

## Culinary 341

Chapter 341: The Secret to Making Fish Head! Lamb is so cute, it must be well-marinated before roasting!

Lin Xu emerged carrying the prepared large fish head, and its spicy aroma instantly captivated all the relatives.

"How does this smell so incredibly good?"

"I remember the fish head we had in the city last time didn't taste anything like this."

"The fragrance goes straight to your sinuses!"

"Our Little Xu's cooking skills are truly exceptional!"

A huge round dining table had already been set up in the courtyard.

Lin Xu placed the fish head in the center, then arranged the previously prepared Fried Fish Fillets, Boiled Assorted Fish Parts, Boiled Fish Slices, Sweet and Sour Fish Slices, and Crispy Fried Fish Slices around it.

Later, the fish soup with tofu would also be served.

Every part of the large bighead carp his Second Uncle had caught was now accounted for in the planned dishes.

At this moment, his Second Aunt's husband, Shi Wenming, also started stewing the geese.

Both geese were quite plump. Knowing they couldn't possibly finish two, he had set one aside.

For a village feast chef like him, making famous or intricate dishes might be beyond his skill, but he was a natural at pot-stewed dishes like these. Especially since he was using the large cauldron in the courtyard's wood-fired stove, the aroma began to waft out not long after he started stewing.

"Xu, this fish head is beautifully made! You have to teach me later. Once I've learned it, our restaurant can add this Wild Chopped Pepper Fish Head to the menu!"

Ever since contracting to manage this scenic area, Shi Wenming hadn't actively managed the fish in the reservoir. He had neither scattered feed nor stocked fish fry, so calling them wild was accurate. It would be a shame for such good fish to simply grow in the reservoir. Besides, if there were too many, it could affect the water quality. Therefore, it was essential to seize any opportunity to generate profit.

Lin Xu said, "No problem, Uncle-in-law. I guarantee I'll teach you before I leave!"

As they were speaking, Lin Hongqi returned with Liu Zhengyu, having shown him around the scenic area.

"Everything's ready, right? Then let's eat! President Liu, I apologize for the humble meal. When Xu goes back to Beijing, we'll treat you to something better."

Yes, learning that Liu Zhengyu had made this special trip for the scenic area, Lin Xu decided on the spot that once he returned to Beijing, he absolutely had to treat Liu Zhengyu to a meal at Fishing Platform.

Liu Zhengyu said with a laugh, "Please, don't stand on ceremony. It was only today that I realized the immense potential of Longqi Mountain Scenic Area. If development continues, it won't just be a 4A-rated site; achieving 5A wouldn't be a problem at all!"

Currently, the scenic area was developed around the outermost Dragon Head Peak.

But in reality, the area further in was vast. Not only was there a huge gentle slope with waist-high green grass stretching for ten to twenty kilometers, but there was also a valley extending for dozens of kilometers behind the mountain. The water in the reservoir flowed to the outside world through the river channel in this valley.

In the future, whether the gentle slope on the other side of the reservoir was developed into a ranch, or the valley was transformed into an Adventure Valley or a scenic promenade like Yuntai Mountain, either would qualitatively elevate the scenic area.

Furthermore, development could continue deeper into the mountains. Connecting several nearby peaks with plank walkways and adding attractions like aerial cable cars would further enhance its ability to attract tourists.

In short, this scenic area was a treasure trove.

Once developed, it could definitely become a major scenic area in Northern Zhongyuan, integrating dining, entertainment, leisure, wellness retreats, and opportunities to connect with nature.

"Then we'll take President Liu's auspicious words to heart!"

Lin Hongqi and Liu Zhengyu washed their hands and then joined the relatives at the large round table to begin the meal.

There were too many people today to fit at one table. So, they split the fish head in half and portioned out the other dishes as well. They also set up another table next to the large one for Lin Xu's younger cousins.

Chen Yuanyuan took one look and exclaimed, "Ha! I'll sit at the kids' table!"

Shen Baobao wanted to join her, but Chen Meijuan held her back. "The kids eat a lot; you might not be able to compete with them."

Indeed, before long, Chen Yuanyuan returned with her stool, looking dejected. Compared to her growing younger cousins, her ability to compete for food was truly negligible.

Just then, Lin Xu, having put the crayfish on to stew, came out of the kitchen. He sat down next to Shen Baobao and started eating with everyone.

"Xu, how did you make this Chopped Pepper Fish Head? It's so much tastier than the usual ones," Second Aunt Lin Hongxia remarked, finding the fish head more delicious with every bite.

When Chen Meiliang had first brought the fish over, she had worried they wouldn't be able to finish it all. But now, she found herself wishing there was another one.

Lin Xu tasted a piece. After being thoroughly marinated, the savory flavor of the fish had been fully brought out. Plus, the aromatics had been stir-fried, which cooked off the harshness of the chilies, leaving only a gentle, spicy aroma. This made it even more delicious.

He explained with a smile, "Before steaming, stir-fry the aromatics with hot oil and dried fermented black beans. Once they're fragrant, add them to the fish for steaming; that's what brings out the flavor."

"Do you need to stir-fry the chopped peppers as well if you use them?"

"Yes, they also need to be stir-fried. And before stir-frying, you should rinse the chopped peppers to wash away excess salt. After pickling, the spiciness of the chopped peppers becomes milder. If you feel it's not spicy enough, you can add some fresh bird's eye chilies when stir-frying the aromatics."

As Lin Xu spoke, he shared the key points of this dish with his relatives.

"First, the fish must be thoroughly cleaned. Split it from the top of the head, which helps it steam through more easily.

Second, the fish must be marinated thoroughly. This allows its savory flavor to be fully released during steaming.

Third, stir-fry the aromatics. Strictly speaking, to achieve the most authentic flavor for Chopped Pepper Fish Head, one should use Tea Oil from the Xiangtan Region for stir-frying.

Fourth, after the fish is steamed and the heat is turned off, don't rush to take it out of the steamer. Let it rest and continue to steam with the residual heat for another two to three minutes. This allows the aromas to fully penetrate the fish.

Fifth, when preparing the hot oil to pour over the fish at the end, try adding some lard. This makes the fish more fragrant and moist."

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After outlining a few key points, the relatives all showed an eagerness to give it a try.

Compared to other dishes, this one didn't require knife skills or any other particular attention to detail—it just needed to be fully steamed—making it a definite first choice for novices.

Plus, once it was done, both the taste and presentation were exceptionally striking.

Wouldn't preparing such a dish be the highlight of the family banquet?

Lin Xu sampled a piece of fish from the belly. The meat there was steamed to a jelly-like consistency and, when dipped into the spicy and fragrant sauce at the bottom of the plate, proved indescribably delicious.

Mmm... No wonder it's a Perfect Level Cooking Technique. The fish head turned out so tasty.

Besides the fish head and a few other fish dishes, the table also featured Shi Wenming's fried crispy river shrimp, wild vegetables stir-fried with pork Lard, and cold salads made from various other wild greens, all beyond reproach in flavor. And because these ingredients weren't something you could find outside, everyone enjoyed themselves immensely. This was especially true for Liu Zhengyu and Zeng Xiaoqi. As they ate, they couldn't help but exclaim that even the leaves in the mountains had a fresher taste than those in the city.

After eating for a while, Lin Xu went back to the kitchen to check on the crayfish. He also took the pressure cooker off the stove, released the pressure, and then fished out the fish bones to pick off the meat.

Well, it wasn't just about eating; he also had to prepare something for the little one.

After removing the fish meat, Lin Xu searched around and finally found Dundun next to the cage holding the remaining goose. The little guy was crouching, once again transformed into a goose hunter.

"Why are you always attempting an Over-level Challenge?"

Lin Xu picked him up, brought him to the kitchen door, scooped the fish meat that was laid out on a dish cooling into a disposable lunch box, and handed it to the little fellow.

Seeing the meat, Dundun instantly became a "rice-devouring cat," head down, gobbling it up bite after bite.

「At the dining table.」

Grandma Lin, wearing glasses, said to Shen Baobao, "Yueyue, hurry and eat while it's hot. Make sure you eat your fill; you're in our home, after all."

Shen Jiayue responded and then said to her mother-in-law, "Grandma is so kind!"

Chen Meijuan laughed, "That's because you haven't seen your grandma when she's really fired up. Back when I first married into the family, we visited some relatives who were quite traditional. They said that women shouldn't sit at the table and wanted me to eat in the kitchen. Your grandma got so angry she flipped the table, sending food scattering all over the room!"

Wow!

Shen Baobao's eyes glittered. She looked at Grandma Lin with admiration and exclaimed, "Grandma, you're so cool!"

Who would have thought that Grandma, who seemed every bit the refined lady from the Republic era, had such a fiery side? But then again, considering how the usually gentle and cultured Grandfather once chased Dad down several streets with a shovel, Grandma flipping a table didn't seem so out of character anymore.

Smiling at the memory, Grandma Lin said, "It wasn't easy for our Hongqi to marry such a beautiful bride like Meijuan. I doted on her so much, how could I let her suffer such indignity?"

Chen Meijuan quickly offered a piece of fish to Grandma Lin, "Mom, try this piece. It's steamed just like jelly; it slides right down."

After saying that, she also served a piece to her own mother, Grandma Chen.

Mm, mothers on both sides. Both deserved devoted care.

Shen Baobao watched with a moved expression. No wonder her mother-in-law was so good to her—it was a family tradition! Ha! In the future, I must also be good to my daughter-in-law. Let the Lin family's fine traditions be passed down!

"The tofu soup is here! After we have some, it'll be almost time for the crayfish," Lin Xu announced, carrying in two large tureens of tofu soup from the kitchen, which exuded a rich, savory aroma.

The broth, made from fish bones and fish, was paired with blanched firm tofu. This delicious combination was simply irresistible.

"Wow, Cousin's cooking skills are amazing!"

"I'm going to apply to Central Finance for college! After graduation, I'll become a chef!"

"Me too, me too! After I graduate, I'll apply to be the head chef at Lin Ji's Food!"

"You, a head chef? Dream on! I added Car Guy on WeChat the other day. He said that Lin Ji's Food is very strict; even someone with his cooking skills had to start as a kitchen assistant. What makes you think you can be head chef?"

The chatter of his cousins left Lin Xu somewhat speechless.

That Car Guy, spouting nonsense online again. Wasn't he afraid his cousins would totally embarrass themselves if they ever visited Beijing? Besides, Central Finance doesn't even teach cooking! You guys better not get any wrong ideas!

Shen Baobao stood up with a ladle and served a bowl of tofu soup to each of the elders. This delighted the Lin family relatives, who all praised Lin Xu's wife for her politeness and filial piety.

If it weren't for the fear of his in-laws' blood pressure skyrocketing, Lin Xu would have really liked to record this and show them.

As everyone enjoyed the tofu soup, their curiosity about the dish grew. Reluctantly, Lin Xu once again explained to his relatives how to make the Milk Soup Tofu.

「Before long.」

The crayfish in the pot were ready. He returned to the kitchen and ladled them onto trays.

Two large trays of spicy crayfish and one large tray of garlic-flavored crayfish were placed on each table.

「When the crayfish were served.」

The meal truly began in earnest.

Everyone put down their chopsticks, donned disposable gloves, and started on the crayfish.

"This crayfish is really packed with flavor!"

Chen Yuanyuan tasted a crayfish, and her eyes lit up. She had eaten crayfish at street stalls many times recently, but none were as delicious as the ones her cousin made.

Lin Xu smiled and said, "There's really no secret to it, as long as you're generous with the seasonings."

Many restaurants failed to make delicious crayfish because they used cheap, dead ones, which tasted vastly different from live ones.

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Additionally, some people are reluctant to deep-fry the crawfish in advance, so the ones they prepare naturally can't compare to those that have been pre-fried.

The ingredients are also very important.

When stir-frying the aromatics, first use Doubanjiang to create the Red Oil. Then, add plenty of Scallion and Ginger and dried chili, and stew with beer. After it boils, add a handful of Crystal Sugar. This way, the crawfish are unlikely to taste bad.

The two elderly women weren't very fond of crawfish. They found peeling them too troublesome, and since they were almost full, they were about to leave the table when Lin Xu arrived with a pot of hand-pulled noodles.

"Every day online, they praise how delicious my grandchild's hand-pulled noodles are. Today, this old woman finally got to taste them."

"Exactly. Many times I've wanted to ask Meide or Meiliang to take me to Beijing to try my grandchild's cooking skills, but I was afraid of bothering them. Now it's great; my grandson has come back."

The two elderly women scooped up some of the soup from the Chopped Pepper Fish Head to mix with their noodles.

After tasting it, they couldn't stop praising how delicious it was.

The women, who had already eaten their fill, each ended up having another bowl of noodles, eating much more than usual.

After eating their fill, the two of them left the table.

They carried Dundun to the small square outside the visitor center to enjoy the mountain breeze.

Once the elderly women had left, the remaining middle-aged and young adults really let loose. Unable to play with their phones, they focused all their energy on wrestling with the crawfish shells.

Shi Wenming said as he ate, "Lin Xu's visit has inspired me with new ideas. I plan to serve large fish heads and iron pot stews in the restaurant, focusing on farmhouse flavors to differentiate from the styles of the other restaurants."

There are now four dining options in the scenic area.

Apart from the farmhouse restaurant at the main entrance, there is also a cliff hotel restaurant halfway up the mountain, a snack restaurant next to the water park specializing in cold skins and meat-stuffed buns, and a buffet restaurant at the tent base where you can eat as much as you want for thirty yuan.

Each restaurant has its own emphasis, offering tourists better choices.

Lin Hongqi thought this idea was quite sound. "You go ahead and do what you need. Just give me a shout if the place needs renovating, and I'll have it all sorted out for you."

When they were almost finished with the crawfish, Shi Wenming's iron pot stewed goose was finally ready.

To ensure everyone enjoyed themselves, Second Aunt Lin Hongxia had even specially made some cornmeal pancakes, sticking them to the side of the pot to cook.

By this time, the goose was well-stewed, and the pancakes, cooked until they formed a crispy crust, were flaky and fragrant, much to Shen Baobao's delight.

She had also eaten iron pot stews in Beijing, but they were all too refined and lacked the rustic, smoky flavor that comes from cooking over a wood fire.

Savoring these delicious pancakes and the fragrant goose, this city girl even began to consider living here permanently.

After everyone had eaten their fill, they were all stuffed.

The cousins, who aspired to study at Central Finance and become chefs, also took off their disposable gloves. They snapped pictures of the leftovers on the table with their phones and posted them under the Lin Ji's Food topic to fish for likes.

"Are you full, Baobao?" Lin Xu gently wiped the Red Oil from the corner of Shen Baobao's mouth and asked dotingly.

"I'm stuffed... Every dish was super delicious and flavorful, but I really can't eat anymore."

Shen Jiayue patted her belly in frustration. I really wish I could continue eating!

Relatives who needed to wash their hands did so, and those who needed to wipe their mouths did that.

After a flurry of activity, they sat in the yard enjoying the mountain breeze and chatting leisurely.

But Lin Xu couldn't relax.

He had to hurry up and marinate the fat sheep hanging in the yard; otherwise, they wouldn't be able to roast it by noon the next day.

Shi Wenming was originally clearing the dining table, but when he saw Lin Xu preparing to marinate the lamb, he quickly went over. Hmm, such a rare learning opportunity; I definitely can't miss it.

He found a large tray and placed it on the kitchen worktable, laying the whole sheep in it with its belly facing up.

It wasn't time to marinate yet. First, the sheep had to be butchered. Lin Xu sliced open the thicker parts of the meat so that the lamb would absorb the marinade better and cook through evenly when roasted.

Next, he used a cleaver to chop along the sheep's spine, separating it. This way, the spine would cook through more easily, and the lamb's fascia wouldn't contract from the heat, preventing the body from contorting and deforming during roasting.

After chopping the spine, the whole sheep was finally laid out flat on the tray.

But that wasn't all. Lin Xu then took a kitchen knife and separated the meat on the sheep's limbs. He scored the thick parts with cross-cuts and severed the fascia at each joint. This allowed the whole sheep to lie completely flat on the tray, making it easy to secure to the roasting spit the next day.

After the lamb was butchered, Lin Xu began preparing the marinating ingredients.

Lin Xu chopped two scallions, two purple onions, one apple, a large piece of ginger, and a large bowl of garlic cloves, placing them all into a basin. Then, he added a large handful of Cumin Powder, a handful of pepper powder, a handful of Five-Spice Powder, a handful of salt, and half a handful of sugar.

He mixed these ingredients with Cooking Wine to form a paste, then spread it evenly all over the lamb, both inside and out.

"With the seasoning applied so thickly, won't it burn during roasting tomorrow?" Shi Wenming asked in surprise.

Lin Xu smiled and replied, "These seasonings are just to give the lamb a base flavor. We will wash them off before roasting it tomorrow."

In the Northwest Region, when a pit oven is used for roasting a whole sheep, the applied seasonings don't need to be washed off. This is because the pit oven roasts using the residual heat from charcoal, not an open flame.

For Mongolian-style roasted whole sheep, which is cooked over a charcoal fire, the lamb must be brushed with oil and Honey water during roasting. Therefore, the surface cannot have seasonings, or it would burn too quickly. Moreover, the skin wouldn't become crispy or flaky, resulting in a poor texture.

The roasting Technique Lin Xu had mastered worked well for both open-flame roasting and pit ovens.

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But the scenic area lacked a traditional naan pit, and there was no need to dig one now, so the Mongolian-style charcoal grilling was more appropriate.

While he was marinating the lamb, Shen Baobao and her cousins held up their phones to film, ready to continue "poisoning" audiences under the Lin Ji's Food topic.

Zeng Xiaoqi and her colleagues, led by Chen Yuanyuan, drove to the Cliffside Hotel to check in and roughly edit the footage they had recorded that afternoon. That way, once they finished filming the mountaintop segment tomorrow, the video could be finalized and sent to the television station to be scheduled for broadcast.

Well, after eating so much of their food, it was only right to repay them!

After they left, the elders continued sitting in the yard, chatting with Liu Zhengyu. This man was an authority in the tourism industry, and when it came to future development plans, Chairman Liu had considerable clout.

Seeing Liu Zhengyu offering cigarettes around, Lin Hongqi hurriedly retrieved the cigars Shen Guofu had sent from inside the house and distributed one to each person.

Uncle Chen Meide looked at the letters on one, tried to piece them together without success, and then curiously asked, "This one must cost two or three hundred, right?"

Liu Zhengyu took a look and said with a smile, "This is a globally limited edition. Each one costs at least four figures, and they're not even easy to find..."

Upon hearing how expensive it was, Chen Meide instantly became reluctant to smoke it.

But his younger brother, the Second Uncle, cared little for the price. He took the scissors just used for the crawfish and—SNIP!—cut off the cigar's end. Then, lighting it with a lighter, he took a puff and remarked, "Hmm, this cigar is not bad."

The Second Uncle had once been wealthy and was quite knowledgeable about tobacco and alcohol.

After Liu Zhengyu lit his cigar, he began to chat with everyone.

「In the kitchen.」

Once Lin Xu had rubbed the marinade all over the lamb, inside and out, he wrapped the lamb in cling film and placed it onto a tray. Then he opened the kitchen's refrigerator and stuffed the lamb inside. Marinating at a low temperature under refrigeration would ensure the lamb remained as fresh and tender as possible.

"Alright, everything's ready. Just remember to come and eat tomorrow at noon," Lin Xu said, washing his hands and calling out to his cousins.

"Don't worry, Cousin, we'll be here first thing in the morning!"

"That's right! We'll skip breakfast; we're just waiting for the lamb!"

"Besides lamb, what else will there be, Cousin?"

"Depends on what Sister-in-law wants. Whatever she wants to eat, our big bro will definitely make it!"

Lin Xu turned his gaze to Shen Baobao. "Well, since they've put it that way, go on. Is there anything you're craving? If so, I'll make it happen."

Shen Jiayue thought for a moment and said, "I want to try the dipping sauce you made during your first competition. The judges looked so delighted eating the lamb with it; I'd like to try it too."

Dipping Sauce Lamb? It would indeed suit this season perfectly.

He was about to agree when the system's notification tone sounded in his mind:

"As the Host passionately explores the culinary arts, a reward task has been triggered: [Dipping Sauce Lamb]. Please prepare a serving of Dipping Sauce Lamb that satisfies Shen Jiayue within twenty-four hours. Completion rewards an Excellent Level Snack: Wild Vegetable Nests."

As expected... Anything Shen Baobao liked to eat could trigger a reward. However, this time the reward was Wild Vegetable Nests—that's Grandma's favorite! I absolutely have to complete this task so Grandma can taste my Wild Vegetable Nests!

After coming out of the kitchen, the yard was filled with the aroma of cigars.

Knowing Shen Baobao disliked this kind of smell, Lin Xu smiled and said, "Why don't we drive over to the tent base? I can keep you company while you gaze at the starry sky you've been longing to see. What do you think?"

"Yes, yes! That sounds wonderful!"

The two of them said goodbye to the elders, asked Lin Xu's mother to take good care of Dundun, and then drove off. They followed the road within the scenic area, heading towards the mountain hollow at the far end of the reservoir...

「At the same time.」

On the Lin Ji's Food social media page, when netizens saw the video posted by Lin Xu's cousins of the marinated whole roasted lamb, they were all drooling.

"This is just too cruel! (SLURP)"

"Lambs are so adorable; how could you eat them?!"

"Booking tickets, booking tickets! I'll try to get to the scenic area by noon tomorrow for that whole roasted lamb!"

"Count me in! I'm going too!"

"..."

Chapter 345: Tent Living is Great, Never Again! The N+1th Crossover!

The car approached the reservoir. The shimmering surface of the water reflected the moonlight, surrounded by the various calls of insects and birds. A gentle breeze carried the fresh scents of flowers, grasses, and the mountain forest right into their nostrils.

"Wow! This breeze feels so nice."

Shen Baobao rolled down the car window, half-leaning out, feeling even closer to nature.

"Sit properly; the mountain road here is a bit steep."

Lin Xu noticed that his Baobao really was like a child with ADHD, never sitting still in the car. She was either reaching out to touch the leaves of the bushes or leaning out to enjoy the feeling of the breeze on her face.

It seems like it's time for her to binge-watch the \*Final Destination\* series, Lin Xu thought. It's such a good safety education film; a child with ADHD like Shen Baobao really needs to watch it several times.

Following the reservoir's edge, they continued onward. As tourist facilities became sparse and the peaks of Dragon Head Mountain receded into the distance, they arrived at Starry Camp, which was full of tents.

This was a relatively high, gentle slope with open surroundings—an ideal place for stargazing.

The streetlights here were very concealed, emitting soft, dim yellow light from the grass on the roadside. Even the lights inside the tents were faint, minimizing light pollution to help visitors appreciate the beauty of the night sky.

Upon arriving at the entrance of the camp, they saw several tourists staying at Starry Camp, lining up to use a telescope that required a QR code payment to gaze at the stars.

"I want to look too, in a bit!" Shen Baobao exclaimed.

"Okay."

Upon entering and finding the service desk, one of Lin Xu's aunts hurried over.

"You're here, Xiao Xu! Your tent is at the very top; I'll take you there."

With that, she hopped onto an electric tricycle and drove ahead.

Is it that far away? Lin Xu wondered.

He drove, following her.

After several twists and turns, they finally reached the highest point of Starry Camp. The grass here was lush, but a clearing had been made, with one large and one small tent set up in the middle.

The high-end tents had transparent tops, so one could lie inside and enjoy the magnificent starry sky.

"The small tent has a shower and toilet; the large tent has bedding, a fan, and a mini-fridge with drinks. I've already spread insect and snake repellent around, and there's a plug-in mosquito repellent coil lit outside, so you won't get bitten by bugs." His aunt's explanation was very detailed, and Lin Xu was quite satisfied.

Shen Baobao was even quicker. She jumped out of the car first, unzipped the tent, kicked off her shoes, and quickly ducked inside.

"WOW! This place is set up so beautifully! It's fulfilled all my camping fantasies! I need to send a message to thank our mom!"

She flopped down in the tent and started tapping away on her phone, messaging Chen Meijuan.

After Lin Xu got out of the car, his aunt continued, "Make sure to lock the tent zipper once you're inside. There's a riot baton and a whistle hanging inside. No matter what happens, blow the whistle first, and the security patrolling nearby will arrive promptly."

Lin Xu curiously asked, "We don't have wolves here, so what kind of danger could there be?"

"Well, a while ago, a drunk tourist crawled into someone else's tent, so we've strengthened our management in that regard since then."

So that's why, Lin Xu thought.

His aunt relayed a few more precautions before riding off on her tricycle.

Lin Xu dragged Shen Baobao's suitcase out of the car and took it into the tent so she could easily get her change of clothes.

Then he checked the bathroom. It was equipped with towels, slippers, and toiletries—even better stocked than a hotel.

He went back to the car to get his own change of clothes, told Shen Baobao, and then took a shower in the small tent out back.

He had been busy all day and was sweaty all over. Taking a shower now felt surprisingly good.

After washing up, he changed into a tank top and shorts and put on his slippers. When the mountain breeze blew over him, he felt refreshed from head to toe.

Lin Xu first put his dirty clothes in the car. Then, he opened the tent flap and was about to duck inside when he noticed Shen Baobao rummaging around for something.

"What are you looking for? Is there a bug?"

"Mom said there were 'safety items' in the tent, so I wanted to see what they were... Huh? What are these little packets? Instant noodle seasoning?"

What in the world? Lin Xu thought. Baobao, are you sure you didn't have someone else take your college entrance exam for you?

Just as he was about to give her a hint, Shen Baobao suddenly realized what the items were. She tossed the "seasoning packets" aside and buried her face in the pillow.

"Boohoo, I thought it was some kind of pepper spray or something, so I searched for ages."

Lin Xu sat down. He had initially planned to lie down, but his hair was still wet, so he opted to rest on his stomach. He checked his messages on WeChat, then gently elbowed Shen Baobao.

"Do you want to go wash up?"

"Okay... okay!"

The two left the tent. Shen Baobao carried her change of clothes into the small tent, while Lin Xu sat on the hood of the car, opened the night mode on his phone, and started taking photos of the starry sky.

Aided by his photography technique and a phone camera that was decent enough, he managed to capture a pretty good image of the starry sky.

What was even better was that his current position was somewhat elevated, so when he took the photo, he also captured the silhouette of Starry Camp and the dim, hazy glow of the path lights, making it look both dreamy and sophisticated.

Opening the Lin Ji's Food topic, he posted the photo with a caption:

"A random snap at Longqi Mountain Starry Camp. Friends who want to experience the joy of camping in a tent can come try it out! The camp also offers a mini-class on constellations, teaching you hands-on how to identify them."

Chapter 346: Living Well in the Tent, Never Staying Again! The N+1th Crossover!

It wasn't long after he posted it that the netizens' replies started appearing:

"Wow, so beautiful!"

"Wow! I really love stargazing. Boss Lin, wait for me, I'll be there tomorrow morning."

"Come on, be honest, you're not going just for the roast lamb, are you?"

"Definitely. He just said in another post that he had to grab at least a lamb leg."

"I didn't expect Boss Lin's non-food posts to still be so tempting."

"Thanks to Boss Lin, I have material for my dreams tonight!"

"Be careful not to have a nightmare; this thing looks like something out of 'A Chinese Ghost Story'."

"Whoa! Wouldn't that be even cooler?"

"Person above, are you for real???"

"..."

While enjoying the amusing comments from the netizens, Shen Baobao finished her bath.

She changed into a thigh-length T-shirt—she hadn't washed her hair—and, smelling of shower gel, she ducked into the tent somewhat shyly when she saw Lin Xu.

Lin Xu instantly felt the netizens' amusing comments become dull.

Jumping down from the hood of the car, he ducked into the tent, zipped it closed, and re-secured the stakes around it.

Seeing Shen Baobao bury her face in the bedding like an ostrich again, Lin Xu chuckled softly. Then, noticing a bottle of red wine, two wine glasses, and a corkscrew next to the mini-fridge, he suggested, "Would you like to drink some red wine?"

"Okay... alright..."

Lin Xu deftly uncorked the bottle, poured some into each of the two glasses, and seeing ice cubes in the small freezer compartment, added a couple to each glass.

As he swirled his wine glass, he marveled. Mom's arrangements were absolutely perfect; she even thought of ice cubes! She's truly the best!

"Alright, we can drink now."

Shen Baobao then sat up, picked up her glass, and took a gentle sip, then grimaced. "So bitter! This tastes awful, doesn't it?"

Lin Xu thought the wine might have gone bad. He tasted his own. It was just the taste of red wine, and quite mellow. That bottle shouldn't have been cheap.

He looked at Shen Baobao, not knowing whether to laugh or cry, and asked, "Red wine just tastes like this. Haven't you ever had it before?"

"No... Red wine is made from grapes, isn't it? Shouldn't it be sweet?"

Lin Xu resignedly reopened the fridge, found some Sprite, and poured some into Shen Baobao's glass.

Once she tried it, she immediately loved the taste. "I think this is the proper way to drink red wine! Wow, it's sweet and really tasty."

Lin Xu: "..."

Those winemakers abroad spent generations perfecting techniques to remove the sweetness from wine, leaving only its mellow aroma, and here you are, taking it right back to square one!

Sipping this tasty red wine concoction, Shen Baobao finally relaxed and let loose a bit.

She downed the drink in her glass in a couple of gulps and then handed him the empty glass. "Hey, bartender, fill 'er up!"

Heh, she's really getting into it now, Lin Xu thought with amusement.

Lin Xu poured her another large glass and then sipped his own red wine gently.

Fine wine, a beautiful woman, a sky full of stars... all the best things in life gathered together. Could this be considered a perfect life?

But this is just the beginning, he resolved. I must work hard to build up my career, make it strong and successful. That way, I can enjoy a broader life and appreciate even more magnificent scenery!

Most importantly, I mustn't disappoint those who support and love me.

Yes, Mom and Dad, my parents-in-law, the elders from both our families, as well as Master, my senior apprentice-brothers, and all our relatives and friends—they're all waiting for me to achieve something.

As he was thinking, he heard a soft snoring sound.

Turning his head, he realized Shen Baobao, who had downed two large glasses of red wine mixed with Sprite, was now sprawled out on the bedding, fast asleep. Her wine glass had slipped from her hand and rolled aside, coming to rest right on those packets of "seasoning."

This... What in the world?

Lin Xu forgot all about his own wine.

Seeing that Shen Baobao was truly asleep, he took a blanket and covered her, then put the wine glasses aside, turned off the lights, and lay down, staring speechlessly at the star-filled sky above.

Lin Xu sighed.

Who would have thought, he mused, that Shen Baobao, who's always clamoring to chug beer and drink till she drops, had actually never touched alcohol before?

If I'd known, I would've let her try some last time we were eating those duck necks, let her build up a bit of tolerance.

After turning off the lights, the twinkling stars became visible overhead, and the sounds of insects and occasional birds chirping could be heard around them.

The mountain breeze rustled through. The grass swayed with the wind, creating a soft, pleasant friction sound.

The air, fragrant with grass and wildflowers, soon wafted in through the tent's mesh ventilation.

To get close to nature, staying in a tent really is the best choice.

Lin Xu turned on his side and gently pecked the lips of Shen Baobao, who looked adorable in her sleep. "Goodnight, Baobao."

Having said that, he covered himself with the blanket, listening to the insects and birds outside as he drifted off to sleep.

「Early morning.」

Lin Xu was woken by a weight on top of him.

When he opened his eyes, he discovered that Shen Baobao was clinging to him like an octopus, her fair, slender legs thrown across his waist, her arm draped over his chest, and half of her body pressing down on him.

He gently pulled the blanket higher to cover her. Is she cold? he wondered.

Checking the time, he saw it was nearly seven o'clock. He got up, fetched the disposable dental kit from the small adjacent tent, filled a cup with water, and began to brush his teeth and wash his face.

While he was busy, his mom sent a message on his phone: "Are you awake yet? Remember to come to the Cliff Hotel's restaurant for breakfast; your uncle doesn't serve breakfast at his place."

"I'm brushing my teeth right now. I'll be there in a bit."

"Son, you're awake? How was sleeping in the tent?"

Chapter 347: Living Well in the Tent, Never Again! The N+1th Crossover!

Looking at this message, Lin Xu replied speechlessly, "The tent was very comfortable, but I'm never staying in one again."

Chen Meijuan: ???????

As the mother and son were chatting, a shrill scream came from the large tent next door, "AAAAHHH! Where is this? Xu Bao! I'm so scared!"

Lin Xu: "..."

It was his first time seeing someone black out from mixing red wine with Sprite.

With his mouth full of toothpaste foam, he walked over, lifted the tent curtain, and said indistinctly, "Don't be scared, I'm sprouting..."

Shen Baobao rubbed her eyes and then patted her head, finally recalling camping last night. "I remember drinking red wine with you, but why can't I remember anything after that?"

Because you got drunk and fell asleep... Lin Xu muttered to himself, then gestured for Shen Baobao to come out.

Only when Shen Baobao crawled out of the tent did she realize how surprisingly beautiful it was outside. The surroundings were covered with a grassland that looked like a blanket, dew hung on the grass blades, and the air was filled with the unique moisture and freshness of dew. At the end of the grassland were layers upon layers of mountain peaks. They echoed Longqi Mountain, which rose behind them.

"Wow! It's so beautiful!"

Shen Baobao took out her phone to snap a photo. Then, suddenly remembering she had fallen asleep midway through the night, she shuffled over in her slippers to Lin Xu, who was washing his face. "I'm sorry, Xu Bao, about last night I..."

Ah, our first night together and I actually fell asleep! Xu Bao must be so unhappy, right?

While she was annoyed with herself, she also felt a little touched. Because Lin Xu hadn't taken advantage of her while she was asleep. Her clothes were still neatly on...

As expected of my Xu Bao, the one I've cherished for four years, so considerate and gentle.

After Lin Xu rinsed the foam off his face, he dried it with a towel before saying, "Hurry up and wash up. We're going to eat breakfast at the Cliffside Hotel restaurant."

"Oh, okay..."

Shen Baobao agreed. Just as she was about to go into the small tent to freshen up, she suddenly hugged Lin Xu from behind and whispered in his ear, "I'm sorry, Xu Bao. Tonight I... I won't drink anymore."

Lin Xu turned around, hugged her, and pecked her gently on the lips, saying, "If our love is true and meant to last, does it really matter if we're together every single moment? Don't overthink it. Actually, this is quite unforgettable too."

Listening to her Xu Bao's insincere words, Shen Jiayue chuckled softly, "So, can we take that bottle of red wine with us when we leave?"

"NO!!!!!!!"

HAHA, Xu Bao, you gave yourself away, didn't you?

Shen Baobao whispered in Lin Xu's ear, "Sorry for letting you down last night. Tonight, I'm all yours..."

After saying this, she kissed Lin Xu's earlobe gently, then turned and walked into the tent to wash up.

Feeling the warmth on his earlobe, Lin Xu had only one thought in his mind: Damn it, why isn't it six in the afternoon right now?

While Shen Baobao was freshening up, he changed into long pants and a T-shirt. He packed the clothes he'd worn into a bag, preparing to go to his parents' place to wash them in the washing machine.

Just as he was busy with this, Shen Baobao finished freshening up. She changed into a round-neck T-shirt identical to Lin Xu's and ripped skinny jeans, along with the white sneakers Dundun had left a black paw print on yesterday.

After packing her suitcase, putting it in the car, and tidying up the tent, they drove away.

At the Starry Sky Base's service center, Lin Xu left a message for his cousin-aunt, then drove along the reservoir back to the foot of Longqi Mountain and followed the winding concrete road uphill.

Upon arriving at the entrance of the Cliffside Hotel, his mom was holding Dundun, admiring wildflowers by the roadside. The little cat saw Lin Xu and Shen Jiayue and immediately turned his head away. Obviously, he was angry that they had left him with Chen Meijuan last night.

"Are you angry, Dundun? How about some lamb for you today?"

Dundun: "..."

Stop tempting me with meat!

"Oh, mutton doesn't entice you anymore? Then how about we slaughter that fat goose?"

Dundun immediately leaped into Lin Xu's arms.

His mom explained, "Last night after you guys left, Dundun tried to take on that goose again and almost got bitten. He got so scared, he hopped and skipped away."

Oh, no wonder he forgave me as soon as he heard about slaughtering that goose, Lin Xu thought.

"You guys go in and eat," his mom said. "Dundun and I have eaten already. I'll take him out to play for a while longer; he's interested in everything here."

「Arriving at the dining hall.」

His dad was dining with Liu Zhengyu, Zeng Xiaoqi, and others. A few sleepy-eyed tourists were also sitting in a corner, clearly guests of the hotel who had come down for the free breakfast. Today's breakfast featured many local specialties. There was vegetable Bump Soup, cornmeal porridge, and porridge cooked with wild herbs and tofu. Staple foods included steamed buns, flower rolls, wild vegetable baozi, meat rolls, Scallion Oil pancakes, and soy-sauce-flavored pancakes, among others. Side dishes included homemade pickles, watermelon-bean sauce, sweet and sour lotus root tendrils, and chilled wild chive flowers—all appetizing and perfect accompaniments to rice. Nearby, there was a toaster, along with fried eggs, bacon, sausages, and milk, offering both Chinese and Western options to satisfy the diverse needs of the guests.

Lin Xu ladled cornmeal porridge into two bowls for himself and Shen Baobao. Just as he was about to put some pickles on a plate, Chen Yuanyuan walked in, yawning.

"Don't eat that," Chen Yuanyuan said. "Try the mushroom sauce. Our mushroom sauce here is practically a signature dish."

Mushroom sauce? Lin Xu wondered.

Chen Yuanyuan scooped some dark-looking sauce onto Lin Xu's plate with a spoon, explaining, "This sauce is made from mountain mushrooms. It's super tasty; I can eat two big steamed buns with it every time I have it."

After getting the porridge, Lin Xu also grabbed two meat rolls, two baozi, and a bit of Scallion Oil pancake, then headed over to the table where his dad and the others were eating.

Just as he sat down, Zeng Xiaoqi, who was next to him, greeted Lin Xu in a hoarse voice, "Morning, Boss Lin."

Her voice was as raspy as sandpaper.

Lin Xu curiously asked, "What happened to your throat?"

The cameraman beside them said, "It's from eating all those spicy crayfish. She kept eating them even though they were so spicy. Then, while editing footage, she drank two bottles of ice-cold water in a row. So, this morning, well, this is the result."

Zeng Xiaoqi took a sip of the honeysuckle tea Chen Meijuan had made for her and said to the cameraman, "Don't forget to copy the footage we shot this morning onto my computer. I'll edit it later, find someone to do a voiceover, finish the video, and send it over. We might even make it for the noon Daily Scenic Spot Recommendation."

Listening to her sandpaper-like voice, Lin Xu really wanted to give her some advice. Xiaoqi, as a host, you need to take care of your throat. If it's really bad, you should just type. Don't talk, or it'll get worse.

Just then, the editor responsible for the script, looking at a message on their phone, said, "Xiaoqi, no one is available for our voiceover. The hosts from other channels who usually do voiceovers are all saying they're too busy. They're refusing even if we offer a red envelope... Ever since our last live broadcast won the viewership championship, they've held a grudge against us."

Originally, the Travel Channel was the least-watched among the network's dozen or so channels. Now, they've suddenly turned things around, surpassing the flagship programs of other channels. This made the Travel Channel a thorn in the side of the entire network. The television advertising pie is only so big, and the Travel Channel's rise inevitably impacted the ad revenue of other channels. Now that there was a chance to trip up the Travel Channel, those other channels naturally wouldn't pass it up.

Upon hearing this, Zeng Xiaoqi immediately grew angry and pounded the table. In the past, when other channels asked her to do voiceovers, she had never refused. She had even rushed to the studio late at night from home to help out. To think that now, when she needed a voiceover, they would pull a stunt like this. "When my throat's better, I'll absolutely give them a piece of my mind!"

Lin Xu felt that the host's anger was making her throat even worse, so he voluntarily spoke up, "Xiaoqi, how about I do the voiceover for you guys?"

Zeng Xiaoqi and her colleagues all looked stunned. "You?"

Shen Baobao and Chen Yuanyuan also looked over curiously. Seeing that Lin Xu wasn't joking, Shen Baobao asked, "Can you really do it?"

"Don't force it, little bro," Chen Yuanyuan chimed in. "There are a lot of people online waiting to see you fail."

Lin Xu said with a smile, "Haven't you guys always called me the Crossover King? Well, today, let's cross over into the voiceover world and have some fun!"

Chapter 348: Two Ultimate Ways to Cook Lamb - Roast Whole Lamb vs Dipped Lamb!

I really hadn't expected this. Just yesterday I was awarded an Excellent Level Voiceover, and today this happened.

Regardless of whether Dundun arranged it or not, I've got to slaughter that fat goose at noon. It's not just about keeping a promise to the kids—the main thing is, I also want to make stir-fried goose chunks for everyone to try.

Well, it's not often I get to come back, so I have to try my best to cook something tasty for the family.

Zeng Xiaoqi took another sip of Honeysuckle Water.

"Let's give it a try later. We'll do it if it works. If not, we'll wait..."

What she had actually wanted to say was that she would wait until her throat recovered.

But when would that be? We're supposed to have roasted whole lamb for lunch, and it'll surely be sprinkled with chili. Mr. Lin went to so much trouble to prepare it. It wouldn't be right not to eat it, but if I do eat it... Sigh! This useless throat of mine, defeated by just a few pounds of spicy crayfish.

Lin Xu picked up a bun and took a bite. The filling, made of mountain vegetables and pork belly, tasted great. After a couple more bites of the bun, he turned his attention to the mushroom sauce highly recommended by Yuanyuan.

The sauce was a bit dark and looked somewhat viscous. A thin layer of Red Oil coated the surface, probably due to the dried chili. When he stirred it with chopsticks, he could see finely chopped mushroom pieces inside.

He scooped up a little and tasted it. A rich, savory aroma immediately filled his mouth. This potent flavor combined the salty fragrance of soybean sauce, the umami of wild mushrooms, and the spicy kick of Chili Oil. The combination of these flavors was an instant appetite stimulant!

Lin Xu was even reminded of the first time he ate shiitake mushroom sauce back in high school; that delicious, savory flavor could make someone eat two extra steamed buns. It was a pity that the shiitake mushroom sauce sold in stores had become increasingly expensive and its flavor progressively milder. He hadn't touched that stuff in years.

"Wow! This mushroom sauce is amazing!"

Shen Jiayue was still a bit sleepy and didn't have much of an appetite. But one taste of the mushroom sauce sent a jolt through her. She immediately grabbed a meat roll and took a huge bite. After finishing it, she picked up her bowl of cornmeal porridge and took a sip. So good!

"I remember your grandma likes these kinds of preserved sauces. Take some back for her when you leave," Lin Xu said. He ate some more with his bun. It really was fantastic. Remembering that Old Mrs. Shen loved it, he decided to take some with him for her.

"Okay!" Shen Jiayue chirped.

After breakfast, Lin Xu followed Zeng Xiaoqi, whose voice was still hoarse, to a room upstairs to prepare for the voice test. She was staying in a corner room with a king-sized bed. It had two huge floor-to-ceiling windows, offering an excellent, unobstructed view of the distant mountains and reservoir.

Shen Baobao's eyes widened as soon as she entered.

Wow! This place is gorgeous! This view is just as impressive as the Star Base!

On the computer desk in the room sat a laptop, with a portable recording device and several sheets of printed paper beside it.

Lin Xu picked up the script to familiarize himself with the content. Then Lin Xu turned on the computer, opened the recording software, and began to record using the portable device.

Zeng Xiaoqi's idea was to first record a segment as a test. If that didn't work, they would think of other methods.

However, what she hadn't expected was that once Lin Xu started recording, his control over syllables, intonation, and cadence made her feel as if she were back in a broadcast hosting training class.

With this level of Voiceover skill, even if he decided to do professional Voiceover work in the future, he definitely wouldn't starve.

Listening to Lin Xu's Voiceover, Zeng Xiaoqi quietly opened the camera app on her phone, shot a short video of Lin Xu, and then posted it under the "Lin Ji's Food" topic with the caption:

"Who was it last time that said Mr. Lin wouldn't cross over into the Voiceover world?"

As soon as she posted it, "Invisible Chicken Wings," an insider in the Voiceover scene, was stunned.

"AHHHH! This can't be real, right? Mr. Lin actually knows Voiceover?"

Others quickly left replies under Invisible Chicken Wings' comment:

"Sis, your predictions are scarily accurate! Why don't you curse me to fail my grad school entrance exam?"

"Curse me to never find a fair-skinned, beautiful, long-legged girlfriend."

"Curse me to live in poverty forever and never even make five billion."

"Curse me to never reach my ideal weight in this lifetime."

"You guys are thinking too small! We should get Chicken Wings to curse housing prices to never fall!"

"The guy upstairs is bold!"

"Bold +1!"

"Bold +2!"

"..."

After finishing the Voiceover, Lin Xu put down the script.

PHEW... Turns out recording isn't that troublesome after all.

"You're amazing, Mr. Lin! If your business wasn't doing so well, I'd genuinely want to invite you to join our travel channel," Zeng Xiaoqi said, her hoarse voice making Lin Xu's own throat feel itchy. He couldn't help but feel the urge to cough.

He laughed and said, "Xiaoqi, you should really try to talk as little as possible. In a bit, I'll make you a bowl of egg water to try. It's said to be effective for sore throats."

I remember when I was little, whenever my throat was sore from coughing and felt uncomfortable, Grandma would always make me a drink with a raw Egg whisked with White Sugar in hot water. Now that Zeng Xiaoqi's throat is in this state... Well, it's worth a try. It might just work.

Zeng Xiaoqi agreed and began to edit the audio they had just recorded. She removed background noise, cut out repetitions and redundant sentences, and then adjusted the video content to match the Voiceover.

Lin Xu went downstairs and into the kitchen. He cracked an Egg into a bowl, whisked it with chopsticks, then poured in freshly boiled water. The Egg in the bowl instantly transformed into fine, silken threads. He then sprinkled some White Sugar into the bowl, stirred it until evenly mixed, and had a hotel staff member deliver it upstairs to Zeng Xiaoqi. While he was at it, he also asked the front desk manager to book a top-floor panoramic suite.

Chapter 349: Two Ultimate Ways to Cook Lamb - Roast Whole Lamb vs Dipped Lamb!

The top floor of the Cliff Hotel featured two extra-large guest rooms, each boasting 270-degree floor-to-ceiling windows on three sides that offered stunning views.

Since he and Shen Baobao were staying here tonight, naturally, they had to choose the best room. The room was booked. He and Shen Jiayue moved their luggage in.

"Wow! This room is even prettier!"

The room's floor was so shiny it could serve as a mirror. Apart from the solid wall separating it from the next room, all other sides were made of huge floor-to-ceiling glass, offering a breathtaking, panoramic view of the distant mountains. If it were too sunny during the day, the electric curtains could be closed, only to be opened again at night.

After setting down their luggage, he stuffed yesterday's dirty clothes into the room's washing machine, poured in detergent and disinfectant, turned on the quick wash function, and then hung the clothes out on the balcony.

Ah, such wonderful sunlight, such a perfect spot. It would be a shame not to dry clothes here.

"I'm going to my uncle's restaurant to prepare the roast whole lamb. Do you want to rest here or come with me?"

On the three-meter-wide king-size bed, Shen Baobao, who had been rolling around, immediately hopped off and started putting on her shoes, exclaiming, "I'm coming too! I'm coming too! I even dreamed about roast whole lamb last night. You complained I ate too much and only let me gnaw on one lamb leg..."

Lin Xu was taken aback. Isn't one lamb leg enough?

He took the girl's hand and said, "Besides the roast whole lamb, there will also be dip sauce lamb and dry-fried goose chunks today. You'll definitely get your fill."

"Thank you, Xu Bao! MWAH! Here's a big kiss for you!"

The young couple headed downstairs. By this time, his mom had already taken Dundun and Chen Yuanyuan to the ticket office.

It was now the summer holidays, and many children had begged their parents early in the morning to bring them to play. The water in the water park wasn't deep, and with plenty of lifeguards patrolling, the children never tired of playing in it.

They arrived at the visitor service center at the base of the mountain and parked the car in a shady spot under a tree. As soon as he got out of the car, Lin Xu spotted the new roasting rack his uncle had purchased.

The roasting rack, which included a base for charcoal, was about a meter wide. Each end featured two steel pipes with hooks welded evenly across them, allowing the height of the roasting spit to be adjusted according to the heat, preventing the lamb from charring or being undercooked. The stainless steel roasting spit was also large, equipped with long handles for easy rotation while roasting the lamb.

"Xiaoxu, what do you think of this roasting rack?"

"Not bad, not bad at all. It's quite sturdy and perfect for roasting lamb."

Upon entering the kitchen, Lin Xu saw four lamb legs soaking in a basin of water.

"These four are all hind legs," his uncle explained. "This morning, your aunt and I specifically went to a lamb butcher stall in the outskirts to get them. Hearing you were making dip sauce lamb, the stall owner specially selected two fattened lambs for us that had just turned a year old."

Dip sauce lamb couldn't be made with lamb that was too old, as it would be too tough to chew. But it also couldn't be made with lamb that was too young, as the meat would be too tender and lack texture. The best choice was full-grown fattened lamb. At this stage, the lamb meat was at its tastiest: the lean parts were firm but not dry, and the fatty parts rich but not greasy, making it suitable for any dish.

"What should we start with? Boiling the lamb or roasting it?" his uncle asked excitedly.

Lin Xu opened the refrigerator, took out the lamb that had marinated overnight, and said, "We need to wash this lamb first, rinse off the surface seasonings, dry off the surface moisture, apply a layer of Crispy Skin Water, and then let it air dry a bit more before it goes on the rack."

The two lamb dishes they were preparing today, roast whole lamb and dip sauce lamb, represented two extremes. Roast whole lamb was intricate to the extreme, while dip sauce lamb was extremely simple.

Roast whole lamb needed to be marinated a day in advance. For a more meticulous approach, it first required over eighteen hours of acid-draining in the freezer before marination. After marination, it had to undergo a series of steps: washing, drying, applying Crispy Skin Water, drying again, racking, roasting over medium heat, basting with oil, roasting over low heat, basting again, roasting over high heat, and finally, sprinkling with spices. It was an extremely intricate process.

Conversely, dip sauce lamb was straightforward: just boil it in water. Lin Xu wasn't entirely sure if any additional seasonings were required for the dip sauce lamb. He planned to call his senior apprentice-brother later to understand the process thoroughly before starting.

After a night of marination, the marinade in the tray seemed reduced, likely absorbed by the lamb. He half-filled a large basin with water and then dunked the lamb in to rinse off the surface seasonings. This step was crucial; even the marinade inside the cavity had to be thoroughly washed out. Otherwise, during roasting, these seasonings would burn and turn bitter, affecting the taste and texture of the roast whole lamb.

After cleaning it thoroughly, he set up the roasting spit between two tables, spread the whole lamb on it, and aimed a fan at the lamb to expedite the evaporation of surface moisture.

While the lamb was air-drying, Lin Xu went outside, placed the roasting rack in the shade of a courtyard tree, and began to light the charcoal.

The delicacy of roast whole lamb wasn't just about its complicated steps; there were many subtleties involved. For instance, during roasting, the charcoal shouldn't be placed directly under the lamb, as the heat would be too concentrated and would char the meat. Furthermore, as lamb fat dripped down during roasting, it could ignite the charcoal, generating even more heat and charring the meat more thoroughly.

To achieve golden, crispy lamb, the charcoal needed to be placed on both sides of the roasting rack's tray. This dispersed the heat, ensuring the lamb cooked evenly. Experienced barbecue chefs would even place an elongated tray filled with some water in the middle of the charcoal bed, directly beneath the lamb. This way, when lamb fat dripped down, it wouldn't splash everywhere and ignite the charcoal.

## Chapter 350: Two Ultimate Ways to Cook Lamb - Roast Whole Lamb VS Dipped Lamb!

The steam produced by the evaporating water also helps to keep the lamb moist, preventing it from becoming too dry and tough.

"This seems like such a hassle!"

Shen Baobao bustled around Lin Xu, now handing him charcoal, now helping with the lighter. Evidently, the girl had rediscovered her childhood joy of playing with fire.

Lin Xu poured some cooking oil on a wad of tissue paper, stuffed it beneath the fruit-tree charcoal, and lit it with a lighter.

「Before long,」

the charcoal was ignited.

Once all the charcoal had caught fire, he stacked it into long rows along both sides of the grill's drip tray. He also filled an elongated tray with water and placed it inside the grill.

After these preparations, the surface of the lamb had air-dried.

Lin Xu went to the kitchen. He poured some honey, maltose, and dark red vinegar into a bowl, then stirred the mixture evenly with chopsticks until the maltose dissolved. This created the simplest form of Crispy Skin Water.

He placed the air-dried lamb onto a tray. Using a brush, he dipped it into the Crispy Skin Water and coated the lamb all over, inside and out.

While he was brushing on the Crispy Skin Water, his younger cousins arrived on a four-wheeled electric utility vehicle. After greeting their cousin Lin Xu and cousin-in-law Shen Baobao, they all raised their phones and started filming again. The posts they made yesterday had garnered a wave of likes and followers, making them the center of attention among their classmates. Consequently, they were even more serious about filming today.

After applying the Crispy Skin Water, Lin Xu carried the whole lamb and returned it to the roasting spit to air dry.

「Before long,」

the lamb had air-dried again.

Lin Xu then carefully removed the lamb from the spit, placed it skin-down on a large tray, and laid the spit rod along its back, ready for tying.

He threaded a wire through the spine at the neck, securing the lamb's cervical vertebrae firmly to the spit. After tying it, he tugged the lamb slightly to smooth out any wrinkles in the meat as much as possible. Then, he threaded wire through the thoracic vertebrae, likewise securing them to the spit. Next were the lumbar and caudal vertebrae.

Securing the entire spine with four wires was necessary to prevent the lamb from slipping, twisting, or losing its shape during roasting.

Once the spine was secured, Lin Xu, with the help of his two younger male cousins, tied all four lamb legs to the spit. Finally, he threaded wire through the ribs and tied them securely. Only then was the entire lamb firmly and wholly affixed to the roasting spit.

He carried the spit outside and carefully placed it on the third rack of the grill, beginning to roast over medium heat. He chose medium heat to quickly sear the lamb's surface, which would lock in the moisture and ensure the roasted meat was tender and flavorful.

During roasting, the spit's crank needed to be turned slowly. Turning it too quickly would extend the cooking time and cause the lamb to dry out. But it couldn't be left stationary either, as that would lead to uneven cooking.

"Let me do it, let me do it! I'm really good at this step!"

Eager for more involvement, Shen Baobao enthusiastically volunteered for this task.

WOW! I never thought I'd get to participate in making such a grand dish! I absolutely have to post about this on my social media and show off.

Turning the spit handle with one hand, she used the other to record a short video, which she then posted to her social media feed:

"First time at my mother-in-law's place, wanted to cook to show off a bit. Not sure what her favorite dish is, so I just went simple with a roast lamb!"

After she posted it, acquaintances mostly gave likes, impressed that Shen Jiayue could even roast a whole lamb. But for those who knew her well, the comments had a completely different tone.

Chen Yan: Yueyue, you're getting more shameless by the day! You turn the handle a couple of times and suddenly you made the dish?

Wu Kexin: Boss Lady, be careful not to burn yourself while you're 'playing' around.

Geng Lele: I always thought Sister Yueyue was thin-skinned. Now I see I was too quick to judge.

Shen Guofu: Daughter, don't mess with Lin Xu's stuff. By the way, a lock went missing from the equipment room. Have you seen where it went?

Han Shuzhen: Why haven't you ever shown off like this at home?

...

Seeing these comments, Shen Baobao wrinkled her nose.

They dare doubt my skills? I absolutely \*have\* to be truly involved in this dish today! Hmph! Once it's ready, I'll flood my social media feed and group chats with pictures to make them all drool with envy!

Just as she was delighting in these thoughts, her cousin Shi Molli, from her second aunt's side of the family, came over.

"Cousin-in-law, Cousin-in-law, let me try, okay?"

"Sure, here you go."

Soon, a new post appeared on Shi Molli's social media feed:

"My cousin brought his wife from Beijing back to our hometown. To welcome my cousin-in-law, I personally cooked a whole roast lamb. Who wants some?"

After she posted, it was Chen Yuanyuan's younger brother, Chen Shaokang's turn:

"I accidentally showed off my skills in cooking whole roast lamb at home last time. Oh boy, my family got hooked! Even my cousin came with his wife from Beijing just for a taste. I won't show off my cooking skills recklessly again; it's exhausting!"

Next was Xiao Xun, from his eldest aunt's family:

"I never thought cooking was a difficult task; even roasting a whole lamb is just this simple. But my family just can't handle it. Even my cousin came specially with his wife from Beijing to learn from me. Some things, it seems, aren't about effort but about talent!"

Soon, all the children of their relatives had taken a turn posting.