

Culinary 50

Chapter 50: The Cooking Learning Card That Could Drive People Insane! [Seeking Monthly Tickets]

Grandpa Gao brought over an empty basin and poured some low-gluten flour into it.

As he busied himself, he said, "Back in my youth, when resources were scarce, we could only prepare as much batter that required eggs as needed. If we made too much, we would get scolded..."

Lin Xu watched Grandpa Gao's movements.

Use Cooking Learning Card! he silently muttered to himself.

Instantly, the system's prompt sounded in his mind: "Learning Subject: Gao Peisheng. Current Skill: Trading on his age. Do you wish to learn?"

System, you need to make this clear to me, Lin Xu thought. Does trading on one's age count as a Cooking Technique?

He refocused his attention on the present, fearing he might inadvertently learn this utterly useless Skill.

After Grandpa Gao finished pouring the low-gluten flour, seeing that Lin Xu couldn't answer why he chose low-gluten flour, Grandpa Gao changed the question. "What's the difference between high-gluten and low-gluten flour?"

Isn't that obvious?

"The gluten content is different, of course."

Grandpa Gao continued to ask, "So what happens to Gluten when it's fried in oil?"

"It expands rapidly!"

This question was no challenge for Lin Xu. In his first year of high school, he had suddenly become enamored with the texture and flavor of Glutinous Rice, always asking for several extra pieces whenever he ate Sichuan-style hot pot. Chen Meijuan thought the ones sold outside were unclean, so she bought some gluten flour and made her own Glutinous Rice at home. Tossing a piece of Gluten the size of a peanut into the pot, it would rapidly expand to the size of a ping-pong ball, making Young Master Lin, who knew nothing about cooking at the time, exclaim in amazement. That day, his mom used one bowl of Gluten to fry up three large baskets of Glutinous Rice. It granted Lin Xu his Glutinous Rice freedom.

And then he... overate.

To this day, when eating hot pot or street food skewers, Lin Xu never orders Gluten.

"The higher the gluten content in the flour, the harder it becomes after frying. This is because the Gluten expands rapidly when fried, filling up the spaces between the flour particles. Low-gluten flour, on the other hand, contains less Gluten, so it remains loose after frying, giving a crispy texture when eaten."

Crispy?

Lin Xu asked, "So if I want a crispy texture, I should use low-gluten flour, right?"

Grandpa Gao nodded. He began to add cornstarch to the basin and said, "But using only flour won't do. The fried dish would become soft too quickly, sometimes even before it's cooled down. You have to add starch as well. The more starch you add, the crispier the texture, and the longer it can be stored without becoming soft, even after two or three days."

Understood! Lin Xu thought. Flour batter makes it fluffy-crisp, starch batter makes it brittle-crisp. If you combine the two, the texture of the ingredient with the higher proportion will be more pronounced.

"Across the country, there are many varieties of batter-coated fried dishes," Grandpa Gao continued. "But once you grasp the essence of it, any type of batter will pose no problem."

In Grandpa Gao's view, learning a single dish wasn't much to master. If you're going to learn, you should understand the entire category thoroughly. This way, no matter what dish you make, you can do it effortlessly.

After discussing all this, he cracked four Eggs into the basin, scooped in half a spoonful of peanut oil, and began to mix the batter. "Today, we're frying and eating on the spot, so we're mixing it at a 1:1 ratio. But normally, commercial restaurants opt for a 1:2 ratio. This makes it last longer, and even if you refry it, it won't burn easily."

Now I should be able to learn, right? Lin Xu silently muttered to himself again, Use Cooking Learning Card!

Immediately, the system's prompt appeared in his mind: "Learning Subject: Gao Peisheng; Current Skill: Mixing batter. Do you wish to learn?"

Mixing... batter? Lin Xu was truly exasperated. The Skill went from trading on his age to mixing batter. Do I really have to wait until the actual frying to learn the complete Fried Crispy Pork Cooking Technique?

Grandpa Gao adjusted the mix to a thick, sticky consistency, ensuring there were no lumps of flour. Then he covered it with plastic wrap and set it aside to be used later, once the meat was marinated.

With nothing else to do, Lin Xu finely chopped the previously stir-fried chili segments and Sichuan peppercorns with a chef's knife. An indispensable seasoning in Sichuan cuisine—knife-cut chilies—was ready. However, in the case of Crispy Meat, these chilies were merely used as a dipping sauce, so their role was minor.

When the meat had marinated long enough, Grandpa Gao picked out the Scallion and Ginger, then poured the prepared batter into the bowl with the marinating meat. "Back when I was an apprentice doing odd jobs," he said, "the head chefs used to mix this batter themselves, never letting us see..."

Lin Xu, still unable to learn the Cooking Technique, was not ready to give up. Use Cooking Learning Card!

"Learning Subject: Gao Peisheng; Current Skill: Lying. Do you wish to learn?"

I'm truly, truly resigned! Lin Xu had completely lost his patience. He had originally thought that using this Cooking Learning Card would be simple, but it turned out to be such a hassle.

Grandpa Gao set up the wok and added half a wokful of rapeseed oil. He turned on the heat and cranked the exhaust hood to its highest setting. Using rapeseed oil for frying gives the food excellent color. However, rapeseed oil has a low smoke point, so when frying, it produces a lot of smoke, requiring the exhaust hood to be on high.

When the oil was about sixty percent hot, Grandpa Gao picked up a piece of meat fully coated in batter and dropped it in.

SIZZLE...

The oil in the wok immediately started to boil vigorously. Grandpa Gao quickly continued to add meat to the wok, ensuring each piece was fully coated with batter.

Lin Xu, at the side, took a deep breath. I'll make one last attempt.

Use Cooking Learning Card!

"Learning Subject: Gao Peisheng; Current Skill: Fried Crispy Pork. Do you wish to learn?"

"Learn!"

Just as Lin Xu made his decision, a flash of golden light swept across the screen in his mind.

"Host has used one Excellent Level Cooking Learning Card and acquired the Excellent Level Fried Crispy Pork Technique. Congratulations to the Host."

Phew... Finally, a success, he thought.

As he was reflecting on this, the system's notification sounded again: "The Host, while learning, has heeded the sincere teachings of a State Banquet Master, and the Excellent Level Fried Crispy Pork Technique has been automatically upgraded to Superior Level. Congratulations to the Host."

Lin Xu: ...

Are there really such good things?

By now, the wok was full of meat. Grandpa Gao turned down the stove flame slightly. "Remember to lower the heat once the batter sets," he instructed. "This helps the meat cook through properly and also allows the excess fat in the meat to be rendered out more effectively."

Lin Xu cleared his mind, listening intently to Grandpa Gao's explanation.

At that moment, Chen Yan's car slowly pulled up to a parking spot in front of the entrance.

Shen Jiayue, just stepping out of the car, saw Geng Lele, clad in her high school uniform, approaching from a distance.

"Lele, you're skipping class again!" After several days of interaction, Shen Jiayue found this genius girl quite interesting. Online, she was a master of sharp retorts, a lively user in Lin Ji's Food discussions who had left almost everyone speechless. Sometimes she even acted like a seasoned pro, initiating risqué topics. But in reality, she was a well-behaved and quiet young girl.

"Not true! How can you make such baseless accusations? I'm just out to refresh my mind after long hours of study. My homeroom teacher gave me special permission." Geng Lele flicked her signature mushroom-cut hair. "Boss lady, is the Crispy Meat ready?"

"How did you know we were frying Fried Crispy Pork this afternoon?"

"Yue Liyue notified me. He also told Uncle Shen from the wet market and Bald Qiang, who rants about the Xierqi takeout every day. It's a pity the Giant Panda isn't here to enjoy the Crispy Meat..."

The three of them pushed open the door and entered. Geng Lele was about to scan the QR code to order when Shen Jiayue stopped her. "I came into a small fortune yesterday, so this meal is on me today!"

"Thanks, Boss Lady! You're so generous! But... I can't eat your food for free." Geng Lele leaned closer to Shen Jiayue and whispered, "I can share a little secret with you..."