

## Culinary 541

Chapter 541: Emotional Master! Low-Fat Delicacy Rich in Collagen - Cold Tossed White Fungus! \_2

Chen Yan opened her phone and tapped on WeChat. She was surprised to find dozens of unread messages in the "Tiantian's Singles Liberation Squad."

Huh? Was there some new development?

Too engrossed to even think about her crocodile claw, Chen Yan hurriedly tapped on the group chat to browse the messages. Only then did she realize that Dou Wenjing and Zeng Xiaoqi, two new members, had joined the group.

By now, the two had already understood Song Tiantian's plan to make a move on Wei Qian and were busy offering advice.

Chen Yan narrowed her eyes.

What's going on here? Could it be that in the time it took to eat an All Crocodile Banquet, my title as chief strategist of the Singles Liberation Squad, which I've held for days, is about to be snatched by these two newcomers?

After some thought, she typed a message in the group:

"Newcomers? Voice reveal, photo reveal, and measurements reveal, quick! Otherwise, I'll strip you all naked!"

After sending the message, she posted an emoticon of cracking a small leather whip.

Right, first, I'll disrupt the rhythm of these two, and then I'll retake control of Tiantian's mission to pounce on Wei the Chubby. My head can roll, my blood can spill, but the title of chief strategist must not be lost!

Upon seeing Chen Yan's message, Zeng Xiaoqi, who was sitting cross-legged on the sofa in her rented apartment eating dried grilled fish, immediately asked, "Does crocodile taste good?"

When Lin Xu left the TV station, he had said he was going to prepare an All Fish Banquet. But not long after, the proprietress announced in the group that it would be an All Crocodile Banquet, which left the gorgeous Zeng Xiaoqi somewhat confused.

Since when were crocodiles classified as fish?

"Delicious, super delicious! Half of today's crocodile is left over. My brother-in-law plans to take it back for the staff to try. If you want some, just come to the store tomorrow."

Chen Yan hadn't expected Zeng Xiaoqi to be so cooperative, steering the topic directly to crocodile meat.

This perfectly aligned with her plan to divert the conversation and maintain her chief strategist title.

So, she continued the chat about crocodile:

"Director Dou, you should come to the store tomorrow too. Crocodile meat is rich in collagen, good for the skin, and incredibly tender with superb moisturizing effects."

Chen Yan had no idea if it actually moisturized or not. But she knew girls cared about such things, so she just winged it.

Fortunately, none of the smart alecks in the group knew anything about this. Upon hearing how good crocodile meat was, they all declared they would come to the store the next day for a free meal, automatically diverting the conversation to skincare.

Hmph, I truly am an exceptionally clever and quick-witted girl... Chen Yan was feeling proud when Shen Baobao curiously asked, "Yan Bao, who are you chatting with? Don't tell me you've got yourself a boyfriend?"

Leave it to my cousin to always hit a sore spot with a single sentence... Chen Yan replied, "A boyfriend? As if! It's someone else looking for a partner, and I'm just helping out with ideas."

Giving advice?

Shen Baobao's interest was piqued. "You should've come to me for this! I've got some experience in romantic matters."

Chen Yan shot her a look. "Tch, what experience do you have? Do you know the golden rules of date outfits? Do you know the four major precautions for a first date with someone of the opposite sex? Do you know the five dos and five don'ts when interacting with the opposite sex? Do you know the six behaviors that will make someone of the opposite sex never forget you?"

Shen Jiayue was dumbfounded. What on earth was all this nonsense? She recalled occasionally seeing such titles while scrolling through short video apps. Could Yan Bao, that old trickster, actually believe that video content was a real strategy for finding a partner?

She rested her head on Lin Xu's shoulder and dealt a heavy blow to Chen Yan. "But I have a fiancé!"

Chen Yan was speechless.

Aargh! I knew this brat Yueyue would bring up my brother-in-law! Why did I give her the opening again? Now I finally understand what it feels like to have your lungs pierced. Good grief! I'm never discussing this kind of topic with my cousin again! If I do, may her cup size go down by one!

While Chen Yan was internally grieving, Shen Guofu was just getting into the swing of things with his drink.

He held up his wine glass, turned to his in-law Lin Hongqi, and said, "Don't leave straight after dinner. Let's go downstairs and play a couple more rounds. It's been too long since I've had such a worthy opponent—we need to indulge!"

Hmm, after dinner, his wife will definitely make him exercise. So, if he keeps his in-law here, he can dodge that bullet! Old Shen is truly a clever BOY!

No sooner had he finished speaking than Han Shuzhen also suggested, "Stay back. I happen to have a set of seaweed mud face masks I haven't used yet. After dinner, Meijuan and I can give them a try to see if they're really as amazing as they're hyped up to be..."

After the meal, the satiated relatives lingered over tea for a while, then one by one, they left.

Grandma Han and Grandpa Han had clinic appointments the next day and also left in their son's car.

As for Chen Yan, she had slipped away as soon as she put down her chopsticks. Tonight was Tiantian's first big move, and as the chief strategist, she had to keep a close watch on the situation.

"I have no idea what Yan Bao is up to, always so secretive."

While Shen Guofu dragged Lin Hongqi down to the basement to play billiards, Lin Xu and Shen Baobao went up to the second floor to take a shower at home. That way, once they returned to Yingchun Street, they could lie in bed and comfortably binge-watch anime.

As they entered the house, Shen Jiayue mumbled to herself, curious about Chen Yan's behavior.

Lin Xu, however, remained calm. "It seems she's trying to matchmake someone we know, maybe even someone from the shop, otherwise she wouldn't be so secretive. Just wait, we'll probably find out who it is soon enough."

Things like this should become clear soon enough. They just needed to see which two people got together, or which two had a complete falling out. Then they'd know exactly who his sister-in-law was trying to set up.

「However, days went by.」

Life at the store remained as calm as ever.

Except for the rumor that Wei Qian and Song Tiantian had recently started leaving work each riding a shared bike at night, everyone else was the same as before.

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However, it was perfectly normal for Wei Qian to ride a shared bicycle. He had been wanting to lose weight since last month, and with the recent cooler evenings, it was a great time to exercise.

In the past few days, Lin Xu let his employees and Zeng Xiaoqi, who came over for a meal, taste some crocodile meat and took his parents to Xiehe for a full-body checkup.

During the checkup, Shen Guofu also rushed over to join in. It turned out he had moderate fatty liver, so Han Shuzhen sternly warned him to drink less and eat less meat.

Ah, if I had known, I wouldn't have gone for the checkup. No issues if you don't check, but now I have to quit drinking and eating meat. This is really distressing.

Today was the day Lin Hongqi and Chen Meijuan were heading back.

Shen Guofu and his wife came over early in the morning to see them off and took the opportunity to grab some breakfast as well.

Old Shen, complaining about the decline in his quality of life, quickly popped a slice of pig ear into his mouth. Seeing his wife glaring fiercely at him, he quickly added,

"Last one, last one, after this bite, I will never eat it again!"

Han Shuzhen said helplessly,

"You've eaten the whole plate already. It's a good thing you didn't let Xiao Xu prepare pork head meat, or your efforts these past few days would have been in vain."

She really liked those pressed pork heads with skin on both sides. But for her husband's health, she had to endure not eating them.

Shen Guofu took a sip of the millet and pumpkin porridge Chen Meijuan had simmered and said,

"Brother Lin, you two be careful on the road. If nothing special comes up over the National Day holiday, Shuzhen and I will take the high-speed train to stay at a scenic spot for a few days."

We'll stroll around the scenic area and enjoy some fresh air. And I'll buy an extra-large copper lock to outdo the one our daughter hung. Lately, the lock our daughter hung has become popular online; many people visiting the scenic area are curious to take photos with it. Some have even calculated the calories burned carrying that lock to the mountaintop. Old Shen can't miss out on such excitement!

Shen Baobao, holding a slice of steamed bread, dipped it into the watermelon bean sauce and asked while eating,

"What? Going on a honeymoon?"

Shen Guofu nodded. "When I first married your mom, we were dirt poor. We've been busy making money all these years and never really relaxed. It's time to make up for that with a honeymoon."

"Then I wish you a long and happy life together. By the way, should I bring a gift or something?"

Han Shuzhen gently kicked her daughter under the table. Silly girl, always so disrespectful.

"Meijuan, you two drive slowly on the way, and remember to stop and rest at service areas to avoid driving fatigue."

When Lin Hongqi and Chen Meijuan arrived, they brought a car full of various local specialties.

They thought they would leave lighter, but Shen Guofu and Han Shuzhen said they hadn't had a meal with their relatives in Yinzhou yet. So, taking advantage of the Mid-Autumn Festival, they bought a small carload of mooncakes and other gifts.

They not only packed the trunk tightly but also piled many items on the back seat, leaving little room for Lin Hongqi and Chen Meijuan's luggage.

Lin Hongqi kept saying it was too much.

But Shen Guofu felt it was necessary. During the few days their daughter was there, the relatives in Yinzhou had nearly spoiled her rotten. Now, with the Mid-Autumn Festival approaching, it was only right to buy some gifts to express their gratitude.

After breakfast, everyone went downstairs to see Lin Hongqi and Chen Meijuan off.

"Son, take good care of Yueyue in Beijing. If you encounter any problems you can't solve, don't bear them alone. Remember to consult your parents-in-law."

Downstairs, Chen Meijuan pulled Lin Xu aside and whispered her instructions.

Lin Xu nodded and said, "I understand, Mom. You two take care of yourselves in the scenic area as well. The temperature fluctuates a lot between day and night now, so keep warm. And make sure Dad drinks less. He shouldn't get complacent just because he doesn't have fatty liver."

"Don't worry, child, we know."

Before long, Chen Meijuan and Lin Hongqi got into the car.

Shen Guofu said, "We won't keep you any longer. The earlier you leave, the sooner you'll get home. Once you get to the North Fourth Ring, just follow the GPS onto the Beijing-Hong Kong-Macau Expressway. Don't take any wrong turns. There are many forks near the West Fifth Ring, so be careful not to get it wrong."

"Don't worry, we won't."

Lin Hongqi waved at everyone, then started the car and slowly left the complex.

Watching the car drive away, Shen Baobao leaned against Lin Xu, her voice slightly choked with emotion, and said, "Can we go back to visit Mom and Dad when we have time?"

"Sure!"

Shen Guofu and Han Shuzhen also felt a bit melancholic. These past few days, the two families had gotten along very well. Han Shuzhen and Chen Meijuan were like sisters, and Shen Guofu and Lin Hongqi had become increasingly like brothers.

A little while after the car had departed, Shen Guofu sighed. Seeing his wife and daughter still looking sad, he said, "Alright, alright, we're going there during the National Day holiday. No need to feel sad."

Han Shuzhen nodded and then added, "You ate so much sliced pig ear this morning. Don't forget to walk on the treadmill in the office to get some exercise. How about some white fungus soup tonight?"

"Again?"

Since the arrival of autumn, the air in Beijing had become visibly drier.

This season, it was important to eat more gelatinous foods like white fungus and tree fungus, which moisturize the lungs and also prevent skin from cracking.

Shen Guofu muttered, "Can't I have something else? I'm really tired of white fungus soup and white fungus porridge every day."

"Eating white fungus is good for your health this season," Han Shuzhen coaxed him earnestly.

However, Old Shen still looked miserable. "Even if it's good, you can't eat it every day! Besides, it's always the same flavor. If I keep eating this, I'm going to turn into a white fungus myself!"

This muttering brought Lin Xu back to his senses. He composed himself and said to his parents-in-law, "White fungus isn't just for soup. It can also be served cold, or made spicy and sour. It's a good side dish with drinks... well, perhaps not with drinks. My dad can't drink now. But it goes very well with porridge."

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Cold dish? Sour and spicy flavor?

Shen Guofu was somewhat surprised. If White fungus could be prepared this way, I could eat it every day without getting tired of it.

It was only just past seven in the morning. Lin Xu thought for a moment and said, "How about this? I'll go to the restaurant now and prepare some for you to try. If it tastes good, I'll go to your home this afternoon to teach Aunt Liu how to make it, so you can eat it every day if you like."

"That's great, Lin Xu! Let's go, let's go to the restaurant right now."

Shen Guofu led the way to the restaurant, followed by Han Shuzhen and a dispirited Shen Jiayue.

Lin Xu turned to look in the direction his parents had gone and sighed softly. I must strive to earn money and settle down in Beijing as soon as possible to bring my parents over. I really don't want to experience such farewells again.

Back at the restaurant, the morning shift staff were having their breakfast.

Today, they were having corn Grain Porridge with some sweet potato added, which smelled sweet and appetizing. The main dish consisted of meat buns and pancakes, accompanied by pickled vegetables and stir-fried Potato Strips. Everyone seemed to be enjoying their meal.

Lin Xu glanced at everyone's food and said with a smile, "Let me add a cold side dish for you."

With that, he went to the kitchen, took a few pieces of White fungus, and placed them in a basin. He poured in some warm water, added two handfuls of dry starch, stirred it well, and then began to soak the White fungus to rehydrate it.

During the drying process of White fungus, dust inevitably gets in. To clean the White fungus more thoroughly, one could add some dry starch during soaking, utilizing the starch's absorbency to draw out the dust.

When soaking White fungus, it's best to use cold water, as the rehydrated florets are larger and have a better texture. However, since cold water took too long, Lin Xu chose warm water to save on soaking time.

While the White fungus soaked, Lin Xu prepared a small bowl. He added a few rings of chopped millet peppers, two to three spoonfuls of dried chili powder, a spoonful of White Sesame, and half a ladleful of minced garlic. Then, he poured hot Seasoning Oil over them with a SIZZLE to release their aroma.

Next, he added two small spoonfuls of Light Soy Sauce, four small spoonfuls of fragrant vinegar, and one small spoonful of oyster sauce to the bowl. Finally, he mixed in salt, Five-Spice Powder, Sesame Oil, and a tiny pinch of Flavoring. After mixing everything evenly, a simple all-purpose cold dressing was ready.

This dressing could be used for various cold dishes with ingredients like black fungus, dried bean curd sticks, rice vermicelli, Rice Noodles, tofu skins, kelp strips, and seaweed strips.

Ten minutes later, the White fungus had visibly swelled to several times its original size.

Lin Xu washed the White fungus in the starch water several times, then removed it and rinsed it twice with fresh water to thoroughly wash the starch off. After draining, he tore the White fungus into small pieces by hand. While tearing, he discarded the tough base of the White fungus, as this part was dry and hard, with a poor texture, making it unsuitable for the dish.

After tearing all the White fungus, he boiled a pot of water to blanch the White fungus until cooked, a necessary step for a cold dish. To improve the appearance of the cold White fungus dish, Lin Xu also cut some carrot strips. He added them to the torn White fungus to be blanched together, which would give the dish a richer texture and better flavor.

Soon, the water in the pot boiled.

He added the White fungus and cooked it for one minute, then immediately removed it and plunged it into cold water to cool. Blanching and then cooling it would make the White fungus's texture crisper and more tender, enhancing its taste.

After cooling, he took out the White fungus and carrot strips, squeezed out as much water as possible, and placed them in a small basin. He then added a handful of roasted peanuts and finally poured in the prepared cold dressing.

He put on disposable gloves and tossed the White fungus and dressing together until evenly mixed. The low-fat, appetizing cold White fungus dish was ready.

After he brought it out, the tangy and spicy aroma made Shen Guofu's eyes light up. "Wow, this tangy and spicy aroma! It's making my mouth water just smelling it. Shuzhen, hurry and try it. If it tastes good, this means we'll have another low-fat side dish for our restaurant!"

As the couple tasted it with chopsticks, at a nearby table, Wei Qian was looking confused and consulting Zhu Yong beside him, "Old Zhu, Tiantian keeps asking me to go cycling with her lately, and she pedals so fast, she often leaves me an entire intersection behind... Do you think she's mocking me?"

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Zhu Yong glanced at Wei Qian, who looked utterly clueless, and then said, "Song Tiantian graduated from a sports school, and her physical ability is good. It's normal for her to surpass you, but I don't think she would mock you. After all, surpassing you isn't much of an achievement; there's really no need."

Zhu Yong might have been better off not saying anything. These words of comfort only intensified Wei Qian's feelings of defeat. "Damn it, a big burly man like me being left behind by a girl—it's so embarrassing! I'm continuing tonight; I don't believe I can't catch up with her!"

"Keep it up! But be careful, okay? Watch out when crossing the street."

"Don't worry, I've been paying attention."

At the dining table by the kitchen door, Shen Guofu tried a bite of the cold white fungus Lin Xu had made and was instantly captivated by its sour and spicy taste. "This is such a surprise—I didn't expect cold white fungus to taste so good."

"Exactly, it's crispy and refreshing. Lin Xu, come over this evening and teach Aunt Liu. It'll become a regular dish at home."

White fungus is rich in collagen and low in calories, so eating more of it is good for the body. Seeing how much his in-laws liked it, Lin Xu nodded and said, "Alright, I'll drive over this evening to show Aunt Liu how to make it. I'll also broaden her repertoire, teaching her the techniques for this kind of cold dish so she can make similar ones whenever she wants."

Shen Guofu's eyes lit up at the thought. Lately, a low-sodium, low-fat diet had been depressing him. But now, with the support of his son-in-law's culinary skills, although he still couldn't eat meat recklessly, he could at least find some joy in his meals.

To encourage her husband, Han Shuzhen said, "Since we've decided to go to Yinzhou for National Day, you need to really work on your fitness this coming month. Don't end up being unable to reach the top of the mountain and making us wait for you halfway."

Hearing this, Shen Guofu, who had been psyched about locking a lock at the mountain's peak, immediately said, "Don't worry, I'll definitely leave you all far behind. It's not like I haven't climbed mountains before; Longqi Mountain is just a piece of cake for me."

Right, to avoid my wife's teasing, I'll do an extra set of aerobics tonight, aiming to increase my lower-body strength before the climb.

After tasting a few more bites of the deliciously sour and spicy cold white fungus, Shen Guofu drove off to work with Han Shuzhen. He needed to drop Director Han at the People's Hospital first, then head to the office. Today, General Yan from the Huasheng Group, who had flown in from Shanghai, was scheduled to discuss specific business details. To show respect, Shen Guofu had even shaved that morning, making him look very spirited.

「In the store」

After seeing off his in-laws, Shen Baobao also decided to drive to work.

"What do you want for lunch? I'll prepare it in advance."

"Let me think about that..."

Influenced by her parents, Shen Baobao had also been trying to lose weight. Although she wasn't very successful, despite having Lin Xu—the Demon King of dieting—by her side, she had at least significantly reduced her intake of high-calorie foods compared to before.

Hmm, even my chubby dad has started dieting, so I can't fall behind!

To motivate herself, she had been posting daily weight records in her group chat. This directly stimulated Chen Yan, Shu Yun, Dou Wenjing, and Zeng Xiaoqi, among others. Although they said nothing overtly, they were all secretly competing, fearing they would become the one with the highest body fat percentage in the group.

"Make me a vegetable salad—no dressing needed, just drizzle some spicy soy sauce on it—and grill a few slices of whole wheat toast. That'll be enough!"

HUMPH, Yan Bao and the others have been pushing hard recently, but I, Shen Jiayue, won't go down without a fight. It's time to bring back the determination I had during my college days. Let Yan Bao and the others see that in this regard, I, Shen Jiayue, am still the undisputed No.1!

Lin Xu looked at his dear Baobao with some concern and asked, "Is it okay to diet this way?"

"It's fine. Didn't I always do this when I was in college? Back then, to make a perfect impression on you, I always gritted my teeth and persevered."

Since Shen Baobao had made her choice, all Lin Xu could do was support her fully.

I just hope she doesn't sneak any of Dundun's snacks tonight... he thought, watching her drive off. Then, he strolled into Uncle Yu's supermarket.

"Uncle, do you have spicy soy sauce here?"

This so-called spicy soy sauce wasn't an oil infused with chili peppers. Instead, it was a condiment from the Great Ying Empire. It looked similar to soy sauce, being dark brown, and had a sweet, sour, and slightly spicy taste.

It wasn't often used in the Northern regions, but it was quite common in the South. Particularly in Shanghai's fried pork chop and borscht, the taste would be much blander without spicy soy sauce. Fried pork chop dipped in spicy soy sauce has been a beloved food for many in Shanghai since their earliest memories, its taste and texture deeply ingrained in their very being.

Aside from Shanghai, spicy soy sauce is often used in Cantonese cuisine, which is known for its constant evolution and great potential. The classic Cantonese dim sum dish, Shanzhu beef balls, can't do without this Western-style condiment.

"Spicy soy sauce? I don't actually have that, but if you want, I can order some in the future."

This time, even Uncle Yu with his all-purpose supermarket was out of luck. Shen Baobao was waiting to eat at noon, and Lin Xu couldn't wait for the next shipment. He informed Uncle Yu, then immediately returned to the store and had Che Zai go buy some.

Just because Uncle Yu's supermarket didn't have it didn't mean that import-export supermarkets and Old Huang's place didn't. That's the advantage of living in a big city: as long as you're willing to pay, getting your hands on an uncommon condiment is still very convenient.

An hour later, two bottles of imported spicy soy sauce were placed in front of Lin Xu.

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"Boss, is this really meant to be eaten with Fried Pork Chop? Eating a pork chop coated in breadcrumbs with Soy Sauce feels odd..."

Che Zai had never had spicy soy sauce before and thought it was just a type of regular Soy Sauce.

Lin Xu said, "It's a translation issue. To be precise, it should be called a sweet and sour spicy seasoning sauce. Honestly, I've had Japanese pork cutlet rice a few times, but I've never tried the Fried Pork Chop dipped in spicy soy sauce in Shanghai."

After some thought, he felt that a chef should always seek knowledge and truth, so he instructed, "Why don't we just fry some pork chops and try them with this spicy soy sauce?"

Mere guessing wouldn't allow him to grasp the sensation, so he decided to get hands-on. After all, pork chops weren't exactly a rare ingredient.

Upon hearing this, Che Zai immediately responded, "Alright, Boss, I'll start preparing now!"

The raw ingredients for Fried Pork Chop are simple: just raw pork chops, seasoning, and the 'pork chop trio': flour, egg wash, and breadcrumbs. With these, you can make delicious, crispy Fried Pork Chops.

However, the specific seasonings and frying techniques vary from place to place. Even in Shanghai, each restaurant's method and ingredients for Fried Pork Chop are secret recipes, not publicly disclosed.

For others, trying to fry pork chops hastily would be difficult. But Lin Xu had no such trouble. He directly exchanged points for the Superior Cooking Technique for Fried Pork Chop.

"He spent 500,000 points and acquired the Superior Fried Pork Chop Cooking Technique. This triggered a Skill Task: The host must attract more than six customers with the Fried Pork Chop within five hours and successfully change their dining plans. Otherwise, the Superior Fried Pork Chop Technique will be downgraded to an Excellent Level Technique."

Well, this is a Skill Task to change dining plans. This task should be easy to complete. During peak meal times, if I just carry a plate around downstairs, I should be able to attract quite a few customers who want to try it. Once they've had the Fried Pork Chop, they'll definitely change their minds about eating other dishes. Then the task will be as good as done. Simple!

Lin Xu, like a master planner, quickly had the task figured out.

Before long, the meat for the Fried Pork Chop was delivered.

The so-called pork chop is actually the loin meat attached to the Pork ribs. If it includes the ribs, it becomes a tomahawk pork chop. Once prepared and posted online, it would undoubtedly attract a wave of likes. But to get a tomahawk pork chop, you'd have to notify Old Hu, the butcher, ahead of time; otherwise, it would be pre-sliced. For instance, the loin delivered today had the ribs and spinal bones already removed.

After taking out the meat, the first step was to trim off the surface fascia. Then, cutting crosswise at about three centimeters thick, he sliced the loin into thick pieces.

"Boss, can something this thick be fried all the way through? The pork chops I see on TV are all very thin."

Lin Xu sliced as he explained, "This meat can't be fried directly. It has to be flattened first, and the tendons broken. That way, the Fried Pork Chop will come out fluffy and delicious—the more you eat, the better it tastes."

Once all the loin cuts were ready, Lin Xu swiftly punctured the meat slices with the tip of his knife. The purpose of this was to cut the inner fascia, enhancing the meat's fluffiness. If he had a tendon-breaking tool, he would simply use it to pound the meat a few times. Unfortunately, since the restaurant lacked Western kitchen tools, Lin Xu chose to use the tip of his knife.

After puncturing the meat, he switched to a meat mallet to flatten it. The reason why fried chicken, pork, and beef steaks you buy outside often look bigger than your face is mostly because they've been pounded out. Using a meat mallet fluffs up the meat to the maximum extent. This not only improves the pork chop's texture but also ensures it cooks through evenly during frying, preventing the outside from burning while the inside remains raw.

Flattening pork chops isn't done haphazardly; it requires Technique. You have to pound from the center outward, ensuring each strike of the mallet overlaps slightly with the previous one to maximize the meat's fluffiness. After pounding, an originally three-centimeter-thick pork chop would be reduced to

half its thickness, while its surface area could increase two to three times. This is because the meat has been loosened, so the area of the meat slice increases substantially.

"Damn, no wonder the chicken steaks on the street are so big! So they're all pounded out," Che Zai remarked.

Wei Qian compared the flattened pork chop with an untouched one and found not only had the size increased, but the shape had also changed. Looking curiously at Lin Xu, he asked, "If you pound it in a specific way, can you make a heart-shaped pork chop?"

Lin Xu paused at this comment, thinking how Wei Qian always had such a unique perspective. Yet, after some thought, he realized these pork chops could indeed be pounded into heart shapes, since the meat is malleable.

He said with a laugh, "Too bad my Yueyue is on a diet recently, or I'd really want to research the pounding Technique... What made you think of that, Wei Qian? Planning to fry a heart-shaped Fried Pork Chop for your sweetheart?"

Wei Qian, holding the tea prepared by the kitchen staff, replied, "Sweetheart my ass. Without a car or house in Beijing, love is just a luxury. As for my hometown, ever since I stopped slaughtering pigs, the girl my dad matched me with when I was a kid doesn't acknowledge that relationship anymore. Around the Spring Festival, I heard she got engaged to a guy who sells animal feed..."

Curious, Lin Xu asked, "She didn't go for a pig butcher but chose someone who sells animal feed? What business is her family in?"

"They run a pig farm!"

Tsk, if the downstream connection didn't work out, they went for the upstream one. They seem quite desperate to form a powerful alliance.

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After tenderizing all the pork chops, it was time to marinate them.

There were several marination methods for pork chops: one was to fry and marinate them on the spot, another was to marinate them for an hour beforehand, and then there was the overnight marination method. In terms of flavor, naturally, the overnight marination tasted better. The marinade for the pork chops was made with ingredients such as Scallion and Ginger, Celery, and Carrots, which kept the pork fresh and fragrant while also providing a perfect texture and rich meat juices. But that took too long; there was no way to complete today's task in time.

On-the-spot frying and marinating basically meant seasoning the meat with coarse sea salt and pepper on both sides, then dipping it in flour, dipping it in beaten Egg, and finally coating it with breadcrumbs. This method was generally used by Western restaurants. The advantage was quickness—cook it, fry it, eat it on the spot; the downside was that the pork chop wasn't very flavorful.

It was almost ten o'clock now, and it was a bit early to be frying pork chops. The task required changing the customers' dining plans, and they had to wait at least until business hours to start frying. So Lin Xu had no choice but to opt for the second method.

He put the pork rib chops into a basin and added Rice Wine, Light Soy Sauce, and ginger juice in turn. Then he sprinkled in salt, sugar, and starch, and based on the amount of pork chops, cracked in six Eggs. After everything was added, he mixed the seasonings well. Then, he vigorously kneaded and squeezed the chops to allow the marinade to penetrate as deeply as possible into the pork. Once all the pork chops were rubbed and coated with the slightly thick Egg marinade, he sealed them with plastic wrap and placed them in the refrigerator to marinate and chill.

「Elsewhere, at the Fung Tong Building.」

Shen Guofu finally awaited the arrival of President Yan and her entourage. Just as he was about to lead this imposing woman in her forties to the conference room, President Yan suddenly asked, "President Shen, that grandson of yours named Dundun..."

Shen Guofu was a bit puzzled. They were asking about Dundun's whereabouts as soon as they arrived—were they here to talk business or to pet a cat?

He said with a smile, "Dundun is at work, serving as the welcoming cat at the front desk of my son-in-law's restaurant. I apologize, Dundun wasn't able to greet you, President Yan."

Hearing that the cat was working, Yan Lin's face instantly showed a look of delight. Last time, it was this little fellow's deliberate pleasing that made her reconsider the possibility of cooperating with Shen Group. She had thought it was just an untroubled little cat, but unexpectedly, it even had a job.

Nowadays, do even cats have to earn their own living expenses?

"Is your son-in-law's restaurant far from here? I mean no offense, I just want to hug that little guy, Dundun. Ever since I left last time, I've been thinking about its chubby figure..."

It was confirmed—President Yan had come specifically to pet the cat.

Shen Guofu glanced at his watch and then said, "The business lunch is arranged at my son-in-law's restaurant. Let's have Dundun keep you good company then. What do you think, President Yan?"

"Yes, yes, thank you, President Shen! I really want to see what that little guy is up to now."

What's it up to? It was living a life of total luxury. Every day, if not being held by one beauty, then it was being cuddled by another. Not only did it get hugs, but it also needed its chin scratched and its body massaged. If the massage was too short, it would ask for overtime. The sweet little thing had suddenly turned into a Cadillac owner.

No time to delay. To pet Dundun sooner, the discussion meeting originally planned for ten-thirty was brought forward to now. Yan Lin and her team didn't even take a moment to drink water and hurriedly entered the conference room to start discussing the cooperation details with the representatives from Shen Group.

「Meanwhile, Dou Wenjing was busy with work.」

She noticed that a document needed the boss's signature, and it was also time to review the accounts for the procurement department. She checked the time, picked up the document, slung her bag over her shoulder, and left the company, planning to check if there were any new tasty dishes at the restaurant in the last few days. Although she had been forced to start cutting fat recently, she still couldn't resist trying good dishes when they appeared.

She took the elevator to the ground floor. Just as she stepped out of the elevator, she saw Chen Yan coming out from another elevator.

"Where are you off to, President Chen?"

"To the restaurant to see what to have for lunch today. What about you, President Dou?"

"I'm also heading to the restaurant. The location for the third branch of Ziqiang Shengjian has been decided; I need the boss to sign off on it."

Hearing they were headed the same way, Chen Yan, who hadn't driven, simply got into Dou Wenjing's BMW 5 Series.

Together, they arrived at Lin Ji's Food on Yingchun Street. As soon as they walked through the door, they saw Shu Yun cradling Dundun and teasing the big-headed fish in the aquarium.

"What's for lunch today, Director Shu?"

"Master Ma is making Stew. At the request of our female employees, he's added a whole pack of Glutinous Rice. If you two like Glutinous Rice, you should get some extra."

Glutinous Rice? What girl doesn't love that kind of delicacy? Especially when it's cooked in spicy hot pot, it's spicy, numbing, soft, and chewy—it tastes even better than meat. But now is the time to cut fat, and it's the boss's wife leading the campaign. Everyone is following suit. Who dares to eat that kind of calorie bomb? Especially when it's stewed in meat broth. Just eating two pieces would probably require two rounds of jumping jacks to burn off the calories.

As soon as she heard Stew, Chen Yan subconsciously swallowed, then immediately added, "Forget it, I'd better eat some low-fat cold dishes later, so I don't give Yueyue a chance to tease me about it."

Dou Wenjing and Shu Yun were about to say they'd eat the same dish when they smelled a rich, savory aroma wafting from the direction of the staircase. Looking up, they saw an employee passing by with a large piece of golden, crispy Fried Pork Chop.

"What's that?"

"The boss made Fried Pork Chop and asked me to bring some to Master Xu, to let the brothers in the marination department have a taste... You want some? If you want to eat, you can go upstairs. The marinated pork chop, drenched in Egg and coated with breadcrumbs before being deep-fried... TSK TSK!"

He didn't continue, but the three women gazing upward couldn't help but swallow. At that moment, they felt like the proverbial kid next door in the joke.

"Ahem, I'll go upstairs to see what cold dishes are available today." "Little Chen" picked up the hem of her skirt and led the way upstairs.

"I need to get the boss's signature; this matter can't be delayed." "Little Dou" followed suit, with a demeanor that said, I'm purely here for business, not because I'm craving anything.

Shu Yun cheerfully placed Dundun on the service counter, "Sweetie, play here by yourself for a bit, okay? Your godmother is going upstairs to taste some pork chop."

If you feel like eating, then eat. It's high in calories, but if no one mentions it in the group, then it's zero calories!

When she arrived upstairs, she saw Chen Yan and Dou Wenjing already eating. The crisp CRUNCHING sound echoed, like a tiny paw scratching at the bottom of her heart...

As Chen Yan munched, she extended her oily hand and said, "Don't forget to dip it in spicy Soy Sauce; it's the essence of Fried Pork Chop. Oh my, Lin Ji could go bankrupt, and my brother-in-law could set up a stall outside a school, and we'd still not go hungry. His culinary skills are amazing!"

Dou Wenjing gave her a helpless look. "Can't you say something more auspicious, President Chen? Shu Yun and I rely on the boss to pay our salaries. What will we do if he goes bankrupt? Set up a stall outside a school too?"

"Follow me! As long as you two take care of me like you do Dundun, I'll support you both for life!" Chen Yan chuckled like a mischievous girl, then straightened up and said seriously, "Let's just eat one piece each and no more. Let's not let Yueyue find out we had pork chop, or she'll definitely make fun of us."

"Mm-hmm, don't worry, President Chen, one piece is enough for me."

"If no one says anything, it's as if no one ate."

As the three whispered among themselves, a white BMW X1 slowly pulled into a parking spot at the storefront.

Healthy eating feels so great; I've been feeling energetic all morning... Huh, is that Wenjing's car? What's she doing here at the shop at this hour? She's not here to scrounge food again, is she?

The thought of her low-fat meal made Shen Baobao suddenly worried. Fearing that Dou Wenjing and Shu Yun might secretly devour her portion, she hurried into the shop and then ran up the stairs, her footsteps echoing THUMP, THUMP, THUMP.

She emerged from the stairwell to find Chen Yan and the others munching on Fried Pork Chops.

The crispy CRUNCHING sound, the rich aroma, the golden color of the breadcrumb coating...

BOO HOO! Which girl on a diet could resist such temptations? Forget about cutting fat—I want to eat the delicious, crispy Fried Pork Chop!

Chapter 547: The Fat-Loss Quartet Turns Into the Weight-Gain Quartet! Can You Make Grilled Pork Chops?

"You! Guys! Actually! Ate! Behind! My! Back!"

Even though she'd decided to eat the Fried Pork Chops, she still needed a legitimate reason to do so, otherwise her words in front of Xu Bao this morning would be embarrassingly contradictory.

And finding a legitimate reason wasn't difficult.

She could just pin it on Yan Bao and the other two.

They'd agreed to reduce fat and slim down together, yet they'd secretly indulged in delicious crispy Fried Pork Chops behind her back, deeply wounding her tender heart.

Hmph!

Without two large freshly fried pork chops, I won't forgive you!

Shen Baobao marched over to the scapegoats still eating pork chops, like a vengeance queen, yet her eyes kept darting towards the kitchen.

Why can't I hear the sizzling sound of frying?

Could it be that they're not frying anymore?

Chen Yan, who was happily eating, looked up to see her cousin approaching and almost choked on the pork chop in her mouth,

"Yueyue, come... come try this. Brother-in-law's cooking is really amazing. We didn't want to eat at first, but he insisted and asked us to give our feedback."

Shen Jiayue: ????????

I was just about to throw the blame onto you, and now you've shifted it onto Xu Bao. Isn't this move a bit shameless?

Believe it or not, on your birthday, I'll ask Xu Bao to steam a giant Longevity Peach for you?

Dou Wenjing and Shu Yun didn't have the thick skin of Chen Yan and were feeling somewhat guilty. But at this time, it was important to drag the boss into the water quickly.

As long as Zeng Xiaoqi doesn't know, then today's meal of Fried Pork Chops doesn't exist, and it's zero calories.

Holding her own piece of pork chop, Chen Yan dipped the unbitten side into the dark brown Soy Sauce on the plate and scurried to her cousin,

"Hurry up and take a bite before it cools down. The crispy fried pork chop paired with the sweet and slightly spicy Soy Sauce, my heavens, it's more touching than Liang Shanbo meeting Zhu Yingtai..."

Shen Baobao had initially wanted to keep pretending to be angry. That way, she could eat more later on.

But as Chen Yan approached, the aroma of the Fried Pork Chop wafted straight to her nose and tantalized her.

She bit into it subconsciously.

CRUNCH.

Although she knew before biting that the egg-soaked breadcrumbs would taste very crunchy, when she actually tasted it, she couldn't help but feel a stir in her heart.

The crispy texture, the aromatic flavor, and the tangy, sweet, and slightly spicy Soy Sauce on the outside blended perfectly together.

And the moist, tender pork chop inside elevated this delicious crispiness to a whole new level.

Perfect!

Without waiting to swallow the pork chop in her mouth, Shen Baobao couldn't resist taking another bite. Chen Yan felt a pang watching her,

"There's more in the kitchen, fresh out of the pot will taste even better. Go ask Brother-in-law for some."

BOO HOO HOO, she gobbled up so much in one bite, I didn't even dare to take a big one. Later on, I'll make your husband compensate me with a whole piece!

「In the kitchen.」

Lin Xu, with chopsticks in hand, was slowly enjoying a strip of pork chop dipped in spicy Soy Sauce.

Before eating, like CheZai, he found this method of eating rather odd.

But after tasting it, he realized that the freshly fried pork chop paired with the spicy Soy Sauce was a match made in heaven.

The pork chop, being fried, was somewhat greasy, but the tangy sweetness of the Soy Sauce perfectly counteracted that oiliness.

The underlying spiciness also stimulated the palate, making one unable to resist going for another bite.

While he was enjoying his food, he caught a glimpse of Shen Baobao at the doorway, so he quickly walked over with the plate,

"Baobao, you've tried... you've tried it already, huh?"

He'd intended to let Shen Baobao taste it first, but upon getting closer, he noticed crumbs on her lips. She must have eaten some of Chen Yan's.

"I really didn't want to eat, but they ate behind my back and I was so angry..."

Ms. Shen was still trying hard to justify eating the meat. But when Lin Xu handed her the chopsticks, she began eating eagerly, her rush making her speech unclear.

Lin Xu held the plate for her and said with a smile,

"I understand, I understand. Eat slowly, don't choke. I'll go fry two more pieces. This stuff has to be fried and eaten immediately. Dad is entertaining an important guest here at noon. Should we let him try it?"

"Let him try. Dad can't eat a single piece of meat when Mom is around. He's quite pitiful."

After handing Shen Baobao the plate full of Fried Pork Chops, Lin Xu looked at Chen Yan and the other two with a complicated expression. They insisted on cupping the food in their hands to eat; anyone who didn't know better would think the restaurant had taken in three refugees fleeing a famine.

Between them and the staff in the back kitchen who had eaten the pork chops, it should have been well over six people. Task completed, right?

After all, no one had planned to eat Fried Pork Chops at the start.

However, when Lin Xu checked the task progress, he discovered it was still [0/6].

Huh?

What's going on?

Wasn't it already more than six people?

He read the task requirements again, only to notice the word "customers."

Indeed, employees didn't count as customers. Shen Baobao, being one of the bosses, also didn't qualify as a customer.

But Chen Yan was a legitimate customer who had topped up a million! System, don't just look at our family ties; we've always paid every cent that was due...

He grumbled to himself, but the system remained unresponsive.

It seemed he had to wait until business hours to come up with a new plan.

Luckily, he had prepared a good amount of pork chops that day, so they could definitely satisfy the customers if they wanted some.

Returning to the kitchen, Lin Xu turned on the stove underneath the oil pot.

Chapter 548: The Fat-Loss Quartet Transforms into the Weight-Gain Quartet! Can You Make Grilled Pork Chops? \_2

He promptly brought out the marinated pork chops from the refrigerator, followed by the flour, egg wash, and breadcrumbs.

When the oil was hot enough, he first used a skimmer to remove any breadcrumb residue from the pot. Then, he picked up a piece of the well-marinated pork chop and dipped it in the flour, ensuring both sides were coated.

This flour was not pure flour but a mixture of two-thirds low gluten flour and one-third cornstarch.

The purpose of this mixture was to give the pork chops a crisper texture.

After coating the chops with flour, he picked them up and patted them, shaking off any excess.

A thin layer of flour paste was sufficient. It didn't need to be too thick, as too much would absorb oil during frying, causing the coating to separate from the meat and potentially fall off.

Next, he placed the floured pork chops into the beaten egg mixture, covering their surface with egg wash.

The egg wash not only helped the breadcrumbs adhere but also added a rich egg flavor, making the pork chops even more fragrant and tasty.

Once fully coated with egg wash, he put the pork chops into a small basin filled with breadcrumbs.

In the making of Fried Pork Chops, the role of flour was to lock in the meat's moisture and help more egg wash adhere, while the egg wash ensured the breadcrumbs would stick firmly to the surface of the chops.

As for the breadcrumbs, they provided a much stronger crisp and aromatic sensation than flour.

This three-part combo complemented each other perfectly, suitable not just for Fried Pork Chops, but also for fried chicken fillets, legs, wings, Large Shrimp, and even mushrooms—anything that could be deep-fried.

Holding the breadcrumb-coated pork chop, he shook off the excess crumbs and smoothly placed it into the hot oil.

Right after being dropped in, the pot started bubbling vigorously, and some breadcrumbs scattered due to the heated oil.

It was crucial to skim these loose breadcrumbs out quickly with a skimmer to prevent them from burning and filling the pot with an unpleasant bitterness.

Once the pork chops held their shape, he used tongs to flip them, ensuring even cooking, which made them even tastier.

The Fried Pork Chops were fried until golden on both sides and then removed from the pot.

After draining the oil slightly on a rack, he laid them on the cutting board used for cooked dishes and sliced them into strips with a kitchen knife.

As he cut, the CRUNCH CRUNCH sound was enticing, making it hard to resist pinching off a piece to taste.

Once sliced, he plated them. Just as he reached the kitchen doorway, Lin Xu saw the fat-reducing quartet standing at the entrance, their eyes glued to the dish in his hands.

"Finished eating?"

With such appetites, they could forget about slimming down. Even those looking to gain weight didn't eat like this.

"I was eating just fine until Yan Bao snatched my Fried Pork Chop away. I hardly had a few bites."

"I only managed a few bites, too. Director Dou was too quick—a general manager stealing food from a VIP! Brother-in-law, if you don't deal with this, I'll report it to the consumer association!"

"I didn't get much either. President Chen said she couldn't finish, so I took two pieces, and then Shu Yun snatched several from me."

"I... I had just grabbed some when the boss's wife snatched them away. I hadn't even had a bite."

Lin Xu: "..."

I get it, I get it. All those Fried Pork Chops were devoured by a rift in space-time; it had nothing to do with you guys.

He handed over the dish.

"Carry on eating. If it's not enough, I'll fry some more—there are plenty of Fried Pork Chops."

As the group took the plate and went off to eat, Ma Zhiqiang also finished preparing the Stew.

Cabbage, pork, vermicelli, dried tofu, Glutinous Rice... A large pot of the Stew looked so tempting that Lin Xu felt his mouth water.

Although the Fried Pork Chops were delicious, they didn't quite feel like a proper meal.

To someone who grew up in North China, it was more satisfying to fill a bowl with the Stew and accompany it with a couple of steamed buns.

"The food is ready, and Chef Ji has just finished steaming the buns. Shall we start the meal, Boss?"

Ma Zhiqiang wiped his hands. Ever since the new store opened, he had been the lead sous-chef. Although the pay was good, he felt a sense of distance from the boss. It was like being kicked out of the core group after the company expanded. But Lin Xu ordering the Stew today instantly brought back the feeling of working at Lin Ji's Food.

"Let's eat!"

The kitchen helpers served the Stew in large bowls and brought it outside, along with a big basket of freshly steamed handmade buns and rice.

Guests could freely choose their staple, and there was plenty of the Stew to go around, ensuring everyone got their fill.

Lin Xu fried two more Fried Pork Chops for the fattening quartet. Then, he filled a bowl with a generous portion of the Stew for himself, sneakily adding a few extra pieces of Glutinous Rice that had softened from cooking.

Carrying his bowl, he sat next to Shen Baobao by the booth, picked up a piece of pork belly, put it in his mouth, and then bit into a bun.

Yep, the Stew was really more satisfying.

After finishing the meat, he fished out the Glutinous Rice he had just added to his bowl. He blew on it and was about to enjoy its chewy texture when a cute face leaned in,

"Can Glutinous Rice actually go into the Stew? Is it good?"

Lin Xu smiled and, using a piece of bun to hold it, fed the Glutinous Rice to the eager Baobao,

"Why don't you have this bowl? I'll go get some more."

"Thanks, Xu. You're spoiling me; you'll have to be responsible for this later on!"

"Alright."

Lin Xu passed his bun and chopsticks to Shen Baobao, pushed the bowl in front of her, and stood up to get more of the Stew and another bun.

The fattening trio sitting opposite: "..."

Why did the delicious Fried Pork Chop suddenly give off vibes of a public display of affection?

Chen Yan sighed helplessly.

"You two just have to display your affection right in front of us, don't you?"

Eating Fried Pork Chops and drinking cola, she had been as happy as a fool. But witnessing their recent public display of affection, President Chen suddenly realized she was alone.

Chapter 549: From Fat Loss Quartet to Weight Gain Quartet! Can You Make Grilled Pork Chops? \_3

Happiness vanished in an instant!

Shen Baobao picked up a piece of Glutinous Rice, blew on it, and handed it to Chen Yan, saying, "We're doing this to motivate you all to find your own Prince Charming sooner rather than later."

Chen Yan opened her mouth and ate the Glutinous Rice. "Now I can't even find a Black Donkey Prince, let alone a White Horse Prince... Hm? This Glutinous Rice is really tasty; I need to get myself a big bowl later."

Seeing that the kitchen staff had come out for lunch, Shu Yun planned to go downstairs and eat with the receptionists. Just as she was about to stand up, Zeng Xiaoqi sent a message in the group chat, "Today's fat-reducing meal: chicken breast and purple sweet potato mash sandwich. What are you all eating at the restaurant for your fat-reducing meal? Share it, share it! Let me know who's suffering with me."

This...

Shu Yun glanced at the Fried Pork Chop and the Stew full of pork belly slices on the table.

If I send a picture of this to the group, wouldn't it totally shatter Miss Zeng?

She thought about it and discreetly put her phone away, pretending she hadn't seen the message.

After lunch was over, the customers started to arrive.

"Is the private room upstairs ready?"

"It's ready."

That afternoon, Shen Guofu—the proprietor's father-in-law—had arranged a business banquet and selected the largest private room upstairs. It was said that the honored guest didn't eat much meat, so Shen Guofu hadn't arranged for dishes like roast whole sheep or roast suckling pig.

「At eleven thirty in the morning.」

A convoy of business cars slowly stopped in front of Lin Ji's Food.

After Shen Guofu got out of the car, he said to Yan Lin, who had stepped down from another car, "This is the restaurant my son-in-law runs. President Yan, please come inside. Dundun should be at the reception desk, greeting customers."

So, this is where Dundun works?

Yan Lin glanced at the sign of Lin Ji's Food, finding the decor quite nice—a perfect blend of tradition and fashion—though the name was somewhat common.

Such a high-end restaurant should have a more impressive name.

She beckoned to her secretary, who hurriedly took a small box out of her bag and handed it over.

"I brought a little gift for Dundun; I wonder if he'll like it."

After seeing Dundun last time, Yan Lin had been thinking about the little critter and even searched for numerous Dundun videos online. The more she watched, the more fond of the little guy she became. After watching Dundun's videos, she looked up some other Russian Blue videos. Finding it amusing that some people dressed their Russian Blues in sunglasses and chunky gold chains, she bought what looked like a 'gangster' style gold chain for Dundun.

Pure 24K gold.

I've heard cats have short memories. He probably doesn't remember me, does he?

Holding the box, the usually decisive Yan Lin felt somewhat nervous, fearing that the little chubby cat wouldn't remember her.

But as soon as she entered the restaurant, Dundun, who was licking his paw on the roof of the reception desk, turned his head in surprise, jumped down from the desk, and dashed toward Yan Lin.

"Oh, my little darling still remembers me!"

As she bent down to hug the chubby little cat, Yan Lin almost felt like crying. She pinched Dundun's paw and asked, "Does it hurt to jump down from such a high perch? You seem to have gotten fatter recently, all chubby and even cuter than the last time I saw you."

Seeing Shen Guofu accompanying her, Shu Yun knew that the honored guest had arrived.

I didn't expect this distinguished guest to know Dundun too... She smiled and explained to Yan Lin, "After autumn began and the weather started to cool down, Dundun grew some fluffy fur to keep warm. That's why he looks chubby, but actually, his weight has remained essentially unchanged."

"Really? So the little darling hasn't gained weight after all."

She asked her secretary to open the box. Her secretary took out the pure gold chain from inside, and Yan Lin put it around Dundun's neck. Then, cradling the little guy, she followed Shen Guofu upstairs.

She chose to take the stairs instead of the elevator.

When they reached the second floor and were about to continue upward, Shen Jiayue, holding a plate of Fried Pork Chops, said to Shen Guofu, "Dad, remember to come and eat after greeting the guests! These are freshly fried, even tastier than those sold locally in Shanghai."

She was just trying to tempt her dad, but unexpectedly, it caught Yan Lin's attention.

"President Shen, who is this?"

"You must find this rather informal, President Yan. This is my daughter, Yueyue. Yueyue, come and greet President Yan."

Shen Baobao approached, holding the plate, "Hello, President Yan. I hope I'm not disturbing you?"

Yan Lin lifted Dundun onto her shoulder, then turned to the plate of pork chops and asked, "Could I try this?"

Seeing everyone's surprised expression, she explained, "It smells just like the pork chops I used to eat at old Western-style restaurants in Shanghai as a child. Sadly, pork chops nowadays rarely have that old Shanghai taste."

Hmm... It seems President Yan is quite a sentimental person.

Shen Baobao passed her the plate, "Please try it. My husband fried them. I hope you won't be disappointed."

Yan Lin picked up a piece of pork chop with chopsticks, dipped it in spicy Soy Sauce, and tried it. A nostalgic expression immediately appeared on her face.

Clearly, the pork chop evoked her long-sealed memories.

"Delicious, so very delicious! Just like what I had in my childhood. They also tenderized the pork to a mush before frying it, unlike now, where they're too concerned with appearance to tenderize the meat, and the sinews are still all connected."

After tasting it, she looked at Shen Guofu and asked, "President Shen, can we add a Fried Pork Chop to today's lunch? Your son-in-law's cooking skills are truly exceptional. It's very delicious."

Add a Fried Pork Chop?

That shouldn't be a problem, but I'm worried the kitchen won't have enough.

Shen Guofu looked at Shu Yun. Seeing the general manager nod slightly, he then said, "No problem, President Yan. One Fried Pork Chop each today, so everyone can appreciate the taste you enjoyed in your childhood... By the way, President Yan, is there anything else you'd like to eat? My son-in-law's cooking is top-notch; even the Fishing Platform State Guesthouse has hired him as a dietary consultant."

Is there anything else she'd like to eat?

The memory evoked by the Fried Pork Chop indeed included another dish just as delicious.

She said to Shen Guofu, "I'd also like to eat another traditional Shanghai delicacy, Grilled Pork Chops. I wonder if your son-in-law could satisfy this request... If so, I could indeed bring some business to this restaurant."

She paused, then added, "A deal worth no less than five million!"

Chapter 550: How wild Shanghai people are about onions, try Grilled Pork Chops to find out!

Grilled Pork Chops?

Shen Guofu had eaten them years ago while running business in Shanghai. The flavor was superb, especially the rich sauce and those scallions. Whether mixed with rice or Mixed Noodles, it was top-notch.

To be honest, when Yan Lin mentioned a business deal of five million, he didn't feel a thing.

Old Shen wasn't short of money; he wouldn't even blink at fifty million, let alone five million, if his son-in-law needed it.

But when Grilled Pork Chops were mentioned, Shen Guofu's cravings were immediately triggered; the days he spent running through the streets and alleys of Shanghai for business also flashed before his eyes.

"Let's set aside business for now," Shen Guofu said. "Since President Yan has ordered Grilled Pork Chops, let my son-in-law Lin Xu give it a try to see if it meets President Yan's standards."

Business or no business wasn't the issue. But since you want to test my son-in-law's culinary skills, sorry, I won't allow anyone to say his skills aren't up to par.

Seeing Shen Guofu's confidence, Yan Lin grew even more eager for today's lunch.

Everyone arrived in the private room and settled down. Shu Yun asked the waiter to pour tea for everyone, while she herself clicked her high heels briskly up to the second floor.

"Boss, Boss, come out quickly! There's a big business deal!"

A business deal of five million might not matter to Shen Guofu, but Shu Yun, as the store manager, couldn't ignore it.

Five million! Even if it was just a simple prepayment, it could hugely increase the store's revenue. And from President Yan's demeanor, it seemed to be more than just a simple prepayment. This VIP from Shanghai might even introduce a few high-end clients to the store.

Lin Xu had just finished making Stir-fried Mutton with Scallions when he heard Shu Yun calling him from the kitchen doorway. He wiped his hands on his apron and strode out.

"What's up? Haven't my father-in-law's guests arrived?"

"They have! Not only have they arrived, but they also specifically asked for your Fried Pork Chop..."

Shu Yun excitedly relayed what Yan Lin had said after arriving, then added with fervor, "Five million, Boss! You must find a way to make the Grilled Pork Chops that President Yan wants. We can't miss out on this deal!"

Since opening, the store had seen prepayments of over a million, but they were mostly from President Shen and his friends and relatives. For instance, President Shen himself had put down five million as hospitality expenses for the Shen Group, President Chen had put down one million for her personal "fattening fund," and others had contributed amounts typically in the one to two million range.

No ordinary customer had yet made a prepayment of over a million.

Now that a sudden five-million deal had dropped into their laps, even Shu Yun, a woman accustomed to grand occasions, couldn't help but feel a thrill of excitement.

"Grilled Pork Chops..."

Lin Xu scrolled through the points store for a long time before finally locating the dish.

The price for Superior-level Grilled Pork Chops was the same as Fried Pork Chops: 500,000 points. It also came with a Skill Task; failure to complete it would result in a downgrade.

Since a five-million deal is on the line, I have to redeem it. Judging purely by the points, a tenfold return is a worthy investment. Even if the business deal doesn't materialize, I should still make it. After all, she bought Dundun a gold chain; I should at least show some gratitude.

"Consuming 500,000 points to obtain the Superior-level Grilled Pork Chops Cooking Technique and trigger the Skill Task: 'Host must secure heartfelt praise for the dish Grilled Pork Chops from ten

Shanghai locals within 24 hours, or the Superior-level Grilled Pork Chops Technique will downgrade to an Excellent Level Technique."

Winning the heartfelt praise of Shanghai locals? This task is definitely more challenging than the Fried Pork Chop task, which only needed to change the dining plans of six customers. This one immediately requires ten people, and they have to be from Shanghai... It feels like the system is deliberately making things difficult for me, its loyal user. But since the task has been triggered, I might as well get started.

He told Shu Yun, "I'll start with the Fried Pork Chop. Once that's done, I'll prepare the Grilled Pork Chops. As for whether I can satisfy that boss... I can only do my best."

"You can definitely do it, Boss! Go ahead and start. I'll go upstairs and ask President Shen how to adjust the menu," Shu Yun assured him.

Since each person was getting a Fried Pork Chop, the rest of the menu needed some adjustment; their initially planned meal was suddenly upended.

As Shu Yun went upstairs, Lin Xu returned to the kitchen.

He brought over all the marinated pork chops, switched to a larger frying pan, and replaced the bowls of flour, egg wash, and breadcrumbs with larger basins.

With all preparations complete, he began frying the pork chops with Zhu Yong's help.

"I really didn't expect a big boss who deals in hundreds of millions to fancy a simple snack like Fried Pork Chop," Zhu Yong remarked. "Lucky you know how to make it; otherwise, we'd have to run to Deke or KFC to find a chef to save the day."

He muttered to himself as he expertly used tongs to flip the pork chops that had firmed up in the hot oil, simultaneously skimming the floating breadcrumbs into a fine-mesh strainer bowl to drain.

Seeing this, Lin Xu curiously asked, "Are you keeping those breadcrumbs for something?"

"Lu Lu likes eating fried stuff. I plan to spread them on a pancake for her dinner."

TSK, TSK, TSK. What a good man. But aren't those breadcrumbs full of fat? Eating too much of that could lead to weight gain, right?

The perfectly fried pork chops were cut into strips about two to three centimeters wide and served on a plate with a small dish of spicy Soy Sauce. Now, the Fried Pork Chop was ready to be served to the guests.

Once all the pork chops for frying were done, there were still five or six marinated pieces left in the basin, ready to be made into Grilled Pork Chops.

Actually, the name 'Grilled Pork Chops' is somewhat inaccurate; it should really be called 'Scallion-Braised Pork Chops,' as the cooking method perfectly embodies the Chinese culinary technique known as 'kào' (braising slowly in sauce).