

Culinary 361

Chapter 361: Cooking Snails in the Style of Spicy Crawfish! Zeng Xiaoqi: I Left Early!

After reaching into the water, he dragged the dip net along the bottom and walked forward. Twenty meters later, he lifted the net out and had scooped up nearly half a netful of river snails.

This...

The tiny amount I had painstakingly picked was actually less than what Second Uncle scooped up in one go.

Shen Baobao pursed her lips, feeling utterly dejected!

Second Uncle dumped the river snails from the net for Lin Xu and Shen Baobao to pick out the stones and debris, while he scooped up another netful.

This was a great haul, easily over ten pounds of river snails. It was more than enough to feed themselves; they could even set up a street stall with this much.

After putting the dip net back, Second Uncle took out a suitable net bag for holding river snails from the dock's small hut. He put the river snails in it and then drove the utility vehicle to take his nephew home.

When Lin Xu went to pick up Dundun, he found the little fellow happily playing with a small crab. Every time the little crab tried to leave, Dundun would bat at it a few times with its paws, keeping the small crab well within its control.

"You've really found yourself a good toy, haven't you!" Lin Xu remarked. He picked up Dundun and placed the small crab in the net bag with the river snails, then got into the car.

They returned to the farmhouse restaurant.

He took out the small crab for Dundun to continue playing with. Lin Xu then started to clean the river snails he had gathered.

The reservoir's water quality was excellent, yielding river snails that were not only large but also had tender, white meat.

He poured the river snails into a large basin and rinsed them twice. Then he drizzled some cooking oil into the basin. Aided by the oil, the river snails soon began to bubble, expelling the sand and mud from within them.

While he was busy, Shi Wenming came out from the kitchen, wiping his hands, and said, "Lin Xu, the mutton vendor just delivered the lamb we need for tomorrow. Are you going to marinate it now or later?"

Upon hearing that the scenic area restaurant was planning to roast a whole sheep, the mutton vendor had immediately driven over with two skinned sheep carcasses and also delivered a set of cleaned sheep offal.

The river snails still needed more time to expel sand. Lin Xu stood up and said, "Let's marinate it now. We can also show the viewers the preparation cuts and marination method for the roast whole sheep."

As soon as the livestream viewers heard about roasting a whole sheep, the chat was instantly filled with messages from people craving it.

A viewer named Bobo Not Happy excitedly commented, "Haha, I've reserved these two sheep! I'll livestream tomorrow when I eat them so everyone can hear just how crispy the skin of Boss Lin's roast whole sheep is."

This comment quickly garnered a bunch of replies.

Flower Not Reblooming, Man Not Rejuvenating: You could actually act like a decent human being!

Thanks to the family, I became a plasterer early: You reserved two whole roasted sheep and you're still not happy? Maybe swap with me, buddy, my happiness threshold is low.

Discount Sale of Universal Film City Tickets: Is your unhappiness because you got beaten for being too cocky?

Wholesale of Various Quality Water Guns: Just give me the roast whole sheep; I'll let you experience a level of happiness even Leonardo can't refuse!

...

Lin Xu went into the kitchen and saw the two plump sheep laid out on the workbench. These sheep must have been freshly slaughtered, as they were still dripping blood.

He placed a large tray on the workbench, lifted one of the sheep onto it, and then took a kitchen knife to begin making the preparation cuts. As he worked, he explained the key points and techniques of the preparation cuts to the viewers.

「An hour later.」

The two sheep were finally set to marinate. The river snails outside had completely expelled all their sand.

Lin Xu scooped the river snails out of the water, washed them twice more, and then carried them to the kitchen. Sitting on a high stool in front of the workbench, he placed a chopping board and began cutting off their tails one by one with a kitchen knife. Doing this not only removed the snail's internal organs but also allowed the river snails to absorb more flavor during simmering. And when eating them, with a gentle suck, the snail meat would slide right into your mouth. It was much easier than prying the meat out bit by bit with a toothpick.

After all the snail tails had been cut, they were washed again. The river snails were now ready.

"It's still early," Lin Xu said. "I'll start simmering the broth for the Snail Noodles now, and later I'll make Spicy Snails."

Lin Xu took two large bones and blanched them in a pot, then washed them with warm water. For snail broth, one must use large bones; this way, the broth develops a sufficiently rich aroma.

He set up a wok and added a generous spoonful of lard. Once it melted, he added half a spoonful of Doubanjiang, stir-frying it over low heat until the Red Oil emerged. Then, he added the cleaned river snails and continued to stir-fry. Once aromatic, he added Scallion and Ginger, Sichuan peppercorns, star anise, bay leaves, cinnamon bark, and dried chili. He then poured in enough water, added the blanched large bones, and transferred everything into a pressure cooker to simmer. The main purpose of using a pressure cooker was to save time and more thoroughly extract the nutrients from the bones.

「An hour later.」

He opened the pressure cooker. A rich, savory aroma instantly wafted out. The slightly thick, white broth looked tantalizing, and the glistening oil droplets on top made it look very appetizing.

"Whoa, this soup looks so tempting."

"Lard, large pork bones, and river snails—simmer these three together, and you get aroma, umami, and richness. How could this soup not be delicious?"

"Forget making Snail Noodles; even just boiling some plain noodles in this soup would taste absolutely amazing."

The fans in the livestream were very satisfied with Lin Xu's cooking skills. This was the way to make snail broth.

But Shen Baobao frowned, asking with a puzzled expression, "Aren't Snail Noodles supposed to be stinky to be delicious? Why does the soup you've made smell so fragrant?"

Lin Xu chuckled wryly. "The characteristic odor of Snail Noodles mainly comes from fermented bamboo shoots when they're heated; it has nothing to do with the river snails themselves. My uncle-in-law pickled a lot of sour bamboo shoots from the mountain bamboo grove back in spring. I'll cut some later; you can smell them then and you'll understand."

With that, Lin Xu ladled out a river snail to taste.

"Is it good?" Shen Baobao asked.

"Not really," Lin Xu replied. "The meat is a bit tough from overcooking; all the umami has gone into the broth... Are you hungry? In that case, I'll start making the Spicy Snails now so we can eat sooner."

He then brought over the previously cleaned river snails and prepared other ingredients and seasonings: Scallion and Ginger, dried chili segments, garlic, beer, and various spices.

Lin Xu actually didn't know the traditional way to cook river snails. But not knowing didn't mean he couldn't do it. He could easily adapt the method for cooking crawfish. River snails cook quickly, and the dish is mostly about the flavor of the seasonings. As long as he was generous with the spices, there was no reason it wouldn't be delicious.

After all the ingredients and seasonings were ready, he began cooking.

Meanwhile, on the Beijing-Hong Kong-Macao Expressway heading back to Beijing, Zeng Xiaoqi watched the livestream, her voice hoarse as she muttered, "I left too early. If only I'd known, I would have stayed another day."

Her colleagues exchanged glances. Xiaoqi, what kind of mortal vendetta do you have against your own throat? We really hope Boss Lin doesn't return to Beijing too soon. Otherwise, the travel channel's leading host is truly going to be ruined...

Chapter 362: Son, it's time for the lottery draw! Hey, these snail noodles are stinky but quite delicious!

SIZZLE...

After the oil in the wok heated up, Lin Xu added the chopped scallion, ginger, Sichuan peppercorns, and star anise.

After stir-frying until aromatic, he added segments of dried chili and continued to stir-fry. Once the spicy aroma of the dried chilies was released, he scooped a ladleful of Doubanjiang into the wok and turned the heat down to slowly fry it until the red oil emerged.

"When stir-frying the seasoning base, add the Doubanjiang later. This way, the seasoning will be more aromatic, and the red oil will look prettier," Lin Xu explained to his live stream audience. Then, he dumped the prepared snails into the wok.

He continued to stir-fry, ensuring the red oil seasoning base completely coated the snails.

Next, he poured in two cans of beer, a small basin of water, and a handful of crystal sugar, covered the wok, and began to stew.

"Whether it's snails or crayfish, don't forget to add crystal sugar. Crystal sugar can make the spiciness milder, and it also enhances the flavor."

As he was explaining, a comment from Shen Baobao came from off-camera, "Simply put, it just tastes better."

Lin Xu was speechless. Her 'simply put' is a bit too simplistic, isn't it? If you don't explain any of the cooking knowledge involved, will the viewers actually buy it?

He took a moment to glance at the live broadcast feed and discovered that all the messages echoed Shen Baobao's comment.

"The Lady Boss is right. Just saying it's delicious is enough; no need to explain. We wouldn't understand anyway."

"LOL, Boss Lin is always trying to teach us."

"My food classification is very simple: either it's delicious or it's not. I'm not like some people who can produce an 800-word essay from just one bite."

"The Lady Boss's explanations are more relatable."

"..."

Lin Xu watched the barrage of comments with a wry smile. These netizens are really good at going with the flow... It feels like everyone is becoming more Zen.

While the snails were stewing, he began preparing the ingredients needed for the Snail Noodles.

The restaurant's storage room had rice noodles suitable for making Snail Noodles. He grabbed some and soaked them in a basin of water.

Then he soaked some black fungus, intending to blanch it later, let it cool, and then slice it into threads—an essential ingredient for Snail Noodles.

After soaking these two items, Lin Xu saw a large tray of deep-fried peanuts in the cold dish area of the restaurant, which saved him the trouble of frying them again.

Though he had peanuts now, he still needed yuba.

He fetched a large bag of yuba from the storage room, carefully breaking it into small pieces. Then, he heated up some oil in a wok. He didn't wait for the oil to get hot before adding the yuba, frying them in warm oil.

"When frying yuba, use the lowest heat. This allows the yuba to slowly open up in the oil and achieve that crispy, aromatic texture."

When preparing dishes like braised yuba, you also need to use warm oil to soften the yuba.

But in that case, the whole yuba stick goes into the wok without being broken into segments. It only needs to unfurl slightly before being taken out, unlike now, where you have to wait until the yuba is crispy and fragrant before removing it.

「Beijing.」

Shen Guofu lay on the sofa in his office, watching his son-in-law fry the yuba, and unexpectedly felt a pang of hunger. He thought for a moment, minimized the live stream, then opened WeChat and sent a message to his housekeeper, Aunt Liu:

"Later, find a place to buy some snails and make some Spicy Snails."

"But... Dr. Han said this morning we're having Mixed Grain Pancakes for dinner."

Aunt Liu was curious. So, the couple wants different things to eat?

Shen Guofu replied:

"We'll have the Mixed Grain Pancakes tomorrow. Let's make snails today, and also cook some Snail Noodles. I haven't had that for a long time; I really miss it."

"Okay! I'll start preparing right away."

Reading her reply, Shen Guofu began to look forward to the evening's meal of snails and Snail Noodles.

Thinking about the spicy and aromatic snails, he suddenly realized that just having snails wasn't enough—it needed to be paired with beer to be perfect.

With that thought, he immediately got up, picked up the phone from his desk, and called his secretary, Xiao Zou, "Have your brother buy a small keg of fresh draft beer and put it in the trunk of my car. Make sure to check the date; it must be freshly made today."

"Yes, Director Shen!"

After giving the order, Shen Guofu spun around on the spot.

He could finally indulge his craving properly tonight. He was really looking forward to it!

Meanwhile, Lin Xu was using a slotted spoon to scoop yuba out of the wok.

After removing all the yuba, he added some cold oil to the wok to lower the oil temperature, so when frying the second batch, the yuba wouldn't burn.

After adding the second batch of yuba into the wok, finding himself with a moment of leisure, he picked up a piece of fried yuba and held it towards the camera.

Just as the viewers thought Lin Xu was about to feed himself, they heard the Lady Boss's CRUNCH!
CRUNCH!

"Wow, it's crispy and fragrant, so delicious!" she exclaimed.

Instantly, a stream of lemon emojis flooded the live stream chat.

"At this moment, a single viewer, grinning like a knowing aunt, passes by!"

"I'm so mad! They're clearly showing off their love, yet I can't help but smile like an auntie!"

"What a coincidence, me too."

"I long for such sweet love; I'd even trade my boss's legs for it!"

"Person above???? Are you actually fantasizing about a double blessing?"

After all the yuba was fried, only the pickled long beans, pickled bamboo shoots, and pickled radishes were left to prepare.

Lin Xu walked out of the kitchen and asked his second maternal aunt's husband, Shi Wenming, who was picking vegetables outside, "Uncle, where did you put the pickles? I'm planning to use some pickled bamboo shoots, pickled long beans, and such for the Snail Noodles."

"They're in the basement of the storage room. I'll go get them for you. How much do you need?"

"A bit of each, please."

The basement was too dark, and with the heat, it would be easy to feel a lack of oxygen in there, so Lin Xu and Shen Baobao didn't go in. Instead, they waited outside.

Chapter 363: Son, It's Time for the Draw! Hey, these stinky Snail Noodles are pretty tasty!

It wasn't long before my uncle came out holding a small basin.

In the basin was a handful of pickled long beans that had turned yellow, a couple of sour radishes giving off a tangy smell, and additionally, a few stalks of sour bamboo shoots and some Pickled Peppers.

"Did these all come from the same jar?"

"No, several jars. They just got mixed together when they were scooped out."

After receiving them, Lin Xu continued to prepare the ingredients needed for the Snail Noodles.

The beans were rinsed with water on both sides, washing away the excess salt from the sourness, then chopped into fine pieces, poured into a pan without oil, and stir-fried together with dried chili pieces for a while.

This process would allow the excess sourness of the beans to evaporate, making the sour and fragrant flavor more mellow and the taste more delicious.

After dealing with the beans, he washed the sour radishes and diced them, and cut the sour bamboo into strips.

The ingredients required for the Snail Noodles were all prepared.

If you were eating this in Liu Zhou, you could actually add fried egg, fried dry tofu, fried pig's feet, and other ingredients, but these were not essential additions. Plus, there was not enough time, so he did not prepare them.

With these preparations done, the Spicy Snails in the pot were already cooked.

After turning off the heat, he dished out some. Lin Xu, using his chopsticks, picked up a snail, brought it to his lips, and gently sucked. The meat, along with the spicy broth, was drawn into his mouth.

"Mm, not bad, the flavor is just right."

The Doubanjiang had salt, so Lin Xu did not add extra salt during cooking. He had thought it would be bland, but it turned out to be just perfect with the right balance of salty and spicy flavors.

After eating, there was a faint sweetness in his mouth, making one want to eat more.

"Let me taste it quickly, I haven't tried it yet."

Lin Xu picked up a snail with his chopsticks and offered it toward the camera again.

In the barrage of comments, there was a chorus of "ah," as viewers attempted to snatch the snail away.

However, to everyone's disappointment, the snail was accurately delivered to Shen Baobao's mouth.

"Just suck at the opening of the snail, and the meat will come out. Try it; if you can't, I'll find you a toothpick."

Shen Baobao gave it a try and managed to suck out the meat on her first attempt.

"Wahaha! It's so tasty, I want more!"

Her voice had barely faded when a notification rang in Lin Xu's mind:

"Host has made a dish that pleased his fiancée, completing the reward mission [Spicy Snails], earning one Excellent Level seafood cuisine draw. Would you like to draw now?"

Tch, it's finally complete.

As for drawing a prize, I'll forget about it for now.

Lin Xu glanced at Dundun playing with the little crab in the yard. I'll do it later while holding Dundun; it feels safer to draw prizes with my son around.

Putting aside his thoughts, he fed Shen Baobao a few more snails, to the viewers' vocal envy, as they declared today's live stream overwhelmingly sweet.

"Aaah, it's just too sweet!"

"The sweet love I dream about is being played out by Boss Lin and the boss's wife."

"Ugh, this livestream has driven my blood sugar over thirty."

"Watching the livestream with my boyfriend cracking sunflower seeds next to me, I asked him to feed me one like Boss Lin, but he shoved a handful of seed shells into my mouth, Boo hoo hoo..."

"Break up, it's my turn now!"

"Break up, it's my turn now!"

"Break up, it's my turn now!"

"..."

By this time, it was already six in the evening. Unknowingly, he had been streaming for several hours.

Lin Xu said, "Today's live stream is about done, my phone is getting hot, so let's call it a day. I'll live stream the cooking of a whole roasted lamb tomorrow morning."

Although he was used to live streaming, he still felt somewhat constrained when eating in front of the camera, particularly since his parents, older sister Yuanyuan, and others were coming over later. Continuing the live stream during dinner would make the whole family uncomfortable.

The viewers were naturally not very willing to part ways.

Lin Xu said with a smile, "If you're bored, you can go to Lin Ji's Food topic to check in and post updates. I'll give likes when I'm free, and also share some food photos and tips."

After speaking, he thanked his friends and family for their gifts and concluded today's broadcast.

Shen Baobao put down her phone and picked up the bowl of Spicy Snails.

She imitated Lin Xu, picking up a snail with her chopsticks and sucking it lightly; the snail flesh mixed with broth was drawn into her mouth.

"Wahaha! The more I eat, the more delicious it gets. It feels even more satisfying than eating crayfish."

Crayfish required a lot of manual work, needing both hands when eating, which precluded doing anything else.

But slurping snails was easy; you could do it while scrolling on your phone, watching TV, or even while watching a movie, with no restrictions.

And most importantly, there's only so much snail meat.

No matter how much you eat, you won't feel stuffed, allowing one to continuously enjoy the pleasure of eating.

"Xu Bao, you eat too!"

Lin Xu wiped his hands and said, "You eat first, I'm going to check on Dundun."

Without doing the prize draw, he felt like something was left undone.

Upon going outside, he discovered Dundun had somehow moved the little crab to the edge of the water basin and was now busily scooping water from the basin onto the crab with its paw.

On seeing Lin Xu approach, the little fellow promptly meowed, "MEOW!"

"What's the matter, kiddo?"

Lin Xu walked over and took a glance, only to find that the little crab was motionless, either from exhaustion due to Dundun's antics or from the heat.

It didn't react even as Dundun poured water over it.

This is...

Lin Xu picked it up to check and said to Dundun, "The little crab is missing home, let's take it back, shall we?"

Starting up the commuting car in the yard, with Dundun accompanying him, he went to the reservoir. He placed the little crab into the water, whereupon the crab, having been in a state of suspended animation, immediately swam away.

Chapter 364: Son, It's Time for the Draw! Hey, these stinky Snail Noodles are pretty tasty!

"You have a home, and little crabs have homes too."

Upon hearing this, Dundun immediately rubbed his round, chubby head against Lin Xu.

After father and son had interacted by the reservoir for a while, Lin Xu then silently invoked in his mind, "Draw!"

Soon, a lottery wheel appeared on the light screen in his mind. It was filled with names of various seafood dishes. As the wheel spun rapidly, a draw button appeared beside it. After choosing to draw, Lin Xu quickly heard the system's prompt in his mind, "Congratulations to the Host for acquiring the Excellent Level seafood dish—Shrimp Pancake. Congratulations, Host."

Shrimp Pancake? Pan-fried cake made with fresh shrimp?

As he was pondering this, a tidal wave of experience flooded his mind. He then realized that the so-called Shrimp Pancake was made by mixing small river shrimp with batter and then frying it in a flat pan with hot oil.

Tsk, when I check the shrimp traps tomorrow, I can try making some with small river shrimp. The taste shouldn't be too bad. After all, river shrimp are so fresh that even if you dry-fry them in a pot without water or oil, the cooked shrimp will still be delicious.

On the way back with Dundun, he ran into his cousins who had been playing all afternoon.

"Stop playing, it's time to eat!"

"Got it, Cousin!"

"Cousin, can you give me a ride for a bit?"

"Cousin, why is it that since this afternoon, every time we post something online, someone reminds us to go home and do our homework?"

"..."

Hearing his cousins' questions, Lin Xu immediately said, "The electric scooter is almost out of power. You guys wait and go back with Second Uncle's car later. I need to go back and charge mine."

Right, he couldn't answer these kinds of questions. He had to dodge them for now.

The first thing he did after returning was delete the social media post he'd made at noon, so they wouldn't discover that their cousin was the mastermind.

It wasn't long after he returned that his parents, Chen Yuanyuan, Second Uncle Chen Meiliang, and the others came back and started eating. Uncle Shi Wenming cooked a few small dishes. These, along with river snails, accompanied his father Lin Hongqi and Second Uncle Chen Meiliang as they drank beer. Meanwhile, Lin Xu went into the kitchen to make Snail Noodles.

He put the soaked noodles into the pot to boil. After the noodles were soft, he scooped them into a bowl with a strainer. Then he ladled a big spoonful of snail broth, which had been cooked in a pressure cooker for an hour, into the bowl. Next, he arranged blanched greens, deep-fried tofu skin, water-blanched and shredded wood ear mushrooms, intensely sour and fragrant Pickled, slightly sweet pickled radish cubes, Bamboo Shoots, and peanuts in the bowl, in that order. Finally, he drizzled a spoonful of Chili Oil on top, and the bowl of Snail Noodles was ready.

At first, the smell in the bowl was quite normal. But as the pickled bamboo shoots warmed up from the noodles and broth, that unique sour and foul smell of pickled bamboo shoots began to waft from the bowl. When Lin Xu brought it to the dining room, the family couldn't help but glance sideways.

Chen Yuanyuan, who usually liked to eat it, started salivating upon smelling it and said, "Wow, it smells so potent; Little Bro, remember to cook another bowl for me later. I've been craving it all day while watching the live stream."

"No problem!"

Bowls of Snail Noodles were brought over. Although the cousins thought the taste was a bit strange, after a crazy afternoon of play, they were starving, so they held their bowls and started eating. While eating, they even complimented their cousin on his good cooking skills. They even forgot the questions they wanted to ask earlier.

His father, Lin Hongqi, had never tried this stuff before. He frowned as he took it, then lowered his head to smell it again, his expression somewhat reluctant. But seeing everyone acting as if they had encountered a delicious treat, he followed his son's lead, stirred the ingredients in the bowl until well mixed, and then slurped up a mouthful of the rice noodles. "Hmm? This thing smells stinky, but it tastes quite..."

He tasted it carefully and found it wasn't bad. The faint foulness of the pickled bamboo shoots actually transformed into a rich, savory flavor in his mouth. This feeling was really nice. He tried another slurp. The sour, savory, aromatic, and spicy flavors intertwined, perfectly complemented by the smooth rice noodles. A sense of satisfaction washed over him with that single bite.

"Hmm, tasty, these Snail Noodles are really good." After finishing one bowl, he even wanted another. "Xiaoxu, make me another bowl and add more pickled bamboo shoots. Huh, I never expected this stinky stuff to be so enticing!"

Well, he was completely hooked now.

Lin Xu laughed and agreed before looking around at the others in the family and asking, "Who else wants another bowl?"

"Me, me, me!"

"And me!"

"Cousin, I want one too."

"Xiaoxu, just make a bowl for everyone then."

Originally, he thought the family wouldn't be used to it, but unexpectedly, they actually fell in love with the taste. Lin Xu stood up and went into the kitchen to cook the noodles.

While Lin Xu was cooking, everyone picked up the river snails from the dining table with their chopsticks and started eating. Mmm, eating the spicy and numbing river snails, then taking a sip of chilled beer. It was just too refreshing!

"These Spicy Snails have to be enjoyed with beer!"

[In Beijing, at the Shen Family's villa dining room.]

Shen Guofu slurped a bite of river snails, followed by a big gulp of draft beer, and let out a satisfied sigh. Han Shuzhen wore disposable gloves, holding a river snail in one hand and a toothpick in the other. She ate a few bites of snail meat and then slurped some Snail Noodles. It really felt great.

"Old Shen, we need to eat a bit lighter while Yueyue is not home. Otherwise, when Lin Ji opens, it'll be all rich food again, and your body won't handle it."

"Mm-hmm, got it, Dear. I'll indulge just a bit today, and start on a diet meal tomorrow... It's all my daughter's fault. If she's going to livestream by the reservoir, fine, but why bring up river snails? It made Xiaoxu busy all afternoon."

As Shen Guofu shifted the blame onto his daughter, he continued slurping down river snails non-stop, occasionally sipping beer, truly enjoying himself!

「On the other side.」

After eating, Lin Xu, along with his uncle Shi Wenming, cleaned up the kitchen, then drove back to the Cliffside Hotel. As he went upstairs, the hotel's front desk manager asked with a smile, "Xiaoxu, your mom asked me to check if you want us to send over a bottle of red wine."

... Red wine? What red wine?

He hurriedly declined, "No need, no need, can't get used to that at all. We're better off drinking the beverages in the room."

After saying that, he took Shen Baobao by the hand and entered the elevator leading to the top floor...

I was too reckless with the air conditioning this morning, and now I have a cold; my head feels like it's about to explode. Somehow managed to write 5,100 words. I've finished the 10,000-word daily update for today. I need to take some cold medicine and lie down quickly, hoping to feel better tomorrow. Brothers, I need Monthly Ticket!

Chapter 365: Cooking Mutton Fat Chili! Too Many Wild Fruits to Eat, What to Do? Stuffed Fruit Vinegar!

It was 6:30 in the morning.

Lin Xu led Shen Baobao by the hand out for breakfast. Both were dressed in matching T-shirts and beach shorts, and they wore identical Minion-themed slippers, highlighting a casual and relaxed style.

When going downstairs, the couple tacitly chose not to take the elevator but instead walked down the stairs at a leisurely pace. Shen Baobao nestled against Lin Xu, pecking at his face from time to time, as close as conjoined twins.

"Hubby~~~~"

"Hmm!"

"Don't worry, I will take responsibility for you!"

"?"

Lin Xu glanced at his Baobao, feeling that he was increasingly unable to keep up with her train of thought.

"Isn't it like that in TV dramas? It would be even better with a cigarette to blow a smoke ring, to add more... Mmph..."

Before Shen Baobao could finish speaking, Lin Xu embraced her and sealed her mouth with a kiss, only releasing her when her breathing became labored.

"I was wrong, Hubby~~~"

The endearing girl finally stopped her teasing.

Lin Xu held her soft, delicate hand and said, "Let's go. We'll go downstairs to eat. There's a live stream to do this morning."

"Okay!"

Arriving downstairs, Lin Xu saw the dining room was filled with quite a few tourists staying at the Cliffside Guest House.

The front desk manager looked at Lin Xu and asked, "Xiao Xu, someone has reserved the top-floor room. If you're still planning to stay, I'll cancel their booking."

"No need to cancel. We'll stay at the B&B tonight. We'll come move our luggage after breakfast. You can have someone clean the room then."

The top-floor room with its 270-degree view costs over a thousand a night. It was so hard to get a booking; it would be a real pity to turn this one down. Who would have thought that bringing Dundun to stay in the scenic area would not only make Monthly Tickets sell so well but also significantly increase the Cliffside Guest House's occupancy rate? This money-making divine artifact truly lived up to its name!

He sighed softly. I need to find some meat Dundun hasn't tried before and reward the little guy properly today.

Thinking this, he opened the car door, and he and Shen Baobao got in.

Today, they weren't having breakfast at the Cliffside Guest House's restaurant. Instead, Lin Xu was taking Shen Baobao to a farmhouse-style restaurant near the Tourist Service Center.

Yesterday morning, his uncle had simmered the four leftover lamb leg bones from the dipped lamb dish into a lamb soup. In the afternoon, when the lamb seller came to deliver more lamb, he had also generously thrown in a set of lamb offal for free. After Shi Wenming cleaned it, he decided to make lamb offal soup for everyone this morning.

Hmm, drinking some lamb soup in this summer heat, sweating a bit to expel the body's dampness—that sounds pretty good.

When they arrived at the restaurant, Chen Yuanyuan was in the courtyard, holding Dundun and watching the blackfish swim in a pond.

Seeing Lin Xu, she immediately said, "I thought you two wouldn't get up. The lamb offal soup will probably take a little longer; they've just started making the lamb fat chili oil in the kitchen..."

Lamb fat chili oil? Lin Xu was instantly intrigued.

Although he now knew how to make Chili Oil, he had always been a bit mystified by lamb fat chili oil.

Since Uncle is making it now, I should go to the kitchen and take a look. I need to see how lamb fat chili oil is prepared, so I won't be completely clueless if I need to make it myself in the future.

When Lin Xu entered the kitchen, he immediately smelled the pleasant aroma of lamb fat.

There were some cracklings in a basket on the worktable, likely left over from rendering the lamb fat.

"Ah, Xiao Xu," Shi Wenming greeted him. "There was a big piece of lamb fat with the offal delivered yesterday. I just rendered it down to make some lamb fat chili oil. You can't have lamb offal soup without lamb fat chili oil, after all."

Lin Xu walked over and saw that the fat in the pot was still simmering. It contained Scallion and Ginger, garlic, cilantro, Carrots, and other aromatics, along with spices like Sichuan peppercorns, Star Anise, bay leaves, and cinnamon.

Isn't this just like making regular Chili Oil?

Curious, Lin Xu asked, "How do you make lamb fat chili oil so it isn't greasy and cloying?"

Lamb fat is an animal fat, different from regular vegetable oil. If one were to make lamb fat chili oil the same way as regular Chili Oil, it would definitely turn out greasy and cloying.

Shi Wenming smiled and said, "That's simple. Just add some vegetable oil during the process to neutralize it a bit."

Add vegetable oil? That's quite similar to making the chili oil for splashing over dishes. When making that, you need to add a bit of lard to the oil to enhance the chili oil's fragrance and richness. I never expected that for lamb fat chili oil, you'd need to add vegetable oil to reduce its intensity and richness. Damn! If I'd known it was this simple, I should have tried it back then. Exploring such contrasting methods might even lead to other rewards!

Just as Lin Xu was thinking this, Shi Wenming brought out the ingredients for the lamb fat chili oil: chili powder ground from Northwest Line Peppers.

Lamb fat chili oil is a delicacy from the Northwest Region, so naturally, using Northwest Line Peppers makes it perfect. Besides the line peppers, raw White Sesame seeds and salt were also needed.

Shi Wenming mixed the raw White Sesame seeds, salt, and chili powder evenly and set the mixture aside.

By now, the aromatics in the pot had infused the oil sufficiently. Shi Wenming used a fine-mesh sieve to remove all the solids. He then reheated the oil and turned off the heat. Using a ladle, he poured the hot lamb fat over the chili powder mixture in three separate additions, a process that thoroughly bloomed the chili powder, drawing out its fragrance, spiciness, and vibrant color.

Soon, a rich, spicy fragrance wafted from the kitchen.

Shen Baobao and Chen Yuanyuan, who were outside playing with Dundun, couldn't help but exclaim, "Wow, this chili aroma is so intense!"

The lamb fat chili oil shouldn't be eaten immediately after it's made. It tastes best after it has cooled, allowing the flavors to meld and the fat to congeal slightly.

However, breakfast was almost ready. Shi Wenming carefully placed the bowl of chili oil into the freezer, surrounding it with a few ice packs used for keeping ingredients fresh, to speed up the cooling process.

Chapter 366: Cooking Mutton Fat Chili! Too Many Wild Fruits to Eat, What to Do? Stuffed Fruit Vinegar!

"This works too, Uncle-in-law?"

"Why not? Chili Oil is a fixed thing, but people are flexible. You have to be good at using modern tools."

With that, Shi Wenming put the lamb soup he had simmered yesterday back on the stove to reheat. Then, he took out the lamb offal cooked the day before and started to chop it. Shortly, he would blanch it in the lamb soup, add some boiling lamb broth, sprinkle some cilantro, and it would become a mouthwatering lamb offal soup.

By the time the bowls of lamb offal soup were ready, Second Uncle had also arrived for work, carrying freshly bought Sesame Pancakes. Mom, Chen Meijuan, had specifically asked him to buy them.

"Come and eat, it's still hot. I didn't know how many to buy, so I just bought them all."

Second Uncle had bought twenty or thirty Sesame Pancakes, so everyone could eat their fill today.

To ensure everyone ate comfortably, Shi Wenming had also specially prepared some pickled chilies and small pickles. By now, the lamb fat Chili Oil had solidified. He scooped some into a bowl, and soon, the rich red oil, along with the unique aroma of lamb fat, began to permeate the dining area.

"Wow, the aroma of this chili is so rich!" Shen Baobao exclaimed, then scooped some more into her bowl.

This Chili Oil is so fragrant, I absolutely need two spoonfuls to satisfy my craving!

Once the Chili Oil melted, just a pinch of salt in the soup, and then it could be paired with the Sesame Pancakes.

"Two lambs cost several thousand yuan, plus all the various individual customers..." Shi Wenming mused, encouraging himself while enjoying the delicious lamb offal soup. "Let's push hard today and try to get the restaurant's revenue over ten thousand yuan!"

Lin Hongqi said, "Don't stress about the sales. Now is the time to build our reputation. Establishing a good reputation is much more important than a temporary increase in sales."

When he first started developing the scenic area, Lin Hongqi had planned to contract out all its facilities. He figured he could just collect leasing fees and not have to worry about the day-to-day trifles.

However, it turned out that the hotel, restaurant, homestays, and even the Stargazing Base couldn't be contracted out, so he ended up running them himself.

Now, with tourists coming up, business was blossoming in all areas. Yesterday, the Cliffside Hotel had fifty or sixty staying guests, and the Stargazing Base had even surpassed two hundred visitors. This outcome pleased Lin Hongqi. Once the 4A certification was approved, another round of promotions could potentially boost business volume even further.

Breakfast was over, and everyone was satisfyingly full.

Chen Meijuan was holding Dundun, trying on the little sweater she had knitted the day before. The wine-red sweater made the little fellow look even more like a child. After the initial discomfort, the little guy even took the initiative to strut around in front of the air conditioner. It was a good thing the air conditioner couldn't move; otherwise, that little rascal Dundun would have definitely gotten a spanking.

"Let Dundun stay with us this morning," Chen Meijuan began.

Just as she spoke, Dundun quietly sidled over to Lin Xu, clearly wanting to stay with his dad and not go to the ticket office.

But what Chen Meijuan said next changed the little fellow's mind: "I've ordered a bunch of cat toys, scratching posts, and a cat bed, and they should be arriving soon. It'll be perfect for Dundun to see if he likes them."

"MEOW~~~"

As soon as she finished speaking, Dundun pounced over, affectionately rubbing his head against Chen Meijuan's trouser leg.

"Heh, this little one is really close to me."

Gleefully, Chen Meijuan held Dundun in her arms. Chen Yuanyuan, holding a Sesame Pancake stuffed with lamb offal in one hand and the handlebars with the other, drove the commuter vehicle carrying

Chen Meijuan toward the main gate. While driving, Yuanyuan still took an occasional bite of her Sesame Pancake.

After they left, Shi Wenming unloaded another grill—which he had bought that morning while grocery shopping—from the backseat of his Wuling Hongguang. One lamb, one grill. That way, come noon, it wouldn't interfere with Bobo Not Happy entertaining his friends.

After breakfast, Lin Xu didn't start his live stream immediately. Instead, he drove back with Shen Baobao to move their luggage to a homestay in the ancient village near the Cliffside Hotel.

"So, this is the Demon Cave everyone talks about, huh?" Shen Baobao asked, looking at the quaint, antique old house before her, her heart filled with pleasant surprise.

She had grown up in Grandma Shen's large courtyard house and had a deep affection for such old buildings. Seeing one again brought back feelings from her childhood.

The ancient village had over ten refurbished homestays, but they had remained unrented. Consequently, Chen Yuanyuan was living in one, and Chen Meijuan and Lin Hongqi were also staying in another.

Opening the courtyard gate, they saw the yard was paved with white gravel. Alongside it, a circular covered walkway connected the gate to the house. The walkway was laid with thick wooden planks, comfortable to walk on.

Passing through the covered walkway to the front door of the house, they first went through a glass door and then entered an exterior corridor. Indeed, the entire corridor was enclosed by glass walls. This not only created a sense of spaciousness but also allowed people to sit there and enjoy the courtyard scenery.

"Wow, this place is beautiful!"

"My mom had all this done," Lin Xu explained, "but my dad put a stop to it later because the costs were too high..."

No matter how well a homestay is designed, it's all for nothing if it can't be rented out. That's why it's better to use limited funds elsewhere.

The suite Lin Xu was staying in had originally been the model unit. When he returned for summer vacation last year, it became his exclusive cabin. Even the game console and its matching TV from his apartment in the city had been moved here.

Taking out the key, he pushed the door open. The house had wooden floors. Chen Meijuan must have had someone clean it yesterday, as the floor was spotless. Paired with the wood-grain papered walls, it gave off the feeling of a cabin in the woods.

Changing into slippers and stepping inside, the first things they saw were the large TV in the living room and the PlayStation game console beside it.

Chapter 367: Cooking Lamb Fat Chili! Too Many Wild Fruits to Eat, What to Do? Make Fruit Vinegar!

The bathroom and shower were on the left side of the room, and on the right was a large bedroom with a tatami-style platform bed.

"Wow, I love this place; it's so comfortably furnished."

Shen Baobao happily rolled on the bed. Then, like a child with ADHD, she opened the window next to her. Her face lit up with surprise as she asked, "Lin Xu, are those trees over there filled with fruit? They look so tempting!"

Lin Xu glanced over and said, "Over there is a wild fruit orchard. The original inhabitants of this mountain used to pick the fruits and sell them down the mountain. The fruits are very tasty. If you like, we can go have a look after lunch."

"Yeah, yeah!"

After moving their luggage in, the two of them drove back to the farmhouse restaurant.

Lin Xu was preparing to roast a whole lamb, while Shen Baobao was getting ready to livestream Lin Xu roasting the lamb.

At eight o'clock in the morning, the livestream officially started.

Lin Xu first greeted the viewers in the livestream and then assembled two roasting racks.

Once assembled, he went to the kitchen. He brought out the marinated lamb from the refrigerator's chiller and rinsed the marinade off its surface with water. Then, he spread it out to dry and, in passing, prepared the Crispy Skin Water for roasting the lamb.

"Wow, I haven't even gotten out of bed yet, and I'm seeing Boss Lin roast lamb for me. This feeling is just too wonderful! Let's start a Carnival."

The viewer named Bobo Not Happy came from a family in the sanitary materials business, which had seen a high volume of work and was doing well over the past two years.

He had originally just wanted a photo with Lin Xu and hadn't planned on buying a whole roasted lamb, since he was almost sick of the whole lamb offered by several restaurants in Yinzhou City.

But after tasting Lin Xu's cooking, his inner foodie was activated.

He instantly ordered two whole roasted lambs.

Now, having just woken up, he saw Lin Xu meticulously busy preparing the roasted lamb he had ordered and immediately sent a Carnival as a sign of gratitude.

"Brother Bobo is really generous!"

"Bro, if you're unhappy, just speak up and let the brothers enlighten you."

"We silly netizens may not be good at much, but making saucy jokes and bringing joy is no problem for us."

"..."

Soon, various life coaches started chiming in on the livestream chat.

Even masters of motivational speaking, adept at pumping people up, came to join the fun.

The comments section of the livestream was filled with grand words about life, motivation, and other such topics.

The enthusiasm of the viewers deeply moved Bobo Not Happy.

He responded, "I'm often unhappy because my dad is only a multimillionaire instead of a billionaire. What do you guys think I should do?"

Everyone: "..."

The life coaches who had initially tried to enlighten him suddenly felt like they needed someone to enlighten them.

In the usually silly livestream chat, an unexpected moment of shared melancholy emerged.

At that moment, Chen Shaokang, who was at home being urged to do his homework, snuck into the livestream. Seeing that the comments had gone quiet, he boldly asked, "Why isn't anyone talking?"

As soon as he posted that, a flurry of comments filled the video page:

"Have you finished your summer homework yet?"

"Have you memorized all your vocabulary words?"

"Have you done your listening and reading exercises?"

"Have you learned all the math formulas?"

"Have you recited the ancient poems?"

"Are you writing an essay every day to improve your writing skills?"

"..."

Chen Shaokang was utterly dumbfounded. Did Mom really get the netizens involved to make sure I do my homework? I—I—I—I... I'll do my homework, okay?

He quickly logged off and began to diligently work on his summer homework.

The depressive moment in the livestream ended with his appearance, and the viewers returned to their silly mode of sharing jokes and memes.

In the restaurant kitchen, Lin Xu worked methodically on the two lambs.

Once everything was ready, he tied the lambs to the roasting racks and began roasting them. Since his cousins were all at home doing homework and hadn't come to the scenic area, Lin Xu was without free labor.

He had to sit on a stool before the roasting racks, slowly turning the spits by hand. He occasionally chatted with the viewers in the livestream, and the morning passed by just like that.

「At noon.」

Bobo Not Happy and his friends came to eat the whole roasted lamb.

To show his gratitude, this fellow ordered every dish in the restaurant again, keeping Shi Wenming so busy he barely touched the ground. In the end, it was Lin Xu who helped out, ensuring the other visitors got their lunch on time.

「After lunch.」

Lin Xu drove Shen Baobao back to the bed and breakfast for a midday rest.

After enduring the heat from the roasting oven all morning, lying down on the bed in the air-conditioned room brought an immense sense of relief washing over his body.

After Shen Baobao also climbed in, the two of them rolled together again...

「At three o'clock in the afternoon.」

After a restful nap, the young couple, each donning a sun hat and carrying a bamboo basket, headed out the door.

They planned to pick some wild fruits for a taste.

Leaving the gate of the B&B, they ambled along the mountain path leading to the back hill.

After rounding two mountain streams and crossing a ridge, the pair, who had now experienced the truth of "a distant hill is a deceiving hill," finally arrived where the wild fruits grew.

There were many types of wild fruits: some resembled black plums, others were red berries akin to persimmons, and there were also wild raspberries and cherries, among others.

Shen Baobao plucked one, rubbed it carelessly on her clothing, and bit into it, exclaiming, "Wow, this sour and sweet taste is really delicious!"

Lin Xu tasted one; indeed, it was good.

Last summer, when I stayed here, I was too preoccupied with playing games and never ventured to this area. Now, it seems like a great loss.

The young couple began picking the fruits.

Shen Baobao found it inconvenient to pick from the ground and nimbly climbed up a tree, making Lin Xu seriously wonder how this girl had spent her childhood.

The two had come with the casual intention of taking a stroll.

The basket they brought was just a small, decorative bamboo one from their room.

Thus, it didn't take long to fill it up.

"There are still so many! Should we make another trip, or what?"

Considering the long distance, Lin Xu really didn't feel like running back and forth. He thought for a moment, took off his T-shirt, tied the sleeves and collar, and turned it into a makeshift bag.

"Come on, let's keep picking."

Yeah, I used to sneak into the neighbor's yard to steal jujubes when I was a kid. Back then, without pockets, I would use my shirt like this to carry them. But doing so often had an unfortunate consequence. Every time Mom and Dad saw me, a beating was inevitable.

"Wow, this method is great! Why didn't I think of using my clothes like this when I was a kid? Hmm... maybe it's because I'm a girl, and girls are supposed to be demure," Shen Baobao mumbled to herself, sitting on a tree branch, swinging her legs, and munching on fruits.

Lin Xu was speechless. Baobao, I really can't see where you've been demure at all.

After finishing a fruit, Shen Baobao resumed picking. When Lin Xu's T-shirt could carry no more, they decided to head back, planning to return the next day for more.

Back at the B&B, they emptied their spoils. To their surprise, the fruits filled an entire coffee table.

"How are we going to eat all this?"

This was a good question. Lin Xu was also wondering how to consume everything, especially with so many still on the trees. If they didn't eat them quickly, the unpicked ones would just rot.

After the trek, both of them were parched.

Shen Baobao opened the fridge and saw many drinks inside. She randomly picked out a bottle of apple vinegar, took a sip, and said with a smile, "Our mom really dotes on me! Knowing I like to drink apple vinegar, she prepared so much."

Apple vinegar? An idea suddenly struck Lin Xu, who was fretting over the fruit. He remembered the last competition rewarded him with the vinegar-making technique, which he had then thought would be a useless skill he'd never need. But now it seemed...

With that thought, he turned to Shen Baobao and said, "You like drinking fruit vinegar, don't you? Then I'll turn all the fruits we pick these next few days into fruit vinegar. It's a good way to handle them."

"Can these wild fruits be made into vinegar?"

"Yes, they can."

"Wow, that's awesome! Thank you, hubby!" Shen Jiayue exclaimed, happily throwing herself at Lin Xu and nibbling on him enthusiastically.

Lin Xu was speechless again. Baobao, what happened to being demure?

Just as the young couple was frolicking, Lin Xu's second uncle called. "Lin Xu," he asked, "I just caught a wild rabbit in the bushes near the water's edge. How should I cook this thing to make it delicious?"

Chapter 368: The Signature Dish of Meaty Cuisine – Braised Rabbit Meat! The Method for Making Fruit Vinegar!

Wild rabbit? This definitely has to be braised!

Just this morning, I was thinking about getting Dundun some meat he hadn't tried before. I never expected Second Uncle to snag a wild rabbit.

Lin Xu said to Chen Meiliang, "Second Uncle, wild rabbit is best braised. How about I cook it? I don't have much to do this afternoon anyway."

"Alright, I'll send it over to your uncle's place later. You can prepare it when you get there. I wasn't planning on drinking today, but this rabbit calls for a couple of drinks with your dad tonight."

Second Uncle was living quite freely now.

Apart from eating and drinking, he just strolled around the reservoir.

But his luck was truly something else. Just yesterday, after setting his nets, he caught a black fish weighing several pounds, and today, while wandering aimlessly, he caught a wild rabbit.

Add to that the fish and shrimp he usually caught.

He's practically a full-time hunter.

This interruption put a stop to Lin Xu and Shen Baobao's lovey-dovey moments.

With such an adorable bunny waiting to be braised and fruit vinegar to be made, kisses would naturally have to wait.

After loading the foraged berries into the car, Lin Xu changed into a T-shirt and drove Shen Baobao to the farmhouse restaurant.

Upon arrival, the wild rabbit had already been delivered.

It was locked in the cage that had previously held the big goose.

And Dundun, who had been with Lin Xu's mother at the ticket office, had taken off his little sweater because he wasn't in an air-conditioned room. He was now circling the iron cage.

Clearly, the little fellow had found new prey.

In the nearby restaurant, several local villagers were having Chen Meijuan weigh the mountain goods they had gathered, one by one.

The mountain goods sold at the scenic area were primarily supplied by these villagers.

Seeing that her mother-in-law was busy, Shen Baobao hurried over to help.

Lin Xu yelled to Dundun, who was lingering near the cage, "Don't get too close! Be careful it doesn't bite you. A bite from this thing can really hurt."

With that, he took the foraged berries to the kitchen. He planned to wash them and get ready to make fruit vinegar before dealing with the wild rabbit.

「In the kitchen.」

His uncle, Shi Wenming, was holding a ledger and calculating the day's earnings.

Seeing Lin Xu come in, he smiled and said, "Today's earnings actually broke ten thousand! If business stays this good, our restaurant will need to hire a couple more people."

Currently, only Uncle Shi Wenming managed the restaurant. His second aunt would help when she wasn't busy, but today she had to supervise Shi Molli with her homework, so she couldn't come over.

Lin Xu said, "If you need to hire people, then hire them. Don't overwork yourself."

As they were speaking, Shi Wenming noticed the foraged berries Lin Xu had brought. "Oh, these fruits look great! Did you pick them from the mountain behind the village?"

"Yes, Yueyue and I just picked some. She enjoys fruit vinegar, so I'm planning to make a batch. It's healthy, much better than drinking sodas."

"Exactly, fruit vinegar is definitely good stuff. They say it softens blood vessels and all that. Your second aunt used to drink it too when she had time."

Lin Xu put the foraged berries into a basin, rinsed them with fresh water, removed any bad ones, and then placed the clean berries in a bamboo basket to air dry.

When making fruit vinegar, the fruit surfaces must be free of untreated water; otherwise, it can easily spoil.

That's why the fruit surfaces need to be dried as thoroughly as possible.

Only then will the resulting fruit vinegar not spoil or go bad.

He placed the bamboo basket in front of a fan to speed up the evaporation of moisture from the berries' surfaces.

As he was busying himself with the berries, Shi Wenming asked, "Are you preparing that rabbit for tonight?"

"Yes, Second Uncle said he'd have a few drinks with you all tonight."

"Then let me butcher the rabbit for you. I'm quite familiar with this."

Lin Xu had been wondering how to deal with the rabbit. So, when his uncle volunteered, he didn't refuse, saying, "In that case, thanks, Uncle."

"We're family, no need for such formalities. I just enjoy skinning rabbits; it's surprisingly therapeutic."

Therapeutic? Uncle, your interests are certainly... unique, huh.

After Lin Xu finished with the berries, he left the kitchen, intending to watch the rabbit being processed. However, he saw that Shi Wenming was already done.

His uncle was now striding towards the kitchen, holding the cleaned rabbit.

Whoa! It was over before I even had a chance to watch. That was incredibly fast, wasn't it?

Just as he was about to offer some praise, Shi Wenming himself remarked, "I'm a bit rusty since I haven't done this in a while. Normally, I'd have that rabbit skinned in under five seconds."

Lin Xu: ????????

I never would have guessed Uncle was such highly sought-after talent at rabbit farms!

Just as he was about to follow his uncle into the kitchen to start preparing the wild rabbit, he saw Dundun nearby, staring in horror at Shi Wenming's retreating back.

Clearly, the butchering process had left a psychological scar on the little fellow.

Lin Xu walked over and picked up Dundun.

Only then did the little fellow seem to snap out of it.

"MEOW!"

He pointed a paw at the rabbit skin draped over the cage, looking utterly terrified.

Lin Xu said with a smile, "Don't worry, don't worry. This is just to get you a tasty treat. I'll give you a rabbit leg to try later so you can have a good taste."

But Dundun still looked very scared.

He pointed at the rabbit skin, then at his own fur.

Evidently, the little fellow realized he wasn't all that different from the rabbit.

So now he wore an expression as if the cat grieved for the rabbit's demise.

Lin Xu scratched under his chin, then pressed his forehead against the little fellow's head and said reassuringly, "Don't worry, my good boy. You're my precious, and I won't let anyone hurt you."

Such an intelligent little cat; I can't even dote on you enough, how could I ever bear to hurt you?

Chapter 369: The Representative Meat Dish—Braised Rabbit Meat! The Method for Making Fruit Vinegar!

After being comforted like that, Dundun immediately rubbed its head against Lin Xu's neck.

Then, a system notification sounded in Lin Xu's mind: "Host has comforted Dundun attentively, completing the hidden task [Pacify Beloved Pet], and obtained the Perfect Level braised dish: Braised Rabbit Meat. Congratulations to the host."

Holy cow! This was a hidden task? Luckily, I'd just consoled Dundun for a bit. Otherwise, I would have definitely missed out on such a great reward.

Although Lin Xu had seemed eager to try earlier, he actually wasn't proficient in cooking rabbit meat, and the system had never rewarded him with a similar recipe. He had only thought that as long as he added more chili and spices, the rabbit meat wouldn't taste bad. But now, after acquiring the Perfect Level Braised Rabbit Meat experience, he realized that this dish's cooking method was very particular; if not careful, it was easy to mess up.

For example, rabbit meat is quite lean and somewhat tough, with a very low fat content. It would be a big mistake to cook it with the usual concept of "cooking meat dishes as if they were vegetable dishes, and vegetable dishes as if they were meat dishes." Instead, this dish required lard. That way, the aroma would be richer, and the meat would become more fragrant, tender, and smooth. If vegetable oil were used, the rabbit meat would not only turn out dry and tough, but it would also seriously lack fragrance.

Moreover, rabbit meat has a strong gamey taste, especially wild rabbit, which has a rich, grassy gaminess. To make it taste good, one must use ingredients that remove gaminess and off-flavors. These included Angelica dahurica, White Cardamom, and White Pepper, as well as lemon, high-proof Liquor, and so forth. Only then could the rabbit meat be cooked to be fresh, fragrant, and delicious, suitable to accompany both drinks and rice.

After processing this information, Dundun, no longer looking scared in Lin Xu's arms, hopped down. It headed straight to the side of the sink, attempting to drag out the black fish. However, with a flick of its tail, the black fish splashed water all over Dundun.

Lin Xu sighed. Back to being a bratty kid again, huh?

He didn't bother with the little guy but walked into the kitchen on his own to start preparing the rabbit.

Alright, since I already have the recipe, let's get started. It would be perfect to see what's different about Braised Rabbit Meat made with a Perfect Level recipe.

First, he chopped the rabbit into large pieces with a cleaver. Then, he soaked them in cold water. This would remove the gaminess and also make the meat moister and more tender.

While soaking the rabbit meat, Lin Xu trimmed a piece of meat from one of the rabbit's legs. He would steam it in the pot for a bit to give Dundun a taste. Having just received the Perfect Level Braised Rabbit Meat recipe from Dundun, it wouldn't be right not to reward it.

Right, not only will I reward it with rabbit meat, but I'll also give Dundun some black fish on Grandma's birthday. I'll let this little fellow truly experience the joy of eating meat.

Once the piece of rabbit meat for Dundun was steaming, Lin Xu checked on the air-drying wild fruits. He noticed their surfaces had mostly dried, except for the stems and the parts touching the bamboo basket, which were still slightly damp, so he flipped each fruit over.

Having finished that, he began preparing the ingredients needed for the Braised Rabbit Meat. He gathered several scallion segments, a few slices of ginger, several cloves of garlic, a large handful of dried chili pieces, a pinch of Sichuan peppercorns, some chili rings cut from Hang peppers and Erjingtiao chilies, and various other spices.

Once everything was ready, he fished the rabbit meat out of the water. After draining the rabbit meat briefly, he placed the wok on the stove. He heated the wok, then swirled in some cold oil to coat it—a technique to prevent sticking—before adding a large spoonful of lard.

Soon, the oil was hot. Lin Xu added the scallion segments, ginger, and garlic to the wok, frying them until fragrant before adding the rabbit meat and beginning to stir-fry. The heat for this step needed to be high. This would ensure that any off-flavors in the rabbit meat evaporated from the meat along with moisture, driven out by the high-temperature oil.

When the surface of the rabbit meat had slightly changed color, he added the prepared spices and dried chilies. He continued to stir-fry, allowing the aromatic flavors to quickly penetrate the meat and further eliminate any gaminess. When the spicy fragrance was prominent, he poured some high-proof Liquor down the side of the wok. Using the volatility of the alcohol, he continued to eliminate the gaminess of the rabbit meat. After this step, most of the meat's off-flavors had been eliminated.

Next, he added Braised Soy Sauce and water, covered the wok with a lid, and let it simmer slowly.

As it simmered, Shi Wenming remarked with a sigh from the side, "No wonder the rabbit I stewed before didn't taste good! Turns out this stuff needs lard. I've learned another trick from you, Nephew."

Lin Xu replied with a smile, "For dishes with low-fat ingredients like this, you need to use lard or beef tallow—it's about making meat dishes with animal fats. Remember when I cooked fish? I used lard then too."

In cooking, you have to learn to adjust the oil flexibly based on the ingredients. When ingredients are naturally fatty, use vegetable oil or no oil at all, letting their own fats render out. When the ingredients are too lean or lack fragrance, use lard. If you want to enhance umami, you can even use chicken fat. Some specific dishes, like the less-common 'It Resembles Honey,' even require Sesame Oil for cooking.

While the rabbit meat stewed, Lin Xu took the nearly-dry wild fruits to prepare fruit vinegar.

There are two types of fruit vinegar: one is for beverages, and the other is for cooking.

So-called beverage vinegar uses vinegars with a simple flavor profile, like White Vinegar or Rice Vinegar, as a base. Fruits, white sugar, Honey, and other ingredients are then added to brew. The resulting fruit vinegar is sweet and sour, and can be drunk directly or diluted with water.

Cooking vinegar, on the other hand, is brewed from washed fruits fermented in a sealed container. Although this type of vinegar has a fruity flavor, its acidity is much stronger. It's not suitable for drinking directly and should only be used sparingly in cooking.

Chapter 370: The Representative Meat Dish—Braised Rabbit Meat! The Method for Making Fruit Vinegar!

Since he was making it for Shen Baobao today, Lin Xu naturally decided to make a drinkable vinegar.

He found a glass jar of about five liters, washed it thoroughly, and dried the inside.

Then, he brought over the air-dried wild fruits. He cut off their stems, halved them, removed the cores, and placed them into the glass jar.

With each layer of fruit, he sprinkled a layer of White Sugar.

When the jar was nearly full of fruit, he poured in some Honey, followed by White Vinegar.

The vinegar should fill more than two-thirds of the jar, leaving some air at the top to aid fermentation.

Making vinegar and brewing liquor are two different processes.

Brewing liquor requires the exclusion of air, allowing starches and sugars to convert into alcohols.

Making vinegar, however, needs some air so that sugars and starches can transform into acetic acid.

Using the same ingredient, like sorghum, for example: if brewed without air, it becomes sorghum liquor; if brewed with exposure to air, it becomes Chen Vinegar.

He sealed the jar with its lid and placed it in a cool, dark place.

In about a month, the fruit vinegar in the jar would be fully fermented.

Lin Xu planned to brew more fruit vinegar before he left. That way, not only could his mom and Second Aunt try it, but he could also bring a few jars to his mother-in-law.

Yes, this kind of beauty-enhancing health drink is his mother-in-law's favorite.

Bringing a few jars home will definitely make her happy.

After preparing the fruit vinegars, the rabbit meat in the pot was also nearly done.

When he lifted the lid, a fresh, spicy, and savory aroma immediately wafted out.

Thanks to the lard, the meat pieces in the pot were glossy and reddish-brown, looking incredibly tempting.

Lin Xu added seasonings like salt, White Sugar, and pepper powder. Then, he added onions and rings of green and red peppers. He stir-fried everything over high heat to thicken the sauce, then squeezed the juice of half a lemon into the pot.

Lemons have a potent effect, neutralizing gamey flavors and enhancing freshness, which would further eliminate any grassy taste from the rabbit meat.

Once these steps were completed, he dished it out onto a plate.

By now, everyone had returned and was ready for dinner.

Lin Xu brought the rabbit meat to the dining table and also put some of the steamed rabbit meat into Dundun's cat bowl.

The little fellow had been circling the pool, plotting revenge, only to get splashed with more and more water.

Upon hearing Lin Xu call out that dinner was ready, it immediately shook the water off its fur, scampered to its bowl, sniffed the rabbit meat, and then began to eat.

Hmph! Only by eating my fill will I have the strength to defeat that big black fish!

「At the dining table」

The Lin Family's dinner began.

Lin Hongqi filled glasses with Luzhou liquor for his second maternal uncle, Chen Meiliang, and his second aunt's husband, Shi Wenming, saying, "You've both worked hard."

Second Uncle Chen Meiliang laughed and said, "Shi Wenming had the tougher job; I was just enjoying the sights... But as the number of tourists increases, more and more children are crowding around the reservoir. Tomorrow, I need to make more warning signs, place more lifebuoys at intervals, and maybe set up some loudspeakers playing looped announcements to remind parents to watch their children closely."

The greatest fear by the water is a drowning incident.

Therefore, extreme caution was essential.

Lin Hongqi said, "If you're short-handed, just let me know. I can arrange for a few more people to help you."

"We don't need more people for now. The main thing is to keep a close eye on the water park. It gets chaotic with so many children, and we can't afford to miss anyone who might be drowning."

Parents bring their children to the scenic area to relax, so they naturally let their guard down more than usual.

That's why we at the scenic area need to be extra vigilant to prevent any accidents.

While the elders were chatting, Chen Yuanyuan quietly picked up a piece of braised rabbit meat with her chopsticks, placed it in her bowl, took a bite, and then gave a thumbs-up to Lin Xu, who was sitting beside her. "This is the best rabbit meat I've ever had in my entire life!"

The rabbit meat melted in her mouth. It wasn't dry or tough like rabbit meat usually was; instead, it was rich and succulent from the lard.

The first bite felt a tad greasy, but as she chewed, that richness perfectly counteracted the rabbit meat's slightly dry texture.

It also compensated for the rabbit meat's natural lack of aroma.

Once this richness combined with the spices, the flavor profile changed completely.

This enticing aroma, paired with the spicy kick, uncontrollably whetted one's appetite, making one crave a mouthful of rice or a sip of Liquor.

"Delicious, absolutely delicious! This flavor is truly exceptional!"

"Don't forget to add this braised rabbit meat to the menu at the Beijing restaurant; it'll definitely be a hit."

"It's perfect with drinks and as part of a meal—that's what a great dish should be!"

"Wow! The sauce over rice is delicious too! Yuanyuan, you have to try it."

"And that subtle hint of lemon, it's so fresh and tasty!"

"..."

Everyone was captivated by the delicious rabbit meat.

His father and Second Uncle Chen even forgot about their drinks.

Shi Wenming remarked with a sigh of realization, "We've been cooking rabbit the wrong way at home all these years. Watching Lin Xu today, I finally understand: you need lard to make it delicious."

He decided that when he went grocery shopping in the next day or two, he would buy a couple of rabbits and try stewing them with lard.

If it turned out well, he'd add it to the farmhouse restaurant's menu.

While they were eating and chatting, Shen Baobao mentioned their earlier trip to pick wild fruits for making fruit vinegar.

Hearing that fruit vinegar was good for beauty and health, Chen Meijuan immediately grew enthusiastic, "Wenming, when you go shopping for groceries tomorrow morning, pick up two cases of White Vinegar. I'll go pick wild fruits tomorrow as well; I want to make a big batch."

She not only wanted to drink it herself but also considered buying some elegant glass bottles to package the brewed fruit vinegar and sell it as a local specialty of the scenic area.

「After the meal」

Since it was still early and the sky hadn't darkened yet, Second Uncle Chen said to Lin Xu, "Lin Xu, I have to keep an eye on the children by the reservoir tomorrow, so I won't have time to pull up the shrimp traps. Why don't we go check them now and see what our haul is?"

Lin Xu was also eager to taste the Shrimp Pancakes he had received from the system draw the previous day, so he nodded and said, "Alright, Second Uncle, let's go now."

Shen Baobao, who had been trying to improve her rapport with Dundun using a cat teaser, perked up at the mention of going to the reservoir. She happily hopped into the resort's shuttle vehicle to tag along.

Hehe, how could I, Shen Baobao, miss out on something as fun as pulling up shrimp traps?

The group arrived at the edge of the reservoir.

After boarding the inflatable assault boat, they quickly headed towards the area where the shrimp traps had been set.

Reaching the spot, Second Uncle Chen located the buoy and slowly pulled the submerged shrimp trap out of the water.

The moment it broke the surface, Shen Baobao, perched on the gunwale of the boat, cried out in surprise, "Wow! There's a snake inside!"

Lin Xu jumped, then looked closely. He quickly grabbed her hand and said, "That's not a snake, it's an eel."

Second Uncle Chen, holding the shrimp trap, peered closer and exclaimed, "Whoa, this eel is a beauty! It's as thick as a small rolling pin. We're in for a feast tomorrow! Lin Xu, what's a good way to prepare this?"

How should I cook it?

Huaiyang cuisine has tons of ways to prepare eel.

Dishes like Sautéed Shredded Eel, Boiled Eel with Crispy Rice, or Stir-fried Eel Sections... but I don't know how to make any of them, and the system hasn't provided those kinds of ingredients...

Just as he was racking his brain, Lin Xu suddenly remembered a famous eel dish from Cantonese cuisine. He smiled and said, "Then let's just make a simple Steamed Eel with Fermented Black Beans, Dragon Coil Style."