

Culinary 451

Chapter 451: New Features in the Points Mall! 'The Taste of Humanity' Premieres to Rave Reviews!

While Lin Xu was taking advantage of the last bit of downtime before the grand opening, he bought a one-year-old Tan sheep lamb through Mr. Huang, the supplier from Fishing Platform. At this moment, the lamb was roasting on the automatic rotisserie in the courtyard, offering a fresh treat for the relatives.

Chen Yan had finally moved her company to Huixuan Building. Now, she was sitting on the cashmere carpet in the living room, fiddling with her dress and eating the newly made Seven-colored Water Chestnut Cake while mumbling to her cousin,

"You roasted a suckling pig and didn't even call me? Some sister you are!"

"You were busy moving, weren't you? Besides, Lin Xu wasn't even sure if he could roast it properly, so he just did a test run. He planned to call you once he completely mastered the recipe."

"So, you two just went ahead and experimented with four roasted suckling pigs in the last two days?"

"Now, now... why don't you just eat more of the roasted whole lamb later, okay? Don't be mad, Yan Bao. You won't look pretty if you're angry!"

Shen Baobao forked a piece of her homemade Hami melon cheese and handed it over. Chen Yan ate it, and her temper subsided a little.

Finally, it was six o'clock in the afternoon.

After an overly long opening commercial, the show finally began.

As the title sequence appeared, Mr. Han, Shen Baobao's maternal grandfather, put on his glasses and asked Shen Guofu, who was beside him,

"Did Mr. Lishan write the calligraphy for this show's title?"

"Yes, he did. Our Little Xu and Mr. Lishan are fast friends, despite their age difference. So, as soon as Mr. Lishan heard it was needed, he immediately put brush to paper and wrote it."

Many people were present. Shen Guofu picked up a cigar and sniffed it, but didn't light it.

In fact, his favorite way to boast about his son-in-law was to light a cigar, pour a glass of red wine, take a puff of the cigar, sip his wine, and then recount his son-in-law's brilliant achievements.

It had been over twenty years.

Shen Guofu finally understood the joy of those parents who constantly showed off their children on social media.

After the intro, the main program began.

The host, Zeng Xiaoqi, opened with the adage, "Food is the most essential thing in life." She then spoke about gourmet cuisine, mentioned several well-known traditional dishes, and finally introduced the day's recipe: Oil Braised Large Shrimp.

After the opening remarks, Lin Xu appeared on screen.

Chen Yan took a bite of the fruit cheese Shen Baobao fed her and then said,

"They say TV stations don't like using beauty filters, and even the most attractive faces can end up looking plain or unsophisticated on screen. But how come my brother-in-law looks even more handsome than he does in real life?"

"Alright, Yan Bao, Lin Xu is busy in the kitchen right now; he's not here. Is there any point in so awkwardly praising him just for a bite of food?"

"I was just hoping my brother-in-law would cut me some more of that crispy roasted lamb back..."

After saying this, Chen Yan saw Shen Baobao fork another piece of fruit cheese and immediately opened her mouth to snatch it. But after tasting it, her usually cool and composed expression twisted into a grimace,

"What is this flavor?"

"Mint... If you didn't know the flavor, why did you snatch it?"

Chen Yan: "..."

I give up on you! Why on earth would you make mint-flavored fruit cheese?!

While the sisters bickered, under the Lin Ji's Food discussion topic, many people were talking about the episode of "A Taste of Life" currently airing on TV.

"Damn! I never thought preparing shrimp involved so many details."

"Learned another trick from Boss Lin today."

"It really seems like he wants to teach me how to cook."

"I've learned the method, but where can I get such beautiful large shrimp?"

"The Oil Braised Large Shrimp I used to eat was always sweet and sour. Only now do I realize that was wrong."

"I hope they continue to feature these classic dishes. I have no resistance to such traditional cuisine."

"With such a great show, it wouldn't be too much to expect it to be number one in the ratings, right?"

"..."

「Yanjing City TV Station, Travel Channel Office」

The television on the wall was currently playing "A Taste of Life." Zhen Wensheng could hardly sit still, pacing around the office.

Finally, when the show was more than halfway through, Zeng Xiaoqi, who was constantly refreshing a webpage on her computer, suddenly let out a cry of surprise,

"It's out! It's out! The ratings are out!"

Zhen Wensheng, as anxious as a new father waiting outside the delivery room, quickly asked,

"How is it? Is it a boy or a girl... No, wait, what's its ratings rank?"

"Number one! Boss Zhen, we're a full 15% ahead of second place! It's a landslide victory!"

Zhen Wensheng pumped his fist vigorously, exclaiming,

"Good! Excellent work!"

Meanwhile, as Lin Xu was busy in the kitchen, the system's notification tone suddenly sounded in his mind...

Chapter 452: Picking Up the Car, Receiving Payment! The Most Suitable Pork Knuckle Dishes for Summer!

"Host assisted 'A Taste of Humanity' in securing the top viewership spot in its time slot, completed the sub-mission [All Crocodile Banquet], and received the Excellent Level Cooking Technique—All Crocodile Banquet."

TSK TSK. I finally got it. When I'm not busy, I can buy a farm-raised crocodile from Old Huang and prepare a full All Crocodile Banquet for everyone to taste. But not today. Today we have roasted whole lamb, oil-braised large shrimp, and a bunch of other dishes. Even if I made crocodile, I doubt anyone would have room for it.

'A Taste of Humanity' wasn't a long program, with each episode lasting about ten minutes.

Soon, the preview for the next episode echoed from the living room.

When Old Madam Shen saw that the next episode featured Sauce Burst Chicken Cubes, she said with a chuckle, "This dish is wonderful! When Guofu was little, he was always craving the saucy shredded meat others had. So, I'd buy some cheap chicken breast and cook it with sauce for him. It wasn't until he graduated from high school that he realized something was amiss..."

Laughter erupted in the living room. But as they laughed, their admiration for Shen Guofu, who couldn't even differentiate between chicken cubes and pork tenderloin, grew.

This man, who had never eaten pork tenderloin as a child, eventually made a name for himself. He not only lived in a luxurious detached villa but also became a role model for his relatives to strive towards.

Han Shuzhen squeezed Shen Guofu's hand tightly. The thought of their impoverished past brought an inexplicable ache to her heart for her husband.

Seeing the atmosphere turn a bit somber, she stood up and said, "I'll go ask Little Xu to cook this dish and see how his skills compare to our Grandma's."

Old Madam Shen immediately waved her hands. "Then I'd surely lose! Who can outdo our Little Xu's cooking? Last time, during the engagement, even those State Banquet masters at the Fishing Platform couldn't stop praising Little Xu!"

She spoke of 'Little Xu' this and 'Little Xu' that, her words brimming with affection.

But no one found it awkward because Lin Xu's skills truly deserved such praise from the elders.

Chen Yan shouted towards the kitchen, "Brother-in-law, didn't you record three dishes for the show? What's the third one?"

"Scallion Burst Lamb!"

"Can you make it for us to try? My parents haven't had it before."

"No problem!"

Hearing Lin Xu's response, CEO Chen immediately picked up a wet wipe from the table to clean his hands. I have to resist, hold back, he thought. There are even better dishes to come! I can't believe I missed out on so much good food while I was busy with the company's move for the past few days. But now that we're closer to Yingchun Street, it'll be even more convenient for me to visit the store than for my cousin. The moment my brother-in-law cooks something delicious, I'll be the first one there. I won't miss out again!

As Chen Yan was lost in her pleasant daydream, her mother, Shen Guofang, said irritably, "If you want to eat something, ask for it yourself. Stop using your father and me as an excuse to order dishes. If you have the guts, find a boyfriend like Little Xu to make us proud!"

Chen Yan: "...". How could I forget the 'maintain silence in front of relatives' rule? Isn't that something my ditzy cousin usually does? It must have been that roasted suckling pig they made that addled my brain. That being the case, it wouldn't be too much to ask my brother-in-law to make me roasted suckling pig twice, would it?

"I'm going to the kitchen to see if any help is needed..." Chen Yan finished wiping her hands and immediately rose from the carpet, slipping into the kitchen.

Yep, based on years of experience, if I don't leave now, Mom will continue her tirade. Then the relatives will jump in to mediate, and the focus of the argument will instantly shift to finding a partner. Next, Mom and the relatives will launch into their earnest, well-meaning persuasion, probably interspersed with Dad's sighs. Finally, they'll express their hopes for a future son-in-law by praising my brother-in-law. As the family's most educated and second-most beautiful 'cool older sister' type, I've seen through your patterns long ago! So, if I leave now, I can instantly interrupt Mom's 'casting animation.'

Entering the kitchen, she put on an apron with a flourish and asked Lin Xu, "Brother-in-law, what dishes are ready? Let this 33-Michelin-star chef give them a taste for you."

Ever since learning to make fruit pudding, Chen Yan and Shen Baobao had started thinking of themselves as chefs. When chatting with family, they often adopted an air of, "This is a matter for us in the culinary world; you laymen wouldn't understand."

"Yan Bao, does Michelin award stars based on age?" Shen Baobao quipped as she walked in with an empty plate. Spotting that Lin Xu had just finished making the spicy shredded chicken her father-in-law adored, she hurried over, mouth open. "Quick, quick, feed me a bite!"

"It's a bit hot. Let me cool it down before I feed you."

Watching her cousin and brother-in-law's sickeningly sweet display, Chen Yan suddenly felt that being lectured by the relatives outside might not be so bad after all. Anything would be better than being subjected to this public display of affection from this shameless couple, like a fish on a chopping block.

She was about to go check on the roasted whole lamb outside when she suddenly remembered something important. "Oh, right, Brother-in-law! The payment for the livestreaming has come through. Also, that money your master tipped Wu Kexin during the last competition—don't forget to come by the company to settle it when you have time."

The money's in? Lin Xu placed the cooled spicy shredded chicken into Shen Baobao's mouth, then asked, "Roughly how much is it?"

"That Die Lianhua tipped a significant amount. Your earnings from your livestream, plus the tips from Wu Kexin's stream, should add up to around a million or so. However, taxes need to be deducted, so we'll only know the exact amount after that."

WOW! This is a huge surprise! Lin Xu had initially thought that getting one or two hundred thousand would be pretty good; he hadn't expected it to be this much.

Once this money is in his account, the points he overspent last time should be covered, and he might even have some left over. Then he can save them up and quickly get a training mission for Ji Minghui to upgrade his Superior-level Rolling Technique to the Perfect Level.

Chapter 453: Picking Up the Car, Receiving Payment! The Most Suitable Pork Knuckle Dishes for Summer!

After all, Panda was the future mainstay of the pastry department. It would be terribly disappointing if he couldn't make Perfect Level handmade noodles.

Moreover, the regular customers were used to eating their Perfect Level handmade noodles. If the new store opened offering only Superior ones, they would definitely scorn it. This would completely shatter the hard-earned reputation of Lin Ji's Food.

While the kitchen bustled, the online popularity of Lin Ji's Food surged again, even shooting up to seventh place on the Yanjing Region's overall topic leaderboard.

Under the topic, old and new fans who had watched the TV show were fervently discussing the Oil Braise Large Shrimp made by Lin Xu.

Menopausal Loli: I can't accept the fact that the Oil Braise Large Shrimp I've eaten for decades has been made incorrectly!

Uncle's Fairy Stick: Indeed, I really didn't expect the way to cook Oil Braise Large Shrimp to be like this.

Blind Taxi Driver: [Picture] I'm at the supermarket buying shrimp, and everyone in line ahead of me is also buying shrimp. Boss Lin has indirectly driven up seafood sales in the Yanjing Region.

Clean and Hygienic, Brothers: Just went downstairs to the neighborhood supermarket to buy shrimp, only to be told they're sold out.

I Eat Therefore I Am: Selling two boxes of live bamboo shrimp. Got home and found out my mom had bought some too. Same-city express delivery available.

Fish Stewed Every Single Day: Give them to me, I'll take them. As a food enthusiast, I want to try any new cooking method I come across. Can I post the final dish here and ask Boss Lin for tips?

Lin Daiyu Pulling the Willow: Certainly, Boss Lin often comes over to correct our homework.

Meow Meow Sect's High Priest: Eh, Sister Lu, how come you didn't tag Brother Yong today?

Lin Daiyu Pulling the Willow: He's lying like a corpse on our club's fighting ring right now. He claimed he could get me to kneel and beg for mercy before the fight, but after a few punches, I almost knelt down to give him CPR.

Meow Meow Sect's High Priest: ?

Fish Stewed Every Single Day: ?

I Eat Therefore I Am: ?

...

After dinner, Lin Xu sat on the living room sofa and checked the online buzz surrounding Lin Ji's Food. He was surprised to see it had risen so much. It seemed that going on TV was the right move.

Since things aren't too busy lately, I need to film as many episodes as possible to promote Lin Ji's Food as much as I can. This will steadily increase the popularity of Lin Ji's Food topics. Only then can I push the topic to the number one spot within the designated time, complete the task, and get the reward.

After browsing for a while, he took a couple of sips of tea, then stood up and went upstairs to change clothes before heading to the basement to continue playing billiards with his father-in-law.

「Sunday morning.」

Lin Xu and Dou Wenjing sat side by side in a cab, heading to the 4S dealership to pick up their cars.

After completing the paperwork, Lin Xu got into his Agate Black BMW X5. The car's elongated body looked even more imposing.

Although it couldn't match his father-in-law's white G63 in terms of appearance, it was, after all, his own car, and driving it simply felt more satisfying.

Dou Wenjing chose a white BMW 5 Series. However, instead of the flashy, impractical high-spec version, she opted for a mid-range model.

Driving one after the other, they reached North Fourth Ring. Instead of heading to Yingchun Street, they turned and pulled up before a nearby office building.

This was the Huixuan Building, which housed Wu Kexin and Panda's Xinda Commerce, as well as his sister-in-law's company, Joyful Media.

Starting today, it would also be the location of the Dundun Catering Management Company.

Right. With Lin Ji's opening imminent, the company's operations were officially on track. It was time to separate from the storefront. From now on, the store will handle all customer reception and daily operations, while the company will manage Lin Ji's online presence, promotion, and brand maintenance.

"In the future, if I need to report on work, I should time my visits to the store around mealtimes. That way, I can freeload a meal," Dou Wenjing said.

"Sister Wenjing, just give me a heads-up before you come, and I'll make sure our general manager gets some extra dishes," Lin Xu replied.

"No, no, that's not necessary. Everyone knows the best food in our store is the staff meal. I'll just eat with you guys; that'll be fine."

In the elevator, the two chatted idly.

Lin Xu got out first on the 23rd floor. His sister-in-law's company was located here, and he had come to settle his live broadcast earnings.

As he approached section 23A, Lin Xu was about to knock on the door to check if anyone was working today when he saw his sister-in-law, Chen Yan, wearing a body-hugging yoga outfit and performing jumping jacks in the office area.

This... Why is she working out here on the weekend instead of sleeping in?

Lin Xu pushed the door open and walked in, asking Chen Yan, who was bouncing to the music, "Overindulged again last night?"

"No, I'm just preparing for the free lunch I'm planning to get at the store later... Weiwei is waiting for you in the finance office. I'll take you there."

She grabbed a nearby towel and, wiping the sweat from her face, led him towards the finance office further inside.

In the finance office, Lin Xu met Sister Weiwei, who was eating Ziqiang Shengjian and watching a soap opera.

"Hello, Sister Weiwei."

"Hello, Boss Lin," she said. "Your various tips and the funds Wu Kexin transferred here, after tax, total seven hundred thousand. Shall I transfer it to your card now?"

"Yes, transfer it now."

Lin Xu hadn't expected there to be so much left after taxes. Seven hundred thousand in cash meant seven hundred thousand points! Once it was in his account, not only could he repay the six hundred thousand points he owed the system, but he'd even have one hundred thousand left over.

Weekend bank transfers often had delays, so Lin Xu didn't wait around.

After signing the papers, he bid farewell to his sister-in-law, who was eager to get back to her workout, and then headed upstairs to the Dundun Catering Management Company.

「Ten o'clock in the morning.」

After saying goodbye to Dou Wenjing, Lin Xu drove his new car to the Fishing Platform.

Chapter 454: Picking Up the Car, Receiving Payment! The Most Suitable Pork Knuckle Dishes for Summer!

He came in for his last day at work.

Originally, he hadn't planned to come, but he was one day short of meeting the work task requirement, so he drove over and also took the opportunity to get his wages settled.

In the kitchen of Building 2, Xie Baomin wasn't drinking his usual tea. Instead, he sipped on goji berry water.

"Senior Brother, it seems you had a good time at the aquarium yesterday?"

Upon arriving at Building 2, Lin Xu greeted him with a smile.

Yesterday afternoon, Su Peipei, Senior Brother Xie's wife, updated her social media status. Her post read:

"Never go to an aquarium with a chef, or you'll feel like you're walking through a vegetable market. We'd been inside for less than half an hour when my husband had already made me understand various seafood cooking techniques, such as Vinegar Cooked, Garlic Roasted, Fried Crispy, Dry-Fried, Steamed, and Sweet and Sour."

Xie Baomin smiled, took a sip of goji berry water, and said, "To us, isn't an aquarium just a bigger seafood shop? What's wrong with treating it like a vegetable market?"

Right or wrong, I don't know, but I do know, Senior Brother, you should restrain yourself a bit.

Tackling tasks at this age that were left unfinished from youth always feels overwhelming.

"Are you starting the trial operation tomorrow?"

"Yes, starting tomorrow, and then next Saturday is the grand opening ceremony. Mr. Lishan checked and said that day is a particularly auspicious one for starting a business."

Xie Baomin said, "Then you should go to the finance department to settle your wages. I've included all the overtime, and Director Liao has also applied for a bonus for you."

Lin Xu didn't stand on ceremony. After chatting a bit more with Xie Baomin, he headed to the Fishing Platform finance department.

In total, he received 90,000 yuan, including his wages and bonus.

Just as he received his wages, the system's notification sounded in his mind:

"Host has completed 20 days of work at Fishing Platform, finishing the side quest 'Work,' earning one draw for a Perfect Level sauce-braised dish and one draw for a Perfect Level pork hock dish."

Finally, it was all wrapped up.

Though Fishing Platform was just a part of his tasks, he should still explore it more when not busy. Every building here was a treasure worth exploring.

Driving away from the Fishing Platform, Lin Xu returned to Yingchun Street.

Arriving at the store, he picked up Dundun, who had been sleeping on the roof of the service desk, and greeted Song Tiantian, the front desk manager, who wore a suit, saying, "That suit looks good on you; it really suits you."

Song Tiantian quickly smoothed her suit and said, "Manager Shu took me to get it tailored a few days ago. She said the front desk manager represents the face of the store, and poor clothing would lead people to look down on us."

After greeting Song Tiantian, Lin Xu walked around the first floor holding Dundun.

When he returned to the service counter, he murmured to himself, "Lottery!"

The system prompted, "Host detected to have two draw opportunities. Would you like to start the sequential draw?"

"No!"

His recent sequential draws hadn't yielded any popular dishes, so Lin Xu opted for a single draw.

First, he drew from the pork hock category.

This was a major category, generally comprising signature or popular main dishes, so he was particularly careful with the draw.

As the lottery wheel spun, he pressed the draw button.

Soon, the system's notification sounded in his mind:

"Congratulations, Host, on acquiring the Perfect Level pork hock dish—Crystal Pork Hock!"

What? It's actually Crystal Pork Hock?

Lin Xu was pleasantly surprised and delighted, as this dish was cool and refreshing, perfect for the sizzling summer days.

Indeed, there are many benefits to a single draw.

After reflecting, he continued to draw from the sauce-braised dishes category while holding Dundun...

Chapter 455: The Unstoppable Rice Companion—Stewed Fish Entrails!

After selecting the option to draw again, the system's prompt quickly sounded in his mind:

"Congratulations to the host for obtaining a Perfect Level stewed dish—Stewed Fish Entrails!"

Wow!

Upon hearing it was this dish, a surprised expression appeared on Lin Xu's face.

Like the Crystal Pork Hock, which was renowned as a god-tier rice accompaniment, Stewed Fish Entrails was also very suitable for selling in the restaurant—even more so than the Crystal Pork Hock. The Crystal Pork Hock, being cold, is suitable for accompanying drinks. When paired with rice, it's slightly less effective. But Stewed Fish Entrails was different; this dish was a surefire crowd-pleaser, perfect with liquor, rice, or noodles, guaranteed to satisfy any diner.

Snapping back to reality, Lin Xu couldn't help but rub Dundun's big head.

Such a sensible child, knowing that it was time to open for business, so he drew dishes that could be directly sold in the restaurant for profit.

He decided to check later if fish entrails were available. If so, he would cook them and have the head chefs from the various kitchen departments taste them at noon. If they all approved, the dish would be added to the menu starting tomorrow for the trial operation.

The restaurant kitchen now had quite a few staff members. To ensure customer satisfaction, every new dish had to be tasted by all the head chefs. Only with their approval could a dish be introduced on a trial basis. This "trial basis" involved monitoring customer purchase and repurchase rates over a set period. If the sales volume wasn't significant and customers showed no intention of repurchasing after trying it, the dish would be removed from the menu. Regular customers who enjoyed it could still order it off-menu through the waiters. However, it wouldn't be recommended to new customers to avoid giving a negative first impression of the restaurant.

People have limited appetites. The goal was to serve dishes so addictive that customers would feel thoroughly satisfied, return for more, and even bring friends and family. That's how we'll get repeat customers for the restaurant.

Since the staff had come on board, Lin Xu had been occupied with shooting TV shows and enjoying roasted suckling pig and whole roasted lamb with his family. The restaurant staff, however, had not been idle. Over the past few days, they had gathered to develop the menu for the trial operation, covering everything from cold appetizers and hot dishes to soups and desserts.

Dou Wenjing and several employees in charge of market research had also compiled pricing data from comparable high-end restaurants in Yanjing City. The pricing standard for Lin Ji's Food was set to be twenty percent higher than the average of comparable restaurants. After all, Lin Ji's Food had a strong reputation, and nearly all its menu items were Perfect Level dishes, so a higher price point was justified.

Regarding the price of handmade noodles, Manager Dou had initially suggested an increase. She pointed out that in comparable high-end restaurants, a bowl of Noodles With Black Bean Sauce could easily cost 68 yuan, tossed noodles 58 yuan, and even specialty health noodles could go for 88 yuan.

But Lin Xu vetoed that idea. Lin Ji had always catered to a broader clientele. Its initial success upon opening was largely fueled by customer word-of-mouth. Even though it had been renovated into a large, upscale restaurant, Lin Xu didn't want to alienate his loyal customer base. Besides, the previous prices weren't actually low; they only seemed more affordable when compared to other high-end

establishments. Ultimately, the company adjusted prices based on the cost of various toppings, but on the whole, they largely maintained the previous pricing structure.

After placing Dundun back on the service counter, Lin Xu went up the stairs to the second floor.

In the kitchen, the chefs, now completely familiar with the environment, were busy practicing the dishes for the trial operation to prevent any mishaps.

"Are there any fish entrails today?" Lin Xu asked Che Zai.

Now that the restaurant had plenty of skilled chefs and assistants, Che Zai had been assigned to the restaurant's purchasing department, responsible for the daily procurement of ingredients.

Seeing the boss ask him, Che Zai hurriedly said, "Yes, yes, yes! This morning, when Uncle Shen delivered the vegetables, he specifically gave me a bag of fish entrails. He said they were from a fishmonger at the market who wants us to source seafood from them. I haven't agreed yet."

Upon hearing this, Lin Xu immediately said, "Vegetables, Scallion and Ginger can be bought from the market, but there's no need to source other seafood there. We'll have a dedicated supplier for our seafood."

The market mostly sells common freshwater fish, but the restaurant plans to feature marine fish. Therefore, it's better to have Old Huang handle all seafood deliveries.

As for the market vendors...

Lin Xu said, "We can buy fish entrails from the market; fresh ones are better quality than frozen. When you have time, go talk to that vendor. If they can guarantee a steady supply, we'll source our fish entrails from them in the future."

"Okay, boss."

The bag of fish entrails weighed about seven or eight kilograms, a substantial amount.

Lin Xu carried the bag to a sink, dumped the fish entrails into a basin, carefully removed the gallbladders first, and then began to clean them. These fish entrails were very fresh. The Fish Roe, fish liver, and fish fat were in whole pieces, and the swim bladders were plump. Rummaging through, he even found several clumps of Fish Intestines and a few relatively intact pieces of Fish Skin. These were likely from customers who didn't eat Fish Skin and had it removed directly by a fish processing machine.

He first scooped out the Fish Intestines. The fish these came from must have weighed over ten jin (approximately five kilograms), as the Fish Intestines were almost as thick as chicken intestines. Using a small pair of scissors, Lin Xu slit the Fish Intestines open from end to end. He then cleaned them thoroughly, inside and out, using the same method for cleaning Fatty Intestines, before cutting them into segments about ten centimeters long.

Once this was done, he scooped out the soaked fish entrails and cut the larger pieces of Fish Roe and fish fat. Then, he brought a pot of water to a boil and blanched the fish entrails.

By now, it was almost noon.

While he was busy, Shen Baobao, Shen Guofu, and Han Shuzhen—the family of three—came up to the second floor. They were taking advantage of the weekend to have a meal and also to see the new car they had talked about.

Chapter 456: The Unstoppable Rice Companion—Stewed Fish Entrails!

"Xu Bao, what delicious dish are you making today?"

"Stewed Fish Entrails!"

Upon hearing this dish, Shen Guofu shivered.

As a child, he had heard countless times from Granny Shen how his old home was in the Northeast, right by the river. There, the family often caught fish bigger than a man, and they would stew the fish entrails in a pot with their homemade soybean paste, refusing to trade it even for a pork hock.

This was Granny Shen's childhood experience.

After reaching adulthood, she followed her husband, Mr. Shen, to work in Beijing, where they had two children.

She had thought that with a son and a daughter, she could live a good life.

Unexpectedly, just a few years after Guofu's birth, her husband passed away from an illness, leaving her a widow.

At that time, some people advised her to remarry; others, to return to her hometown.

But Granny Shen didn't listen to anyone. Instead, despite lacking food and clothing, she single-handedly raised her two children and ensured they both received a good education.

With hindsight, Granny Shen's choice was correct.

After all, staying in Beijing was the only way to keep their Beijing household registration, expose her children to new things, and broaden their horizons.

Later, when Shen Guofu became wealthy, he took Granny Shen back to their old home. However, after many years of absence, the place had changed completely, and there were no longer any fish in the river bigger than a man.

"Uh... I've eaten the one Dad made. It was fishy and stinky—really nasty! And he said it was the taste of our hometown..."

The moment Stewed Fish Entrails were mentioned, Shen Baobao involuntarily recalled the "dark cuisine" her dad had once made.

Shen Guofu chuckled dryly, "I made it according to your grandma's method, but who would have thought the taste would differ so much..."

This is the most frustrating part for those who don't understand cooking. You follow each step of the recipe, but the finished dish, in terms of both taste and presentation, is far from what you imagined.

"Try mine today. I guarantee there will be no fishy or strange taste, only deliciousness."

Lin Xu's words excited Shen Baobao.

Wow, my Xu Bao is finally going to change my perception of Stewed Fish Entrails. I can't wait!

Meanwhile, Shen Guofu slapped his forehead, somewhat annoyed. "If I'd known, I wouldn't have driven today."

If he hadn't driven, he could have enjoyed a few light drinks with the fish entrails. But since he had, he would have to settle for some Sour Plum Soup.

Lin Xu blanched the fish entrails. Seeing it was already past eleven, he set up the wok to start making the Stewed Fish Entrails.

The Shen family of three didn't bother him further. They walked away from the kitchen door to a nearby booth to play on their phones, preparing to enjoy a big meal later.

Just as they sat down, Chen Yan appeared upstairs, wearing a yellow floral dress and clacking in her high heels.

"Eh~ Wearing heels that high every day, you're going to need crutches soon."

"Only because your legs are so long. If I had your height, I'd wear flat shoes every day too."

"Yan Bao, you have to bravely accept the fact that you have short legs."

"I also have to bravely punch you, you stinker Yueyue! Take this!"

As the two sisters bantered, Lin Xu, in the kitchen, began preparing the ingredients needed for Stewed Fish Entrails.

This dish is akin to farmhouse fare, with simple ingredients: scallion, ginger, garlic, and dried chili. If you like it spicy, you can add some Er Jing Tiao and millet chilies before serving.

The highlight of this dish is the Northeastern farmhouse soybean paste, which is considered the soul of the dish and is indispensable.

Of course, if farmhouse paste isn't available, dry soybean paste and soybean paste will suffice, though the flavor will be slightly inferior.

Besides the soybean paste, pork lard and a little pork belly are also needed. This makes the fish entrails tastier, more delicious, and utterly addictive.

With everything ready, Lin Xu added half a spoonful of pork lard and half a spoonful of vegetable oil to the pan.

He heated the oil, added thinly sliced pork belly, and sautéed it briefly before adding ginger slices, scallion sections, dried chilies, and halved garlic cloves.

After frying them until fragrant, he poured half a bowl of farmhouse soybean paste into the pot and stirred it over low heat.

This step requires patience; the fragrance of the paste must be fully brought out before moving on.

"Boss, are we getting ready to serve Stewed Fish Entrails?" Zhuang Yizhou approached and asked curiously.

"I'm going to make some to try first. Later, you all can taste it and see if it's suitable to serve in the restaurant... By the way, did Weiwei give you the contract?"

"She did. She also said she'll arrange a live stream for me with Yue Liyue and Wu Kexin in a few days."

"Weiwei is their agent. Make sure to do well in the live stream after work; the income is definitely good."

"Thank you, Boss!"

Exploited by the capitalist before and after work, yet you still thank them. If it were me... AHEM, stop there. If I keep going, I'll just be insulting myself.

Lin Xu still couldn't accept the fact that he was the boss. He had spent his entire senior year at university studying the struggle against bosses, only to become one himself.

In the end, he had become what he once despised!

The paste in the pot wasn't ready yet.

Seeing Zhu Yong fiddling with some small river fish, apparently intending to pan-fry them, Lin Xu asked curiously, "Did Lin Daiyu knock you out in the ring?"

This comment made all the surrounding chefs smile. For a grown man to be knocked down by a woman in the ring, and for it to be posted online, was rather embarrassing. He wasn't very tough, was he?

Zhu Yong sighed, "I just wanted to trick Yuyu a bit, but she threw a glass of water in my face. Despite my best acting, she saw through it. Her acting must be good too; it was a fair match, you could say."

Seeing him in this state, Wei Qian couldn't help but ask,

Chapter 457: The Rice Companion So Divine You Can't Stop After Three Bowls—Stewed Fish Entrails!

"Is there a possibility that she doesn't know how to act but just knows what someone looks like after being knocked out, which is why she could tell you were faking?"

Zhu Yong: "..."

If that's the case, won't I be subject to domestic violence every day after I manage to win Sister Lu over?

He asked curiously, "If I were beaten by a woman until my nose was bruised and my face swollen, and I called the police, would the officers at the police station laugh at me?"

Wei Qian grinned, "I can't give you any advice, because I'll definitely never be like you, getting beaten up by a woman like a little chick. Isn't it embarrassing?"

"Don't speak too soon. I never expected the person with the screen name 'Lin Daiyu' to be so violent."

With more people, the back kitchen also became lively.

By now, the sauce had been stir-fried until fragrant. Lin Xu poured the blanched fish entrails into the wok, followed by two bowls of clear water.

The Fish Roe had been cut open, and having been blanched, it could easily break apart if stirred further, so water needed to be added immediately after putting it in the wok.

If lard wasn't used when stir-frying the aromatics for the sauce, adding Pork Bone Broth now would achieve the same effect.

However, if lard was already used, there was no need to add broth, otherwise the fish entrails would be too greasy, giving an impression of too much of a good thing.

After adding water and pouring in a bit of Cooking Wine to remove the fishy smell, it was time to cover the wok and braise over high heat.

When making Stewed Fish Entrails, it's essential to cover the wok and cook on high heat. This allows the sauce's fragrance to be braised into the fish entrails, and any fishy or strange smells from the ingredients will be completely removed.

Ten minutes later, Lin Xu lifted the lid.

The stock in the wok had reduced by more than half, and the original singular fragrance of the sauce was now replaced by the fresh aroma of the fish entrails.

Lin Xu added the chopped green and red peppers, then shook the wok to mix them as thoroughly as possible into the fish entrails.

A minute later, when the green and red peppers were just cooked through, he sprinkled some White Pepper powder to remove any fishiness and drizzled a bit of Seasoning Oil before dishing it out.

When preparing Stewed Fish Entrails, you need to leave a little bit of the sauce; don't reduce it too much.

This way, when eating, you can scoop some to mix with rice, making it utterly irresistible.

Seven to eight Jin of fish entrails filled two basins.

One basin was for the employees to try, and the other was for his own family.

Just as it was brought out from the kitchen, Shen Guofu sniffed and looked incredulous, "It's all fish entrails, so why have I never managed to make this kind of flavor? It smells so good! Give me extra rice later."

Today, the chefs had each prepared the dishes they were responsible for during the soft opening period, so lunch was sumptuous.

Aside from Lin Xu's Stewed Fish Entrails, there were also Zhu Yong's Chopped Pepper Fish Head, Wei Qian's sweet and sour Pork Ribs, Zhuang Yizhou's Kung Pao Chicken, and other dishes.

As the food was served, Chen Yan picked up her bowl of rice and immediately snatched a fish maw from the Stewed Fish Entrails, "I worked out for two hours at the company this morning. Finally, I can eat to my heart's content."

All that hard work exercising, what was it for? Wasn't it precisely so I could hold a bowl of rice and feast like this?

Shen Baobao kindly reminded her, "Binge eating after exercise accelerates the digestive system's absorption... making it easier to gain weight."

"Really?"

"Of course. But it's the same for you whether you exercise or not. Because after a woman turns thirty, her metabolism slows down, fat accumulates, and gaining weight is to be expected."

Chen Yan: "..."

You're the one who's thirty! I'm eighteen this year!!!! AHFFF, that wretched Yueyue, I really want to kill you!!!!!!

CEO Chen had lost her composure...

"These Stewed Fish Entrails are truly delicious... Lin Xu, when you have time, don't forget to go to South Third Ring and make them for your grandma. She loves this kind of richly sauce-flavored fish entrails."

"Alright, Dad. When I'm not busy, I'll buy some fish entrails and go with Yueyue."

Still flustered, Chen Yan immediately asked, "Let me know when you go. I want to visit Grandma too."

Being flustered is one thing, but missing out on delicious food? Chen Yan absolutely must be there. This is a matter of principle.

Lin Xu picked up a piece of Fish Roe and tasted it. Mmm, the sauce flavor and the fresh taste of the Fish Roe combined perfectly. Coupled with the precise cooking, the texture was excellent; the more he chewed, the more fragrant the Fish Roe became.

Delicious.

After finishing it, he took a couple of mouthfuls of rice, thoroughly enjoying himself.

Han Shuzhen initially had no interest in things like fish entrails, always finding them fishy and unclean. But smelling the fish entrails her son-in-law had cooked, she was instantly tempted.

The fish entrails glistened with a rich, red sauce. She didn't know which part it was, so she casually picked a piece with her chopsticks and tasted it. It was surprisingly smooth and tender, with a delightful crispness when chewed.

"Which part is this? It's so delicious!"

"Those are Fish intestines. Eating more is good for your skin."

Lin Xu didn't know if Fish intestines were actually good for one's health, but he knew that adding that comment would make his mother-in-law eat more happily.

Sure enough, upon hearing it was good for her skin, Han Shuzhen deliberately picked out the Fish intestines from the basin and began to eat them. Shen Baobao and Chen Yan, seeing this, also started eating the Fish intestines.

Mmm, if it's good for the skin, then it absolutely cannot be missed.

Seeing this, Shen Guofu immediately picked up a fish maw and began to eat with relish!

The fish maw had a soft yet resilient texture, chewy and delicious. Coated in the rich, savory, and slightly spicy sauce, eating a piece followed by a couple of mouthfuls of rice was an incredibly comforting experience.

After finishing one bowl of rice, he got up and served himself another. Then, he spooned some of the fish entrail sauce into his rice and stirred it. The oily, rich sauce tightly coated every grain.

Lifting a spoonful to his mouth, the deliciousness almost made him want to cry out.

"These fish entrails with rice are absolutely divine! I'll have to get another bowl later."

In ancient times, Wu Erlang couldn't cross the ridge after three bowls; today, our Old Shen won't leave the table after three bowls!

"Wow, not only are the fish entrails delicious, but all the other dishes are amazing too! Lin Xu, what are you making for dinner? Will there be this many delicious dishes?"

Shen Baobao, while enjoying the tasty food, began to look forward to dinner.

Lin Xu, munching on rice mixed with fish entrail sauce, said, "This afternoon, I need to make a few braised dishes so it doesn't delay tomorrow's soft opening."

Braised dishes?

Shen Guofu's eyes lit up instantly.

It was frustrating enough not to have a drink with the fish entrails at lunch. Now that there would be braised dishes in the afternoon, he absolutely had to have a couple of drinks to satisfy his craving.

But how could he smoothly get to drink?

He thought for a moment, then muttered softly, "The car felt off while driving today, very jerky. It seems it's time to have Zou Cheng take it for maintenance, to prevent any problems."

Haha, once the car is gone, I'll be able to drink.

However, he had no sooner spoken than Shen Baobao said, "Okay, okay! In that case, when you go back this afternoon, you can drive the G-Wagen back. We have our own car now, so we won't need to drive yours."

Shen Guofu: ?????

Daughter, are you doing this on purpose?

Chapter 458: In preparation for the trial opening, make a delicacy that can only be enjoyed during the New Year—Pressed Pig's Head!

Shen Guofu thought for a moment, then turned his gaze to his son-in-law.

Lin Xu instantly understood his father-in-law's implication.

He cleared his throat and immediately said, "I should also take the G-Wagon in for a check-up. After all, I haven't maintained it despite having driven it for so long, and I even took it to Yinzhou. I've always felt the brakes are a bit stiff."

HAHA! That's my Lin Xu... cough, cough, that's my good son-in-law. When father-in-law and son-in-law are united, they can achieve anything! In the future, if I want to drink, I'll just have my son-in-law cover for me. It's absolutely foolproof!

Shen Guofu suppressed the surge of joy inside him, pretending to be displeased as he grumbled at Lin Xu, "Why didn't you say so earlier? What if something had happened? What would Yueyue do?"

He finished speaking and handed his phone over to Zou Cheng, "Zou, find someone to come to Yingchun Street later. Take both my car and my son-in-law's car back for maintenance, and check the brakes as well."

"Alright, President Shen, I'll head over right now."

After hanging up the phone, Shen Guofu was still immersed in his performance, "Brakes are no small matter; you must pay attention."

Lin Xu nodded as if taking lessons, "I'll remember that. By the way, Dad, I'm preparing seasoned delicacies this afternoon, and I always feel uncertain about the flavor. If you're not too busy, could you stay and give me some guidance?"

AIYO! A son-in-law this good is one you couldn't find even if you searched high and low.

Shen Guofu hadn't expected that after his son-in-law helped cover for him, he would also conveniently provide a reason for him to stay and drink. The move was so smoothly executed it left no room for criticism.

What a great son-in-law! He's truly my, Old Shen's, wonderful son-in-law!

He scooped up a few mouthfuls of rice, using it as a pretense to hide his inner thrill.

After calming his emotions slightly, Shen Guofu picked up the teacup in front of him and took a sip, feigning modesty as he said, "I was actually planning to play pool with your Uncle Tan, but since there's something going on in the store, I'll just find him next week. I wouldn't want your seasoned delicacies to be less than perfect."

He was just about to continue his pretense with a few more words of caution when Han Shuzhen, sitting beside him, couldn't stand it anymore, "Lin Xu gave you an excuse to drink, and you should've just gone

along with it. Why put on an act? With your half-baked cooking skills, are you really planning to give pointers to your son-in-law?"

Shen Guofu: "..."

I just got too into character, too immersed in the role!

He bowed his head, shoveling rice into his mouth without uttering another word.

I can't retort right now. Otherwise, with just one word, my wife could have a car sent over immediately, whether from home or the company. Better not risk it. As long as I can get a drink, my goal will be achieved. As for being ridiculed by her, isn't that pretty normal?

Han Shuzhen picked up a piece of fish liver and put it in Shen Guofu's bowl, gently saying, "Don't just focus on the rice; eat more of the dishes."

Shen Guofu's heart warmed. "Thank you, my dear. I'll do the exercises when I get home tonight."

I knew what you were going to say, so I said it for you. See how considerate I am! Son-in-law, learn from this. When dealing with your wife, you must be like me: anticipate her needs, think what she thinks.

As he was secretly pleased with himself, he heard Han Shuzhen force a few words through her clenched teeth, "Then no exercises tonight. Tonight, I'll take you to practice aerial yoga!"

HMPH! You dare to get one over on me? Just wait and see how I'll deal with you tonight! Han Shuzhen thought.

Shen Guofu: ?????

I just got good at the Compendium of Materia Medica dance routine, why a new project all of a sudden?

While he was inwardly fretting, not far off at another dining table, the chefs, almost sated, were quietly discussing the Stewed Fish Entrails on their table.

"The boss's cooking is really top-notch. I usually can only finish one bowl of rice, but today even two bowls aren't quite enough."

"Me too, this Stewed Fish Entrails dish is so good with rice."

"Every dish the boss makes is a classic."

"He has ventured into all the major cuisines. I used to think the boss couldn't make Northeastern dishes, but not only does he make them, he does so professionally. Impressive, impressive."

"I wonder when the boss will make Sweet and Sour Pork; I love that dish."

As everyone was praising Lin Xu's culinary skills, Shu Yun and Song Tiantian came upstairs with their bowls of rice. Seeing that there was still plenty of food at Wei Qian and the others' table, they asked with a smile, "Can we sit here and eat?"

Wei Qian and his group hurriedly made space; Ji Minghui even got up to bring over two chairs from a nearby table.

Zhuang Yizhou asked curiously, "Store Manager, why did you two come up here to eat?"

"The dishes downstairs are running a bit low, so we decided to show some team spirit and eat up here... Hey, you guys really did hide some good stuff! What's this dish in the middle?"

Shu Yun originally wanted to try the Sweet and Sour Pork Ribs, but she had already eaten two pieces downstairs. So, she wanted to try the dish in the middle, which looked quite appetizing.

Wei Qian moved the bowl of Stewed Fish Entrails toward her and Song Tiantian. "This is the boss's Stewed Fish Entrails. You two should try it; it goes great with rice."

Song Tiantian had initially planned to just have a small bowl of rice. After all, as the front desk manager dressed in a slim-fit suit, she needed to watch her figure.

However, upon hearing "Stewed Fish Entrails," her interest was piqued. "The boss can make Northeastern dishes too? Then I have to give it a taste."

The two of them tried some of the Stewed Fish Entrails, and their faces immediately showed expressions of shock.

Shu Yun was shocked that Lin Xu could make the Stewed Fish Entrails so delicious—not only were they completely free of any fishy taste, but they even had a rich, almost unctuous texture.

This handsome boss is just too amazing, isn't he? she thought.

Song Tiantian, on the other hand, was shocked that Lin Xu could prepare such authentic Northeastern cuisine.

Even if you went to an old, established restaurant in the Northeast, it would be at most this good, right? Amazing, amazing. The boss is truly incredible! she marveled.

Shu Yun had come upstairs looking for a couple of side dishes to finish her bowl of rice, but after tasting Lin Xu's Stewed Fish Entrails, she couldn't help but serve herself another small bowl.

Chapter 459: Making a Dish Only Available During New Year for the Trial Opening - Pressed Pig's Head!

As for Song Tiantian, this formidable woman directly picked up the small basin filled with rice and asked, "Are you all done eating?"

"Not us, we're pretty much done."

Song Tiantian then held up the dish of fish giblets and asked Shu Yun, "Manager, have some more."

After Shu Yun added a few pieces to her own bowl, Song Tiantian dumped the remaining fish giblets into the rice basin, piling them high on top and completely covering the rice.

Wei Qian and the others stared blankly at this scene. They had a lot they wanted to say but didn't know where to begin.

Watching her eat, Zhuang Yizhou instinctively swallowed his saliva and said, "Manager Song, have you ever considered becoming a mukbang broadcaster? With your constitution and appetite, you'd definitely be a hit."

Although Song Tiantian occasionally watched live streams, she wasn't interested in that industry. For her, a steady job was better.

"Not interested. I think following the boss right now is pretty good." I've only been at Lin Ji's Food for a month, and I've already gone from cashier to front desk manager. Who knows, I might get promoted further down the line! Isn't that much better than being a gluttonous mukbang streamer?

Wei Qian brought over the Tomato Egg Drop Soup he had made and said, "Have some soup, have some soup. It'll help it settle, then you can continue. If it's not enough, we'll make more for you right now."

Good heavens, she can really pack it away!

"Thanks, Chef Wei. I haven't eaten at the restaurant this month. I've been eating out a lot and was worried people would make fun of me, so now that I've tasted the boss's cooking, I just can't stop."

If it had been elsewhere, Song Tiantian might have felt embarrassed by such stares. But at Lin Ji's Food, it didn't matter because this was her turf, and no one would laugh at her for eating a lot.

After finishing lunch, Lin Xu called out to Che Zai, who was nearby watching Song Tiantian eat, "Do we have pork hock, pig heads, and Pork Skin in the restaurant?"

"We have two pig heads and twenty pounds of Pork Skin, but no pork hock. Should I have Boss Hu bring some over now?"

"Let's use them tomorrow; there's no rush. Later on, send the pig heads and Pork Skin to the braising department downstairs. I'm going to make a braised dish."

He currently had three braised dishes he could make: Beef Steaks, Braised Pig Head, and Crystal Pork Hock.

Beef Steaks were best eaten with baked flatbreads. The restaurant hadn't introduced sesame flatbreads yet, so he'd wait until he mastered the technique for making small sesame baked buns before preparing them. Then, he could launch the sesame flatbreads and Beef Steaks together, letting customers experience how satisfying it is to eat beef tucked into flatbreads.

He had originally planned to make the Crystal Pork Hock and Braised Pig Head together. But since there was no pork hock today, he decided to do it tomorrow morning. That would be fine; Crystal Pork Hock was relatively quick to prepare and wouldn't delay the trial opening at noon tomorrow.

"Xiao Xu, where are the house keys?" Han Shuzhen called out immediately, seeing her son-in-law heading downstairs to get busy.

That morning, the family of three had gone shopping and bought a pile of clothes and socks for Lin Xu. It was the Beginning of Autumn. Although the weather was still quite hot, autumn clothes needed to be bought.

"In the third drawer of the service desk on the first floor."

"Then we'll bring the clothes over later and take a rest upstairs. Your father-in-law heard there would be alcohol and now refuses to go anywhere else, so I have no choice but to accompany him."

Chen Yan, who was rubbing her stomach and marveling at the delicious food, suddenly realized that it wasn't just her younger brother-in-law and cousin who were good at public displays of affection; her uncle and aunt were also masters of it.

But what she didn't understand was... Why am I always the wallflower when everyone else is showing off their romance? Can't you people pick on someone else for a change?

Incensed, President Chen ate another bowl of rice. You all parade your relationships in front of me every day! I'll eat you into the poorhouse!

Upon reaching the first floor, Xu Xinhua and two kitchen assistants from the braising department had just finished lunch.

"Clear a pot for me. I'm going to braise two pig heads and try making a Braised Pig Head dish."

Braised Pig Head? Xu Xinhua asked curiously, "Isn't that a dish we usually have during the New Year? Are we planning to serve this dish now?"

"Yes, I'll try braising two pig heads first and see how the sales go tomorrow. If it does well, it will become another signature dish of our restaurant, like the Chicken Feet."

Compared to ordinary braised pig head, this pressed version involved an additional step of compressing the pig head meat with Pork Skin into a block, much like tofu. This resulted in a firmer texture and a more appealing presentation when sliced. Furthermore, it had layers of Pork Skin on top and bottom, encasing thoroughly braised pig head meat, with crispy pig ears in the very center. To get so many textures from a single dish—this was truly the pinnacle of pig head cuisine.

As they were speaking, Che Zai and two kitchen assistants brought over the pig heads and Pork Skin.

The pig heads were spotlessly white and already cleaned. The Pork Skin consisted of large, machine-scraped sheets, with not a speck of fat remaining.

Qiu Zhenhua took them and said, "Boss, don't worry about these. I'll handle the prep. You can just supervise from the side."

Lin Xu didn't stand on ceremony. He stepped aside and began to inspect the master stock for the Tiger Skin Chicken Feet and the black duck master stock for the braised ducks.

Both master stocks had been frozen for a month. Over the past couple of days, following Lin Xu's instructions, Xu Xinhua had replenished them with spices and fresh stock, simmering them twice. During the simmering, a few pieces of pork fatback had also been added. This had finally restored the master stocks to their pre-freezing quality.

The braising department wasn't large, but Xu Xinhua kept it impeccably tidy. The department's rules and regulations were posted on the wall.

For example, one rule stated: "Regardless of circumstances, the master stock must be simmered for over half an hour daily to prevent spoilage."

Another read: "Under all conditions, ingredients must be thoroughly cleaned. Carelessness, negligence, or a perfunctory attitude are strictly forbidden."

Chapter 460: Making a Dish Only Available During New Year for the Trial Opening - Pressed Pig's Head!

Additionally, it was emphasized that there was 24-hour surveillance in the Braised Food Department. Should any violation of operating procedures be detected, penalties would range from wage deductions to, in serious cases, termination. Legal action would be taken immediately against any illegal conduct.

When Lin Xu first saw these rules and regulations, he thought they were somewhat over the top. But upon closer consideration, he realized that braised meats were indeed a hotspot for food safety issues. Things like the illegal use of nitrates or banned food additives, and the use of rotten ingredients—there's always a plethora of such reports each year. Xu Xinhua being so cautious was the right approach. Better safe than sorry, after all.

Before long, two pig heads had been properly cleaned. By then, the jaws of the pig heads had been removed, the skulls split in half, and the brains scooped out into a bowl on the side. As for the ears, they too had been sliced off at the base. The ear canal of a pig is very deep, so the ears need to be cut open to be thoroughly cleaned.

Lin Xu looked and said, "Then let's blanch them."

Pig heads and Pork Skin both needed blanching. After blanching, any scalded hair stubble would be cleaned once more, providing a more reassuring experience for the consumer.

Water was set to boil, and the pig heads, ears, Pork Skin, and tongues were placed in the pot in succession. Lin Xu poured a high-proof Liquor, used for braising meats, into the pot. Soon, grimy foam appeared in the pot. Using a spoon, he skimmed off the foam. After about ten minutes, he took out the pig ears and Pork Skin. When fifteen minutes passed, he finally turned off the heat and removed the pig heads and tongues as well. The pig heads and Pork Skin were scraped clean, and the ears and tongues were cleaned again.

Once everything was prepared, it was time to start braising.

Lin Xu had initially planned to use the brine from Braised Chicken Feet for the pig heads as their flavors were similar, and it could even add some aroma to the Chicken Feet's brine. But he reconsidered, thinking that if it sold well, it might become a new signature dish for the restaurant. So, he set a soup pot on the stove and prepared a fresh brine.

The brine for braising pig heads required less sugar and chili compared to that for Chicken Feet. Particularly in the case of sugar, since Braised Pig Head should be savory and mouth-watering, it was important not to add too much. Just a few pieces of Crystal Sugar were enough for seasoning purposes. While using less sugar and chili, the amounts of other spices needed to be increased. These included cinnamon, Star Anise, Sichuan peppercorns, bay leaves, Angelica dahurica, and more. This was because pig head meat is thick and fatty, requiring a larger quantity of spices for the flavor to penetrate the meat.

After everything was ready, Lin Xu fried some sugar until it was caramelized and added it to the brine as a substitute for the Dark Soy Sauce that easily darkens in color. Once the brine was well-prepared, he first put in the pig heads, which were difficult to cook thoroughly, and then added the tongues, ears, and Pork Skin at ten-minute intervals. Such staggered braising ensures that each ingredient cooks through at the same time, also facilitating the pressing process for the pig heads.

The brine quickly came to a boil. Lin Xu skimmed the froth with a spoon and adjusted to a medium-low heat for a slow braise. When braising meat, the heat shouldn't be too high. Otherwise, the boiling brine could break the ingredients apart. This could result in their exteriors becoming mushy while the insides remain uncooked. A gentle simmer allows the brine to cook the pig head gradually. Such braised meat looks better and tastes more satisfying.

Once the pig heads were put on to braise, Shen Guofu and the others had finished their meal. They came downstairs, played for a while with Dundun who was sleeping on the service desk, and then took out the keys from the drawer to deliver clothes to their homes in the nearby community.

Having had her fill of "dog food," Chen Yan intended to drive to a nearby badminton hall to play for a while and recover some of her charismatic appeal. Feeling like a perpetual background presence gives rise to the nagging fear of "I'm unsellable because I'm ugly." In reality, with a successful career, a figure to match, and a pretty face that commands attention, Chen Yan was never short of admirers wherever she went.

The pork needed some time to be properly braised.

Taking advantage of this interval, Lin Xu, carrying a box of Black Sugar Shaqima made by the Pastry Department, headed to the neighboring supermarket.

Upon entering, Uncle Yu asked, "Xu, hasn't your shop finished refurbishing? When are you opening? I've been eagerly waiting to try your hand-pulled noodles."

Lin Xu replied with a smile, "We'll start a trial run tomorrow, letting the staff get a feel for things and adapt."

On hearing that the trial run was starting tomorrow, Uncle Yu immediately said, "Wow, I'll have to spread the word in the neighborhood then, get everyone to come and support your shop at noon. It's been a month since we've had your cooking; quite a few of our folks have been missing it."

I couldn't think of a better person to tell than you, Uncle Yu, hoping you'd help spread the word. As long as Uncle Yu knew, it meant the whole street would soon be in the know. As for online promotion, Lin Xu only told those like Qiang that they wouldn't need too many customers the next day, as the staff needed time to adjust. Once all departments had worked out the kinks, they would start marketing and attracting customers.

"Uncle, this is the Black Sugar Shaqima our shop makes. Could you evaluate it for us? In the future, the shop will sell a limited quantity every day. It won't be a large amount, so reservations will be needed."

The Snacks made in the shop didn't contain preservatives or freshness enhancers. To prevent unsold stock from spoiling, the shop planned to adopt a reservation system. Only upon receiving orders would they make the Snacks, ensuring maximum freshness.

"Oh! These are handmade? Then I must let our neighbors have a taste!"

See, that's the advantage of having a promoter.

After chatting a bit more, Lin Xu took his leave of Uncle Yu and returned to the shop. By this time, the pig head had been braising for forty minutes. After turning off the heat, Lin Xu soaked it for another twenty minutes before finally removing all the ingredients from the brine.