

## Culinary 421

Chapter 421: The Summer Heat Relieving Divine Artifact—Watermelon Curd! So Simple Even Shen Baobao Can Learn It!

Thinking of this, Lin Xu stopped practicing his shots and went directly to the garage on the second basement level. He took out the filming equipment from the trunk and went to the kitchen to set up the cameras, preparing for the shoot.

As he was busy, he heard Shen Baobao and his elder sister-in-law talking outside:

"So tired! Let's quickly change and see what's in the kitchen to eat. We need to refuel."

"Me too. I feel like the brisket we had for lunch has completely digested... I wonder if Brother-in-law is back yet. If he's not, let's just reheat the leftover brisket and sneakily eat it."

"Hmm... Weren't we going to make noodles?"

"If Brother-in-law comes back, we can just make a fresh batch. We can even make extra. I didn't eat my fill at noon because I was afraid you'd laugh at how much I ate..."

Soon, two beauties in bathrobes shuffled in wearing slippers, muttering about the Tomato Stew Beef Brisket they had for lunch.

Chen Yan was vividly describing how much she could eat when they both spotted Lin Xu at the kitchen door, holding a watermelon.

"Ah! Brother-in-law, when did you get back?"

"What are you doing holding a watermelon, Xu Bao? Playing the role of an onlooker?"

Both were quite surprised.

Chen Yan secretly sighed in relief. Thank goodness they were talking about food when they came in and not about our conversation while swimming earlier. Otherwise, I'd want to find a hole to crawl into right now.

Lin Xu said, "While we still have watermelons, I plan to film an episode on making Watermelon Curd."

Watermelon Curd?

Shen Jiayue and Chen Yan looked at each other, excitement gleaming in their eyes.

"Can we have some then?"

"Of course. It's made to be eaten."

Lin Xu said this and, holding the watermelon, walked into the kitchen. The Watermelon Curd needed to be refrigerated before it could be eaten, so he had to hurry and not delay the tomato brisket noodles planned for the evening.

Shen Jiayue and Chen Yan quickly went upstairs to change.

WAKAKA! We're going to have Watermelon Curd!

By the time the two of them had changed and come downstairs, Lin Xu had just finished recording the intro.

He was now adjusting the camera, preparing to film the scenes of scooping out the watermelon.

The method for making Watermelon Curd is quite straightforward: squeeze the watermelon into juice, melt Agar and mix it in, then pour the mixture into a mold to cool and set.

When it's time to eat, cut it into pieces and drizzle some refrigerated Crystal Sugar Water over it. Eaten cold and refreshing, it's truly a Divine Artifact for beating the heat.

"Is that all the ingredients? It looks so simple," Chen Yan said, leaning over. Seeing there weren't many ingredients, an eager expression appeared on her face.

If I learn to make this heat-busting Divine Artifact, it'll be so convenient whenever I want to eat some in the future! Besides, the Watermelon Curd from outside always seems to have additives. Making it myself would be much safer and more reassuring.

"Watermelon Curd really isn't difficult at all," Lin Xu said. "You two can learn if you'd like."

After adjusting the camera, Lin Xu was ready to start filming.

Hearing they could really learn, Chen Yan immediately pulled a hair tie off Shen Baobao's wrist and tied her own wavy hair into a neat ponytail.

Alright, if I'm going to learn to cook, I need to look sharp and be efficient!

"Do you two want to be on camera?" Lin Xu asked. "If you do, I'll teach you step by step as we film. If not, I'll shoot the video first and then teach you afterward."

The prospect of being on camera immediately made Shen Baobao's eyes light up.

"Yes, yes! I've been wanting to see what I look like on video."

After saying that, she looked at Chen Yan and asked, "Yan Bao, is my outfit okay? Is it too casual?"

Shen Baobao was currently wearing a rather loose white T-shirt with light gray yoga pants; after all, she was at home, so casual and relaxed was the way to go.

"Casual is good. You should dress comfortably at home," Chen Yan replied, playfully flicking her own luxurious dress, her words full of sly implications.

However, Shen Baobao was not one to be outdone. Seeing her cousin dressed as if attending a cocktail party, she smiled and said to Lin Xu, "Later, give Cousin Yan more screen time. Lots of unmarried young men watch your videos. It'll be a good chance to find her a match and save my aunt and uncle the headache."

Chen Yan: "!!!!!!!!!"

I was just teasing you a little, and this is how you treat me? Some plastic sisterhood this is! I wouldn't care if it ended!

But then she thought about her brother-in-law's cooking skills and the Watermelon Curd they were about to make... Oh, forget it. It's still worth it.

Chen Yan then said, "You two lovebirds can be on camera. I'll handle the filming; that happens to be my strong suit."

After saying this, Chen Yan began adeptly adjusting the camera settings.

Since Shen Baobao was going to participate, they naturally had to re-record the intro.

Once everything was ready, Lin Xu addressed the camera, "Hello everyone. Today, I'm not going to teach you how to cook a dish, but how to make a very simple dessert that even a kitchen rookie can master— Watermelon Curd."

He introduced the ingredients needed for the Watermelon Curd.

Then he continued, "To prove that this dessert is really simple, I've specially invited my Baobao to follow along and demonstrate firsthand that this is truly a treat anyone with hands can make."

With a gesture from him, Shen Baobao walked over and greeted the camera, "Hello everyone, I am Boss Lin's fiancée. Welcome, everyone, to follow my Xu Bao's account."

Chen Yan, who was recording from behind the camera, couldn't help but roll her eyes. If I weren't craving Watermelon Curd so badly right now, I'd really give that couple a piece of my mind! Flaunting their affection in broad daylight! Have they no shame?

After a brief interaction, Lin Xu had Shen Baobao follow his example, soaking a small handful of Agar in slightly warm water.

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Warm water can soften agar, making it easier to dissolve. Soaking also helped clean off dust and other particles from its surface.

After soaking the agar, he picked up a fruit knife and cut the watermelon in half, placing one half in front of himself and handing the other half to Shen Baobao, instructing her to follow along.

He first took a basin and placed a large sieve on top of it.

"Use a small spoon to scoop out the flesh and put it into the sieve. This step will..."

While Lin Xu was explaining, Shen Baobao took the small spoon meant for scooping watermelon, inserted it into the center of the watermelon, twisted it around, and then gently lifted, scooping out the sweetest part of the melon.

She forked it into her mouth with the spoon, chewing blissfully.

"Wow, this melon is so sweet! It even has a bit of a grainy texture."

Lin Xu: "..."

Chen Yan: "..."

We're making Watermelon Curd here, so why is she holding the watermelon and eating it?

Should I also move the TV over and find a popular anime for her to watch while she eats?

Lin Xu said, "Baobao, stop snacking. Let's finish making this first, otherwise we won't have enough for the Watermelon Curd."

"Oh..."

Both of them continued scooping out watermelon flesh with their spoons.

Chen Yan then brought the camera closer to start filming a close-up of the scooping.

While she was filming, Shen Baobao used her spoon to offer a bright red piece of watermelon flesh to Chen Yan's mouth.

"Yan Bao, try this. It's really sweet!"

Chen Yan: "..."

If she keeps snacking like this, we'll have to cut open another melon.

But since her cousin had offered it right to her mouth, it would be a waste not to eat. So, she bit into the watermelon as Shen Baobao smoothly pulled the spoon away, and the piece of watermelon entered her mouth.

Mm, it really is sweet.

It feels like there's no need to make Watermelon Curd; just scooping and eating it with a spoon is quite satisfying too.

After all the watermelon flesh was scooped out, Lin Xu noticed that Shen Baobao had about a third less flesh in her basin than he had in his.

Looks like these two cousins ate quite a bit!

"What do we do next?"

Shen Baobao burped contentedly, her eyes sparkling with excitement for making delicious food.

Mm, I'm full now! Time to start making Watermelon Curd with Xu Bao.

"Put on disposable gloves and crush the flesh through the sieve to turn it into fine granules. This will give it a better texture when eaten."

Many recipes online use juicers or blenders for this. Although easier, this method results in a very uniform texture, lacking the satisfying graininess of watermelon flesh.

In the past, this dessert was typically made with large, grainy-fleshed watermelons, as they produced an even better granular texture.

"Is it that simple?"

Shen Baobao hadn't expected it to be so straightforward. She immediately and happily put on gloves and, as if practicing the Iron Sand Palm technique, began to mash the watermelon flesh in front of her.

Lin Xu, on the other hand, took handfuls of the watermelon flesh.

First, he squeezed out the juice, then passed the remaining pulp through the sieve.

This way, the pulp would turn into fine, grainy granules.

Soon, the basin beneath the sieve contained about half its volume in watermelon juice, with tiny granules floating in it, looking quite tempting.

"Ah, I didn't realize I was such a hidden culinary talent! What's next? Hurry and teach me, please!"

Shen Baobao, emulating Lin Xu, took off her gloves, her face filled with a sense of accomplishment from making food.

Chen Yan, who was in charge of filming, frowned.

All she did was scoop out the watermelon and then mash it into juice with her hands. Even a three-year-old can do that. Why does she look so accomplished?

Anyone who didn't know better would think she'd just made Buddha Jumps Wall.

"Next, we need to simmer the agar. It's the Coagulant for the Watermelon Curd. If there's no agar, gelatin, White Jelly, or jelly powder can be used as substitutes; the effects are similar."

Having said that, Lin Xu took two stainless steel dessert pots out of the cupboard.

When simmering ingredients like agar, it's best to use pots dedicated to desserts or stainless steel pots. Try to avoid using iron woks or stir-fry pans.

This is because iron pots can leave black flecks, which aren't easily visible while simmering, and this could ultimately affect the dessert's appearance and quality.

He placed the pots on the stove, added a bowl of water to each, then put the softened agar in and turned on the heat to simmer it slowly.

Very soon, the water in the saucepans began to boil.

The agar inside also started to melt.

Shen Baobao watched this magical sight, her sense of accomplishment swelling even more.

Chen Yan, filming with the camera, watched with keen interest, wanting to try it herself.

But there's no rush. Once the video is shot, it'll be my turn, Chef Chen, to show what I've got! Then, I'll show you two lovebirds who the real culinary genius sidetracked by business is!

After simmering for four to five minutes and confirming the agar had completely dissolved, he poured the watermelon juice into his pot.

"Do we need to cook it further?"

Shen Baobao was curious, but she still followed Lin Xu's lead and poured her watermelon juice into her pot.

Lin Xu stirred the mixture in his pot a few times with a skimmer, then skimmed off the foam, explaining, "After simmering a bit, the pigments and juice from the watermelon will naturally separate. This gives the Watermelon Curd varied colors, making it look prettier."

Watermelon juice should not be boiled.

Once it's slightly warm, the heat can be turned off.

Pour the watermelon juice into molds, then place them in the refrigerator. Once the watermelon juice cools and solidifies, it will form a jelly-like Watermelon Curd—a true Divine Artifact for beating the summer heat.

After Shen Baobao finished her batch, she also poured it into molds.

"So now we just wait and eat?"

"No, we still need to simmer some Crystal Sugar Water. When the Watermelon Curd solidifies and you cut it into pieces to serve, drizzling some Crystal Sugar Water over it will make it even tastier."

The watermelon juice contained no sugar, so the Watermelon Curd itself wouldn't be sweet enough.

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"So, we need to boil some Crystal Sugar Water to increase the sweetness," Lin Xu stated.

As soon as he said this, Chen Yan, who was filming, chimed in, "Exactly, exactly! We need Crystal Sugar Water. The Watermelon Curd we ate as kids was always like that. Sadly, now they usually add the sugar directly into the Watermelon Curd. It's meant to be refreshing and quench thirst, but the more you eat, the thirstier you get."

Boiling Crystal Sugar Water was even less of a challenge.

You just add a big bowl of water to the pot, throw in a handful of Crystal Sugar to dissolve it, then pour it out and put it in the refrigerator's cooling compartment to lower the temperature.

By the time they filmed this step, the making of the Watermelon Curd was completely captured.

Next up was filming the finished product.

But that had to wait until it was set, so it couldn't be filmed right now.

Chen Yan put down her camera and picked up a watermelon, intending to practice. Meanwhile, Shen Baobao came over and said in the tone of an old hand in the cooking world, "Give me half of that watermelon. I'll teach you how to make it. I'm Lin Ji's Food's culinary consultant, you know."

The girl thought the title of consultant sounded pretty good, so she gave herself one too.

Chen Yan initially refused, but then she thought, I might understand it just by watching, but I'll probably mess it up when I try to do it myself, so she agreed.

From the side, Lin Xu said, "Clean out the watermelon pulp and dry the inside of the rind. Pour the prepared watermelon juice into the watermelon rind. Once it's chilled, you can cut it like a real watermelon, stick on some watermelon seeds, and pretend it's the real thing."

Could you actually do it that way?

The two "culinary experts" were so energized by the idea that they immediately started working on it. Hahaha, once it's done, we'll let our families try it and see if they're astonished! We never imagined fruit juice could be this much fun—it's truly a Divine Artifact for stress relief!

Lin Xu gently shook his head at the sight of the sisters frolicking with the watermelon. Then, he opened the refrigerator's chiller compartment, rummaged around, and eventually pulled out a box of top-grade Spanish red prawns.

Eh?

These prawns look good, and they're quite big.

Even the Fishing Platform's kitchen doesn't have them, so they mustn't be cheap. Tonight, I'll steam them for our little contributor, Dundun.

With the new store opening soon, this is the right time to seek a good omen.

Having decided to cook prawns for Dundun, Lin Xu then pulled out some beef brisket, planning to make Tomato Stew Beef Brisket so his father-in-law could enjoy it again tonight.

Additionally, the chicken breast in the fridge looked good; he would make a low-fat spicy shredded chicken dish in the evening.

Serve that with handmade noodles for Tomato Stew Beef Brisket Noodles, and dinner will be sorted!

While he was busy cooking, Chen Yan and Shen Baobao poured the prepared watermelon juice into the dried watermelon rind. As Chen Yan placed it in the fridge, she exclaimed, "Now comes the time to wait for the miracle!"

When Chen Yan was putting the watermelon away, she casually took out a few peaches from the fridge to wash and eat.

While washing them, she suddenly had a stroke of inspiration. "Brother-in-law," she called out, "if you can make Watermelon Curd out of watermelon, can you make Peach Cheese out of peaches too?"

Lin Xu hadn't expected his sister-in-law's mind to be so creative and said with a laugh, "Of course, you can. Not just peaches, but fruits like pomelos, tangerines, oranges, sweet melons, and Hami melons can all be juiced and turned into fruit curds. When making them, there's no need to boil the juice. Just pour the prepared agar into the fruit juice, and that's it... What? Not tired of playing yet?"

Chen Yan was genuinely treating this as a game; she found the idea of turning fruit juice into a jelly with agar water quite fun. Hearing it was possible, she took the peaches from the fridge and began to make her Peach Cheese.

Seeing this, Shen Baobao couldn't help but join in.

Now that I'm a culinary master, I can't limit myself to making only Watermelon Curd.

She tilted her head and thought, My mom says bitter melon is good to eat. It's not only good for one's complexion but also great for your health. If I make her some bitter melon curd, she'll be really happy, right?

「At the same time.」

Han Shuzhen, who was organizing recent patient files in her office, couldn't help sneezing.

What's going on? Is the air conditioning set too high?

She got up, raised the temperature a bit, and continued organizing the files...

Watermelon Curd is really simple; everyone should try it. Other fruit juices work too, just don't make bitter melon curd like our Shen Baobao.

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"Wow! It's set, wobbly, just like jelly."

"No, it's much better than jelly. This is made with all-natural ingredients. Jelly is full of additives; you might not even be able to melt it with a blowtorch."

「Half an hour later.」

After Lin Xu had stewed the beef brisket in the pressure cooker, he opened the refrigerator to take a look.

The Watermelon Curd he'd made earlier had completely set. It jiggled when tapped, a bit like mung bean starch jelly and a bit like regular jelly.

Shen Baobao, who was making bitter gourd curd, and Chen Yan, holding a papaya and planning to make papaya curd, immediately gathered around.

Growing up in alleyways, they were not unfamiliar with Watermelon Curd.

But looking at the Watermelon Curd Lin Xu had made, they felt as if they were encountering this dessert for the first time.

The curd in the mold wasn't a uniform red. Instead, it looked like red pigment diffusing in water, creating a gradient of colors with natural transitions. Some areas were even colorless and transparent.

It didn't look like an everyday summer dessert you'd see on the streets, but more like an exquisite piece of art.

"It's truly beautiful!"

"Bro-in-law, your skill is quite impressive, isn't it?"

Lin Xu smiled and said to the two foodie sisters beside him, "If you've finished looking, let's get ready to shoot; the video's not over yet."

With that, he put the mold back in the fridge. He planned to film himself taking it out later for a more immersive effect.

"Right, we still have to shoot."

"You two wait, I'll go get the camera."

Chen Yan brought the camera over, aimed it at the two in front of the fridge, and said, "Alright, and action!"

Lin Xu opened the vacuum refrigerator and took out the mold containing the Watermelon Curd. Shen Baobao, standing beside him, let out another exclamation, "Wow, that's so pretty!"

Chen Yan pursed her lips again. She hadn't expected her cousin to be such a drama queen. Just get the filming over with. Why is she ad-libbing? I'm still waiting to make my papaya curd; I don't have time to watch you two lovebirds put on a show.

Muttering to herself, she finished filming this segment.

She followed Lin Xu to the workbench and started shooting close-ups.

Meanwhile, Shen Baobao, out of the camera's view, snuck a kiss on Lin Xu. He made such beautiful Watermelon Curd; he definitely deserved a reward for it!

"If you two keep this up, I'm going on strike! It's broad daylight! Do you think I'm invisible?"

After voicing her dissatisfaction, Chen Yan filmed the Watermelon Curd from different angles.

After the close-ups were done, Lin Xu stood before the camera again and said, "Look at these patterns; they're the result of slight heating. The colors have multiple layers, making it look prettier. But be careful when heating. It's best not to exceed seventy degrees, or the watermelon juice will develop a foul smell, like overripe watermelon."

Then, he looked at Shen Baobao and asked, "Did you learn anything?"

"I've learned nothing... When can we eat? I'm so hungry..." I don't understand any of that. I just want a bowl of that cool, refreshing treat right now. We've been busy for so long; isn't it time to taste this homemade Watermelon Curd? If it's delicious, I could show off this skill during the holidays. I'd definitely rake in a bunch of red envelopes, right?

Lin Xu smiled and pinched her cheek, "I'll serve you some now."

He used a small knife to evenly slice the Watermelon Curd in the mold, cutting the single block into uniform small pieces.

After slicing, he poured some chilled Crystal Sugar Water over them to prevent the pieces from sticking together.

Then, he carefully scooped them into a bowl.

The Watermelon Curd's colors weren't very distinct in the mold, but once scooped out, the gradation of the diffused red became much more pronounced.

The lower half, in particular, had more transparent areas and looked glittery and visually stunning.

He poured a spoonful of Crystal Sugar Water over the jiggly, jelly-like Watermelon Curd in the bowl. It instantly took on a crystalline appearance, becoming even more tempting.

Using small tweezers, he placed two thin, vibrant green mint leaves in the center. After Chen Yan finished filming the close-ups, Lin Xu handed the bowl to Shen Baobao, "Try it and see how it is. If it's not good, I'll make you another batch."

"Thank you, Xu Bao!"

Shen Baobao took the bowl, spooned a piece of Watermelon Curd into her mouth, and tasted it. Her eyes immediately lit up with pleasant surprise. "Wow, this is even better than watermelon!"

The Watermelon Curd was made with pure watermelon juice. It lacked the sweetness of street-vendor versions, which often had added sugar, but the fresh melon flavor was much more intense.

Paired with the cool Crystal Sugar Water, it was subtly sweet, smooth, refreshing, and appetizing.

As she chewed, she could feel the fine Watermelon Puree, reminiscent of eating sandy-textured watermelons from her childhood.

"Super delicious! Xu Bao, you try a bite! It's absolutely divine!"

Seeing her cousin pick up a piece with the spoon and feed it to her brother-in-law, Chen Yan really wanted to throw down her camera and storm off. Aaaargh! Isn't this just too much PDA?

After feeding Lin Xu, Shen Baobao carried the bowl and strolled over to Chen Yan, "Here, Yan Bao, open wide!"

Chen Yan shook her head in refusal. "Change the spoon."

"Huh? Yan Bao, are you grossed out by me or something?"

"It's not that I'm grossed out. It's just that the spoon reeks too strongly of 'dog food.' I'm afraid I won't be able to taste the Watermelon Curd's sweetness."

"Tch, you're so fussy!"

Shen Baobao changed spoons, scooped up a piece of Watermelon Curd, and popped it into Chen Yan's mouth. Noticing the papaya on the workbench, she whispered a reminder, "Bao, papayas don't actually have any breast-enhancing effects, you know. Don't waste your effort."

Chen Yan was speechless. "..."

If this Watermelon Curd weren't so delicious, I'd really spit it in your face! Which eye of yours saw me eating papaya for breast enhancement? I'm a proud 34D; do I need any enhancement? What an international joke!

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I just like eating papayas; why does it always lead to such wild assumptions?

As she muttered to herself, she glanced at Shen Baobao's figure and whispered, But... compared to a 34E, mine still isn't perfect...

Finally, the filming for this lovey-dovey special episode was completed.

Chen Yan turned off the camera and immediately started eating the Watermelon Curd Lin Xu had served her. "Wow, this is really delicious! Brother-in-law, I remember the Watermelon Curd I ate when I was young had a minty taste. How do you make that?"

Lin Xu explained, "You just replace the Crystal Sugar Water with brown sugar water. That sugar, when boiled down, produces a mint flavor and gives a stronger cooling sensation. I couldn't find any brown sugar just now, so I used Crystal Sugar instead."

Oh... so that's how it is.

Having fully understood, Chen Yan planned to embark on her own gourmet journey as soon as she finished eating, determined to try making every fruit curd she craved!

While she was lost in thought, Lin Xu, who was beside her, spoke up. "The Travel Channel is looking for a cultural celebrity to create a calligraphic title for their upcoming food program. They can't afford to pay, so they're only offering program resources in exchange. I'm planning to ask Lele's grandfather to help with the calligraphy. Contact Zhen Wensheng in a bit and try to negotiate for more benefits."

If it weren't for that task of hosting an All Crocodile Banquet, there'd be no need to go to all this trouble. But since the task exists, I might as well do it properly. Besides, it's quite easy to ask Geng Lishan for calligraphy; the man would most likely not refuse if I, Lin Xu, personally asked. My worry isn't about Geng Lishan refusing, but about what to offer him in return. Gifting food is a given, as it's the very bond between us. But beyond that, a proper fee for the calligraphy is necessary. This is a commercial engagement, after all, and needs to be accounted for fairly; I can't just expect free work.

As soon as Chen Yan heard there was serious business to attend to, she immediately said, "I'll contact Zhen Wensheng right now and try to negotiate the best possible deal for you."

After speaking, she quickly finished the Watermelon Curd in her bowl, then took out her phone to contact Zhen Wensheng.

With nothing else to do, Lin Xu tidied up the filming equipment. He took the camera's memory card upstairs, copied the recorded video onto his computer, did some quick edits with video software, and then uploaded it to the short video platform.

The video's title was quite appealing: "This Simple Summer Dessert Can Truly Be Made by Anyone with Hands!"

Whenever he posted cooking videos in the past, netizens would find all sorts of reasons to be 'discouraged' from trying. They'd be 'discouraged' by the Knife Skills, the amount of oil, the cilantro, the green onions, the lard, the sugar caramelization... Lin Xu chuckled, wondering if this new video would add 'discouraged by PDA' to the list.

He closed his computer and went to the kitchen to make Tomato Beef Brisket with Hand-pulled Noodles.

Soon, the video passed its review and appeared in the update list.

"Wow, I was just telling my friend that today's update might be delayed, and here it is!"

"It's here, it's here! The update has arrived!"

"I love Boss Lin's videos the most; I can't learn a single dish he teaches."

"I've been wanting to learn a dessert recipe lately, and I can't believe Boss Lin just uploaded a related video! Do you think he has a crush on me?"

"Why is the boss's wife on the thumbnail?"

"For those who've watched it, how high is the sugar content in this video? Will watching it give me diabetes?"

"Just from this cover, I'm bracing myself for all the 'dog food'."

"Done with the like, save, and share! My friends also need to experience this online 'dog food' feeding."

"..."

Seeing the boss's wife on the thumbnail, everyone instinctively guessed there would be some sweet moments and mentally prepared themselves for the public displays of affection.

But upon clicking the video, they were taken aback.

This wasn't just a sprinkle; they were shoveling 'dog food' down our throats from start to finish!

In the comments section, netizens were universally outraged.

EatingNoodlesWithoutGarlicIsLikeNotEatingGarlicAtAll: It was 'dog food' from beginning to end! I don't even know what dessert they actually made.

200 Pound Cutie: After watching, I measured my blood sugar—it's 36.6! You two need to tell me how you're going to compensate me.

BigPorkyHeadUnderTheWillowInTheMoon: Upstairs, did you measure your blood sugar with a thermometer?

IAmACadillacOwnerAndILikeFootMassages: That was so cloyingly sweet, it made me sick! I need to find a place for a foot massage. Any other Cadillac owners want to join?

LinDaiyuUprootsAWeepingWillow: @[Boss Lin's Channel] Hey, I'm the 'Weeping Willow' part of the legend! Make some of that for me to try when you're free. Dare to refuse, and I'll beat you up!

ProAFKer6: If I'm not mistaken, that big kitchen belongs to the boss's wife, right? It feels like what's being made isn't Watermelon Curd, but Lemon Curd.

Nine Billion Girls' Nightmare: Thanks, Boss Lin, for teaching me how to make this delicious 'dog food' curd!

「In the kitchen.」

Lin Xu had finished kneading the dough, and Shen Baobao had also completed the bitter melon curd she had been working on for half the day.

Meanwhile, Chen Yan had finished her communication with Zhen Wensheng.

"It's all settled," she announced. "Three months of title sponsorship for the food program, a special food interview episode of no less than forty minutes, plus several rolling advertisements and related soft advertising. Basically, I secured every benefit possible."

Three months of title sponsorship? His sister-in-law was truly skilled at business negotiations. If it had been him, he'd likely have softened up the moment the other party started pleading poverty. For similar matters in the future, he'd definitely need to rely on his sister-in-law.

Lin Xu was very pleased. He had initially thought that occasional appearances on such food programs would be enough. But with a three-month title sponsorship, Lin Ji's Food would now dominate their culinary showcases.

This would not only allow them to showcase the wide array of culinary delights from Lin Ji's Food. It would also give Wei Qian, Zhu Yong, Qin Wei, Zhuang Yifan, and others television exposure, boosting their reputations and simultaneously demonstrating the depth of talent at Lin Ji's Food.

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What a bargain!

"Thank you so much, Sister Yan!"

"Don't mention it. Just don't flaunt your lovey-dovey stuff in front of me so much in the future."

Chen Yan, carrying the papaya she had prepared, continued making her beloved papaya curd. Meanwhile, Shen Baobao looked through the fruit preservation fridge at home and eventually chose netted melon and blueberries.

Well, since I'm making it anyway, I might as well try using high-end ingredients.

And so, while Lin Xu was making hand-pulled noodles, the two sisters kept busy making various kinds of curd.

By six in the afternoon, the kitchen was filled with batches of freshly made fruit curd.

"Hmm, Mom's about to get off work. I should get the bitter melon curd I made for her ready to slice. Yan Bao, do you want to try this healthy bitter melon curd?"

"No thanks, I'm quite fond of my current, somewhat unhealthy state."

"Oh, come on. Just admit you don't trust my skills."

"I trust your skills; it's the bitter melon I don't quite trust..."

After Chen Yan finished speaking, she saw Lin Xu tearing cooked chicken breast by hand and asked curiously, "Brother-in-law, what are you making?"

"Spicy chicken shreds!"

I've missed out on so many delicious dishes! Like the whole roasted lamb from the live broadcast back home, which I haven't even tasted yet, and now there are spicy chicken shreds?

Chen Yan thought it might be time to relocate her company closer to Yingchun Street. Otherwise, everyone would be eating delicious food in the shop while she could only stick to ordering takeout in Wangjing. That would hardly be fair.

Coincidentally, Panda and Wu Kexin's Xinda Company was located in the Huixuan Building near Yingchun Street, so moving there would make collaboration more convenient as well.

As she was thinking this, Shen Guofu's voice came from the living room, "Xiaoxu! Make something tasty for Dundun later. The little guy helped me land an order worth hundreds of millions today; he's truly the family's hero!"

An order worth hundreds of millions?

As soon as Shen Baobao heard this, she carried the bitter melon curd she had made out from the kitchen, "I told you Dundun is a fortune cat, now you all believe me, right? Mom, quickly try this delicious snack I made for you. I've named it—Emerald Jelly!"

Han Shuzhen had just put on her slippers and was about to ask about the big order Dundun had helped secure. But upon hearing that her daughter had cooked something herself, her curiosity was immediately piqued, "You're not passing off Xiaoxu's cooking as your own again, are you?"

"It's truly my own work this time, Mom, please try it! It's super nutritious and healthy, a real beauty enhancer!"

Han Shuzhen looked at the snack in the bowl. It was green, wobbly like jelly, and looked quite tempting.

She asked curiously, "What's this made of? Is it really edible?"

Seeing her daughter's confident eyes, Director Han immediately scooped up a piece with a spoon and offered it to Shen Guofu, who was praising Dundun as the little hero, "Lao Shen, try our daughter's cooking. It's delicious."

Upon hearing it was tasty, Shen Guofu, still immersed in excitement, took a bite of the Emerald Jelly his wife passed to him, not forgetting to thank her, "Thanks, hon— why is this so bitter? What is this, bitter melon?"

Since sending off Yan Lin and the others after signing the contract, Shen Guofu had been basking in the euphoric prospect of sweeping the market in collaboration with Huasheng Group.

Now, with one bite of bitter melon curd, all that euphoria abruptly disappeared.

This thing was too bitter, growing more so with each bite, a bitterness that penetrated deep into his soul.

Seeing the mask of agony on his face, Han Shuzhen felt a surge of relief. Thank goodness I didn't eat it, or what would have become of me?

At the kitchen door, Chen Yan, who was quietly eating papaya curd, mumbled to herself, Thank goodness I curbed my curiosity, or I'd definitely have ended up like Uncle.

Han Shuzhen glared at her daughter, "How old are you to still be pulling pranks like this?"

Shen Baobao replied with a wronged expression, "You said eating bitter melon was good for you... I didn't know it would be this bitter."

Seeing the pained expression on her father's face, she also felt guilty. She quickly took the Watermelon Curd and Peach Cheese from nearby and handed them to Shen Guofu, "Dad, eat something sweet to balance it out. I'm sorry, let me see how I can fix this..."

Her attempt to show filial piety had backfired, leaving Shen Baobao dismayed. She took the small bowl of bitter melon curd back to the kitchen, approaching Lin Xu, who was cutting chili peppers, "Xubao, the bitter melon curd is too bitter. Neither Mom nor Dad liked it..."

Lin Xu looked at her in surprise, "Didn't you add Crystal Sugar Water? Even sweet fruits need it, let alone bitter ones!"

Shen Jiayue was utterly bewildered.

Isn't eating sugar unhealthy?

Lin Xu poured the prepared Crystal Sugar Water into the bowl and tried a small piece with a spoon. It was still bitter, but with the sweetness of the Crystal Sugar Water, it was bearable.

He pondered for a moment and said, "Your idea is right, but next time don't use pure bitter melon. Try mixing it with cucumber—say, one part bitter melon to three parts cucumber. The juice from that, made into curd and drizzled with sugar water, should be just right."

Summer tends to bring internal heat, and eating bitter-tasting dishes and drinks is good for the body.

That's why Lin Xu hadn't stopped Shen Baobao from making bitter melon curd. He just hadn't anticipated that she would make it completely sugarless, purely bitter to the core.

That would be unbearable for anyone.

With the Crystal Sugar Water added, the bitter melon curd finally became edible.

Han Shuzhen graciously ate a small bowl and also served some to Shen Guofu, "Bitter melon is great for cutting fat, Lao Shen. You should have some too."

"Sure, let me taste our daughter's handiwork!"

Chapter 427: This isn't Watermelon Curd, is it? It's more like Dog Food Curd! The Spicy Peppers from the Old Home!

Chen Yan looked enviously at the family of three. The food was so bitter, yet simply because her cousin had made it, her uncle grimly bit down and swallowed.

If it had been her own father, he probably would have started cursing a long time ago.

Alas! There's no comparison!

In the kitchen.

Lin Xu scooped the sliced chili rings into a basin and cracked an egg into it, stirring until each chili ring was coated with the egg liquid.

Then he sprinkled a small spoonful of salt evenly into the basin, giving the chili a base flavor.

Finally, he added a large handful of low gluten flour, continuing to stir until the flour evenly coated the chili rings, ensuring that each chili ring remained separate and didn't stick together.

After completing this step, he heated oil in a pot.

What Lin Xu was about to make was a common household dish in the Central Plains—Pan-fried Chili with Flour.

This dish could be eaten with alcohol, with rice, or even wrapped in a small pancake, or sandwiched between sesame buns or steamed buns—no matter how you ate it, it was delicious.

Today's Tomato Beef Shank Noodles tasted similar to what they had for lunch. To prevent everyone from getting tired of the same flavors, Lin Xu, after finishing the Spicy Chicken Strips, washed some slender, helical chilies, ready to offer everyone a new experience.

Since this was a pan-fried dish, a bit more oil was necessary.

Once the oil in the pot was hot, Lin Xu poured the flour-coated chili rings into it. He used a spatula to spread them out as flat as possible. After spreading them, he picked up the pan and rotated it a few times, ensuring the oil thoroughly coated the chilies.

As the oil temperature rose, the flour on the surface of the chilies began to fry and emit a fragrant aroma.

Then, the fragrance turned into a spicy scent that grew increasingly strong.

Chen Yan, who was sulking at the kitchen door, smelled the enticing spicy fragrance and asked curiously, "Didn't you finish making the Spicy Chicken Strips? Brother-in-law, what are you cooking now?"

"Pan-fried Chili with Flour, it's a common dish we often eat back home."

Pan-fried Chili with Flour? This was yet another blind spot in Chen Yan's culinary knowledge.

She didn't know the dish, but Shen Baobao, who was out handing fruit curd to her parents, knew. "Wow, Xu, are you making that Pan-fried Chili with Flour we eat at your home? Make more, it won't be enough!"

Lin Xu: "... You're saying this now, after it's already in the pan—that's too late!

However, there would be plenty of dishes tonight: besides the Pan-fried Chili with Flour, there were also Spicy Chicken Strips, Ginger Lotus Root, and Boiled Chinese Broccoli, plus the Tomato Beef Shank Hand-rolled Noodles—a feast sure to please his father-in-law.

Once the bottom side was fried to a golden brown, he carefully flipped the chilies over.

He then pressed down on top of the chili rings with the spatula, which helped the chilies cook faster and also made the surface batter fry up more fragrantly.

After both sides were fried to a golden brown, he used the spatula to stir-fry them a bit, to draw out as much water from the chilies as possible, making the chili rings dry and intensely flavorful.

During frying, some chili rings had also stuck together and needed to be separated by stir-frying.

When the intense spicy aroma in the pot grew stronger, it was time to take them out and put them on a plate.

Shen Baobao approached just as the dish was served.

"Let me help you taste the saltiness, okay?"

"All right, but just a little. These chilies are quite spicy. Eating too much might be too much for you to handle."

After speaking, Lin Xu put the large pot for boiling noodles on the stove to heat the water, then placed the dough on the large cutting board and started rolling out the noodles with the rolling pin.

Soon, all he would have to do would be to boil the freshly rolled noodles and serve them with the ready Tomato Beef Shank.

「At the same time.」

In the Fishing Platform State Guesthouse.

He Baoqing, the head chef of Building One, with hands clasped behind his back and a gloomy expression, arrived at Building Six, just in time to see Qiu Zhenhua looking worried at the entrance.

"Old Qiu, did Shu Yun, the one Old Xie swapped with you, resign?"

"Yes, not only did she resign, but Chef Ji from my kitchen, who was good at making hand-rolled noodles, also left... Did you have anyone quit as well?"

Upon hearing this, He Baoqing's expression darkened further. "Qin Wei, whom that bastard Old Xie traded to me, also resigned! And he even took Wei Qian with him when he left! Tell me, do you think Old Xie is up to something?"

The two exchanged glances and said in unison, "Let's go, find that bastard and ask for an explanation!"

Chapter 428: Xie Baomin: Putting aside the facts, are you two without fault? The Romance of a Chef!

「Fishing Platform Building No. 2.」

The chefs had just finished their dinner and were now busy preparing the meals booked for the evening.

Dressed in his white chef's uniform, Xie Baomin made a round in the kitchen. Bored, he took out his phone to watch the new video his junior brother had posted today. He couldn't help but chuckle, "Tsk, tsk, my junior brother is getting really creative with his fun these days."

The method for making Watermelon Curd wasn't anything special; it was so simple that just about anyone could learn it by rote. But his junior brother had somehow used this technically simple snack to show off his love life, and in a way that wasn't off-putting, which was quite interesting.

As he was watching, his wife, Su Peipei, sent him a message:

"Look how romantic Junior Brother and his wife are. And you? All day long, all you do is complain that this dish isn't tasty or that person doesn't understand cooking."

Xie Baomin sighed helplessly and typed a quick reply to his wife:

"How about I make Watermelon Curd for you when I get home tonight?"

"It's not about the Watermelon Curd; it's about their romantic gestures! Look at Master. To make his wife happy, he created Qingshui Furong. Junior Brother, to make his fiancée happy, made Watermelon Curd with her. And you? All you do is drag me to the Fishing Platform to freeload, making me too embarrassed to even go anymore..."

Upon reading this message, Xie Baomin muttered under his breath, "What's wrong with freeloading? Eating and drinking for free without spending a dime, and she's still not satisfied?"

He replied:

"I'll have a surprise for you when I get home tonight."

"A surprise? Last time you said that, you stole half a roast suckling pig from Building No. 10 for me. Which building are you planning to steal from this time?"

Xie Baomin chuckled. "I won't steal this time. It's really a surprise."

After sending the message, he pocketed his phone and strolled over to the storeroom.

In the storeroom, rows of shelves were neatly lined with various long-lasting ingredients and many common dried goods. Thoughtfully, several baskets were placed beside the shelves for the kitchen staff to use when collecting ingredients.

Xie Baomin picked up a basket and walked among the shelves. After searching for a while, he selected a basket of fairly round red beets from the rearmost shelf.

It's a root vegetable similar to a radish, with a fiery red color. It's not commonly used in Chinese cuisine, generally only chosen to color desserts or when a dish needs a splash of color.

However, in Russia, red beets are comparatively more popular. Beet Soup, made from red beets, is even honored as their national dish.

Carrying the basket out, Xie Baomin rinsed the red beets thoroughly.

After letting them drain, he placed them on an unused workbench, then fetched his kitchen knife and cutting board.

With his preparations complete, he placed a red beet on the cutting board. Taking his knife in his right hand, he focused intently on carving a rose into the beet.

They had been married for nearly twenty years, and this was the first time he'd heard his wife complain like this. If you say I don't understand romance, then I'll let you experience a chef's romance...

Busy at work, a commotion erupted at the kitchen door.

"Old Xie, you scoundrel, get out here!"

"I was wondering why you suddenly wanted to swap staff with us! So, you were planning to screw us over, huh? Do you even have a conscience?"

Soon, an enraged Qiu Zhenhua and his boss, He Baoqing, stormed into the kitchen. Spotting Xie Baomin, they strode purposefully towards him.

As they approached, Qiu Zhenhua saw a trickle of red liquid dripping from the knife in Xie Baomin's hand and froze for a second. "Old Xie, don't try to threaten us by self-harming!"

Xie Baomin stopped his work and looked at them. "Qiuqiu, Boss, what's up with you two?"

Qiu Zhenhua said, "Stop playing dumb. You traded Shu Yun to me for Gu Junli. Didn't you know Shu Yun was about to resign these past couple of days? Trading someone on the verge of quitting for our Building No. 6's front desk manager—no normal person would do such a thing, right?"

He Baoqing chimed in, "And Qin Wei too! I thought it was odd. Why would you be willing to trade Qin Wei, a pastry chef? Turns out you knew he was going to resign. That's really low, man. And I actually considered you a brother."

The two of them spoke over each other, insisting Old Xie give them an explanation. Otherwise, they'd go to the Dining Department director's office and have him judge the matter.

"What? Shu Yun and Qin Wei resigned?"

The moment Xie Baomin heard his star employees had resigned, his face contorted with anger. He grabbed his kitchen knife and slammed it onto the cutting board. "Qiu Zhenhua! He Baoqing! Neither of you are leaving Building No. 2 until you explain this clearly! When we swapped staff, you both swore you'd treat them well. And what happens? They resigned barely a week later! Setting aside the facts for a moment, just how much did you two make my people suffer?!"

This sudden counter-accusation left Qiu Zhenhua and He Baoqing, who had come to question him, completely stumped.

What was happening? We hadn't even started questioning him, and he was already turning the tables?

Qiu Zhenhua looked at Xie Baomin and said, "Stop trying to fool me. Shu Yun is a star manager at our Fishing Platform. Would I mistreat her? You definitely knew she was resigning! No wonder you gave me that tea the other day. So that was your scheme all along!"

Tea? Damn it, he scammed Old Qiu and even gave him tea, but I didn't get anything! Old Xie, you dog, aren't you playing favorites a bit too much?

He snapped at Old Xie, "Qin Wei had it even better with me! He'd only been at Building No. 1 for two days before he started trading his future leave with colleagues—swapping days from next month all the way to the Spring Festival! He and Wei Qian have practically scammed every single chef in our Building No. 1 by now..."

Chapter 429: Xie Baomin: Disregarding the Facts, Aren't You Two at Fault? The Romance of a Chef!

This remark almost made Xie Baomin burst out laughing.

That damned Qin Wei, always seems so tight-lipped, but he turns out to be quite sly.

However, considering the current atmosphere wasn't suitable for laughter, he forcefully suppressed his amusement, slammed his hand on the workbench, and continued to question the two loudly, "Would they resign if they hadn't been mistreated? Especially Qin Wei, such an honest kid, can barely string a sentence together. If he hadn't been wronged, would he treat his beloved culinary career so negatively?"

Xie Baomin's rapid-fire questioning left He Baoqing utterly confused.

Could it be that Qin Wei was really mistreated in my kitchen? I remember when he first started in the back kitchen, some chefs did secretly mock his stutter. Those guys couldn't have privately ridiculed Qin Wei, leading him to become passive and eventually choose to resign, could they?

Among the eighteen head chefs at Fishing Platform, He Baoqing was relatively unassuming, always a trustworthy elder. Startled by Xie Baomin's bluff, he began to doubt if he had done something wrong.

As he was lost in self-reflection, the voice of Song Dahai from Building 15 echoed at the kitchen entrance, "Xie Baomin, where the hell are you? Did your junior apprentice brother abduct my nephew?"

No sooner had the words left his mouth, an enraged Song Dahai strode in.

He was livid today. His nephew, whom he had been nurturing, had abruptly chosen to resign without a word. He had even gone around him to get Director Liao from the Dining Department to sign off on it directly.

He had initially assumed his nephew was just taking a day off. But after inquiring with the HR department, he discovered his nephew had already completed the resignation process.

Song Dahai had always seen Zhu Yong as the future administrative head chef. He planned to hand over the position to his nephew once he retired, ensuring the Song family legacy at Building 15 wouldn't end. But unexpectedly, before he even retired, his chosen successor had bailed.

Considering his nephew had recently been close to Lin Xu, and with Lin Ji's Food about to open, he came to Building 2 to ask if Lin Xu had lured his nephew away.

Song Dahai's interruption hit Qiu Zhenhua like a bolt of lightning.

Right, Lin Xu! He'd heard Shu Yun was particularly fond of Lin Xu's cat. After moving to Building 6, she even received a bunch of cat supplies by courier, likely all for that cat. Shu Yun's resignation was to work for him, right?

With this thought, Qiu Zhenhua turned to Xie Baomin and asked, "Old Xie, Shu Yun resigned to go to Lin Ji, right? Lin Ji's Food's specialty is hand-rolled noodles, and Shu Yun then helped lure away Master Ji from Building 6, who's best at rolling dough..."

I really never expected that youngster, who smiles so amiably, to be so full of dirty tricks. True to Senior Chef Gao's teachings, each disciple is worse than the last!

As Qiu Zhenhua spoke, He Baoqing, who was usually slow to catch on, finally understood.

If Shu Yun and Zhu Yong resigned to work for Lin Xu, then it was even more certain for Qin Wei and Wei Qian, who were already friends. During the competition, Wei Qian even sneaked into the kitchen to get food for Lin Xu...

"Old Xie, you and your fellow disciples are real pieces of work, aren't you?"

"Now, you have two choices: either let us beat you up to vent our anger, or come up with a solution that satisfies us."

"It's up to you. You have ten minutes to decide."

Since the staff had already been poached, discussing anything else was futile. The three victims quickly presented Xie Baomin with two options after a brief consultation. On a personal level, they'd much rather beat up Xie Baomin than receive compensation. This bastard was just too hateful.

Xie Baomin sighed, picked up a red beet from the cutting board, and while carving it, said, "My master is returning soon, and he's extremely petty. If any of you dare lay a finger on me, he might not be able to beat you all, but he'll definitely take revenge on your respective elders."

Qiu Zhenhua: "..."

Song Dahai: "..."

He Baoqing: "..."

We've never encountered such a shameless lineage!

The three men had been itching to strike, but upon hearing this, they immediately lost all inclination to do so. Because this bastard was right; Senior Chef Gao really would retaliate. If their elders at home were to suffer a fall or even a minor injury, it would indeed be an unbearable loss for their families. Forget it then. Dealing with such shameless rascals from their school, there was really no way to win!

Seeing the three men no longer looking menacing, Xie Baomin secretly breathed a sigh of relief and then said, "As for compensation... I can prepare for you the Clear Soup Noodles for which my master signed a non-disclosure agreement. That's the most sincere gesture I can offer."

Clear Soup Noodles?

Upon hearing the name, Qiu Zhenhua couldn't help but laugh dismissively.

All the chefs at Fishing Platform know how to cook Clear Soup Noodles; it's practically child's play... wait, the Clear Soup Noodles that Senior Chef Gao signed a non-disclosure agreement for?

His smile suddenly froze. "Are you talking about the Clear Soup Noodles that your master made for himself on the day of his retirement—those noodles that seemed deceptively simple but were actually profound?"

A few years ago, after completing his retirement procedures, Senior Chef Gao had bid farewell to his culinary career with a bowl of noodles. On the surface, it was just a bowl of plain noodles in a broth so clear you could see the bottom, without a speck of oil, garnished only with a poached egg. But in reality, the soup for that bowl of noodles was more intricate to prepare than even the consommé for the renowned 'Boiled Cabbage in Supreme Broth' dish. A single sip revealed not only the rich umami of meat but also the distinct, clean flavors of several kinds of vegetables.

And the noodles were no simple matter either; they were 'dragon's beard noodles' that Senior Chef Gao himself had hand-pulled through sixteen intricate folds.

The so-called dragon's beard noodles refer to extremely thin pulled noodles. When making these pulled noodles, each act of stretching and folding the dough is called a 'fold.' An ordinary chef is considered to have mastered the basics if they can manage eight folds. A good chef can manage around ten, and one who can execute twelve folds can be the star attraction of a restaurant.

Chapter 430: Xie Baomin: Putting aside the facts, aren't the two of you in the wrong? The romance of a chef!

Reaching fourteen folds means you're essentially acknowledged as an industry expert, someone who can have their way within the culinary world.

As for Master Gao, who can stretch noodles to sixteen folds, he's absolutely a figure to look up to in the hand-pulled noodle industry.

Just stretching the noodles to sixteen folds isn't enough; the noodles, pulled finer than hair, must then be placed in lard and deep-fried in warm oil.

During frying, the oil temperature must be constantly controlled to keep the noodles white.

After frying, the noodles are first blanched in Clear Soup to wash off the excess grease, then transferred to a new bowl of soup.

The Egg accompanying the bowl is also no ordinary Egg.

The egg white preparation is relatively simple, resembling the common Furong Chicken Slices.

The yolk, however, is made from goose liver cooked thoroughly, mashed into a paste, and then filtered through cheesecloth.

The bowl of noodles looks deceptively simple, yet it utilizes almost all the Techniques of cooking, with extreme requirements for both pastry and hearty dish preparations.

Guo Jichang, who was present at the time, tried it and couldn't stop praising it, stating that no other chef would be able to make this bowl of noodles independently within the next fifty years.

And indeed, he was not exaggerating.

This was because, these days, pastry and hearty dish preparations are distinctly separate fields, and specialists in each even look down on one another.

It's rare to find a chef proficient in pastry who is also equally skilled in hearty dishes.

Moreover, the demand this bowl of noodles places on one's mastery of Cooking Technique is so high that one must be an industry leader in both pastry and hearty dishes to even consider attempting it.

"Old Xie, if you could let us witness Master Gao's Clear Soup Noodles, I'd treat you to Wangjing kidney skewers for six months!"

He Baoqing, rubbing his hands excitedly, had an eager expression on his face.

He had never seen such a legendary bowl of noodles before.

If he could just have a glimpse—never mind poaching two chefs—Boss He was even thinking of offering two more of his chefs.

Song Dahai also exclaimed excitedly, "Old Xie, I have a nephew who is also in the cooking field. Should I send him to Lin Ji?"

Only Qiu Zhenhua remained relatively calm, remarking, "Old Xie, with your pastry skills, you'd struggle to even reach nine folds, right?"

Xie Baomin, also aware that pastry was his weak point, said, "I plan to work with Old Yin from Building Twelve. Aren't those Northwest cuisine guys always boasting that their beef noodles are superior? Well, I'm going to challenge his limits."

Qiu Zhenhua laughed immediately. "You rascal, you never miss a chance to set someone up... Old Yin drove to the Northwest for a culinary inspiration trip a couple of days ago. So, when he gets back, shall we do it then? I'm dying to see those Clear Soup Noodles."

"Sure, sure, it will definitely be an eye-opener for all of you!"

Xie Baomin then turned to the other head chefs and said, "My wife complains I'm not romantic enough. I'm thinking of carving some roses out of red beets. How do you think I should arrange them? As a flower basket or a bouquet?"

This question deeply interested Qiu Zhenhua and the others.

They gathered around the workstation and began discussing it seriously.

And just like that, the few people who had originally come to confront him, because of a legendary bowl of noodles, became close friends with Xie Baomin again, even helping him brainstorm ideas.

「Inside the West Fourth Ring Villa.」

After finishing the Tomato Beef Noodles, everyone once again felt the familiar agony of being overstuffed.

Shen Guofu patted his belly and said to Lin Xu, "Lin Xu, shall we start our game later?"

Lin Xu stood up and replied, "Not right now. I need to use this time to make some Black Sugar Shaqima. I'm visiting the great calligrapher, Master Lishan, tomorrow morning, and it wouldn't be right to go empty-handed."

Upon hearing he was making Shakima, Chen Yan, who had originally planned to bring her homemade Watermelon Curd for the elders to taste, suddenly decided not to leave. "When will it be ready, Brother-in-law? My grandma tasted the Shakima you made and has been raving about it ever since. She says it's much tastier than the store-bought ones."

Han Shuzhen also looked tempted.

The last time she ate the Shakima her son-in-law made, her daughter even conned her out of a good bit of money for it. She hadn't eaten any since.

So, as soon as she heard he was making Shakima, Director Han immediately said, "Could you make some extra, Lin Xu? The Shakima Yueyue brought over last time was devoured by my close friends who came for afternoon tea before I barely had any. I've been craving that Shakima ever since."

Shen Baobao, using a fruit fork to feed her mom a piece of Watermelon Curd, said to Lin Xu, "Paternal Grandma and Maternal Grandma will need some too... That means you'll have to make a lot. Won't that be too tiring for you, Lin Xu?"

Lin Xu said with a smile, "It's no problem, it's not that difficult. I'll just make a larger batch of dough in a bit."

Since everyone wanted some, he might as well make more.

Once the restaurant opens, we can add Shakima to the pastry section. Packaged in gift boxes, customers can buy them as souvenirs or as gifts when visiting friends and relatives. This would subtly boost Lin Ji's reputation, wouldn't it?

Just as he was pondering this, the system's notification sounded in his mind:

"The host plans to launch new snack gift boxes, triggering the side mission [New Gift Box Launch]: Within one month, the host must launch more than five types of takeout snack gift boxes. Completion reward: one Perfect Level Imperial Snack lottery draw."

Whoa! The mission popped up just as I had that thought. Imperial-style snacks... if I get my hands on those, that'll be another profitable venture!

While musing over this, he glanced at the mission tab.

He saw that the Beijing snacks mission had new progress: [3/10].

This is?

Lin Xu glanced at the Watermelon Curd on the table and suddenly understood. Watermelon Curd also counted as a Beijing snack, so the mission progress had updated.

Right, I mustn't forget the mission for the lost snacks. When I get the chance, I'll make a few more Beijing snacks to push the progress forward.

After Aunt Liu finished tidying up, he went into the kitchen and began making Black Sugar Shaqima.

When he went to the storage room for flour, he noticed some Horse Hoof Flour and grabbed a few packets as well.