

Culinary 391

Chapter 391: Can Chicken Breast Actually Be This Delicious? The TV Station's Invitation!

Shen Guofu reminded, "This piano is a limited edition Steinway..."

Before he could finish, Han Shuzhen gave him a sidelong glance. "What? I can't even touch it?"

Shen Guofu was speechless. Normally, it pains you greatly if the nanny wipes it with a regular cloth, and now I kindly offer a reminder, and I'm the one in the wrong? Grandmothers really do have unlimited tolerance for their grandchildren.

He gave a sheepish smile. "No, I was just worried about Dundun's paws getting hurt by the piano keys."

「In the kitchen.」

When the chicken breast had completely cooled down, Lin Xu took it out of the ice water and began to shred it. "When tearing it, there's no need to tear it too thinly; just slightly thinner than chopsticks is fine. After deep-frying and then dry-frying, the chicken strips will be crispy on the outside and tender on the inside, giving a more layered texture and making them more delicious."

Shen Baobao, who was at the side, found this dish very interesting. It needed to be hand-torn into strips, which seemed quite stress-relieving.

After tearing all the chicken strips, Lin Xu took a clean cheesecloth, placed the chicken strips inside, wrapped them up, and squeezed tightly.

"What are you doing that for?" Shen Baobao asked.

"To wring out the excess water. This saves time in frying."

Actually, there was another method: directly put the torn chicken strips into a frying pan and dry them out by pan-frying. This would save more oil but require more cooking time.

After squeezing out the water, he poured the chicken strips into a bowl and started seasoning: two small spoonfuls of salt, one small spoonful of pepper, and one small spoonful of Sichuan peppercorn powder. After stirring evenly, he added a couple of handfuls of low-gluten flour.

First, he tossed the bowl a few times to allow the flour to evenly coat the surface of the chicken strips. Then, he separated any strips that stuck together, ensuring each one was fully covered with flour.

Next, he heated oil in a wok to deep-fry the chicken strips. The oil temperature could be a bit higher for this step since the chicken was already cooked. The main purpose of deep-frying was to dry and crisp up the surface of the strips.

When the oil was about sixty percent hot, Lin Xu grabbed the flour-coated chicken strips and scattered them into the wok.

While adding them, he explained the key points to the camera Shen Baobao was filming with, "Don't stir them right after putting them in. Let the chicken strips firm up before turning them; otherwise, the flour on the surface might come off."

After a while, when the chicken strips had turned golden brown and hardened, he used a ladle and chopsticks to separate any that were sticking together. He deep-fried them for one more minute before removing them to drain the oil.

While frying the second batch, Lin Xu pinched one strip, intending to taste it, but Shen Baobao, standing nearby, snatched it away.

"Wow, it's crispy and tingly! So delicious!"

"This is only half-finished. The flavor will be even better after it's dry-fried."

Once all the chicken strips were fried until dry and crispy, he poured out the oil from the wok, leaving just a little bit of oil at the bottom. He put the wok back on the stove over low heat.

Without waiting for the oil to heat up, he grabbed a handful of Sichuan peppercorns and slowly stir-fried them. When they became fragrant, he added chili strips and stir-fried for another minute, then poured in the fried chicken strips.

He continued to stir-fry over low heat.

By this time, a spicy aroma had wafted out, and the chili strips had released their red oil. Lin Xu grabbed some dried chili powder, added a handful of roasted sesame seeds, and two small spoonfuls of sugar.

He continued to stir-fry for another minute. Once the chicken strips were coated with the shiny red chili oil, the dish was ready to be plated.

Today, two whole chicken breasts had made a large, full plate.

The spicy fragrance made Shen Baobao, who was in charge of filming, crave it completely; she was eager to try it even before filming ended.

But Lin Xu wasn't finished yet.

He spoke to the camera, "When dry-frying, you can add vegetables like celery, celtuce, or even fried potato strips to enhance the color and create a more diverse texture."

He was in a hurry today, so Lin Xu didn't add these. Besides, this wasn't a restaurant; there was no need to increase the volume of the dish with extra ingredients.

After filming, Lin Xu brought the plate of chicken strips to the dining room. Shen Guofu walked over quickly, "Ah, that's the flavor!"

The numbing and spicy chicken strips had such an enticing aroma. It was the kind of dish that made those who normally only drank about 100ml of liquor want to start with 250ml, and those who could handle 250ml aim for at least 500ml as a baseline.

Too bad I have a workout session tonight and can't drink.

Soon, dinner was served. Auntie Liu had made fried pumpkin with aromatic herb, shrimp salad, blanched asparagus, and cold seaweed strips, paired with barley porridge and mixed-grain flatbreads.

Looking at the dinner on the table, Lin Xu finally understood his father-in-law's earlier expression. All these dishes were potent for cutting oil and shedding fat. Just looking at them for a while felt like losing half a pound, let alone eating them.

"Honey, come eat!"

For the first time in a week, Shen Guofu was filled with such anticipation for dinner. To think that just a few days ago, I wouldn't even glance at chicken breast when it was placed in front of me. Yet, after my son-in-law prepared it this way, it's become my biggest motivation for eating dinner. Shen Guofu, oh Shen Guofu, are you still that famous Gourmet Prince? If Old Tan and the others found out, how could I show my face?

"What a delicious smell..."

Having eaten lunch very late, Han Shuzhen hadn't originally planned to have dinner. However, with her son-in-law at home, she felt she should at least come and sit down to make an appearance.

When she arrived at the dining room, she suddenly smelled a delightful spicy fragrance. Looking closer, she saw an additional, vibrantly red dish on the table, from which the spicy aroma emanated.

Is this...

She examined it carefully and then exclaimed in surprise, "Isn't this Numbing and Spicy Chicken Strips? I haven't had this dish in so many years."

No wonder Old Shen was so eager just now.

She smoothed her skirt and sat down next to Shen Guofu.

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"Remember when we were dating, the first time we ate out, we had spicy chicken shreds. You even coaxed me into drinking beer, saying it wouldn't get me drunk..."

As soon as Shen Baobao heard this, a gossip-hungry glint appeared in her eyes. WOW! Dad actually had the idea of getting Mom drunk on the sly! Dad, you were quite naughty, weren't you?

Shen Guofu sighed deeply. "Who knew you could drink even more than me? I miscalculated."

TSK TSK TSK, is this really something we younger folks should be hearing?

Shen Baobao stopped eating, supporting her cheeks with both hands as if ready to hear a story. This reminded Shen Guofu and Han Shuzhen that it was still dinner time.

"I'll taste Xiao Xu's cooking." Shen Guofu picked up a mouthful of chicken shreds with his chopsticks. After chewing, he gave Lin Xu a thumbs-up. "Spicy and crispy, and the meat inside is still so tender! You've nailed these chicken shreds. Honey, you better try them quickly. They're way better than the ones from that place at the alley entrance we used to go to."

Han Shuzhen tasted it, nodded, and said, "Indeed delicious! You two, hurry up and eat. Still waiting to hear the story, are you?"

Lin Xu and Shen Baobao exchanged smiles, then grabbed their Mixed Grain Pancakes in one hand and chopsticks in the other, and started eating.

The thoroughly fried chicken shreds were indeed tasty—crispy and flavorful. Especially with that hint of spice, it instantly whetted the appetite.

"MMM, not only are the chicken shreds delicious, but even the dried chilies are fried to a crisp. Chewing them is truly a delight."

The family ate joyfully. Lin Xu also tried some of Aunt Liu's dishes. They were all delicious, and the plating was exquisite. The only slight issue was that they didn't look particularly appetizing; otherwise, there was really nothing wrong with them. Especially the seaweed strips. They were sour and sweet, crunchy and tender to chew, with a fresh flavor that made one feel as if they were tasting nature itself.

It reminded him that he still had an unused Perfect Level Cooking Learning Card. Shen Baobao had also mentioned several times that Aunt Liu excelled at making Noodles With Black Bean Sauce. Lin Xu realized he needed to find an opportunity in the next couple of days to learn how to make Noodles With Black Bean Sauce from Aunt Liu. The new shop was about to open, specializing in hand-pulled noodles. Not offering Noodles With Black Bean Sauce would be an inconceivable omission, especially in Yanjing, where authenticity was paramount. A restaurant selling hand-pulled noodles without Fried Bean Sauce simply wouldn't be considered authentic.

「After dinner.」

Han Shuzhen took Dundun to the basement gym to play with a pogo ball, leaving Lin Xu, who had been about to get up and say goodbye, suddenly at a loss for words.

"Stay here, Xu Bao! Go back in the morning. I can't sleep without you!"

Lin Xu also wanted to sleep cuddling the fragrant and soft Shen Baobao, but this was his father-in-law's house, after all. It would be going too far. But with Dundun "kidnapped" by Han Shuzhen, he had no choice but to head upstairs, use Shen Baobao's computer to edit the video, and then upload it.

As his fanbase grew, the video review speed increased significantly. Soon after uploading, the video titled "Using My Father-in-Law's Kitchen to Make a Bar Snack He Loved in His Youth" appeared on his account feed.

"WOW! The uploader my great-grandpa follows posted an update! I'd better go 'burn some joss paper' for him!"

"Father-in-law's house? Has Boss Lin returned to Yanjing?"

"Isn't Boss Lin's father-in-law a big shot? Let me see what kind of bar snack the big shot loved when he was young. Starting tomorrow, I'm eating it every day!"

"Me too! I'm aiming to be a big shot in a few years!"

"Count me in!"

"And me!"

Before the video intro even finished playing, various scrolling comments floated up. As the video began, the scrolling comments were instantly tinged with envy:

"WHOA, this kitchen is bigger than my living room!"

"Thank you, Boss Lin, for giving me new material to dream about."

"I thought Boss Lin was teaching cooking, but he was actually showing off his wealth on the sly."

"If this kitchen fell into the hands of some shady landlord doing illegal sublets, wouldn't it be partitioned into more than a dozen tiny rooms?"

"I shared the video with my father-in-law, who after watching, passed it on to his father-in-law."

"Hey, does anyone know if the boss's wife has any sisters? If not, a brother would be fine too. I can adapt."

"..."

On the bed, Shen Baobao, wearing casual shorts, swung her two fair, long legs, laughing out loud at the hilarious comments from the netizens.

Lin Xu, sitting in front of the computer, said, "Tomorrow night, I'm having Dou Wenjing and the others over to my place for crayfish. Since the opening is soon, let's get everyone to meet and get acquainted."

Hearing this, Shen Baobao rolled over and said, "Then I'm going too!"

Eating crayfish without drinking beer wouldn't be right, would it? As the hostess, wouldn't it be improper if I didn't toast everyone a couple of times? And if I drink, I can't drive, and designated drivers aren't always safe... So, it would be perfectly reasonable for me to make a small sacrifice and stay at Xu Bao's place, right? WAHAHA, I'll get to cuddle Xu Bao to sleep tomorrow night too!

While Lin Xu was on his phone, messaging Dou Wenjing, Zeng Xiaoqi, and the others, Shen Guofu was downstairs in the gym, warming up for his aerobics session. He looked at Han Shuzhen, who had changed into a sports T-shirt and yoga pants, and asked, "Xiao Xu is staying here tonight, right?"

"Let him stay. It's not good for them to be apart so soon after getting together. I'm worried Yueyue might not be used to it."

"You're quite an open-minded mother, aren't you?"

"When you were young and came to my house, didn't my mom also let you stay? You even walked into the wrong room at midnight and ended up in my brother's room..."

"COUGH COUGH, let's not talk about that, dear... Let's get started. After this, I'll play a couple of games of pool with Xiao Xu. Yueyue said he played a lot in college and has a good foundation."

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Speaking of playing pool, Han Shuzhen couldn't help but glance at the nearby snooker table. Dundun was currently on it, enthusiastically fiddling with a pool ball.

You guys want to play pool? You'll have to see if Dundun agrees first!

「Upstairs room.」

Everyone invited to the lobster feast tomorrow night had confirmed they would arrive at Yingchun Street by seven in the evening.

Initially, it didn't seem like many people, but a careful count revealed Zhuang Yizhou, Zhu Yong, Wei Qian, Qin Wei, Dou Wenjing, Zeng Xiaoqi, Shu Yun, Shen Baobao, and his sister-in-law... enough to fill a large table.

Looks like I'll need to buy more crayfish for tomorrow!

Just as he was about to put down his phone and head to the basement gym to watch his father-in-law do his "Compendium of Materia Medica" workout routine, Zeng Xiaoqi suddenly sent another message.

"Boss Lin, I've planned a gourmet food program over the last couple of days, and it has been approved by the station. If you're not too busy in the next few days, how about we try recording an episode first?"

A gourmet food program? Lin Xu asked curiously, "Something like 'Daily Food,' that teaches cooking?"

"Yes, something like that, but relatively more professional, given your qualifications."

I'm just a newbie who hasn't even been in the industry for two months!

Lin Xu wasn't very enthusiastic about this kind of program. Besides the likely low ratings, it could easily lead to controversy. Plus, the advertisements involved might conflict with the Lin Ji brand.

He was about to refuse when Zeng Xiaoqi sent another message: "If we can successfully launch it, I'll help you secure a week of pre-screening advertisements and a feature report on gourmet food. You'll also get no less than three news promotions and at least a week of recommended publicity for your Longqi Mountain Scenic Area..."

Seeing these conditions, Lin Xu suddenly felt that, as someone in the catering industry, he had a duty and responsibility to promote the culture of Chinese culinary arts.

Yes, Chinese culinary culture has a long and rich history; it's time to properly introduce it to the audience, he thought.

Tapping away, he replied, "To promote Chinese cuisine, I agree, Sis Xiaoqi. If the program takes off, I can even help you invite the head chefs from the Fishing Platform to join."

My senior brother loves this kind of excitement; I should involve him too. It's a good chance for him to challenge other hotels. As for the other head chefs... we'll see how my senior brother handles this beating first.

After ending the chat, Lin Xu and Shen Baobao went downstairs together to the gym to watch the workout.

「Yanjing City TV station.」

In the office of the Travel Channel.

Upon seeing Lin Xu's message, Zeng Xiaoqi couldn't help but cheer.

Wuhu! The gourmet food program is all set!

She happily got up and performed a peacock dance. Thankfully, the office was empty; otherwise, her graceful moves would definitely have made her colleagues' jaws drop.

After her excitement subsided, Zeng Xiaoqi began to plan the remaining details. With the most important guest secured, the next step was arranging the recording venue. If all went well, they could start recording the day after tomorrow. Once approved, it would immediately be broadcast during prime time on the Travel Channel.

It will surely dazzle everyone!

Thinking this, she took a malva nut from a box, placed it in her cup, and headed to the water dispenser to fill it with boiling water.

Since we're eating crayfish tomorrow night, it's perfectly reasonable for me to start drinking malva nut tea today, right? Humph, I refuse to believe my throat will act up this time!

Chapter 394: Cook a Pot of Chicken Soup in Ten Minutes, Want to Learn? Signature Jade Soup!

At eight in the morning, Lin Xu drove his car, with Dundun, to the Fishing Platform.

After parking in the lot in front of Building No. 2, he carried a drowsy Dundun out of the car and strode toward the reception desk of Building No. 2.

Dundun was lethargic because he had stayed up until almost midnight, just like Lin Xu, who had been playing billiards in the basement gym with his father-in-law—dubbed the 'Yanjing Ding Junhui.'

Fortunately, his mother-in-law, fuming, had dragged her husband away by the ear; otherwise, the little furball might have stayed up even later.

The billiards tables, cues, and other equipment in the basement were all high-end, and the space was ample. Having not played for a long time, Lin Xu found himself somewhat addicted.

He planned to continue honing his skills with his father-in-law when he had time later.

He'll truly show him the prowess of the 'Finance University Trump'!

"Wow, so you're Dundun? Hello, hello! There are so many little toys for him here. Chef Xie specifically instructed us not to throw them away but to keep them for this little cat to play with."

Just as he walked in, the cheongsam-clad reception manager approached him.

His senior brother had introduced her yesterday in the teahouse. Her surname was Gu, and her name was Gu Junli.

"Hello, Manager Gu. Dundun likes to lie on the reception desk when I'm working, so I'm hoping you can take care of him."

"Don't mention it, Chef Lin. It's my duty."

Dundun struggled out of Lin Xu's arms, jumped onto the reception desk, and pulled his little mat to the side, trying not to disrupt the front desk's normal operations. Then, he plopped down on it and continued his deep slumber.

This left Gu Junli, who had picked up a toy hoping to play with the cat, feeling a strong sense of defeat.

They say Dundun clung to Shu Yun like a child when she was here. Why does he act so aloof with me?

Could it be that not only people but cats too have learned to judge by appearances?

Seeing her holding the toy, Lin Xu gently reminded her, "Dundun played too long last night and didn't sleep much, so he might need extra sleep today. He'll look for you to play when he wakes up. He enjoys playing with beautiful women."

Upon hearing this, Gu Junli looked at Dundun with even more curiosity.

Huh? Are you perhaps a lecherous cat?

Lin Xu continued to the kitchen.

Seeing him, his team members came up to greet him.

If the boss didn't show up soon, they'd start suspecting they'd been sold to the Fishing Platform.

"Just one more week, and we can move to the new restaurant. Just hold on a bit longer."

When they heard the new restaurant would be ready in about a week, they all perked up.

"Ah, that's great! Finally, we can go back to work!"

"This kitchen is too idle. We're not used to it."

"Exactly! Every day I have to find work for myself. Today, I plan to cut twenty pounds of Potato Strips."

"I just kneaded some dough. I'm not planning to do anything else today; I'm just going to practice making hand-rolled noodles."

TSK TSK TSK... Such initiative; no wonder they earn such high salaries.

Lin Xu knew they were under great pressure.

After all, the new restaurant was aiming to be a high-end establishment where their current skills would only suffice for assisting and providing backup. So, they were practicing hard now, hoping to be able to stand on their own in the kitchen sooner.

"Make sure to balance work with rest. Don't exhaust yourselves."

After chatting for a bit more, Lin Xu waved his hand, letting them get back to their tasks.

It was still early, and the dishes he usually prepared had already been handed over to other chefs. With nothing else to do, he wandered over to the seafood section to see if there were any fish, shrimp, or crabs in need of "rescue."

「At ten-thirty in the morning.」

After eating the lunch prepared by Head Chef Cheng JianShe, everyone became busy and tense.

Today, the Ministry of Commerce was hosting a high-profile banquet in the restaurant's third-floor banquet hall, and all dishes had to be flawless.

"Junior Brother, are there any dishes on this menu that you can make?"

Lin Xu had already studied the Ministry of Commerce's menu before lunch and didn't hesitate to answer his Senior Brother, "Oil Braised Large Shrimp, Fried Crispy Silverfish, Ginger-Sauce Lotus Root Strips... I can make these three."

Lin Xu was proficient primarily in home-style dishes using techniques such as dry-frying, sweet and sour, poaching, and black bean sauce, which were rarely featured in business banquets.

For example, the dishes on this menu—such as Herb Beef, Sauce Cod, Lotus-Scented Pork Riblets, and Rosemary Beach Lamb—were all suitable for individual servings on a plate or in a small tureen, completely different from the usual shared dishes.

"Heh? You know how to make Oil Braised Large Shrimp too, Junior Brother? Then you do it! Today, your Senior Brother is going to show these people from the Ministry of Commerce the real strength of Building No. 2!"

By this time, all the ingredients to be used had already been properly prepped and portioned.

As for the cooking, Head Chef Cheng JianShe and the other head chefs were personally overseeing it, ensuring the highest possible quality for the dishes.

Lin Xu started to prepare the Oil Braised Large Shrimp.

Chef Xie Baomin was initially somewhat worried, but upon observing his Junior Brother's technique, he was instantly shocked. It's the classic method! These Ministry of Commerce folks are in for a real treat today!

「Noon arrived.」

Dish after dish was served in an orderly fashion to the third floor.

After finishing his tasks, Lin Xu wiped the sweat from his face with a towel, then ladled some of the leftover Matsutake soup into a bowl to taste.

Wow, this flavor is truly exquisite!

No wonder Matsutake is rated as one of the top three premium ingredients. This umami flavor is so exceptional it's breathtaking!

After tasting it, he grabbed some takeout containers.

He packed some of the leftover dishes and soup, then called for a delivery runner to take it to Shen Baobao.

Ever since the cooking competition, the girl hadn't been to work. This was a perfect opportunity to pack some extra dishes for Uncle Tan to try as well, hopefully preventing any deductions from Shen Baobao's salary.

「In the Dongming Building.

Chapter 395: Making Chicken Soup in Ten Minutes, Do You Want to Learn? Signature Jade Soup!

Shen Jiayue, who was idly passing time, received a message from Lin Xu and immediately bounced into Tan Yajun's office.

"Uncle Tan, don't have Assistant Yuan buy your lunch today; there's going to be something delicious coming soon!"

Tan Yajun was browsing through documents when he heard her and asked curiously, "What delicious thing? Has Xiao Xu made you a special dish again?"

"No, it's because there was a Ministry of Commerce banquet at Building 2 today, and some dishes were left over. Xu Bao just sneakily packed some. A delivery person will bring them over soon, so you can try some too."

Dishes from the Ministry of Commerce banquet?

Tan Yajun's interest was piqued. Any banquet held at Fishing Platform wouldn't be low-grade, and Building Two is famously mysterious. The food there must be absolutely top-notch.

He said to Shen Baobao, "When the dishes arrive, bring them directly to the reception room. The tables there are more spacious; it's much better than eating in the office."

"Okie dokie!"

Before long, a courier carrying two large, tightly packed tote bags arrived at the entrance of the office area and called out, "Shen Jiayue, your package!"

"I'm coming, I'm coming!"

Shen Baobao quickly ran over, thanked the courier, then took the bags to the audit firm's reception room.

Upon opening the bags, she took out the dishes one by one.

As she was busy with this, Tan Yajun came in with two cups of freshly brewed tea. "What dishes do we have here?"

"Hmm... there are so many! Beef short ribs, lamb, and whatnot... Oh, and there are Oil Braised Large Shrimp too. This is definitely made by Xu Bao; he has cooked it several times back home."

Shen Baobao opened the box containing the Oil Braised Large Shrimp. Inside, eight large shrimp lay quietly. Each one was plump, rosy in color, and emitted a rich, savory aroma.

Upon seeing this, Tan Yajun's eyes were fixed. "Wow, this is a signature dish from Cuihua Tower, and Xiao Xu knows how to make this too? Well, I must have a proper taste later!"

「Over at Fishing Platform.」

After finishing the kitchen chores, Lin Xu sliced some leftover cod and brought it to Dundun. The adults were enjoying delicious food, and the little one deserved to satisfy his cravings too. Taking advantage of the Ministry of Commerce banquet, Lin Xu wanted to let Dundun try something new, especially since the little fellow hadn't eaten cod before.

Just as he reached the front desk, a certain adorable little one, who had been sound asleep, twitched his nose, then rolled over and climbed to his feet. Seeing the disposable plate in Lin Xu's hand, he pounced immediately.

"Eat slowly; no one's going to snatch it from you."

Lin Xu hadn't expected Dundun to take such a liking to cod. He decided to buy some later so that whenever the little guy craved it, he could steam some to satisfy him.

While watching Dundun eat the cod, Gu Junli hurried over. "Master Lin, the banquet hall upstairs urgently added another soup. Chef Xie wants you to go to the kitchen."

An emergency soup addition? Lin Xu thought. Aren't there already several soups on the menu? Are those not enough?

Arriving at the kitchen, Head Chef Cheng JianShe was losing his temper. "Why is there no Chicken Soup left? The Jade Soup ordered by the guests needs Chicken Soup to make it. Without Chicken Soup, won't it just become cucumber slice soup?!"

For such high-standard banquets, kitchen preparations are generally based on the established menu. They wouldn't prepare too much extra, to avoid wasting ingredients. Unexpectedly, just after all the dishes were served, the banquet hall requested an additional Jade Soup to cleanse the palate. However, the kitchen had used up most of the Chicken Soup and hadn't had time to make more.

This made Cheng JianShe extremely frustrated.

Seeing Lin Xu approach, Xie Baomin, who had been silent, said, "Junior Brother, even at meticulously planned state banquets, you'll sometimes encounter last-minute additions of soup or dishes. What you need to do is stay calm and not descend into helpless rage like Old Cheng here."

Cheng JianShe: "..."

Chef Xie, if you want to guide your junior brother, just guide him. Why use me as a teaching example?

Lin Xu curiously asked, "Isn't it too late to start making Chicken Soup now? What should we do? Stir a pot of soup with Chicken Essence?"

Xie Baomin spoke with a calm and composed demeanor, "What's too late? Within ten minutes, I guarantee you a pot of clear and savory Chicken Soup... Junior Brother, today I'll teach you how to make Chicken Soup in ten minutes!"

Then, he told an assistant cook, "Get two fresh chicken carcasses and three whole Chicken Breasts."

After giving the instruction, Xie Baomin moved to the stove, placed a large iron pot on it, added more than half a pot of water, and turned on the heat.

Lin Xu asked with some bewilderment, "Can this really work, Senior Brother?"

"Trust me. Our master once did this at a State Banquet. Your restaurant is about to open, so you should learn this trick as well. It will be enough to deal with any critical gourmets who come looking for trouble."

This indeed served as a reminder to Lin Xu. He decided that no matter what, he would always have stock on hand to avoid such infuriating situations.

Soon, the chicken carcasses were brought over.

Xie Baomin placed the chicken carcasses on the cutting board and said to Cheng JianShe, who was beside him, "Old Cheng, blend the Chicken Breast with Scallion and Ginger water until smooth. And remember, you owe me a treat at Wangjing Xiaoyao later. This trick is a secret of our school, not to be shared with others. Today, you're getting a bargain."

Cheng JianShe, upon hearing it was a special technique, immediately grabbed the Chicken Breast and gleefully went to the nearby food processor to start mincing the meat.

Soon, the buzzing of the food processor filled the kitchen.

Meanwhile, Xie Baomin took a cleaver and started to chop the chicken carcasses haphazardly. As he worked, he explained to Lin Xu,

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"The protein and umami substances in bones dissolve very easily in water. For pure chicken soup, you don't actually need to simmer it too long to extract the flavor. It's just that simmering it longer makes the flavor more intense."

But could it really be done in just ten minutes?

Last time I made Clear Soup, just the step of clarifying the soup took nearly half an hour.

And that was when the soup had already been simmered well.

Lin Xu was somewhat skeptical.

However, seeing his senior brother's confident expression, he decided to wait and see.

If it truly could be done, then he should learn it well and understand the techniques. That way, he wouldn't be clueless the next time he wanted to make it.

Xie Baomin chopped two chicken carcasses into a pile of minced meat and bones.

As he finished, the water in the pot was just beginning to boil.

He transferred the chopped chicken carcasses to a basin and then poured them into the roiling pot.

After pouring them in, he stirred a few times with a spoon to fully disperse the minced meat and bones.

Soon, the boiling water in the pot turned murky. The surface was covered with a lot of foam from the minced meat, and spots of chicken oil were even visible in some areas.

As the soup simmered, Cheng JianShe came over carrying the prepared Chicken Meatball.

Seeing the soup in the pot, he immediately frowned.

"They asked for Chicken Soup. What are you doing making such a stinky, murky concoction?"

This was also the question on Lin Xu's mind.

Xie Baomin still appeared calm and collected. "Old Cheng, can't you be a little patient?"

After saying that, he began to add seasonings to the pot.

A small bowl of Scallion and Ginger, six small spoons of salt, three small spoons of sugar, two small spoons of pepper, and a large spoonful of Cooking Wine.

After adding these, he continued to stir and then said to Lin Xu, "This type of quick Clear Soup needs to be seasoned in advance. Also, the pepper is added at this time so that the soup comes out clear and free of little black specks from the pepper."

Ah, a long-lost piece of knowledge!

I'll need to pay attention to this next time I make Clear Soup dishes.

Not long after he added the ingredients, the gaminess of the chicken carcasses faded considerably, but the soup became murkier as more soluble substances dissolved into the water.

Taking advantage of this time, Xie Baomin brought over the Chicken Meatball Cheng JianShe had prepared. He added pepper and Cooking Wine, along with some clear water, stirring it to a porridge-like consistency.

Everyone knew this step; it was definitely for clarifying the soup.

But could such a broth, which had been simmering for only a few minutes, really be clarified into Chicken Soup?

Lin Xu and Cheng JianShe were both doubtful.

Xie Baomin, unhurried, brought over a few fresh cucumbers.

First, he peeled the cucumbers. Then, he cut them vertically, then vertically again into quarters. Using a chef's knife, he carefully sliced away the cucumber seeds.

"The cucumber core has a slight sour taste, so it's best to remove it when making soup to enhance the umami flavor."

After removing the core, Xie Baomin cut each quarter lengthwise again, perfectly splitting a whole cucumber into eight strips.

After preparing them, he finely sliced these cucumber strips into pieces about one millimeter thick.

The finely sliced cucumber pieces, not even as large as a fingernail, were evenly thick and consistent in size, vividly showcasing his senior brother's solid Knife Skills.

Once sliced, they were placed in a basin.

The tender green cucumber slices piled together even resembled jade a bit.

Once all the cucumbers were sliced, the chicken soup in the pot was almost ready.

The chicken meat and bones were thoroughly cooked, and their aroma was even wafting out.

Xie Baomin used a large slotted spoon to scoop out all the minced meat and bone fragments from the pot. Then, he strained the soup through a fine-mesh sieve to remove any remaining bone fragments as thoroughly as possible.

Once he was done with that, he started to clarify the soup.

He turned the stove's flame to the lowest setting. Once the Chicken Soup in the pot was no longer boiling, he directly poured the prepared Chicken Meatball mixture from the basin into the pot.

After pouring it in, it was crucial not to stir.

This allowed the Chicken Meatball to gradually absorb the impurities in the soup.

Xie Baomin took some cornstarch and mixed it with water to make a slurry. With that, all the ingredients for the Jade Soup were ready.

Inside the pot, the Chicken Meatball gradually floated to the top, forming clusters on the surface.

If some beaten egg whites were added to the meat paste, it would become another Clear Soup dish in Sichuan cuisine, comparable to 'Boiled Cabbage in Consommé'—the Chicken Bean Curd.

Unfortunately, this was for clarifying the soup.

This Chicken Meatball was only there to filter and absorb impurities.

Normally, when using meat paste for clarifying soup, one could add tofu and form it into balls. However, this couldn't be done with this soup due to the numerous bone fragments. Eating it could easily scratch the esophagus, so it could only be discarded into the swill bucket.

Before long, more and more of the Chicken Meatball accumulated on the surface of the pot, eventually forming a thick "cake."

Meanwhile, the soup in the pot visibly began to clear.

Not only was it clearer, but the previous gamey smell had also completely disappeared. Now, it was filled with the unique, fresh aroma of chicken soup.

Lin Xu watched, deeply impressed.

Cooking is truly an art!

When the time was right, Xie Baomin placed a clean pot on an adjacent burner. He set a fine-mesh sieve over it and ladled the clarified Chicken Soup from the first pot into the sieve to filter it.

"Although the soup is clarified, there are still too many bone fragments. To be safe, we need to use another pot to cook the soup. Also, when ladling, don't touch the bottom of the pot, because the larger bone fragments have all settled there," he explained.

When more than half of the soup had been ladled out, enough for the Jade Soup, Xie Baomin stopped. He then turned the flame under the new pot to its highest setting.

Since the Chicken Soup had already been seasoned, there was no need to add more spices.

When it boiled, he poured the large plate of sliced cucumbers into it.

The aroma of chicken soup from the pot was suddenly enriched by the fresh scent of cucumbers.

The flame under the pot was now at its highest.

When bubbles started forming around the edge of the pot, Xie Baomin poured in the prepared cornstarch slurry, stirring quickly. The soup in the pot quickly came to a boil.

He turned off the heat and removed the pot from the stove.

On the adjacent worktable, the kitchen helpers had already set out several small, exquisite soup bowls. Xie Baomin held the pot with one hand and a ladle with the other, pouring the freshly made Jade Soup into the bowls.

After all the bowls were filled, there was still enough for a few small servings left in the pot.

Cheng JianShe didn't hesitate to ladle some into a bowl for himself and handed another to Lin Xu. "Learned another trick! Chef Xie, pick a place tonight. It's my treat—grilled kidneys on me, as much as you want! Master Lin, join us if you're free. The more, the merrier!"

Lin Xu replied, "I have plans tonight. Maybe next time. We can find a spot and have a few drinks together then."

After speaking, he took a spoonful of the soup from his bowl.

Hmm, the umami of the chicken soup and the refreshing flavor of the cucumber blended perfectly. It was a rich taste that instantly cleansed the palate.

The cucumbers were even still crunchy.

It added a unique texture to the soup.

Delicious!

This soup is fantastic!

Lin Xu thought he could make this for his father-in-law; it might help with his diet.

"How is it, Junior Brother? Is the taste passable?"

"It's incredibly delicious, beyond anything I imagined."

Xie Baomin said with a smile, "When making this soup, simmer the chicken carcasses as long as possible to make the flavor richer. Also, be sure to add plenty of cucumber. Too little will make the soup watery and ruin that smooth, refreshing texture when you drink it."

Lin Xu nodded, silently committing it to memory.

After another two sips, just as he was about to ask his senior brother for seasoning tips, Shu Yun unexpectedly called.

Hmm?

Calling at this hour?

Could Manager Shu have sorted things out with that chef who's skilled in hand-pulled noodles?

Muttering to himself, Lin Xu answered the call...

Chapter 397: Daughter, weren't you just going out to eat crayfish? Why did you bring your toothbrush too?

Lin Xu had just answered the call when Shu Yun's affable voice came through the receiver.

"Boss, I just had a chat with the master who is good at making hand-pulled noodles, and I also discussed the compensation issue with Manager Dou. He has agreed to switch over to our restaurant."

Ha! Having a store manager with strong execution is such a relief.

Lin Xu replied with a smile, "Thank you so much, Manager Shu. Eat more crayfish tonight!"

"Sure, sure, I won't be polite then... The master's name is Ji Minghui. Shall we invite Master Ji to join us for the crayfish tonight?"

"Sure, sure, let's all go together; it's more lively with more people."

They were all future pillars of Lin Ji; it was essential to bring everyone together to get them more acquainted.

After hanging up the phone, Lin Xu continued to sip his Jade Soup, finding it more and more delicious with each mouthful.

I'll buy a chicken frame tonight and try cooking it. It'll be a good way to give everyone eating crayfish a break from the richness.

As he was thinking, Xie Baomin, who was next to him, asked curiously, "Is there something going on tonight?"

"I'm planning to invite Shu Yun, Qin Wei, Wei Qian, and the others to my house for a crayfish meal. We can get to know each other, which will make it easier to work together after the opening."

Upon hearing this, Xie Baomin immediately pointed in the direction of the seafood section and said, "Just take whatever ingredients you need. As long as it's not imported, the cost won't be too high."

"Isn't that inappropriate, Big Bro?"

Lin Xu was somewhat surprised. Poaching people was bad enough, but now they're even offering ingredients? Isn't this just taking too much advantage?

"If it were someone else, of course, it wouldn't be acceptable. But for you, Director Liao of the Dining Department would be thrilled if you owed Fishing Platform a few more favors. That way, you'd be more inclined to help out in the future when needed."

TSK, so that's how it works?

Xie Baomin patted Lin Xu on the shoulder and said, "You have no idea how much honor this competition has brought to Fishing Platform. Never mind crayfish—if you wanted a hundred pounds of Boston lobsters, Liao Jinming would happily deliver them to you."

Since that was the case, Lin Xu no longer held back.

He had indeed spotted a few interesting ingredients at the seafood section that morning. For example, there were the nail-like river snails, oysters still breathing through their open shells, and top-quality crayfish so large they barely resembled common ones, among others. All these had caught Lin Xu's eager eye.

It's a pity the June crabs are gone; otherwise, tonight's meal would be even more sumptuous.

Upon reaching the seafood section, he picked out more than twenty pounds of extra-large crayfish and put them in an aquarium. He also chose several pounds of river snails and other ingredients. There were about two pounds of leftover Silverfish from lunch swimming joyfully in the water, and he hijacked those as well.

After selecting the ingredients and just as he returned to the kitchen, planning to rest for a bit, he saw Dai Jianli, the head chef of Building 18, entering with a bag in his hand. He called out, "Old Xie, Brother Lin, guess what treasure I've got here!"

Seeing his mysterious look, Lin Xu initially thought the guy had gotten his hands on some wild animals banned from sale and consumption. But upon opening the bag, he discovered it was full of silkworm chrysalises.

These silkworm chrysalises were quite large, about the size of a thumb, and each one was plump.

Xie Baomin's interest was immediately piqued. "These really are treasures, Old Dai! Where did you get them from?" he asked.

"Supplier Old Huang gave them to me... With these chrysalises, aren't we brothers due for a couple of drinks tonight?"

Xie Baomin replied, "My junior brother has a dinner party tonight. His new store is opening, and he needs to have a meal with his employees first to get everyone acquainted. We old-timers will drink together tonight... Old Cheng, you make the arrangements."

Cheng JianShe immediately gave an OK gesture. "No problem at all."

Learning a quick technique for making Chicken Soup from Chef Xie—let alone one serving of Wangjing Mini Waist, even ten servings would be a super deal. After all, mastering this Technique meant enjoying it for a lifetime.

Xie Baomin looked at the bag of chrysalises and said, "This is too much. We definitely can't finish it. Give half to my junior brother."

Dai Jianli generously responded, "Sure, Brother Lin. Take a bag, and I'll give you some."

「At six in the evening」

Lin Xu cleaned the crayfish in the ultrasonic shrimp cleaner at the seafood section. He then packed them into a foam box along with the river snails, silkworm chrysalises, oysters, and other ingredients, placing everything in the trunk of his car. He also grabbed some cucumbers and other vegetables so he wouldn't have to go to Uncle Yu's supermarket to buy them.

Once everything was ready, he called Wei Qian.

Soon after, the chubby fellow, who had almost tricked every cook in Building One, strolled over with Qin Wei.

Lin Xu went to the front desk to pick up Dundun.

The three of them got into the car, and they headed to the entrance of Building Six to pick up Shu Yun and the sturdy-looking Ji Minghui.

Ji Minghui was in his mid-twenties and not very talkative. After greeting Lin Xu, Wei Qian, and Qin Wei, he quietly stood to one side.

This is Chef Qiu's territory. I can't let him find out I've poached two key members from Building Six yet; otherwise, this refined head chef will probably lose it.

"Get in, get in! Let's go quickly!"

Shu Yun, holding Dundun, sat in the front passenger seat, while Wei Qian and the other two sat in the back.

"No need to pick up Zhu Yong; he's off today. He's currently in line on Yingchun Street buying shengjianbao."

Hearing Wei Qian say this, Lin Xu didn't turn towards Building Fifteen. He drove directly towards the main entrance.

Three weeks ago, he had driven to Fishing Platform alone. Now, he was absconding with a car so full of people there was barely enough room.

Chapter 398: Daughter, weren't you just going out to eat crayfish? Why did you bring your toothbrush too?

Tsk...

Do I have the potential to be a human trafficker?

「At the same time.」

In a villa in West Fourth Ring, Shen Baobao was nervously packing the things she needed to bring to Lin Xu's house.

Having just dined, Shen Guofu entered her room. He originally intended to secretly ask his daughter to bring a few crayfish over, but on seeing the suitcase on the bed, he was utterly bewildered.

Do you really need to bring so much luggage just to eat crayfish?

Just as he was curious, he saw his daughter walking out of the bathroom with a toothpaste and toothbrush in hand.

This...

"Sweetie, you're only going to have crayfish. Why are you even taking a toothbrush?"

Shen Baobao's face turned red as she forcefully made up an excuse. "Crayfish are so spicy; it's good for your teeth to brush immediately after eating."

"Then what's with the suitcase? Are you planning to eat these crayfish in the Maldives?"

"Oh, you're so annoying, Dad. It's Mom who won't let you eat them, not me. Just keep up your exercises at home. We can eat them at home for lunch someday, so you won't gain any weight."

Shen Guofu nodded; it seemed that was the only way.

After leaving the room, he strolled down to the basement. He planned to practice billiards while his son-in-law was absent. Next time, he would definitely show his son-in-law how formidable Yanjing's Ding Junhui was.

To improve his skills, Shen Guofu even arranged to meet Tan Yajun, known as the O'Sullivan of South City, to spar when they were available. They would team up against Finance University's Trump!

「Not long after Old Shen left,」

Han Shuzhen, who had already changed into her yoga outfit to exercise, walked in. She casually placed a small box into the suitcase and earnestly advised, "Be safe, and maintain good hygiene."

Seeing that both her parents had figured out her intentions, Shen Baobao's face suddenly showed a bashful expression. "Got it, Mom... No, I mean, I should call you Shuzhen. Sis, that yoga outfit really makes you look younger, just like my actual sister!"

Han Shuzhen helplessly glared at her daughter. "Honestly, you have no respect. Hurry up and get out of here; don't bother me."

"Okay, Sis Shuzhen!"

Shen Baobao kissed her mom's cheek and then continued packing the luggage she needed for the crayfish dinner.

「Meanwhile,」

Lin Xu was speeding in his car. Passing by Haidian Middle School, he noticed Ziqiang Shengjian's branch was once again open, with a long queue at the door. The shengjian shop not far away, however, had its shutter door tightly down, its future uncertain.

"Is this also our shop, Boss?"

"Yes, the company invested in it a few days ago, and it has already developed one branch. It shouldn't be long before new branches appear."

According to the development model set by Dou Wenjing, the chefs in each store only had to handle the Filling and make the buns, without needing to prepare the Filling itself. This made the learning process much faster.

If they could poach staff from other shengjian shops, it would be even faster.

The investment for such shops was minimal. As long as there were enough hands, opening ten shops a month wouldn't be a problem.

Lin Xu planned to visit the shengjian shop tomorrow morning. After all, the person in charge was Dou Wenjing's cousin, so it was only right and proper for him to offer some encouraging words.

Turning into Yingspring Street, just as he drove up to the neighborhood entrance, Lin Xu and the others saw Zhu Yong, Zhuang Yizhou, Zeng Xiaoqi, and more people following Dou Wenjing out of the store. Clearly, they had just been inside for a look.

Lin Xu stopped the car, greeted everyone, and then had them follow his car into the residential complex.

He parked the car in a downstairs parking spot and opened the trunk. Wei Qian and the others immediately gathered around, and with everyone pitching in, they carried the ingredients upstairs to prepare for tonight's dinner.

"Dundun, we'll be at your place soon. Can I visit your little den?"

Having visited twice already, Dou Wenjing said with a smile, "Dundun's den is very simple; it's just a cardboard box. This little guy has collected a bunch of cardboard boxes and won't let the boss tidy them up. He sleeps in one today and another tomorrow; he's quite the connoisseur!"

Hearing this, Shu Yun hugged little Dundun a bit tighter. "You're not picky about where you sleep? You're much better than me. I'm very particular about beds; I always sleep poorly when I travel."

Zeng Xiaoqi immediately chimed in, "What a coincidence, I'm like that too, super fussy about beds! But this time, staying at Boss Lin's resort was quite nice. Falling asleep to the scent of flowers and the sound of birdsong was very restful."

"Really? I'll have to go experience a couple of days at the boss's resort sometime..."

They chatted and laughed as they walked into the house.

Zhuang Yizhou said, "Ladies, please stay in the living room. Us men will handle the kitchen."

His words made the women realize that for today's dinner, all the men were chefs, while they themselves knew little about cooking.

Although the boss's wife and Manager Chen hadn't arrived yet, those two sisters looked like the type who had never done a day's work in their lives—they'd probably struggle even to make instant noodles.

「In the kitchen.」

Zhu Yong had just opened the foam box containing the crayfish when he exclaimed, "Holy cow, these crayfish are top-notch! Where did you get these?"

Lin Xu entered the kitchen, passed the dried chili to Qin Wei, asked him to cut some into sections, and then said, "My senior heard we were having a dinner party tonight, so he let me scoop some up from the aquaculture area. I was worried we might run short, so I got extra."

Everyone except Zhuang Yizhou was from Fishing Platform and knew the rule there well: "You can eat to your heart's content, but you can't take anything with you."

Unexpectedly, the boss had broken this rule.

He hadn't just taken some; he'd taken whole boxes.

That really showed his influence.

Chapter 399: Daughter, weren't you just going out to eat crayfish? Why did you bring your toothbrush too?

After sighing, Zhu Yong grabbed a pair of scissors and began to prepare the small lobsters. "We have a lot of seafood dishes in Building 15; I can prep this stuff with my eyes closed. Boss, just leave it to me. You can start cooking once I'm done."

Yes, during the visit to the new store just now, that beautiful hostess was clearly full of expectations for the boss's skills. So I shouldn't steal the boss's thunder right now. It's also a good chance for us to see how delicious this much-praised small lobster really is.

Taking a small lobster from the foam box, Zhu Yong first snipped off its head to remove the stomach sac. Then, he cut off the eight small legs, saying to Wei Qian, who was helping nearby, "Once the legs are snipped off, it looks much neater. They're inedible and just spoil the look."

After removing the legs, he pulled out the intestinal tract and then made a cut along the belly of the small lobster, on the inner shell near the tail. "These small lobsters are really big, so the tails don't cook through easily. Cutting the inner side of the tail helps it absorb flavor better without affecting the presentation."

Once he was done, everyone gathered to look at the prepared small lobsters. They indeed looked much tidier, and the shell on the back of the tail remained intact, making for a very presentable dish.

Lin Xu examined a small lobster and seriously discussed the pros and cons of this preparation method with Wei Qian and the others.

"The presentation is great, but it's not very efficient."

"If you cut off the legs like this, some customers might think we're using dead small lobsters."

"I think this method might make the meat looser, but it could cook faster. It used to take ten minutes for the flavor to infuse, but with this method, it might only take six or seven minutes to be ready for the sauce to reduce."

While they were discussing, Lin Xu heard the system's notification: "The host has seriously discussed the cooking method with the staff. The Excellent Level spicy small lobster has been upgraded to Superior spicy small lobster. Congratulations, host!"

Wow! That's a pleasant surprise. It looks like I'll have to gather everyone to discuss dishes more often from now on.

While everyone was busy with the small lobsters, Lin Xu poured the silkworm pupae into a pot and boiled them for a while. He then scooped them out, let them cool, and used a chef's knife to cut them in half. After cutting them, he removed the black core from the middle, making the entire silkworm pupa edible.

Just as he was busy, there was a knock at the door. Dou Wenjing went to open it, and Shen Baobao and Chen Yan walked in.

"Dundun, call your auntie!" Chen Yan immediately scooped Dundun into her arms upon entering.

Shu Yun, who was playing with blocks nearby, laughed at Dundun's disgruntled expression. "What's wrong? Aren't you happy being held by a beautiful woman? Lots of people wish for such an opportunity."

Dundun, however, only wanted to play his game and had no interest in a beautiful woman's embrace. He squirmed out of Chen Yan's arms and scampered into a cardboard box behind the sofa.

A good cat doesn't pick a fight with a shrew; if I can't afford to provoke her, I can certainly afford to hide.

Shen Baobao put on her Minion slippers and approached the kitchen door, feigning seriousness as she asked, "Do you need any help?"

Lin Xu replied, "Just take good care of the ladies for me. Oh, and there's juice, drinks, and ice cream in the fridge. Help yourselves to whatever you want."

"Okay dokey!" Shen Baobao agreed and immediately stepped into the role of hostess. She offered drinks, handed out juice, and even dug out snacks like sunflower seeds and peanuts for everyone. Chen Yan watched in amazement.

"I've never seen you this diligent at home! When guests come over, you usually can't even be bothered to move. Yet here, with your brother-in-law, you're as demure as a little wife. I should really take a picture and show it to your uncle and aunt."

"If my parents saw it, they'd just say, 'Yan Bao, when are you going to find someone?'"

Chen Yan was speechless. Can we please not talk about the one thing I'm trying to avoid?

She sighed softly, lifting the hem of her skirt as she sat down on the carpet beside the sofa. "I want to find someone too, but they're all either duds or smooth-talking playboys. I don't even feel like having a meal with them, let alone spending more time together."

Chen Yan's face was filled with melancholy. Her thirtieth birthday was fast approaching, yet she still hadn't found that special someone to share her life with.

Shen Baobao suggested, "You could ask Dundun for help. Dundun works wonders; whatever you ask for, you get. Don't believe me? Try it!"

Chen Yan scoffed, "Pfft, I stopped believing in that stuff when I was three. Only you and Lele still get a kick out of it like silly children."

Dundun thought, It seems Auntie really wants to stay single forever. Since that's the case, this cat will begrudgingly fulfill her wish!

In the kitchen, Lin Xu finished preparing all the silkworm pupae, removing their black cores and slicing them in half. He placed them in a bowl, added two handfuls of starch, and kneaded vigorously to ensure the starch adhered firmly to the cut surfaces.

By the time he was done, Qin Wei had already prepared the dried chili segments and was steaming the oysters with garlic sauce in the rice cooker. Ji Minghui, who had been quiet all along, had meticulously cleaned the whelks, cutting off the tip of each one.

"Boss, are these silkworm pupae for dry-frying?" Zhuang Yizhou asked, noticing the small lobsters were nearly prepped and volunteering to deep-fry the ingredients.

"Yes, dry-frying," Lin Xu confirmed. He placed the vegetables brought from the Fishing Platform into the sink to soak. They couldn't just eat seafood; they needed some vegetables for balance, otherwise, the meal would become too rich too quickly.

He poured oil into the wok and, once it was hot, deep-fried the small lobsters in batches. After the small lobsters, he fried the dry starch-coated silkworm pupae.

Once everything was fried, Lin Xu began the final cooking process. Meanwhile, Zhu Yong and the others leaned against the kitchen doorway, discussing their impressions from the tour of the new restaurant.

"Wow! The layout inside is very logical. The kitchen is huge and spacious, and each private room has its own unique character. Once the new restaurant opens, it'll definitely become the new benchmark for Yanjing's dining scene!"

Zhuang Yizhou even took out his phone to show Wei Qian, Qin Wei, and Ji Minghui the photos he had taken. As chefs, the sight of such a spacious and well-lit kitchen immediately made their eyes burn with envy.

This is going to be our workplace from now on!

As they were discussing, Shen Baobao started stuffing beers into the refrigerator's chilling compartment and even began freezing some ice cubes in an ice tray.

Zeng Xiaoqi watched her curiously and asked, "Boss Lady, are you planning to drink? You won't be able to drive later if you do."

Shen Baobao had indeed planned to drink a little, creating a situation where she couldn't drive and would be 'forced' to stay over.

Just as she was daydreaming about snuggling up to sleep with Xu Bao, her cousin Chen Yan picked up her juice and, with a couple of hearty GULPS, drank two large mouthfuls before saying to Zeng Xiaoqi, "It's fine. I'll drive her back later. It's quite convenient to get from the North Fourth Ring to the West Fourth Ring—just a quick press of the accelerator."

Shen Jiayue: (What in the world?!) Do you think you're so funny, Yan Bao?!

Chapter 400: Mom, I'm Allergic to Silkworm Pupae and Got an Injection! What Injection? Tiramisu!

Seeing Zhu Yong and the others walk out of the kitchen, Dou Wenjing took out several contracts from her bag and said, "Chef Zhu, Chef Zhuang, Chef Qin, Chef Ji, Chef Wei, please sign your employment contracts... Manager Shu, this one is yours."

Although they had already discussed the terms of their employment, it had all been verbal until now.

Taking advantage of the fact that everyone was present today, Dou Wenjing brought the contracts over.

After handing out the contracts, she said, "If you have social security, the company will transfer it as soon as possible without interruption. If you don't, the company will start paying it for you from next month."

Everyone looked over their contracts. Surprise appeared on their faces because the salary amount on the contract was a little higher than what had been verbally agreed upon.

For example, Zhuang Yizhou had previously agreed with Dou Wenjing to an annual salary of 300,000, plus the opportunity to sign with Joyful Media to become a key promoted broadcaster. But now, the previously agreed annual salary of 300,000 had changed to 320,000.

Though it was only an increase of 20,000, it was still quite a pleasant surprise. After all, HR departments were notorious for only trying to negotiate salaries down, and proactive raises like this were quite rare.

Everyone picked up a black pen and signed their names on their contract.

Just as they had finished signing, Lin Xu, who was busy in the kitchen, heard the system's alert in his mind:

"Host has successfully recruited five chefs recognized by the system, completing the side quest 'Desperate for Talent', and has been rewarded with a Cuisine Upgrade Card, two Perfect Level Stir-fry Draws, and two Perfect Level Braised Delicacy Draws. Would you like to draw now?"

"Host has invited the best manager from the Fishing Platform to become the restaurant manager, completing the Hidden Task 'Best Manager', and has been awarded with a Perfect Level Soup Delicacy—Jade Soup."

Wow! He hadn't expected that recruiting Shu Yun would also come with extra rewards. He was just worrying about whether he could make the Jade Soup to his senior brother's standard, and now the system had directly given him the Perfect Level recipe... He'd just have to wait to hear everyone's praise! As for the draws, Dundun definitely had to do them. Without this little guy's blessing, Lin Xu felt there was a high chance he'd draw some obscure and useless dishes.

While he was pondering, Qin Wei finished signing his contract, came to the kitchen, and began to rinse the Silverfish he had taken from a bag.

Silverfish was a specialty dish of Building Number Two. These semi-transparent, fresh ingredients didn't need much processing and could be cooked after being rinsed a couple of times. Chef Qin had always excelled at making this dish in the past.

At the adjacent stove, after stewing the spicy crawfish, Lin Xu set up a frying pan on another burner and started to make a hearty dish to pair with drinks—Dry-Fried Silkworm Pupae.

This dish was famous all over the country, especially in the Northern Region, where there was a saying: "One silkworm pupa is worth three eggs." This suggested that the nutritional value of one silkworm pupa exceeded that of three eggs. Of course, this was an exaggeration, much like the saying "one pigeon is better than nine chickens," merely meant to highlight the preciousness of an ingredient.

The silkworm pupae had already been deep-fried once. During that process, he had also flash-fried the cut celery pieces. Now, all that remained was the dry-frying.

He heated the wok, added half a ladle of cooking oil, and tossed in a pinch of Sichuan peppercorns before the oil got too hot. Adding the Sichuan peppercorns to cooler oil prevents them from burning and allows their numbing fragrance to be more thoroughly released.

Once the Sichuan peppercorns were fragrant, he added vertically sliced dried chili to the wok. This dish required a slightly larger amount of dried chili to make the stir-fried silkworm pupae spicy and delicious, perfect for whetting the appetite when drinking.

He stir-fried the dried chili over low heat until fragrant, then added minced Scallion and Ginger. After a quick stir-fry, he added the silkworm pupae and celery pieces. He then stir-fried everything on high heat for thirty seconds to let the spicy flavor penetrate the pupae and thoroughly cook the celery.

Next, he drizzled some Light Soy Sauce along the edge of the wok to add a savory depth to the dish.

Then, he began to season. He added salt, sugar, and ground pepper, followed by some Roasted White Sesame seeds. He stir-fried for another ten seconds to mix the seasonings thoroughly, and then it was ready to be plated.

After plating, Lin Xu washed the wok and poured in fresh oil. He added half a ladle of yellow lantern chili sauce from the Fishing Platform and stir-fried it until fragrant. Then, he poured in a large spoonful of the pre-made garlic sauce.

Next, he added the briefly fried crawfish and stir-fried them for a minute. Then, he poured in a can of beer and a large bowl of water to start the stewing process.

There were more than ten kilograms of crawfish, too much for a home-use wok to handle at once, so Lin Xu set some aside to make garlic-flavored crawfish.

Today's guests were all quite fond of spicy food, so when stir-frying, he deliberately added half a ladle of the yellow lantern chili sauce. This not only gave the crawfish a more beautiful color but also added a degree of spiciness that made them tastier than ordinary garlic-flavored crawfish.

While he was busy, his sister-in-law Chen Yan sneaked into the kitchen. Seeing the Dry-Fried Silkworm Pupae were ready, she picked up a piece and tasted it, exclaiming, "WOW! These silkworm pupae are crispy, fragrant, numbing, and spicy; they taste amazing!"

After saying that, as if possessed, she quickly carried the plate out of the kitchen to share with the women outside.

"Come, come, everyone try this! These silkworm pupae are delicious! Brother-in-law, why haven't you ever made this dish before?"

Before? No one had ever mentioned this dish. He had hardly ever seen this ingredient when grocery shopping. If Dai Jianli hadn't specifically gone to his senior brother to get it, he really wouldn't have had the chance to make this dish today.

He called out from the kitchen, "I just didn't think of it. If you like it, I'll make it more often in the future."

Well, after subjecting his sister-in-law to so much of their public display of affection, it was time to treat her to something delicious.

Shen Baobao brought everyone chopsticks and then sat to the side, continuing to play with her phone.