth, and then return it to the broth to make soup... whoever came up with this must have had a lot of time on their hands to go to such lengths!

The judges finished tasting the Wensi Tofu and began on the Nine-Turned Intestines.

Guo Xinghai brought over a bowl from his station, covered with a plate. Removing the plate, he revealed several segments of richly colored Nine-Turned Intestines.

"I had a few pieces left over after plating. Everyone, please try some."

Huo Yifan and Zhuang Yizhou's eyes lit up simultaneously, surprised that someone would have extra food hidden away at a cooking competition.

Lin Xu said, "We did the same thing in the last competition—tasted a bit of what was left after plating."

With that, he picked up his chopsticks, selected a piece of Nine-Turned Intestines, and popped it into his mouth.

The oily richness instantly awakened his taste buds. Then, a symphony of five flavors—sour, sweet, bitter, spicy, and salty—began to spread throughout his mouth.

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He took a bite. The dense, firm texture of the intestine cap immediately filled him with the satisfaction of eating a hearty piece of meat.

It was so delicious.

Since the intestine had been fried, its outermost layer was slightly crisp. This crispness made the soft, tender, and dense texture of the interior even more pronounced.

"My God, Nine-Turned Intestines truly must be made from the intestine cap! The texture is indeed far superior to that of regular intestines," Zhuang Yizhou sighed.

He felt that the intestines were perfectly cooked, with five flavors merging and intermingling in his mouth, as if he were tasting the legendary Nine-Turn Golden Pill.

"Indeed delicious. Master Guo's culinary skills are impeccable," Huo Yifan nodded repeatedly as he ate.

He planned to try making this dish when he returned.

Guo Xinghai said with a smile, "During the competition, I was stuck in a rut. It was Lin Xu who awakened me, allowing me to find my own sense while cooking."

The judges, too, were full of praise for the Nine-Turned Intestines.

Clearly, once the cage of his thoughts was opened, Guo Xinghai had once again displayed his true capabilities.

After tasting the Nine-Turned Intestines, they began to sample the Honey Roasted Square.

Huo Yifan looked at Lin Xu and the other two, a bit embarrassed, and said, "Sorry about that. When plating, I ended up putting an entire Fire Square on the dish... How about this? Let's set a date, and I'll treat you all to it another time."

After drinking Zhuang Yizhou's Wensi Tofu and eating Guo Xinghai's Nine-Turned Intestines, when it came to his own dish, he couldn't offer everyone a taste.

This made the competitively spirited Huo Yifan feel very remorseful.

If this dish weren't so incredibly time-consuming, he would have even considered making another portion right then and there.

Lin Xu said with a smile, "No worries at all. Come and try my Qingshui Furong instead."

He brought over a small basin containing leftover Clear Soup and scraps of Furong Chicken Slices. Apart from lacking the central flower shape, it looked no different from the portion served to the judges.

"This portion won't bloom, but try the flavor."

Lin Xu placed the small basin on a side table.

The group didn't start eating right away but gathered around, examining the dish.

Huo Yifan wore a curious expression. "I just want to know how it blooms. Is there really such a thing as voice-controlled dishes in this world?"

The scene of the flower blooming moments ago had truly astonished him.

Especially since it bloomed at the snap of a finger.

It was even more spectacular than a magic show.

Only after asking the question did Huo Yifan remember that this was Lin Xu's guarded secret, and it was inappropriate for him, an outsider, to ask such a question so directly.

So he chuckled and said, "I'm just asking casually, Lin Xu. You don't have to tell me."

Lin Xu, however, didn't hide it. "I utilized the water absorption and swelling property of Furong Chicken Slices. As for the snap, it was just good timing, nothing magical."

The principle behind this dish would inevitably be figured out by others sooner or later.

Rather than being accused of deliberate mystification, he preferred to be straightforward about it.

Besides, even if the principle was made public, not many chefs could successfully recreate it.

The moment he finished speaking, a shocked expression appeared on Huo Yifan's face.

Fuck, fuck, fuck! He just outright explained it! Isn't he afraid we might spread the word? He must trust us a lot to say something like that, right? Don't worry, I wouldn't divulge this secret even if it killed me!

Thinking back to how he had glared at Lin Xu at the start of the competition, his face grew hot.

Compared to him, I've been so petty!

While he was lost in these thoughts, he saw Zhuang Yizhou and Guo Xinghai start tasting the Clear Soup from the basin with their spoons, so he hurriedly scooped up a spoonful and put it in his mouth.

It was hard to imagine that such a transparent broth could possess such a savory taste.

Moreover, no seasonings had been added to the broth at all; its saltiness came entirely from the whole ham that had been simmered in it, making it far more savory than if salt had been directly added.

After finishing the soup, he tasted the Furong Chicken Slices, which had been fried in warm oil.

The chicken slices were tender and smooth, richly infused with the Clear Soup.

With one bite, a delicious flavor spread and lingered in his mouth.

This is truly an impeccable soup dish!

While Huo Yifan was still marveling, the judges had finished tasting the sweet and savory Honey Roasted Square and now stood before Lin Xu's Qingshui Furong.

"Oh, I just realized this isn't a lotus."

"Right, it's not a lotus. The petals are finer, and there's a distinct pistil."

"Is this a lily?"

"Lily... a perfect union for a hundred years... It's all so romantic."

"Then this dish shouldn't be called Qingshui Furong. It should be called Qingshui Lily."

"..."

Liu Zhengyu no longer cared about the dish's name. He only wanted to taste it quickly and see if its flavor could live up to its perfect presentation.

He scooped up a spoonful of soup and brought it to his mouth.

The delicious taste that met his palate made him shiver all over.

The other judges had similar expressions.

The crystal-clear soup was quite deceptive. Before tasting it, one might assume it would be bland, but only upon sipping it could one truly appreciate the rich, savory depth within.

It was perfect!

After finishing the soup, they ate the Furong Chicken Slices, which served as the petals.

The texture was equally perfect.

From the audience, Shen Baobao pouted, her voice tinged with grievance, "Don't eat my flower... My dear Xu made it for me..."

Chen Yan rolled her eyes helplessly.

Too bad I'm not a judge. If I were, I'd take my chopsticks and dismantle that flower right now! Stop your public display of affection already!

After all the dishes had been tasted, it was time for scoring.

The judges gathered to discuss.

After the scores were finalized, Liu Zhengyu picked up the microphone and announced, "Zhuang Yizhou, your Wensi Tofu was truly excellent, perfect in every aspect. Unfortunately, with the other entries being main dishes, a soup like yours is at a slight disadvantage. We give this Wensi Tofu a 9.8. We hope you'll continue to strive for excellence."

Zhuang Yizhou was somewhat surprised. He hadn't expected to receive such a high score.

It's probably because there was ample time.

With several hours at his disposal, he could leisurely perfect every step.

After commenting on Zhuang Yizhou's Wensi Tofu, Liu Zhengyu continued, "Guo Xinghai, your Nine-Turned Intestines gave me the distinct impression that you truly let yourself go, unlike your previous dishes where you seemed to be holding back. I've rarely tasted Nine-Turned Intestines this delicious. We give you a 9.87. We hope you'll keep up the great work."

Upon hearing this score, Guo Xinghai shot another grateful look at Lin Xu.

Next up was Huo Yifan.

"Huo Yifan, your father and I go way back. This Honey Roasted Square is almost indistinguishable from his. It's a pity the competition time was still too short. With another two hours, this Honey Roasted Square could have been even more perfect. We give you a 9.9. Keep it up, my nephew!"

The Honey Roasted Square dish requires three cycles of steaming and preparation to achieve perfection.

The entire process takes roughly more than five hours.

Therefore, the time allotted for today's competition was still insufficient for this dish to reach its absolute best.

After discussing the Honey Roasted Square, it was time for Lin Xu's Qingshui Furong.

"Lin Xu, on behalf of the online viewers streaming live, the television audience, and everyone present here, I once again express our profound gratitude. This Qingshui Furong is not only spectacular but also flawless in taste and texture. If the maximum score is ten points, then I believe this dish deserves a hundred! Congratulations on winning this cooking competition!"

As soon as he finished speaking, a system alert sounded in Lin Xu's mind:

"Host has won first place in this round, completing the sixth round of the 'Serial Victory' chain task, and has received the Perfect Level General Technique — Oil Braise. Congratulations to the Host."

"The Host has won first place in every round, receiving an additional reward of three Perfect Level Cooking Learning Cards and one Perfect Level Dish Exchange Card. Congratulations to the Host."

"The Host has won the championship in the Top Ten International Hotels Cooking Competition, completing the Hidden Task 'Win The Championship', and is awarded the Superior Grade grilling dish—Roast Whole Lamb."

Three successive alerts made Lin Xu increasingly thrilled.

I even got a Roast Whole Lamb...

Damn, System, aren't you going a little overboard?

Chapter 314: Shen Baobao Pins Against the Wall! Preparing a Dish for Dad and Father-in-law to Enjoy with Drinks!

No matter the type of banquet or the level of restaurant, whenever there's roast whole lamb, it's undeniably the grand finale dish.

Lin Xu had not anticipated such a big surprise waiting for him after winning the championship.

With the roast whole lamb, won't his new store's opening drive sales through the roof?

He always felt Lin Ji's Food lacked a true signature dish, but now, he had one, and it was the kind that could rank amongst the top worldwide.

He really wanted to try it out immediately.

Unfortunately, the competition wasn't over yet, as there was still the award ceremony to go.

「On the video broadcasting truck at the back door of Building One.」

Zhen Wensheng had just been sweating over Lin Xu's dish, but unexpectedly, the result turned out so well. When the petals bloomed, his heart bloomed along with them.

"Xiaoqi, what's our viewership ranking now?"

Zeng Xiaoqi, who was constantly monitoring the real-time viewership data, said, "Our viewership has now surpassed all other channels except Yanjing Satellite TV. Mr. Zhen, our Travel Channel has topped the Yanjing Region's viewership ratings for the first time!"

What?

It rose that fast?

Zhen Wensheng stood up and came over to look at the viewership curve chart. It had been steadily increasing, but about ten minutes ago, right when Lin Xu was making his heartfelt declaration, the viewership spiked by about thirty percent.

It seems that to achieve high ratings, TV shows really need to stir things up... Zhen Wensheng reflected for a moment, feeling that he definitely owed Lin Xu a big thank you.

Without his actions, who knows how long it would have taken for the Travel Channel to reach the top. Now, at last, they had the viewership. The leaders at the station wouldn't be nitpicking any longer.

What's more, after this live broadcast, advertisers related to cooking would flock to them. The advertising revenue for the Travel Channel was bound to surge significantly.

He could finally strut around the station with his head held high.

"Xiaoqi, take a team to Lin Xu's scenic area this weekend to shoot a promotional video. Make it as classy as possible. He's done us a huge favor, and it's our turn to repay the favor."

"Okay, Mr. Zhen. I'll head out first thing Saturday morning," Xiaoqi agreed.

Zhen Wensheng picked up the walkie-talkie and said, "Next up is the award ceremony. Everyone in all departments, brace yourselves! After it's over, I'm paying out of my own pocket to treat everyone to drinks!"

Laughter from the camera crew chief came through the walkie-talkie, "Where are we drinking, Mr. Zhen? How about we just go to Fishing Platform?"

Zhen Wensheng burst out laughing, "Are you trying to bankrupt me, kid? This place isn't suitable for a rowdy drinking session. Let's find a barbecue spot instead. Lamb skewers, crawfish, beer—have as much as you want!"

"Alright!"

As Zhen Wensheng mentioned crawfish, Zeng Xiaoqi couldn't help but recall the last time they ate it at Lin Xu's house.

After that meal of crawfish, she had lost interest in other crawfish; she wondered when she could taste Lin Xu's cooking again.

「At the competition venue.」

After the scoring concluded, it was time for the awards ceremony. Lin Xu, as he hoped, received the championship prize money and the first-place platinum trophy for his team.

Beyond the trophy, he also received 100,000 yuan in prize money.

In the points column, -700,000 instantly became -600,000. This made Lin Xu overjoyed, and he was eager to ask Liu Zhengyu if there were any more competitions coming up.

If there were more competitions, he would definitely continue to participate.

As a person in the catering industry, he had to contribute to the promotion and development of Chinese cuisine.

Definitely not because he was greedy for the championship money.

After the awards ceremony, Liu Zhengyu and Lin Xu exchanged WeChat contacts, then Liu Zhengyu announced the official end of the competition.

Holding his trophy, Lin Xu was about to step down from the stage to hug Shen Baobao when Zeng Xiaoqi suddenly came over with a microphone, accompanied by a cameraman.

"Lin Xu, congratulations on winning this cooking competition. What are your feelings right now?"

"I want to hurry up and hug my girlfriend."

Zeng Xiaoqi: "..."

You're making this interview impossible for me.

It then dawned on Lin Xu that this was being broadcast on television, not a live internet stream. He immediately wiped the smile from his face and adopted a more serious expression. He talked about his experience participating in the competition and mentioned the people he needed to thank, such as his parents, parents-in-law, his master, senior apprentice-brothers, Fishing Platform, and the organizers, among others.

After he had thanked everyone involved, Zeng Xiaoqi finally let him go and led the cameraman to interview Liu Zhengyu.

But just as Lin Xu breathed a sigh of relief, Wu Kexin approached him.

The viewership for the TV broadcast and the popularity of the online stream were both frighteningly high, which was why Zeng Xiaoqi had hurried over right after the award ceremony.

It'd be such a waste to end it like this!

"Boss Lin, when you confessed to the lady boss just now, the fans were all worried sick. Say a few words to everyone," Wu Kexin said.

At that moment, the live stream chat exploded with messages. Many fans who had missed the blooming of the flowers were beating their chests and stamping their feet in regret.

"Boss Lin, could you give us a hint before you pull a stunt like that again next time?"

"Someone like me, an old fossil over twenty, really can't handle this kind of excitement!"

"The magic community wants you to join them! Boss Lin, are you considering a career change to become a magician?"

"It's not just the magic community, guys! Metalworking, hairdressing, carving, and more—so many fields think Boss Lin is the talent they desperately need."

"..."

Lin Xu casually glanced at a few of the bullet comments and said with a smile, "Sorry for making everyone worry. But you should have a little confidence in my culinary skills. Would I have chosen this dish for the finals if I wasn't sure I could pull it off?"

Taking advantage of his current popularity, he seized the opportunity to promote the Lin Ji's Food discussion topic, "Everyone, please follow the Lin Ji's Food topic! When I have some free time in a couple of days, I'll release a tutorial for this dish. As long as you follow my instructions, you'll also be able to make flowers bloom with a snap of your fingers."

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As he said this, everyone's interest was piqued.

During the award ceremony, many people were analyzing the principle behind it.

Now that they heard tutorials would be released, everyone started following the topic of Lin Ji's Food. They also followed Lin Xu's personal account.

After chatting a bit more, Lin Xu said goodbye to the fans.

He then took the two trophies and headed to the audience seats.

"Xu Bao!"

Shen Baobao rushed over, nearly knocking Lin Xu down.

Why is it always so sudden... Lin Xu held an individual trophy in one hand and the hotel's platinum trophy in the other. He wanted to hug Shen Baobao but couldn't, so he just held them awkwardly in mid-air.

Fortunately, his sister-in-law was quick to react. She took the two trophies and went off to take selfies with Geng Lele.

"Thank you for your flowers. I really like them," Shen Jiayue said, overjoyed.

Her senior brother mentioned that Qingshui Furong was a dish their master created to please his wife. Hearing this, Shen Jiayue felt a little envious, wishing her own Xu Bao would pamper her a bit too. Even just for a brief moment would be fine. Yep, Shen Baobao was that easily satisfied.

However, she hadn't expected such a scene to unfold after Lin Xu prepared the dish; it was completely beyond her expectations.

"We're getting engaged tomorrow. I wouldn't want you to have any regrets." Lin Xu's words warmed Shen Baobao's heart once again.

Wow! He actually did this so I wouldn't have any regrets about the engagement.

Excited, Shen Jiayue grabbed Lin Xu and headed outside. "Come with me for a sec! I have something to tell you!"

Lin Xu gave an apologetic smile to his parents and in-laws, then followed her out of the venue.

He wondered what she was up to. But as soon as they left the banquet hall, Shen Baobao turned around, pushed him against the wall without a word, then tiptoed and kissed him.

Lin Xu: "..."

Good heavens, I got wall-slammed! So now I'm supposed to ask this girl to take responsibility for me for life, right?

He gently broke free from Shen Baobao's grasp and then wrapped his arms tightly around her, passionately reciprocating her kiss.

"HAHA, the photos are clearer outside! Lele, take a couple of shots for me. I'm going to show off on my Moments later..." Chen Yan stood at the entrance to the banquet hall, holding the two trophies as if she were Li Yuanba brandishing two purple-gold maces. Suddenly, she saw the two at the doorway locked in a heated kiss.

Who am I? Where am I? What was I about to do? AH AH AH AH, this is the second time!!!! Why must this shameless couple flaunt their affection so wantonly right in front of me? If it weren't for looking forward to enjoying Qingshui Furong all to myself on my birthday, I'd really want to swing these trophies at both their heads right now! Their constant public displays of affection... Can't they have some public decency?! AH AH AH AH!!!!

Chief Chen had originally planned to take a set of photos celebrating the culinary victory, but now she had completely lost interest and just wanted to find a quiet corner.

"Huh? Why aren't you taking photos anymore?" Geng Lele asked, seeing Chen Yan enter looking lost. She then peeked out the door herself. TSK TSK. "More engrossing than gnawing on a duck head. Is it really that good?"

Before long, people started leaving the banquet hall. Lin Xu and Shen Baobao finally stopped their intense, seal-like kissing.

They said goodbye to the TV station staff, the judges, and the fans who were there to support them. After most of the people had left, they handed the platinum trophy to their Senior Brother.

Xie Baomin looked dejected. "I just had a chat with Chairman Liu, and I found out that there was supposed to be a middle-aged group competition after your youth group finished..."

Lin Xu was startled. "Isn't that good news, Senior Brother?"

"Indeed, it's good news," Xie Baomin sighed. "However, because your victory was so smooth, all the other hotels withdrew from the competition. As a result, the middle-aged group competition just faded away."

Lin Xu: "..."

No wonder Senior Brother looked so unhappy. It was such a great opportunity for him to show off, and now it was gone.

He hadn't anticipated things would turn out this way. If he had known, he would have made the competition a bit more difficult. Then, perhaps those middle-aged chefs would have thought Fishing Platform was nothing special and eagerly come to challenge them.

Sigh! I was too careless! If there's a similar competition in the future, I definitely need to hold back a bit. Try to win by a narrow margin. That way, after defeating the younger ones, we might attract the older ones to serve as punching bags for Senior Brother.

"Tomorrow's engagement. Remember to come early. Don't let her family think we lack manners. After all, they're marrying their daughter to our side, so be smart and say plenty of nice things."

"Mm-hmm, I know, Senior Brother."

「After the brothers parted.」

Xie Baomin looked at the platinum trophy in his hands and sighed again. Shouldn't they have eagerly come for revenge after seeing their restaurant's young members defeated? Why did those cowards withdraw?

Leaving the banquet hall and reaching the lobby of Building One, Lin Xu saw his parents and in-laws waiting for him. He strode over.

"We can go back now," Lin Xu announced. He then looked at Shen Guofu and asked, "Dad, you drank at noon. Should we find someone to drive back?"

Shen Guofu pointed to his daughter. "No need, Yueyue can drive. Let's go, let's go! We'll go to your place and have a good celebration."

And so, the young couple drove two cars, bringing both families to Yingchun Street. After parking the cars in the residential complex, Lin Xu said to his parents, "You guys go up first. I'm going to buy some groceries at the supermarket."

If it's a celebration, of course, you need to prepare a few dishes.

Hearing this, Shen Baobao also followed. "I'll go too, I'll go too..." Shen Baobao chimed in. She took a small, exquisite parasol from her bag, opened it, and then said:

Chapter 316: Getting Pinned against the Wall by Shen Baobao! Preparing a Dish for Dad and Father-in-law!

"When I was little and got scorned for being picky, I always wondered why adults didn't pick their food. It wasn't until I grew up that I realized they had already picked everything out when shopping."

Shen Guofu cleared his throat, "Daughter, next time you talk about this, can you not do it in front of your mom and me?"

"I got it, Dad!"

「They arrived at the supermarket.」

Old Master Yu greeted the young couple with a smile, "Congratulations on the championship, Boss Lin, that Qingshui Furong was spectacular."

"Thanks for the praise, Old Master Yu. What fresh vegetables do you have today? My in-laws are coming over for dinner, and I need to cook some decent signature dishes."

Upon hearing this, Old Master Yu said, "Funny you should ask. We actually have some. Old Sun, from the alley diagonally opposite, just caught a small bucket of river fish. He left them here for me to sell for him. They're all incredibly fresh. You can take the lot if you want."

River fish?

Lin Xu and Shen Baobao went to the seafood area of the supermarket and spotted a small bucket of river fish slightly smaller than a finger.

They looked round and plump.

Seeing them, Lin Xu immediately remembered the Perfect Level Fried Crispy Technique he had been rewarded with during the Carving challenge.

Since these river fish were fresh enough, he decided to buy some.

His dad and father-in-law would probably love some Fried Crispy river fish.

Besides frying, these river fish could also be stewed with tofu to make a pot of river fish stewed with tofu.

The taste should be just as good as crucian carp stewed with tofu.

Thinking this, he said to Old Master Yu, "How much for this small bucket, Old Master Yu? I'm planning to take it with me."

"If it were mine, I'd give it to you for free, but it's Old Sun's after all... Let's say 30 yuan. That old fellow spent all afternoon in the sun and only caught this much. Selling them too cheaply wouldn't be right."

Thirty yuan for a bucket of pure wild river fish, all alive. This deal seemed very reasonable no matter how you looked at it.

Then Lin Xu also bought a block of firm tofu suitable for soup, a watermelon radish for a cold dish, along with other vegetables and ingredients.

These, along with the pork belly and other things in the fridge, would be enough for a full spread.

He poured the fish into a plastic bag and packed the groceries. When the total came to 49 yuan, Lin Xu saw Shen Baobao picking out ice cream and chuckled, "Just pick one that costs one yuan; that way I can make it an even 50."

He was just about to scan 50 to even it out.

The cashier looked at the ice cream in Shen Baobao's hand and said, "That ice cream is 80."

Shen Jiayue quickly put it back and switched to another one, only to be informed that the price was 108.

It scared the poor girl so much she didn't dare to eat any.

Lin Xu paid the 49 yuan with a wry smile.

Even the capitalist's daughter found it expensive; the price of ice cream these days really left one speechless.

「Back at home,」

both sets of parents were sitting in the living room eating watermelon.

They had eaten half of it. The other half was still left on the side.

Shen Baobao, having missed out on ice cream, immediately went to the kitchen, grabbed a spoon, and dug out a piece from the heart of the watermelon, popping it into her mouth.

WOW! It was cold, refreshing, and very sweet.

Isn't this more enjoyable than eating ice cream?

"I bought some river fish, I'll fry them up in a bit."

As soon as Shen Guofu heard it was a side dish for drinking, he immediately perked up, "Yes, yes, yes, that's great! Fry plenty! And daughter, where's your trophy? Let me see it. I forgot to take a photo and post it on my social media feed when we were at Fishing Platform."

Well, others always boast about how sensible and obedient their kids are. Although we can't boast about our child, we can definitely boast about our son-in-law.

「In the kitchen,」

Lin Xu poured the river fish into a basin, washed them twice, and then began preparing them with scissors.

First, he scraped off the fish scales with his fingernails, then removed the gills, and finally cut open the fish belly to squeeze out the innards. With that, one small river fish was prepared.

After cleaning all the fish, he rinsed them again and drained the water.

He set aside a small bowlful for the tofu dish later. To the remaining fish, he added a bit of thirteen-spice powder and a bit of salt, mixing well before adding a handful of flour and a handful of starch.

Once the fish were coated with a thin layer of batter, they were ready to be fried.

Fresh river fish don't need marinating; they can be cleaned and fried directly. This way, you can truly taste the freshness of the fish. However, if not fresh enough, it's still better to marinate them with Scallion and Ginger, and Sichuan peppercorns.

He heated oil in the wok. Using chopsticks, he added the fish one by one. Once the wok had a full batch, he stopped and let the fish fry slowly until thoroughly crispy.

After frying one batch, he scooped them out and used a fine-mesh skimmer to remove any debris from the oil before frying the next batch.

Once all the river fish were fried, he increased the oil temperature and returned the small fish to the oil for a second fry.

When frying small fish, the second fry is essential. This step not only keeps the river fish crispy for a long time but also forces out excess oil, making the fish delightfully crisp and not greasy.

The second fry didn't need to be long; 30 seconds was enough.

Just as he lifted the fish from the wok, Shen Baobao was lured to the kitchen by the smell.

"Are they ready yet?"

"Yes, take them out and we can eat."

Lin Xu handed a whole plate of fish to the girl.

After re-frying all the fish, he poured the oil out of the wok and then sprinkled an even layer of salt over the bottom of the wok. The salt was to prevent sticking.

After sprinkling the salt, he brought over the bowl of small fish he had set aside earlier, arranged them evenly on the bottom of the wok, then turned on the heat. He pan-fried the fish until both sides were golden brown, then added boiling water.

He first simmered the fish to draw out their savory flavor. Then, he added the blanched tofu cubes.

He set it aside to simmer gently over low heat.

Then he started preparing other dishes.

While he was busy in the kitchen, Dou Wenjing led a young man in his twenties to the entrance of the Ziqiang Shengjian shop, where a long line had formed.

"Busy, aren't you, Master Wang?"

Wang Ziqiang, seeing that the general manager had arrived, hurriedly greeted, "You're here, Manager Dou! Have you eaten? This batch will be ready soon, I'll serve you a few in a bit."

Dou Wenjing smiled and waved her hand, "No need, no need. I just came to assign a new employee here: my cousin, Yang Lin. He's always wanted to come to Beijing to make a name for himself. I want him to learn how to make shengjian from you."

Upon hearing this, Wang Ziqiang's expression changed.

The last place was the same. A relative came saying he wanted to learn the craft. Then, once he learned it, he kicked his master to the curb. This place was even worse, behaving the same way less than two days after opening, not even bothering to conceal it. No wonder they offered high salaries. Clearly, they didn't plan on keeping me for long.

As he was secretly grieving, Dou Wenjing took out a contract from her bag and handed it over, "Master Wang, sign this agreement when you have time."

Upon hearing this, Wang Ziqiang felt even more certain of his guess.

He let out a bitter laugh, "I didn't expect you all to get rid of me now that I've served my purpose so soon..."

Just as he was about to finish, he saw at the top of the contract a line that read:

[Ziqiang Shengjian Franchise Authorization Contract]

Franchise? Authorization?

"Manager Dou, this is..."

Dou Wenjing said, "The Ziqiang Shengjian shop is doing so well, so naturally, we need to open a branch. I've already rented a storefront opposite Haidian Middle School. As soon as you've trained my cousin, our branch will open."

Haidian Middle School? Isn't that where the previous store was located? So Manager Dou is...

Wang Ziqiang felt heartened and then said with a bitter laugh, "But learning to make shengjian isn't something that can be mastered in a day or two. From making the Dough to preparing the Filling, it takes at least a few months just to learn the basics. Renting the shop now is a waste."

While he was talking, Dou Wenjing added, "Don't teach him how to prepare the Filling. Just teach him how to make the Dough, wrap the Filling, and pan-fry them. Master Wang, no matter how many branches we open, you will be in charge of all the Filling, and no employee who learns to make shengjian from you will be allowed near the Filling preparation."

After saying that, she turned to the young man and added, "Yang Lin, from now on, Master Wang will be your mentor. Learn well from him. Once you've learned, go and open the branch in front of Haidian Middle School. Your master was driven out by a shengjian shop over there. Once you open, quickly put that shop out of business and get revenge for your master!"

Wang Ziqiang: "!!!!"

Did the company actually have this arrangement? This is so exciting!

"Thank you, Manager Dou. I will work hard, I will definitely work hard..."

Dou Wenjing said smilingly, "I never thought about opening a snack shop. But since the boss has given the order, I can only work wonders within these limitations and make it as presentable as possible, so I can live up to the boss's trust."

After communicating with Wang Ziqiang, she turned to the cashier, Song Tiantian, and said, "Tiantian, hold on for a few more days. We'll hire a suitable cashier to replace you soon."

"What about me?"

"The boss plans to make you the front-desk manager of the new store. Once the new cashier arrives, I'll arrange a place for you to train under a professional front-desk manager for a period."

Song Tiantian: "!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

OH MY GOD! I'm getting promoted?!

Chapter 317: Xiaoxu, Your Father-in-law Wants to Become Sworn Brothers with Your Dad! The Recipe for Boiling Fish!

"These small river fish are fried really crispy."

「In the living room.」

Shen Guofu picked up a small fried river fish with his chopsticks and put it into his mouth. The fish's outer skin was coated with a thin layer of batter, now fried to a golden brown. It looked very crispy and even felt like it might crumble in his hand. With one bite, it was so crispy it crackled. Following that, the unique, delicious flavor of the river fish spread throughout his mouth. The fish flesh had hints of saltiness, enhancing its freshness even more. The whole fish was fried thoroughly; even the bones were crispy. Yet, the fish flesh was just perfect—succulent and flavorful. He could even taste the rich juices in the meat, with no sense of it being over-fried.

"These small river fish might seem simple, but it's not easy to make them delicious. I didn't expect Lin Xu to know how to do this too; this kid's culinary skill is really amazing! Come on, Brother Lin, let's have one!"

The table was now set with the previously prepared fried peanuts, the sweet and sour pickled radish strips Chen Meijuan had marinated in the morning, a dish of pig's ears in red oil, a small dish of soybean paste, and a few washed cucumbers. Lin Hongqi, holding a cucumber, dipped it into the soybean paste and, while crunching away, raised his glass to clink with Shen Guofu's. Lin Xu's trophy was sitting beside him. When he was happy, even glancing at the trophy seemed to enhance the taste of the wine.

After a few bites of cucumber, he used his chopsticks to pick up a small fish and put it into his mouth. The crispy texture and fresh flavor surprised Lin Hongqi. He had always thought his wife, Chen Meijuan, was a good cook. When he used to work at the trade bureau, his colleagues often went to their house for meals. These crispy fried small river fish had always been a staple at home, firstly because they were cheap, and secondly because they went well with drinks, making them a permanent household dish. He had eaten crispy fried small river fish made by many people, and he had always thought none were as good as Chen Meijuan's. But today, tasting his son's cooking, he actually felt that proverbial saying come to life: 'the student has surpassed the master.' His son's skill has surpassed his mother's!

On the couch next to them, Chen Meijuan, who was chatting with Han Shuzhen, was surprised when she tasted the small river fish Shen Baobao passed to her. "Oh my, our son's skills have surpassed mine! Shuzhen, you must try this; the fish is fried just right."

Han Shuzhen tried it too and found it delicious. "Old Shen, this is much better than the fried Knife Fish we ate last time in Shanghai at that restaurant that cost several thousand per person! From now on, if we want to eat anything, let's just have Lin Xu cook. We won't waste money eating out anymore."

"Hmm, from now on, we'll eat nothing but Lin Xu's cooking," Shen Guofu agreed.

Then, he tasted the sweet and sour pickled radish strips made by Chen Meijuan and immediately said in surprise, "The radish strips Meijuan made are quite tasty too! The flavors of the pickled chili and the sweet and sour sauce complement each other so well. I see now, Lin Xu's cooking talent is purely inherited."

Chen Meijuan said with a smile, "This is just something I whipped up. If you'd like some, I'll pickle a small jar for you both soon."

「In the kitchen.」

Lin Xu finished making the small river fish stewed with tofu. He also made a dish of stir-fried beef, pork belly stewed with green beans, and dry-fried lotus root strips.

Hmm, eating Ginger Lotus Root every day had gotten a bit monotonous. So, he used the Dry-frying Technique to make a batch of dry-fried lotus root strips. This dish was quite simple: slice the lotus root along its holes into pencil-thick strips, briefly fry them, and then stir-fry them with dried chili and Sichuan peppercorns before seasoning. The taste was crisp and tingling with spiciness—perfect with drinks and rice.

When he brought the food out, the family started dinner. Only Shen Guofu and Lin Hongqi were still chatting and drinking.

"Hmm, this small river fish makes a really flavorful soup!"

The small river fish were quite fresh. After being pan-fried slightly and then simmered in boiling water, the soup turned as white as milk. Adding blanched tofu made the flavor indescribable. Han Shuzhen slowly savored a small bowl, finding it even more delicious than the Crucian Carp Tofu Soup she had tasted last time.

"Last time, it was made with Plaster Tofu, which is tender and soft but lacks fragrance. Today's soup uses brined tofu, which is a bit firmer but very flavorful, and the resulting tofu is delicious," Lin Xu explained, then picked up a slice of pork belly for Shen Baobao.

He liked the green beans stewed with pork belly, especially those plump, thick varieties; stewed with meat, they were delicious—even tastier than the meat itself.

After a bowl of rice, he served himself a bowl of the tofu soup and took a sip. The taste was truly rich and exquisite. After drinking it, he felt as if he were by a small river, the breeze wafting from the water, fishing leisurely under the shade of a tree.

Ahh... I feel like going fishing. After I get back, I'll have to dig out my fishing rod and treat myself to a good time by the reservoir. Once the new store opens, there'll be no more leisure time like this.

「After the meal.」

While both sets of parents were still eating and chatting, Lin Xu took Shen Baobao to his room. As soon as they entered, Shen Baobao bounced onto Lin Xu's bed and rolled around.

"Ah! Your bed is so comfortable!" she exclaimed, kicking off her slippers and rolling around again.

Lin Xu chuckled softly. He walked over, kissed her lightly, and said, "I haven't uploaded my video today. I'll keep you company as soon as I'm done."

"Okay, okay!"

Seeing Lin Xu open his computer, Shen Baobao sat on the bed in a W-sit, watching her Xu Bao skillfully edit the video. The video's content was very simple.

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All of these featured Dundun's behavior in daily life.

He had been busy these past two days and hadn't had time to film the dishes, so he was using Dundun's videos to make up the numbers.

Of course, the fans wouldn't see it that way.

These are the real bonus videos!

We can't really learn cooking from those other videos anyway. Watching Dundun is way more thrilling!

"When did you learn video editing? You seem even quicker and more skilled than the video editors at my cousin's company."

Shen Baobao knew Lin Xu could edit videos, but she hadn't expected him to be so efficient.

With such a large amount of video material, he had managed to pair it with music and edit it into an approximately five-minute clip in just a few swift moves.

After finishing the edit and playing it back, it actually turned out to be quite exciting and fun.

Lin Xu said with a smile, "I was slow at first, but after practicing a few more times and watching some editing tips from the pros, my speed improved."

"Oh..."

After everything was done, he selected 'Render'.

Rendering would take some time. Lin Xu stood up from the computer and had just stretched when Shen Baobao hugged him from behind, almost knocking the wind out of him.

He turned his head, then his body. After finding each other's lips, the two 'seals' started passionately kissing again.

After they tired of kissing, the two lay on the bed, cuddling.

"Xubao, I love you so much..."

"What a coincidence, I love you too."

Upon hearing this, Shen Baobao immediately flipped over and straddled Lin Xu like a ruffian, pinning his arms down and kissing him again without any argument.

Right in the middle of their kiss, Chen Meijuan's knock sounded from outside the door: "Xiao Xu, come out quickly! Your father-in-law is about to kowtow and become sworn brothers with your dad!"

Lin Xu: "..."

He patted Shen Baobao's round, perky bottom and kissed her a couple more times before saying, "Alright, Baobao, let me go outside and check. We don't want to end up as siblings before we even become husband and wife..."

After getting out of bed, they both straightened their clothes.

Once they were sure they wouldn't look disheveled, they pushed the door open and went out.

At this moment, the small dining room was a complete mess. A drunk Shen Guofu was kneeling on the floor, clutching Lin Hongqi's shoulder, snot and tears streaming down his face as he lamented past hardships: "Brother, if you had been with our family back then, we wouldn't have had it so rough! Why did you only come now?"

"I didn't know our family had it so tough either. It's my fault, brother. Should I punish myself with another drink? No, two! Good things come in pairs, right?"

Han Shuzhen and Chen Meijuan were each trying to control their own husbands, their scolding voices intermingling.

The entire small dining room was more chaotic than Northwest Shanxi when Li Yunlong attacked Ping'an County.

「Twenty minutes later.」

After Shen Guofu and Lin Hongqi were each doused with a basin of cold water by their wives, their heads finally began to clear a little.

Lin Xu made some sour soup for them to drink.

Once they were completely sober, he drove the Shen family of three home in the Big G.

「In the morning.」

After breakfast, Lin Xu, Bentley keys in hand, had just reached downstairs when he saw Shen Guofu walking in from outside the residential complex.

"Xiao Xu, Dad lost his composure last night."

Seeing his son-in-law again, he couldn't help but recall how he had grabbed his daughter's father-in-law to become sworn brothers the previous night. It had been a close call; the young couple had nearly become siblings.

After taking the car keys, he opened the car door. He took a cigar from a hidden compartment beneath the passenger-side dashboard, snipped off the end with a cigar cutter, and then lit it with a special match. After taking a satisfying puff, he then said, "Xiao Xu, you're going to start a family soon. You need to remember, you are the pillar of the home. No matter how much pressure or how many setbacks you face, you have to grit your teeth and endure. Don't ever collapse. If the main pillar falls, the house crumbles."

Lin Xu nodded, then asked, "Dad, have you been under a lot of pressure lately?"

Shen Guofu exhaled a puff of smoke and said with a smile, "What business doesn't come with pressure? But it's fine once you vent your emotions. After crying in your dad's arms last night, I felt much better."

He took a few more puffs of his cigar, then drove off.

「At nine in the morning.」

Lin Xu drove Dundun and his parents to Fishing Platform Building No. 10.

Guided by Guo Xinghai, he arrived at the National Unity Private Room in Building No. 10.

Before entering, he had only heard it was a large table for fifty-six people and hadn't thought much of its size. But upon entering, he discovered it was an enormous round table, at least a dozen meters in diameter.

Holy shit, isn't this too big? Lin Xu was astonished. If we sat face-to-face, we'd probably have to shout to converse, right?

Guo Xinghai pointed to the microphones placed at regular intervals on the table and said, "You have to use microphones to talk here, otherwise your throat will be raw by the end of the meal."

TSK... It's like a staff meeting.

After speaking, Guo Xinghai turned on the electric turntable on the table. Unlike the ones he usually saw, this electric turntable was ring-shaped. Only the part where dishes were placed would rotate, while the other areas stayed still.

How many dishes would it take to fill this up? Lin Xu asked curiously.

"It would take several hundred dishes to fill it completely. However, they usually don't fill it that much, leaving gaps between the plates."

While he was looking, Shen Baobao sent a message: "The relatives want to see you make Qingshui Furong and also want to taste your White Jade Lotus Root Strips. Do you have time to prepare them?"

On a big day like today, even if I don't have time, I have to make some.

Letting his parents take Dundun around to explore, Lin Xu followed Guo Xinghai to the kitchen of Building No. 10.

Because business at Building No. 10 was good, the kitchen staff had clearly increased, and everyone was very busy.

In the kitchen, he saw his senior fellow disciple Xie Baomin, along with Dai Jianli, Song Dahai, Guo Weidong, Qiu Zhenhua, and other head chefs, all busy cutting up a giant grouper.

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Wow... What a spread!

"Here comes my junior brother. The Giant Grouper will be ready in no time."

A variety of prepared parts were arranged on the workbench, including fish intestines, fish lips, fish belly, fish fillet, fish tail, fish liver, and fish brain, among other ingredients.

Dai Jianli saw Lin Xu approaching and nudged him with his shoulder, laughing, "Thanks for helping us advertise Building 18 yesterday. When you run out of those dipping sauces, just let me know. I'll make you some more, striving to make them even tastier than last time."

"Thank you, Chef Dai!"

Upon hearing this title, Dai Jianli immediately frowned and said, "What an awful way to address someone. Your senior brother and I are like brothers from different mothers. You should be calling me 'brother'."

Lin Xu: "..."

This 'brothers from different mothers' bit has got me all confused.

"Dai, go away... Oh right, could you make a Boiling Fish for my junior brother later? He hasn't witnessed your cooking skills yet."

"You got it!"

Boiling Fish?

Lin Xu's interest was immediately piqued.

Just yesterday, the system rewarded him with three Perfect Level Cooking Learning Cards. With such an important occasion today, and so many head chefs squeezed in here, it would really be a waste not to learn something.

But before he started learning, Lin Xu first asked Guo Xinghai to help fetch a few front pork elbows. Using a free stove, he began making Crystal Sugar Pork Knuckles.

Madam Shen was expected today, and he had to fulfill his promise of Crystal Sugar Pork Knuckles.

Additionally, according to the Shen Family's tradition, eating pork knuckles at significant events was customary. A betrothal banquet without Crystal Sugar Pork Knuckles might seem imperfect to the old lady.

Scalding the skin, singeing off hairs, cleaning, blanching, caramelizing sugar, cooking in a pressure cooker...

There were many people today; a single pork knuckle would probably not make it halfway around the table before being snapped up.

So, Lin Xu used a large pressure cooker to cook six pork knuckles.

After the pork knuckles were on the stove, the Giant Grouper was completely broken down.

Dai Jianli washed his hands, and seeing that Lin Xu was now free, he smiled and said, "Shall we start making Boiling Fish now? This dish is actually quite similar to Boiled Fish, but Boiled Fish is cooked in water, while Boiling Fish is cooked entirely in oil."

Oil? Wouldn't that just be frying the fish slices?

Dai Jianli picked up a piece of Dragon meat.

After cutting it into strips, he used a knife to slice it into fish pieces about three millimeters thick.

"Your senior brother is really good to you. I've never used such fine ingredients to cook a rustic dish like Boiling Fish in my life. If word got out, I don't know how many people would criticize me for wasting such precious food."

Lin Xu, curious, asked, "How is this kind of fish usually cooked?"

"Giant Grouper is typically steamed or charcoal-grilled. It can also be prepared with salt and pepper, braised, Fried Crispy, and so on. Any way you cook such a high-end ingredient, it will be delicious."

After the fish was sliced, it was placed in a basin.

Then, the seasoning began.

"After slicing freshwater fish, we generally rinse them to reduce any muddy or fishy taste. But for deep-sea fish like this, it's best not to. Each extra rinse would just wash away more of the fresh flavors."

While speaking, he added a bit of salt and a tiny dash of sugar (to enhance the flavor) to the Scallion and Ginger water. He stirred it until dissolved and then poured it over the fish. He repeatedly mixed it by hand, allowing the flavors of the Scallion and Ginger water to seep into the fish.

Next, he added an egg white, mixed it until the fish was coated in a slurry, and then added a handful of cornstarch.

Continuing to mix by hand, he coated the fish slices with a thin layer of starch, then poured in a little oil, and the fish was marinated.

While the fish was marinating, Dai Jianli grabbed a handful of Chinese lettuce and two stalks of Chinese celery from the freshly washed greens beside him. He gave them a quick chop and set up a wok.

He started making the base vegetables.

He added a bit of vegetable oil to the wok, heated it, then tossed in the Chinese celery. After a few stirs, he added the Chinese lettuce and stir-fried over high heat until just cooked but still crisp, before transferring it to a serving bowl.

"When stir-frying base vegetables, you must use high heat. This way, they come out crispy and taste better." Dai Jianli, fearing Lin Xu might not understand these details, made sure to explain it.

Once the base vegetables were arranged, he brought over the marinated fish slices.

He neatly laid the fish slices on top of the base vegetables.

The biggest difference between Boiling Fish and Boiled Fish lies here.

Boiled Fish involves cooking the ingredients in a spicy broad bean paste broth until done, then sprinkling it with chopped dried chili before pouring hot oil over it.

Boiling Fish, on the other hand, involves placing the fish slices directly in the bowl and then pouring searing hot oil over them, using the high temperature of the oil to cook the fish.

The two methods are entirely different, but both taste very good.

Once made, they can both be deemed Divine Artifacts for accompanying rice.

"Try not to overlap the fish slices, to prevent them from being undercooked. Also, spreading them in a single layer like this makes a standard full portion of fish," he said.

Lin Xu nodded, silently taking note.

After arranging the fish slices, Dai Jianli set up the wok again and poured in two large scoops of rapeseed oil.

"Boiling Fish is a dish that evolved from Sichuan cuisine. Therefore, when cooking it, try to use rapeseed oil, which is commonly eaten in the Sichuan and Chongqing regions. But using just rapeseed oil isn't fragrant enough, so we need to add something else," he explained.

After saying that, he added a large spoonful of lard and a large spoonful of Seasoning Oil into the wok.

Lard enhances the fragrance. Seasoning Oil adds a complex aroma.

While the oil was heating, Dai Jianli prepared nearly half a basket of dried chili segments and half a bowl of Sichuan peppercorns.

Building 10 specialized in Cantonese cuisine, where dishes were generally lighter in flavor.

His current activities had him taking half of the dried chili segments prepared by the assistant chefs, causing several of them to hurriedly start cutting more chili segments with scissors, flustered.

They were afraid of being scolded by the supervisor if seen.

After the oil in the wok heated up, Dai Jianli said, "When the oil is about 70% heated, turn off the flame. Then pour in the dried chilies and Sichuan peppercorns. If you're worried about burning them, you can soak these two ingredients in alcohol beforehand."

After he finished speaking, he turned off the heat.

He poured the dried chili segments and Sichuan peppercorns into the wok.

The hot oil in the wok immediately began to boil furiously, and a rich, spicy, and numbing aroma spread out.

Dai Jianli stirred the contents of the wok a few times with a ladle to ensure the peppercorns and chilies were heated evenly.

Then he poured everything all at once into the bowl layered with fish slices.

The hot oil started boiling again, now mingled with a fresh fragrance of fish.

As he was pouring the oil, Lin Xu silently recited in his mind, "Activate Cooking Learning Card!"

The Cooking Learning Card was instantly triggered.

"Learning subject: Dai Jianli. Current Skill is Boiling Fish Cooking Technique. Would you like to learn?"

"Learn!"

"Congratulations, Host, for acquiring the Perfect Level Sichuan Cuisine innovative dish—Boiling Fish."

Not bad, not bad at all. He had mastered it in one go. It seems he really had a connection with Chef Dai, this fun-loving guy.

As he was musing, Guo Weidong came over, frowning. "Dai, you son of a gun! Why didn't you turn on the range hood when you were frying the peppers and peppercorns? Look at how you've choked everyone in the kitchen..."

Lin Xu came back to his senses and realized that the kitchen was indeed filled with a pungent, numbing, and spicy smell. Nearby chefs were fleeing outside, covering their mouths and coughing as they ran.

They were obviously choked by the chilies.

Dai Jianli put down the wok, laughing as he said, "Well, I just wanted to add a bit of 'atmosphere' to your kitchen."

Guo Weidong: "..."

You damn thing! Is this choking, numbing smell that makes it impossible to stay here what you call 'atmosphere' in your home?

"Now that the Giant Grouper has been disassembled, crawl back to your eighteenth level of hell!"

Still smiling, Dai Jianli said, "Why are you chasing people away, Old Guo? I was just about to teach Brother Lin how to make Fried Fish Fillets."

Guo Weidong waved his hand impatiently. "I can teach him. If I let you continue, I'm afraid you'll demolish my kitchen... Lin Xu, how about I teach you how to make Fried Fish Fillets? Want to learn?"

Lin Xu, who had been enjoying the drama: "..."

Is this for real? Such a good thing?

"Yes, yes, yes! I really want to learn! I was just eager to witness Chef Guo's skills!"

Chapter 320: Fried Fish Fillets! This Crystal Sugar Pork Knuckle is Delicious! Happy Engagement! Dai Jianli didn't leave. Instead, he went looking for Xie Baomin and Song Dahai with a teasing smile. They were about to eat Giant Grouper; he just couldn't bear to leave.

Guo Weidong sighed, then turned on the range hood and all the kitchen ventilation equipment, which significantly reduced the choking smell in the kitchen. He glanced at the Boiling Fish made by Dai Jianli and said to Lin Xu, "Although that rascal is as much trouble as your senior brother, his skills are still quite good. Try this Boiling Fish; the taste should be very good."

By now, the Red Oil in the basin was no longer boiling vigorously. The Red Oil had a rich, glossy red color and wafted a tempting spicy aroma. Just from the smell, it was very enticing.

Lin Xu felt that having a serving of Boiling Fish, a small bowl of rice, and a bottle of ice-cold cola during his school days would have been incredibly satisfying. Unfortunately, he no longer played basketball, and his appetite had decreased a lot. Sometimes, he even ate less than his Shen Baobao.

Picking up a pair of disposable chopsticks from the nearby shelf, Lin Xu stirred in the basin. The oil-soaked fish slices immediately surfaced, filling the air with their fragrance once more.

Sichuan cuisine is quite interesting. Some dishes involve digging through piles of chilies to find pieces of meat, like Spicy Chicken Cubes and Cold Eating Rabbit. Others involve searching for ingredients in Red Oil, just like this Boiling Fish right in front of him.

Lin Xu picked up a slice of fish draped in Red Oil from the basin and put it into his mouth. As soon as it touched his taste buds, he felt the richness of the oil and the spiciness it contained. However, the spiciness in the Red Oil was neither overwhelming nor choking. It was just intensely aromatic.

As he chewed gently, the initial spicy flavor in his mouth was soon masked by the fresh taste of the fish.

Giant Grouper was a delicacy among seafood. When used to make Boiling Fish, its fresh flavors were maximally sealed into the fish by the surrounding oils. The moment he tasted it, his appetite, which hadn't been strong, was instantly whetted by this delicious aroma and flavor. Even the spiciness became a mere backdrop.

"How's the taste?"

"Delicious. The freshness is locked into the flesh, making the flavor even richer."

Unfortunately, there was no rice right now. If only there was a bowl of rice to go with it, that would be even more perfect.

Hearing this, Guo Weidong looked a bit surprised. He grabbed a pair of chopsticks, tasted it, and immediately said, "No wonder Xie Baomin asked Dai to teach you Boiling Fish. I thought you liked spicy flavors, but it seems he already knew the secret of using oil to lock the freshness into the flesh."

After tasting it, Guo Weidong looked towards Xie Baomin in the distance, a look of admiration on his face.

What is talent? This is it. Using a spicy flavor for such delicious fish. It might seem like a reckless waste of a fine ingredient, but in reality, it actually intensified the delicious flavor of the fish. Xie Baomin had even figured this out. He truly deserved to be the leading figure of the middle generation at Fishing Platform. Head Chef Gao firmly held the top spot among the elder generation. Xie Baomin was the leader of the middle generation. And among the younger generation, he had initially thought his nephew would distinguish himself, but then Lin Xu had emerged out of nowhere. This trio of master and disciples was truly impressive.

After reflecting on this and taking advantage of the remaining time, Guo Weidong began teaching Lin Xu how to make Fried Fish Fillets.

"Each culinary style has its quick stir-fry dishes, such as Lu cuisine's Oil-fried Double Crispy, Coriander Fried Meat Shreds, and Sauce Burst Chicken Cubes. Sichuan cuisine has similar dishes, represented by the 'raw-fried' and 'fire-blasted' series."

The head chefs at Fishing Platform had different training backgrounds, so their teaching methods varied. Xie Baomin taught cooking by starting with the dish in question but would interject many small culinary tips during the process. It was the same approach Head Chef Gao used. When Dai Jianli taught cooking, however, his instruction revolved entirely around the dish at hand. He didn't digress to discuss other culinary knowledge. He just wanted to get through the cooking process efficiently, all while making sure to have some fun. If it weren't for Guo Weidong's formidable presence rushing over, Lin Xu wouldn't have even realized that this head chef was cooking without turning on the ventilation.

As for Guo Weidong, his teaching was typical of an academic style; when teaching a dish, he would start by explaining its category. This not only gave one a new understanding of the dish's category but also unknowingly inspired one to try this cooking method with other ingredients.

Perhaps this was why Cantonese cuisine was considered the only evolving one among the Eight Great Cuisines, Lin Xu sighed to himself.

Seeing Guo Weidong cutting a piece of fish and starting to cook, he quickly focused, preparing to seriously learn how to make Fried Fish Fillets from this head chef.

Once he mastered it, he could introduce it in his restaurant and make more money!

"Fried Fish Fillets, similar to the Boiling Fish that Dai just made, also requires slicing the fish and marinating it beforehand. However, the difference is that for Fried Fish Fillets, the slices need to be as thin as possible."

Guo Weidong's knife skills were top-notch. As his kitchen knife danced, thin and uniform slices of fish were cut. The sliced fish didn't need to be washed. It was directly mixed in scallion and ginger water before being seasoned with a small spoonful of salt.

"Most meats shouldn't be salted during marination, as salt is a strong dehydrating agent that can be detrimental. However, when making Fried Fish Fillets, it's necessary to add some salt. This utilizes salt's dehydrating properties to make the fish slices gelatinous and sticky, which improves the texture of the quickly stir-fried fish."

Oh ho! Got it, got it.

Guo Weidong vigorously worked the fish slices in the basin by hand, mixing and slapping them a few times. When the fish slices became gelatinous, he added half an egg white and a little cornstarch.