

## Culinary 49

Chapter 49: These are all key points! Circle them, they will be on the test!

Chen Yan's eyes sparkled. Her cousin wanted to eat Crispy Meat, so her brother-in-law had shamelessly asked the State Banquet Master for the recipe.

These two are just too sweet together, aren't they?

She couldn't even focus on eating, typing away a message to Shen Jiayue, "Wow! Your Xu Bao just asked that State Banquet big shot how to make Crispy Meat, saying you liked it..."

"Ah? I just casually mentioned it last night."

"Why do I feel even more jealous hearing that? Seriously, if you weren't my cousin, how great would that be? Then I could be wielding my little hoe, trying to poach your boyfriend!"

After sending that message, Chen Yan thought about it and retracted the message.

Even though she was rather attractive herself, and plenty of people called her a goddess when she posted selfies, she knew she couldn't compare to her cousin. Her legs weren't as long, her waist wasn't as slim, and her breasts were a cup size smaller. Even her car wasn't as expensive.

She couldn't poach him, not at all. Her little hoe would break long before she could make a dent in a foundation that solid.

"What did you just send? Why did you retract it?"

"Oh, I was just wishing you two a century of happiness and to grow old together."

Chen Yan scooped a spoonful of braised pork rice into her mouth. She could no longer taste the fragrance of the rice, only tasting the sourness of lemons in every grain.

Boo hoo hoo, I also want a sweet love like my cousin's!

Nearby, Master Gao looked at Lin Xu and asked, "Shall we start now?"

Lin Xu replied with a smile, "Let's wait until the afternoon. My girlfriend gets off work before five. We can do it then, okay? My culinary skills will never be as good as yours, and I want her to taste your handiwork too."

Master Gao nodded. "Alright, we'll do it in the afternoon then."

「At 4:30 in the afternoon.」

Shen Jiayue bid farewell to her colleagues and walked out of the audit firm, bag in hand.

Off work! I can go see my Xu Bao!

She didn't drive her sports car; instead, like any normal office worker, she took the subway to and from work. However, since she started work late and finished early, she'd never actually had to endure a crowded subway.

Stepping out of the Dongming Building, just as Shen Jiayue was about to scan a shared bicycle to go to the subway station, a white Porsche 911 suddenly honked its horn by the roadside.

She glanced at the license plate number and saw it was her cousin Chen Yan's car, so she curiously walked over.

"What are you doing here?"

"Came to pick you up after work!"

The car door opened, and Shen Jiayue swiftly sat down. Looking at Chen Yan, she asked, "Aren't you usually busy? You never have time when I ask you to play tennis. Why are you so free today?"

Chen Yan put on her sunglasses and said, "This afternoon, the State Banquet Master is going to fry Crispy Meat for a certain someone. How could I miss such excitement? I may not have love, but I can at least get my fill of their public displays of affection, right?"

Shen Jiayue giggled, buckled her seat belt, and said, "Alright, alright, I'll let you have your fill."

Chen Yan started the car, turned it around, and drove in the direction of the North Fourth Ring.

「At the same time.」

Master Gao entered Lin Ji's Food carrying a bag.

"Boss Lin, shall we begin?"

Lin Xu had just put the Chicken Feet on to steam. Upon hearing this, he replied, "Yes, Master Gao. What ingredients do you need? I'll prepare them."

Master Gao said, "Sichuan peppercorns, fennel, low-gluten flour, cornstarch, eggs, cooking oil, scallions, ginger, and... pork belly and Meat."

Meat? Lin Xu was about to say they didn't have it in the store.

But then Master Gao took out a piece of meat from the bag he was carrying. It was mostly lean meat, interspersed with irregular fascia and fat, and the entire piece quivered like jelly.

"I bought it for you. Meat is from near the pig's front leg; it's tender and has fascia, which gives a richer texture for char siu or deep-frying. That's why Cantonese chefs prefer Meat."

Although they were making Crispy Meat today, Master Gao didn't limit himself to that dish. He began by explaining the characteristics of Meat to Lin Xu.

Lin Xu listened intently.

These were all key points that needed to be highlighted! If he weren't worried Master Gao would disapprove, he would have even wanted to record it.

Master Gao placed the piece of Meat into a basin of water to soak, continuing, "All meat is best soaked before cooking to draw out the blood, which improves the flavor. If the meat isn't fresh enough, adding a little baking soda can help tenderize it again."

Lin Xu nodded, took a piece of pork belly from the refrigerator, and also placed it in water to soak.

After putting them in to soak, he asked curiously, "Master Gao, do we need to remove the skin when making Crispy Meat?"

"You can remove it or leave it on. Leaving the skin on gives a richer texture, but there's a risk of the oil splattering violently during frying, so it's not recommended for beginners."

Lin Xu silently made a mental note, then started preparing the ingredients Master Gao would need.

Master Gao, meanwhile, turned on the stove, added some Sichuan peppercorns and fennel, toasted them over low heat, and then chopped them finely with a knife.

"Adding some coarsely chopped Sichuan peppercorns when frying Crispy Meat gives it an unexpected texture. You can use whole ones, but the texture will be slightly inferior."

He set the chopped spices aside to be added to the marinade later, allowing the meat to absorb the flavors in advance.

After chopping the Sichuan peppercorns, Master Gao turned to Lin Xu and asked, "Next, we need to make knife-cut chilies. Do you know how?"

"I do. How about I make it, and you can supervise?"

He had just acquired this Skill that morning and hadn't had a chance to use it yet. This was a perfect opportunity to try it out.

"Alright, you do it then. Let me see your skill level."

Lin Xu took some dried chilies, cut them into segments, and also prepared some Sichuan peppercorns.

After readying them, he set up the wok, scooped a spoonful of cooking oil into it, swirled the wok to coat the inner surface with oil, and then poured the excess oil out. When stir-frying knife-cut chilies, adding a little oil makes the chilies and Sichuan peppercorns crisper and easier to chop.

After turning on the heat, Lin Xu turned the flame down. Before the oil got hot, he poured in the cut dried chili segments and began to stir-fry.

Soon, a spicy aroma began to waft from the wok.

Master Gao suddenly asked from the side, "Why haven't you added the Sichuan peppercorns yet?"

"Sichuan peppercorns don't tolerate heat well; they burn easily, so they need to be added later."

Master Gao nodded. He was very satisfied with Lin Xu's answer.

When the chilies in the wok began to turn brown, Lin Xu added the Sichuan peppercorns and continued to stir-fry. When the chilies turned a deep reddish-brown, he turned off the heat and poured the chilies and Sichuan peppercorns out of the wok to cool. Only when they had completely cooled could he begin chopping them.

Master Gao looked at the color of the chilies and said to Lin Xu, "You controlled the heat well."

With that said, he took the meat out of the water, patted the surface dry with paper towels, and began to cut it.

"The Crispy Meat strips shouldn't be too thin, or they'll overcook easily and lose the crispy-outside-tender-inside texture. But they also can't be too thick, or they won't cook through. A thickness of about three to four millimeters is best."

Master Gao explained each step in detail, making Lin Xu wish he could take notes.

Together, they finished cutting the meat and then began to marinate it.

Into the meat, they added Scallion and Ginger, Light Soy Sauce, Cooking Wine, salt, sugar, and the chopped Sichuan peppercorn and fennel powder. After mixing it well, they covered it with plastic wrap and let it marinate for half an hour.

Next, they had to prepare the batter for the Crispy Meat, a crucial step.

"To make the batter, you need flour and starch. Boss Lin, do you know the difference between starch and flour in deep-fried dishes? And why you should use low-gluten flour?"

Lin Xu shook his head.

Master Gao, please don't keep us in suspense! Go ahead and start your demonstration. My Cooking Learning Card and I are itching to learn!