

Culinary 551

Chapter 551: How Wild Shanghainese Are About Scallions, Try the Grilled Pork Chops to Find Out! _2

The technique known as *kào*, or braising, is a cooking method where ingredients are first pan-fried, then simmered with a small amount of broth. In Shandong cuisine, dishes such as dry-braised big shrimp and garlic-braised small yellow croaker utilize this technique.

Now, since they were preparing a scallion-braised dish, green onions were naturally indispensable.

In China, when it came to eating green onions, everyone immediately thought of the land of Qi and Lu. Not only were the large scallions grown there considered the best in the country, but the locals also had a voracious appetite for them; children there might even gnaw on large scallions as if they were sugarcane.

However, hundreds of kilometers away from Shandong, at the terminus of the Yangtze River, the people of Shanghai also consumed green onions with gusto. Yangchun noodles, Scallion Oil Noodles, scallion oil mixed rice, scallion oil pancakes—a host of Shanghai delicacies were inseparable from the touch of green onions. Unlike Shandong, however, Shanghainese had a particular fondness for the smaller varieties of green onions.

These smaller green onions had a milder spice and a more potent fragrance; adding a touch to any dish was never a mistake.

Lin Xu selected nearly half a basket of peeled and washed small green onions from the vegetable washing area. Weighing about three to four pounds, this was typically a half-day supply for Lin Ji's Food.

But for the dish of Grilled Pork Chops, this half-basket of green onions was only enough for a few pieces of pork. If there were a couple more pork chops, this amount might not even suffice.

This alone showed that the Shanghainese affection for green onions was no less than that of the robust men from the Qi and Lu region.

"Damn!" Wei Qian exclaimed when he saw Lin Xu carry away so many green onions. He quickly instructed a kitchen helper to peel and wash more. "Is this dish about eating pork chops or green onions?"

Lin Xu explained, "The pork chops are braised with the fragrance of green onions. The more green onions, the tastier the pork chops will be."

Wei Qian listened, astonished, feeling that his hometown folks now had a serious competitor when it comes to eating green onions. However, Shanghainese tended to look down on large scallions, preferring the smaller green onions. Conversely, the men of Qi and Lu often found small green onions too delicate, taking more pleasure in gnawing on large scallions, some even taller than a man.

Lin Xu cut the small green onions in half, separating the white stalks from the green leaves and placing them in different containers.

Next, he set up the wok and began to cook.

He poured oil into the wok, a more generous amount than usual for stir-frying. Once the oil was hot, he added the marinated pork chops to pan-fry them. This step was crucial for locking in the moisture, keeping the pork chops tender and juicy. The oil temperature needed to be high during frying to quickly sear the surface of the pork chops. Once both sides were nicely seared, he used tongs to remove them from the wok and proceeded to fry the next piece.

After all the pork chops were fried, he spread the cut white stalks of the green onions evenly on the bottom of the wok and began to fry them.

The sight of half a wok of green onion whites frying in hot oil reminded him of making Scallion Oil and Seasoning Oil. Only when preparing those two types of infused oils would one use such large bundles of green onions.

The tender green onion whites quickly wilted and softened from the frying. He then added the green onion leaves, frying them briefly. Following that, he drizzled half a ladle of Dark Soy Sauce, half a ladle of Light Soy Sauce, half a ladle of Rice Wine, and a small handful of Crystal Sugar into the wok, along with a small bowl of water.

After bringing the mixture to a brief boil, he laid the fried pork chops on top of the green onion leaves, covered the wok with a lid, and let them braise over medium-low heat. Medium-low heat, meaning the flame was adjusted to slightly lower than medium, allowed the aroma of the green onions to thoroughly

infuse the pork chops while maintaining their tenderness. If high heat were used, the pork chops would likely become tough and chewy by the time they were cooked.

This seasoning looks pretty simple, Zhu Yong thought. We'll see how it tastes when it's done. If it's good, I'll make it for Lu Lu too, so she can experience a bit of Shanghai sophistication.

Whenever Lin Xu prepared a new dish, Zhu Yong was always extremely attentive. He always wanted to learn how to make it for Lu Lu, and every time he showed this eagerness, Wei Qian couldn't resist teasing him.

But today, Wei Qian was uncharacteristically silent. Having been thoroughly outpaced by Song Tiantian during their bicycle rides for several consecutive days, he felt rather deflated and worried that any attempt to mock Zhu Yong might backfire.

Lin Xu remarked, "The hallmark of Benbang cuisine is its rich, oily, and dark reddish-brown sauces. If a dish can use Soy Sauce, salt isn't added. If there's too much Soy Sauce, sugar is used to balance the flavor. That's pretty much the standard pattern."

Grilled Pork Chops were considered a common homemade dish in Shanghai, with seasoning that varied from family to family. Those who preferred sweeter flavors would add more sugar, while those who didn't would use less.

Since their guest today, Mr. Yan, was a native Shanghainese with traditional tastes, Lin Xu had intentionally added more Crystal Sugar. According to his own preference, even half this amount of sugar would be too much.

Soon, a rich fragrance began to waft from the wok, a blend of green onion and Soy Sauce aromas. Through the transparent lid, one could see that the green onion leaves and white stalks had completely softened, and the pork chops were bubbling merrily in the reddish-brown Soy Sauce broth.

After six minutes, as the sauce in the wok began to reduce, Lin Xu lifted the lid.

An incredibly enticing fragrance immediately burst forth, a complex medley of pork, Soy Sauce, small green onions, and the caramelized notes of Crystal Sugar that had melted and been kissed by the hot oil. The combined aromas were so intoxicating that a single sniff could make one swoon.

So incredibly fragrant! Lin Xu thought. No wonder this is a dish Shanghainese people cherish so much.

By now, the green onions in the wok had cooked down into a soft mass, almost seeming to melt, while the pork chops had absorbed the Dark Soy Sauce, taking on a luscious, ruddy color. Paired with the glossy, thick sauce at the bottom of the wok, the sight irresistibly brought to mind the phrase "rich oil, dark reddish-brown sauce."

Before encountering this dish, Lin Xu hadn't fully grasped the concept of "rich oil, dark reddish-brown sauce." But now, inhaling the wonderful aroma from the wok and seeing the appealing colors within, he finally had a clear and vivid understanding of it.

Using chopsticks, he carefully lifted the pork chops from the wok and arranged them on a plate. As he did so, it was important to also scoop out the clumps of thoroughly cooked green onions along with them.

Chapter 552: How Wild Shanghainese Are About Scallions, Try the Grilled Pork Chops to Find Out! _3

Don't let the unassuming appearance of these scallions fool you. When it comes to being the perfect companion for rice, even these pork chops would have to step aside.

These scallions are infused with a rich sauce of Soy Sauce and Crystal Sugar. Whether mixed with rice or noodles, they can double a person's appetite.

They're simply a Divine Artifact for enhancing meals.

Once the contents are removed from the pot and the sauce is drizzled on top, the dish is complete.

Zhu Yong took a small spoon, scraped a bit of the sauce from the bottom of the pot to taste, and immediately couldn't stop praising it. "Damn, this flavor is absolutely amazing! That sweet and savory taste... I wouldn't be able to stop with less than two bowls of rice! Boss, when you're not busy, remember to teach me how to make this. I absolutely love this flavor."

Lin Xu covered the plate with a lid and, while carrying it out, asked, "Is it you who likes it, or does Lu Lu?"

"We both do! We both do! Don't forget to teach me!"

"I won't."

As soon as he stepped out of the kitchen, the system's notification chimed in his mind:

"The host has altered the dining plans of more than six people with the Fried Pork Chop, completing the Skill Task for Fried Pork Chop, and has officially acquired the Superior-grade dish—Fried Pork Chop. Congratulations to the host."

Finally completed.

"Is it ready, Boss? How about I carry it for you?"

Just as he reached the staircase, he encountered Shu Yun. The general manager, seeing the boss personally delivering a dish upstairs, hurriedly offered to take it.

Lin Xu smiled and said, "I've got it. Just open the door for me in a bit."

They've been so good to Dundun; naturally, I should repay their kindness.

Shu Yun led the way. Upon reaching the private room door, she didn't push it open immediately. Instead, she knocked first to signal to the diners inside that someone was about to enter, then opened the door and stood to the side.

Lin Xu walked in carrying the platter and saw Yan Lin sitting at the deputy head seat.

This woman, likely in her forties, was slim and not particularly tall. Her neat short hair and well-fitting business attire exuded the competence of a professional elite.

By now, Yan Lin had almost finished eating and was amusing herself by playing with Dundun.

Shen Guofu, however, was still eating with a blissful expression. After so many days of diet meals, suddenly indulging in a Fried Pork Chop filled him with an almost overflowing sense of joy.

"Ah, Lin Xu is here! Does this mean the Grilled Pork Chops are ready?"

Seeing his son-in-law enter, Shen Guofu quickly wiped the breadcrumb residue from the corner of his mouth with a napkin, looking with great interest at the platter Lin Xu was carrying.

"Mr. Shen, is this your son-in-law? He's truly handsome."

Thanks to Dundun, Yan Lin knew of Lin Xu and had even watched his online cooking videos more than once.

She had initially assumed those videos used beauty filters. However, upon meeting Lin Xu in person, she realized this young man was even more handsome than he appeared online.

It even made one wonder if he used an uglifying filter in his videos!

"Yes, that's my son-in-law, Lin Xu. Lin Xu, this is Ms. Yan. She's a huge fan of our Dundun and even brought gifts for him on her trip to Beijing."

"Hello, Ms. Yan! Here are the Grilled Pork Chops you ordered."

Lin Xu placed the platter in front of Yan Lin and then lifted the lid.

A rich aroma immediately wafted from the platter, captivating everyone in the room.

"Mmm, this aroma... it takes me back to my childhood."

Inhaling this fragrance, Yan Lin felt as if she had returned to her childhood days of living in the alleyways of Shanghai.

She remembered it clearly: when her grandmother used to make Grilled Pork Chops, it had this exact aroma of Soy Sauce and scallions, with no other complicated seasonings.

And yet, it was this very aroma that had lingered in her dreams to this day.

"Mr. Shen, you should have a piece too."

Yan Lin didn't taste it immediately. Instead, she used the serving chopsticks to place a piece of pork chop onto Shen Guofu's plate.

Seeing that it was inconvenient for her to hold Dundun, Lin Xu extended his hand. Dundun promptly climbed onto Yan Lin's shoulder and then, with a light leap, jumped into Lin Xu's arms.

This display of tacit understanding left Yan Lin astonished.

She truly hadn't expected Dundun to be so clever and well-behaved, understanding what to do the moment its owner extended a hand.

It was a pity she was too busy with work; otherwise, she would have loved to raise such a well-behaved little cat herself.

With such a comforting little creature around, she imagined she would probably wake up from her dreams laughing.

After her brief reverie, Yan Lin placed a piece of pork chop onto her own plate. Then, skillfully using her knife and fork, she cut off a piece and brought it to her mouth.

"Wow, this texture is incredible! It feels like I'm eating the Grilled Pork Chops my grandmother used to make. Thank you, Boss Lin, your culinary skills are truly amazing!"

She had actually been almost full from the Fried Pork Chops earlier.

She had only intended to try one piece and then put down her cutlery.

But after eating several pieces in succession, not only did she not stop, but she found herself wanting more with each bite.

The taste, the texture... they were simply beyond words.

Shen Guofu, sitting nearby, was also full of praise. "Lin Xu, your culinary skills are truly exceptional! Years ago, when I was doing business in Shanghai for a few months, I had Grilled Pork Chops a few times, and this is exactly that flavor!"

After this remark, he pointed at the Grilled Pork Chops on the platter and said to the VPs and managers from both sides present, "Come on, everyone! Try my son-in-law's cooking."

No sooner had Shen Guofu finished speaking than the VPs and managers, who had already been secretly salivating, swarmed forward. The platter was empty in an instant—not only were the pork chops snatched up, but even the scallions weren't spared.

Everyone exclaimed in admiration as they tasted it:

"This is so delicious!"

"I never imagined scallions could be cooked this way!"

"Boss Lin's culinary skills are truly exceptional! I definitely have to post about this and brag to my friends after we're done eating."

"As someone from Shanghai, it's unbelievable to find such authentic local Shanghai cuisine here in Beijing, a city often called a culinary desert! This is truly incredible."

"..."

Once everyone had started eating, Lin Xu left the private room, holding Dundun.

As soon as he stepped out, he noticed a change in his Skill Task progress.

It had changed from the initial [0/10] to [3/10].

Oh? Besides Ms. Yan, there were at least two other people from Shanghai in the room.

Of course, there might have been more, but there were only a few pieces of pork chop—not enough for the VPs from both sides, let alone the department managers.

If only I'd made a few more pieces. If everyone had gotten one, I might have heard the task completion notification by now... What a pity...

As Lin Xu stood at the door holding Dundun, inwardly chiding himself, Yan Lin, who had finally put down her cutlery, sighed contentedly. "That was truly delicious. I was actually thinking of having some rice or noodles with that sauce and those scallions, but I'm so full now I couldn't eat another bite... Mr. Shen, could you reserve a private room for me here tonight?"

"Not a problem at all, Ms. Yan. Is this for something special?"

Yan Lin dabbed the corner of her mouth with a napkin, wiping away a trace of oil, and said with a smile, "There's a group of business owners from Shanghai here in Beijing whom I'm quite friendly with. They're always complaining about the lack of good places to eat. Since your son-in-law's restaurant is excellent, I'd like to host a dinner for them here tonight and give them a pleasant surprise!"

Chapter 553: Huge Top-up Comes With Rewards? Classic Shanghai Dish—Sweet and Sour Spare Ribs!

A boss from Shanghai who's on good terms with General Manager Yan? Shen Guofu thought. So, does that mean the restaurant can expect an influx of high-end clients from Shanghai? This would be really beneficial for my son-in-law's establishment... He hurriedly expressed his gratitude, "Thank you, General Manager Yan, for promoting my son-in-law's business. I'll cover all expenses tonight."

Yan Lin immediately waved her hand and said, "No need. Even though we are partners, inviting friends to dine is entirely personal. It wouldn't be right to let you pay, Shen. Besides, Lin Xu's culinary skills are indeed fantastic, and they're worth sharing with good friends."

She paused momentarily and then instructed her secretary, "Go downstairs and get a card charged up... put three million on it. Then, get seven more cards, each charged with one million. I left Beijing in a rush last time and got complaints from a few old friends. I'll charge these cards for them as an apology."

TSK TSK TSK... The employees from both sides who were dining felt a pang of envy.

Getting a card charged with a million just like that—such friends are truly enviable, they thought. I really wish I could take a picture of this moment and show it to my useless friends so they could learn the proper way to make friends. If we had friends who could casually charge up a million, we wouldn't just lend them our video streaming accounts; we wouldn't even mind if they changed the passwords!

After the secretary left, Yan Lin stood up and said, "Please continue eating. I'm going to check on Dundun. I originally came for him today but got carried away by the delicious food here. Now that I've had my fill, it's time to play with the little guy for a while."

She knew her authoritative demeanor was strong, and staying in the private dining room would make everyone feel uneasy. Eating wouldn't be as enjoyable, and they wouldn't dare to chat loudly. So she decided to leave and give the employees a relaxed dining atmosphere.

She wasn't like Shen Guofu in this regard, she thought.

Shen, at that moment, was boasting about his son-in-law's culinary skills to the employees. When no one was paying attention, he snatched the last piece of the black bean pork ribs from the plate, showing no airs of a boss at all.

No wonder the employees of Shen Group were so supportive of him, Yan Lin mused. This ability to mingle with the staff wasn't something an ordinary boss could achieve.

When I started my business, I too tried to be close with my employees, Yan Lin recalled. But it led to them taking too much liberty, becoming indiscreet in their speech and conduct, even offending clients and nearly bankrupting the company. Since then, I've always maintained a distance from employees and strived for strict management. When I first saw Shen Group's employees being so laid-back, I instinctively felt that such a company had no great prospects and might falter soon. But after studying Shen Guofu, I realized that this smiling, chubby boss was especially good at getting along with his employees. During his company's tough times, more than one employee voluntarily used their savings to help the company survive the crisis. A boss who could get employees to dig into their own pockets to support the company—how could he not be successful?

However, being able to partner with Shen Guofu is mostly thanks to Dundun. Initially, I felt it was a wasted trip and I was in a bad mood, but then I met that sprite-like cutie. Especially when Shen introduced Dundun as his grandson with such a serious demeanor, it made me find it quite amusing. How adorable would a cat have to be for a big boss to proudly declare it his grandson? I didn't expect this cat to be so incredibly well-behaved; I find myself missing him whenever he's not around.

Stepping out of the private room, Yan Lin saw Lin Xu, wearing chef's attire, standing at a small service station on the third floor, playing with Dundun using a cat teaser.

The man and cat were in sync, both enjoying themselves immensely, just like father and son.

"Can I join you?" Yan Lin asked. She had never played with a cat teaser before and thought it looked fun.

Lin Xu was trying his best to touch Dundun's body with the cat teaser, while Dundun did his best to block it and attempt to capture the teaser as if it were prey.

During the fun, the little guy even purposefully huffed loudly, making playful 'GRRRR' sounds to intimidate the cat teaser.

I never thought playing with a cat could be so entertaining, Yan Lin mused. I feel like I could do this all day without getting bored!

Lin Xu put away the cat teaser, looked at Yan Lin, and asked, "Have you finished your meal, General Manager Yan?"

"I've finished, and those Grilled Pork Chops are truly classic. I want them again tonight."

I'm not going back tonight, Yan Lin decided. I've got to enjoy myself a bit more, indulge in the flavor of the pork chops! Maybe I'll mix some rice with the sauce and green onions to reminisce about how I ate as a child.

Seeing the imposing female boss eager to try her hand at it, Lin Xu handed her the cat teaser, "You can give it a try, General Manager Yan. Dundun is very good at cooperating."

Indeed, other cats might need to be enticed by their owners, but Dundun is different, Lin Xu thought. Playing games with this little guy always makes you feel like you're the one being teased. It's as if he's the one using the cat teaser on you!

"I won't hit him, will I?"

"No, it's covered with feathers. Even if you hit him, it won't hurt."

Yan Lin awkwardly waved the cat teaser. Dundun gently mewed twice, seemingly reassuring her, warming her heart.

This little cutie is too clever! she thought.

While playing, General Manager Yan also chatted with Lin Xu, "Chef Lin, besides Fried Pork Chop and Grilled Pork Chops, what other local dishes can you make?"

Local dishes? Lin Xu thought for a moment and said, "Braised Pork Belly, that's something I'm quite good at. As for others..."

There are also Shengjian Buns, but that's not really a dish. The Crab Bun is a dish from the Yangtze River Delta region, but strictly speaking, it's Suzhou cuisine, not local Shanghai cuisine, he mused.

"Braised Pork Belly is fine," Yan Lin said. "It's okay if you're not skilled in other local dishes. Just being able to prepare a table of dishes from the Yangtze River Delta region is enough. I'm inviting friends over for dinner tonight, and I want everyone to taste the flavor of home."

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Cuisine from the Yangtze River Delta region?

That was much simpler. Dishes like White Robed Shrimp could be prepared for everyone to try.

Just as Lin Xu was about to agree, a system prompt suddenly sounded in his mind:

"Host has received a first-time cash top-up of ten million, awarding the Perfect Level classic Shanghai cuisine—Sweet and Sour Small Ribs. Congratulations to the host."

What? Someone topped up ten million?

Lin Xu was somewhat surprised. But now that he had acquired another Shanghai dish, he might as well make it too. He said to Yan Lin,

"I'm quite good at making Sweet and Sour Small Ribs as well. If President Yan doesn't mind, I can prepare a portion for you and your friends to taste tonight."

"Sweet and Sour Small Ribs?"

Yan Lin's eyes were full of surprise. She had not expected Lin Xu to know this dish.

To avoid any disappointment, she asked quietly,

"Is it the old Shanghai-style method?"

"Yes, with a lot of sugar, the kind that's so sweet it would make country folks cry."

Hearing the term "country folks," Yan Lin, who was playing with a cat teaser, couldn't help but laugh.

"Young Lin, if you keep teasing us Shanghainese like this, I'll have to protest, you know."

In the past, when Shanghai was prosperous, they considered everyone else country folk. Even people from Beijing visiting Shanghai would be looked down upon.

But nowadays, this attitude is rare. The younger generation in Shanghai rarely speaks the soft Wu dialect anymore. Everyone speaks Mandarin, and the distinction between locals and outsiders has become blurred.

As the two were talking, Shu Yun came up with Yan Lin's secretary.

"President Yan, all the cards are topped up."

"Wrap those seven cards in an envelope and give them to the guests tonight. Keep the one with three million. Next time I'm in Beijing without special plans, I'll dine at Young Lin's place."

So it was President Yan, with her commanding aura, who had topped up the ten million! Lin Xu quickly expressed his gratitude,

"Thank you for your support, President Yan. If there's anything you would like to eat in the future, just let me know, and I will do my best to fulfill your request."

The addition of ten million to the store's account also meant an extra ten million points. He could finally exchange for other dishes and Techniques without agonizing over points. Even Perfect Level dishes might be exchanged... Uh, better skip Perfect Level for now.

The starting price of 800,000 points was still somewhat daunting. With over ten million points at hand now, exchanging for Perfect Level dishes would only yield about a dozen or so. Some famous, complex dishes even cost more than 800,000 points, requiring an additional spend.

In such a case... it's better to focus on paving the way with Superior dishes.

Yan Lin looked at Lin Xu and said with a smile,

"No need to be so polite. Your skills are worth it. Besides, this is a top-up, not a gift. You'll have to cook enough dishes to cover it."

Still, topping up ten million is incredibly generous. This will elevate the store's cash reserves to a new high, allowing the company to operate even more smoothly. Even the expansion of Ziqiang Shengjian can be pursued more boldly.

Having said that, Yan Lin focused wholeheartedly on playing with Dundun using the cat teaser. Under Dundun's 'expert' guidance, this typically decisive businesswoman quickly mastered the art of playing with the cat teaser.

Lin Xu didn't disturb them further. He instructed Shu Yun to take good care of President Yan, then washed his hands and headed to the kitchen.

Business was booming, and both the company and the store were developing soundly. While his own efforts played a part, it certainly wouldn't have been possible without Dou Wenjing's management.

It was time to discuss formal compensation with this capable lady, who was always worried about gaining weight yet couldn't resist delicious food. Indeed, since taking office, Dou Wenjing had adhered to the code of a professional manager, wholeheartedly helping the store and company get on track, which had saved Lin Xu a lot of trouble. A general manager who made things so easy for him definitely deserved a high salary. Moreover, in less than a month, Dou Wenjing had developed his impulsive investment in the shengjian shop into several branches, turning it into a chain enterprise for the company. Based on current trends, the company could see a net monthly profit increase of several hundred thousand. This income alone was enough to justify a high salary for Dou Wenjing.

Reaching the kitchen entrance, he sent a message to Manager Dou,

"After lunch tomorrow, would it be possible to have a chat, Wenjing?"

Dou Wenjing was sitting in her office chair, still savoring the memory of the Fried Pork Chop from lunch. When she saw the message, her lips curled into a smile as she quickly replied,

"Okay, boss!"

Communicating with such a straightforward boss was so much less of a hassle. Unlike in some companies where employees generated substantial profits, yet the bosses played dumb and never mentioned a raise. Such infuriating bosses deserved to be sorted out by the Gen Zers.

Entering the kitchen, Lin Xu began to prepare for the evening's dishes.

Among the dishes he had now mastered, suitable options included Braised Pork Belly, Sweet and Sour Small Ribs, Fried Pork Chop, Grilled Pork Chops, White Robed Shrimp, White Jade Lotus Root Strips, Braised Mahuangqiao, Steamed Sea Bass, and Crucian Carp Tofu Soup... However, he couldn't serve all of them. For instance, Braised Pork Belly and Braised Mahuangqiao were clearly a bit repetitive. As for Steamed Sea Bass, the Shanghai method for preparing sea bass differed from Cantonese cuisine. Although the Shanghai style also involved steaming, a layer of chopped scallions was placed on the fish before pouring hot oil over it at the end. Furthermore, the Steamed Fish Sauce would be replaced by a homemade soy sauce favored in Shanghai. This homemade soy sauce was made by simmering white sugar, Light Soy Sauce, and Dark Soy Sauce together. The flavor was a rich blend of sweet and savory, with a strong soy aroma. White Jade Lotus Root Strips wasn't a regular menu item at Lin Ji's Food; after all, even Fishing Platform hadn't introduced it yet. It would be rather presumptuous for Lin Ji to serve it. However, offering a taste to a distinguished guest like President Yan was perfectly fine.

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Additionally, we could have Zhuang Yizhou prepare a dish of Wensi Tofu and Steamed Three Shreds. With their exceptional presentation, these dishes shine at any banquet, regardless of its prestige.

Unfortunately, there's not enough time. Otherwise, we could have Zhu Yong whip up some Drunken Shrimp and Drunken Crab, whose flavors are also unparalleled.

Upon seeing Wei Qian, Lin Xu went over the dishes to be prepared. "I'm handling the private banquet for General Manager Yan's guests this evening. They've just topped up their account with ten million, so we need to give this our utmost attention."

Ten million?

Wei Qian clicked his tongue in amazement, "This boss is really generous! When I play games, I don't even dare to recharge that many Joy Beans... To make our generous lady happy, tonight I'll contribute a dish of Braised Pork Belly for her to taste."

Braised Pork Belly is a popular delicacy in the Yangtze River Delta, made with the salty pork and fresh bamboo shoots commonly eaten in Hui. The resulting dish is rich but not greasy, and exceptionally tasty.

"Then you should first have Chezai ask Boss Huang if there are any fresh bamboo shoots available now. If not, you really won't be able to make it."

「Four o'clock in the afternoon.」

After putting the Ma'anqiao stew on to simmer, Lin Xu casually scooped out the soaked Pork Ribs and started to prepare Sweet and Sour Spare Ribs.

People in Shanghai, out of modesty and to differentiate from the original dish, like to add the word "small."

For instance, today's Sweet and Sour Spare Ribs, as well as the Small Jinling Salted Duck, Small Crab Soup Dumplings, and more. The "small" doesn't refer to the size, but rather to the unique and independently spirited character of local Shanghai cuisine.

I acknowledge the authenticity of your traditional methods and your status, but I also want to showcase the unique personality of Shanghai folks. A single "small" in the dish's name perfectly conveys all these sentiments.

"Boss, what dish are you making?"

Chezai walked in carrying several fresh bamboo shoots. These were for the Braised Pork Belly Wei Qian was to make later in the evening.

Lin Xu replied, "I'm making Sweet and Sour Spare Ribs."

At the mention of this dish, Chezai's interest was immediately piqued. "Do you need to blanch the ribs for this dish?"

"No need. Remember this, Chezai: any dish made with Pork Ribs isn't suitable for blanching. Just like when making Pork Ribs with Black Bean Sauce, simply soaking them in water for an extended period will suffice. If you're pressed for time, you can rub and wash them with baking soda for ten minutes... However, if they're frozen Pork Ribs, then you should definitely blanch them."

Frozen Pork Ribs not only require blanching but are also unsuitable for dishes that are steamed or have sweet and sour flavors. It's best to opt for preparations with heavier flavors, such as soy-braised, red-cooked, or spicy.

The reason is that after Pork Ribs are frozen, a significant amount of their umami substances are lost, and the meat also loses its elasticity.

After draining the Pork Ribs, Lin Xu placed them in a basket. He then prepared Scallion and Ginger, Star Anise, Rice Vinegar, Zhenjiang vinegar, Rice Wine, Crystal Sugar, White Sugar, Light Soy Sauce, Dark Soy Sauce, salt, and other seasonings.

Once everything was ready, Lin Xu set up the wok and began to cook.

As one of the eight famous cold dishes in local Shanghai cuisine, Sweet and Sour Spare Ribs are meant to be eaten cold. Therefore, they need to be prepared in advance to allow the ribs' temperature to cool down.

This way, the acidity mellows, and the meat becomes firmer. The sourness will then gradually emerge from the meat as you chew, making for a more lingering and delicious experience.

Add oil to the wok, using a bit more than you would for a typical stir-fry.

Heat the oil, then add the Pork Ribs and sauté them.

There's no need to rush this step. It's crucial to cook the Pork Ribs thoroughly, allowing any blood and off-flavors to escape with the steam, leaving only the pure aroma of the meat.

During frying, there's no need to add anything else; just keep stir-frying.

Chezai, watching from the side, looked surprised. "At the restaurant where I used to work, we always caramelized sugar for Sweet and Sour Spare Ribs. Don't you do that, Boss?"

Lin Xu replied with a smile, "Traditional Shanghai cuisine seldom uses caramelized sugar; most dishes rely on Dark Soy Sauce for color. The so-called 'rich oil and red sauce' comes from this. For this dish to be perfect, it needs the deep color from Dark Soy Sauce. If it has that reddish hue from caramelized sugar, then it's not the old Shanghai method."

Traditional Sweet and Sour Spare Ribs should not only have a syrupy sauce that can be stretched into threads but also a color that is deep red with black undertones. In areas where the sauce is abundant, it should be a dark brown—that's authentic Sweet and Sour Spare Ribs.

However, nowadays, with the growing emphasis on healthy eating, the flavors of Shanghai cuisine have become much lighter. They have even started to shift towards the fresh and natural tastes akin to Cantonese cuisine, with a much more restrained use of seasonings.

In terms of sugar consumption, Shanghai cuisine is even less sweet than that of the Wuxi people, who are also from the Yangtze River Delta and are known for their love of sugary flavors.

When the Pork Ribs are fried until their surface turns golden brown and the oil in the pot becomes clear again, it indicates that the ribs are thoroughly cooked and the surface moisture has evaporated.

At this point, Lin Xu poured a prepared bowl of Rice Vinegar into the wok.

To make Sweet and Sour Spare Ribs, a very large amount of Rice Vinegar is used—nearly six liang (about 225 grams) of Rice Vinegar for one jin (about 500 grams) of Pork Ribs. However, the sour taste of this dish doesn't actually come from the Rice Vinegar, but from the Zhenjiang vinegar added towards the end.

The main purpose of the Rice Vinegar is to tenderize the meat, remove any gamey taste, neutralize unwanted odors, and enhance the overall fragrance.

After adding the Rice Vinegar to the wok, Lin Xu added two slices of ginger, one tied scallion, one Star Anise, a handful of Crystal Sugar, a ladleful of Light Soy Sauce, a ladleful of Rice Wine, half a ladleful of Dark Soy Sauce, a small spoonful of salt, and a large bowl of water.

Once everything was added, he covered the wok and let it stew over medium heat.

The seasoning in Shanghai cuisine is quite interesting. Although sugar and Soy Sauce can be used generously, other seasonings are used very sparingly, especially spices. For a whole pot of Pork Ribs, one Star Anise is usually enough.

And in another representative dish of Shanghai cuisine, Braised Pork Belly, there isn't even a place for a single Star Anise. The entire dish is cooked without a hint of spice, truly achieving an original and natural flavor.

Simmer on low heat for about fifteen minutes. When the sauce in the pot thickens, lift the lid.

First, pick out the scallion, ginger, and Star Anise. Then, turn up the heat.

At this stage, the sauce in the pot has turned somewhat black, while the Pork Ribs still have a reddish hue.

Then, grab a handful of White Sugar, add it to the pot, and begin to stir-fry.

White Sugar effectively helps to thicken the sauce, while stir-frying accelerates the evaporation of moisture.

Soon, the sauce began to thicken, and the color of the Pork Ribs deepened. Simultaneously, the fragrance in the wok grew more intense.

When the sauce was nearly at the string-pulling stage and had turned dark brown, Lin Xu poured the prepared Zhenjiang vinegar along the edge of the wok.

After a burst of tangy aroma rose up, he stir-fried for ten seconds, then removed the ribs and plated them.

If you like sesame seeds, this would be the time to sprinkle a handful of White Sesame seeds. However, today Lin Xu was making the traditional flavor that Yan Lin had specifically requested, so he omitted the sesame.

Just as he finished plating the Pork Ribs, a beautiful face peeked through the kitchen doorway—Shen Baobao was back from work.

"What are you cooking?"

"Sweet and Sour Spare Ribs. Wait by the door; I made extra."

Upon hearing "Sweet and Sour Spare Ribs," Shen Baobao's eyes immediately lit up.

Wow, I love this kind of sweet and sour dish the most! Lin Xu, you're so annoying! I was planning to eat a light meal for my diet; looks like I'll have to start cutting calories tomorrow...

Chapter 556: A Traditional Local Dish That Gets Tough If Fried for More Than 18 Seconds — Fried Shrimp!

Today, Lin Xu made sweet and sour pork ribs. He knew his own Shen Baobao would crave them, and even his sister-in-law might want some. So, when cooking, he directly used over a kilogram of small pork ribs.

According to the Northeastern way of serving food, this was merely a portion for one person.

But for the delicate Benbang cuisine typical of Shanghai, it was almost enough for four servings.

After all, it was a cold dish, not the main course; one or two pieces per person were enough to whet the appetite.

Lin Xu, holding a small plate with a few freshly cooked sweet and sour pork ribs, came to the door and handed it to Shen Baobao, who had spent the day idly "fishing"—slacking off.

"Here, try some," he said. "This is the traditional Shanghai method; it's quite sweet."

Seeing the deep reddish-black ribs, Shen Baobao's heart leaped with joy. The color reminded her of Black Sugar Shaqima, a dessert with a similar hue.

"How sweet exactly? As sweet as our love?" she asked.

She snuggled up to Lin Xu. Having not seen her Xu Bao all afternoon, she wanted to be close for a moment.

Lin Xu pinched the girl's creamy cheeks. She's quite the smooth-talker, isn't she? But why does she always say such upsetting things in front of her parents?

"Take your time eating; I've prepared extra of all the dishes today, just to satisfy your cravings," he said.

"Thank you, Xu Bao! MWAH!"

Shen Baobao kissed Lin Xu and carried the small plate over to the booth to taste the ribs.

The sweet and sour pork ribs were still hot. They had a strong sour aroma, but the taste was excellent—a perfect balance of sweet and sour with a rich, meaty flavor.

The ribs weren't fall-off-the-bone tender, offering a pleasant chewiness.

And the more she chewed, the stronger the appetizing sweet-and-sour flavor became.

Wow, delicious, delicious! I never expected Xu Bao's sweet and sour pork ribs to be this good! I absolutely love this kind of sweet and sour dish.

Shen Jiayue ate two pieces in a row.

The more she ate, the tastier it seemed.

While eating, she remembered it had been several days since she'd shared food photos with her online friends. So, she picked up her phone, snapped a picture, and posted it to the Lin Ji's Food topic:

"The happiest thing is when someone has sweet and sour pork ribs waiting for you right after work. This sweet and sour taste... it's the taste of love!"

As soon as she posted it, replies from netizens started streaming in.

Fatty Who Refuses to Diet: Here we go again, another public display of affection.

Rat Loves Hide and Seek: Just tell us when they'll be on the menu at the restaurant! We'll definitely order some to taste how sweet the boss and boss lady's love is.

Lin Daiyu Uproots Weeping Willow: @Everyone, I'm Weeping Willow, get it?

A Lupin Flower: I deeply sympathize with Brother Weeping Willow's plight. If only someone would bully me like this every day!

Lazybones Who Can't Tell Seasons Apart: You want to be bullied? Dude upstairs, you're weird!

Warmhearted Little Popsicle: Hey, Lazybones upstairs, what about your "five bodies"? You're weird too!

Invisible Chicken Wings: AHHH! I love these kinds of sweet and sour pork ribs! I'm begging you to add them to the menu! I'd spend all the hard-earned money from my voiceover work this past half-month just to try them!

Zeng XiaoqiV: Ten minutes ago, you said in the group chat that you were going to eat a weight-loss meal. So... are sweet and sour pork ribs for weight loss?

Seeing Zeng Xiaoqi's message, Shen Baobao's heart skipped a beat.

Oops! She'd forgotten this acquaintance from the group was the topic moderator! This was... this was... Oh no...

She quickly opened WeChat, tapped on Zeng Xiaoqi's avatar, and sent a photo of Chen Yan, Dou Wenjing, and Zeng Xiaoqi herself holding and eating Fried Pork Chops.

At this point, she could only drag her cousins into this. Anyway, her cousin would definitely be pestering her for sweet and sour pork ribs later. Selling her out felt completely justified. Not only did she feel no guilt, but it even seemed like the natural thing to do. They were supposed to have weight-loss meals for lunch, but it was those few who dragged me into it. So now, selling them out was also fair and reasonable.

「In the television station office」

Zeng Xiaoqi, who was just about to leave work, saw the photo and immediately...

"!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

We all agreed to get slim together, but you went off secretly eating meat! And it was a brazen group offense too! Utterly despicable!

She had been in quite high spirits today. The broadcast of "Tastes of Humanity" had led to a change in her position; she was now the program director. The former Reporter Zeng had become Director Zeng.

She had wanted to share her joy with her good sisters, but before she could, her blood pressure shot up instead.

What angered her even more was that Dou Wenjing was still in the group chat with Chen Yan and Wu Kexin, discussing weight-loss tips.

Hah! Some diet you're on, "losing weight" with Fried Pork Chops, are you? I curse your cup sizes to shrink daily, your bellies to grow bigger daily, and your thighs to get fatter daily...

While she was still fuming, Shen Baobao sent another message:

"Come quickly, Sister Xiaoqi! I saved some sweet and sour pork ribs for you. There's also melt-in-your-mouth Braised Pork Belly and Braised Saddle-Cut Fish simmering on the stove. Oh, and do you like Crucian Carp Tofu Soup? We have that too!"

Seeing this message, Zeng Xiaoqi was instantly tempted.

Time to leave work! I'm going to Lin Ji for a free meal!

And just like that, Shen Baobao, who had initially exposed herself, successfully redirected the trouble. She leisurely ate her sweet and sour pork ribs, occasionally replying to netizens' comments, the picture of carefree enjoyment.

WAKAKA! Now let's see how Sister Xiaoqi gets her revenge. If this were a Japanese manga, it would definitely have a huge title: Sister Xiaoqi's Revenge!!!!!!!!!!

「In the kitchen」

Chezai walked over with a basket of green shrimp.

"Boss, these shrimp are too small. Master Zhu said they're not suitable for White Robed Shrimp. How should we prepare them instead?"

Zhu Yong had just finished processing the larger shrimp for their meat; the basket was full of the smaller ones he had set aside.

The shells and remains from the processed shrimp would be used to make shrimp oil. But using these small whole green shrimp just for oil would be somewhat wasteful. If used well, they could make at least one dish.

Chapter 557: A Classic Local Dish—Fried Shrimp That Gets Tough if Fried for More Than Eighteen Seconds! _2

Lin Xu glanced at the bowl of small green shrimp and said, "Let's keep them for now. Later on, I'll cook a dish of Fried Shrimp for the customers."

In the afternoon, when he was researching local Shanghai dishes in the points mall, he discovered that the recipe for Fried Shrimp was suspiciously cheap; the Superior level cost only 350,000 points. Embracing the philosophy that one would be a fool to pass up a bargain, he acquired the Technique. The Technique was cheap, and the accompanying Skill Task was also simple. All that was required was for ten people to say the dish tasted good within one hour of it being made. It was so easy that it barely seemed like a task.

Now seeing these ingredients suitable for making Fried Shrimp, Lin Xu immediately wanted to cook the dish.

However, the customers haven't arrived yet. It's better to wait a little longer.

Idle with nothing to do, he thought about the Salted Fish Eggplant Stew that Dundun had drawn a few days ago and said to the waiter, "Whenever you're free, ask Old Huang if he has any salted fish. If so, buy a few to try. If they taste good, we'll add some salted fish dishes to the menu later on. Autumn is here, and it's time to nourish ourselves."

After autumn arrived, the weather was still hot. However, customers began to lavish themselves with food and drink under the guise of 'autumn fattening' and even requested the restaurant add more dishes that go well with rice.

Take Qiang, whose hair was on the verge of extinction, for example. Although his hair had thinned even further, his income had significantly increased after completing a project, and he became more demanding about the dishes. After Yue Liyue had given him a few introductions to Cantonese cuisine, he became fixated on various claypot dishes, such as sizzling claypot, Claypot Rice, tofu skin Fish Belly claypot, and other similar meals.

Seizing the opportunity, now that he had acquired the Technique for Salted Fish Eggplant Stew, Lin Xu decided to give it a try. If successful, he would introduce it to the restaurant and, based on its recipe, come up with other dishes like salted fish tofu skin stew and salted fish bok choy stew. If everything went as planned, he would officially launch a series of salted fish claypot dishes, letting the customers experience the joy of salted fish.

「At five-thirty in the afternoon.」

Outside Lin Ji's Food, Zeng Xiaoqi walked into the shop with her bag, and Shu Yun immediately came to greet her. "Welcome, Director Zeng, to our establishment for guidance! If I had known earlier, I would have had someone change the carpet. With Director Zeng visiting, we should at least have had a new carpet for you to walk on."

Zeng Xiaoqi hadn't informed everyone about her promotion, but just because she hadn't said anything didn't mean others were silent. Her appointment was confirmed in the afternoon. Right after, Xiaowei,

an editor and director from "Flavors of the World," and Sis Sui, an operator from the Travel Channel, announced the news in Lin Ji's Food's customer group. Zhen Wensheng, who usually lurked in the group, even sent a red packet to mark the occasion.

Zeng Xiaoqi, with a smile that was not quite a smile, stared at Shu Yun and asked softly, "Shu, what's your bra size?"

Shu Yun was dumbfounded for a moment before replying, "I'm a 36C... Why are you asking me this?"

"From now on, it's a 36B."

Shu Yun, even more confused, asked, "What do you mean?"

"Because I heard that sneaking Fried Pork Chops could shrink your cup size by one!"

Shu Yun was utterly floored.

Who let the cat out of the bag?

Today at noon, trying to deceive Zeng Xiaoqi, I deliberately dug up an old photo of myself eating plain noodles and posted it in the group, all to cover up the fact that I ate Fried Pork Chops!

Great, now the news has been leaked!

"Actually, it's not my fault. It's all because the boss's cooking is too good! And I think we shouldn't be so anxious about our looks, always caught up in these internal struggles. So, I took the initiative to eat Fried Pork Chops... I heard fried foods have a breast enlargement effect, but I don't know if it's true or not?"

Knowing that Zeng Xiaoqi was interested in breast enlargement topics, she steered the conversation in that direction.

As expected, Zeng Xiaoqi, who was only a 34B, took the bait. She told Shu Yun, "It does have an effect, but alas, it's only effective for men. Fried foods can increase the secretion of estrogen in males..."

After speaking, Director Zeng headed upstairs.

After dieting for so many days, I can finally go upstairs and enjoy some meat! I don't want to keep talking about Xiongxiang with Shu Yun. Even if we talked, it wouldn't get me a boyfriend, nor would my Xiongxiang grow bigger. The only thing I can do is gaze enviously at the lady boss's impressive bust and Manager Chen's equally impressive one.

At half-past six in the evening, Yan Lin arrived with the friends she was hosting. These people were all from Shanghai, talking in the soft local dialect that others could hardly understand.

The dishes began to be served. The delicacies were brought into the small private room where the group was dining.

"Try this Pork Rib, it's divine!"

Yan Lin originally thought that Lin Xu's Sweet and Sour Pork Ribs could, at best, be as good as large ribs. Yet after tasting them, she realized that not many local restaurants in Shanghai could reach this level of quality. Probably only a few master chefs specialized in local Shanghai cuisine could achieve this.

Simply delicious!

Her several friends were equally astonished. They didn't expect such authentic local Shanghai cuisine from a Beijing restaurant.

"Let's book our gatherings here from now on—it's far better than those so-called modern Chinese restaurants in Shanghai."

In recent years, a surge of so-called modern Chinese restaurants had emerged in Shanghai. These places charged thousands per person with a no-menu policy—you ate whatever the chef prepared—and diners at the same table often didn't even know each other. Such restaurants were a novelty at first. But after

a few visits, it was always the same routine. Their stories were always similar: the head chef or executive chef had studied in Japan or France. They were suddenly determined to revitalize Chinese cuisine, so they dedicatedly learned the local culinary arts abroad before returning to open their own restaurant. Even the stories were manufactured in the same pattern, becoming increasingly mystical, and had long lost the essence of dining where taste is paramount.

This time when Yan Lin invited them to eat, they thought it was the same kind of place. But after coming in, they found no stories from the head chef. No diplomas from abroad hung on the walls. Even the service staff didn't posture pretentiously.

It was so ordinary... as ordinary as any regular restaurant.

Chapter 558: A Classic Local Dish — Fried Shrimp, Becomes Tough If Fried For More Than 18 Seconds!

But when the dishes arrived, they realized that each dish here was more ingenious than the last. In the Yanjing dialect, it was authentic, extremely authentic!

「In the kitchen.」

After preparing the dishes to be served, Lin Xu brought over the small green shrimp for the Fried Shrimp.

Fried Shrimp is a dish found throughout the Yangtze River Delta region, using readily available small river shrimp or small green shrimp from the area.

Because these shrimp are tender and properly prepared, there is no need to spit out the shell when eating them. The crispy shell is even more flavorful than the shrimp meat itself.

This dish has two methods of preparation: home-style and restaurant-style.

Home stoves have less firepower, so the oil heats up slowly. To achieve crispy shells and tender meat, it is necessary to flash-fry the shrimp twice at high temperatures, each time for a very short duration, allowing the hot oil to affect only the surface of the shells.

This way, the shells become sufficiently crispy, and the meat remains tender.

The restaurant method, however, is not as complicated.

Restaurant stoves are comparable to rocket engines and can keep the oil in the wok at a consistently high temperature, so there is no need to fry the shrimp twice.

Even the first quick pass through the oil needs to be timed in seconds.

One second more, and the shrimp meat might overcook.

One second less, and the shell might not be crispy.

The key to this dish lies in mastering heat control.

Although the cooking time for Fried Shrimp seems brief, it is actually a Kung Fu dish.

Before cooking, the small green shrimp need to be meticulously cleaned: the whiskers, pincers, legs, and Shrimp Spear must all be removed, leaving only the intact shrimp body.

This prevents these parts from pricking the mouth when eaten and also stops them from burning during the flash-frying process.

After cleaning the small green shrimp, Lin Xu set up the wok, poured oil into it, and lit the stove to begin frying.

While waiting for the oil to heat up, he prepared a sauce for the Fried Shrimp.

Depending on the quantity of shrimp, he added a spoonful of Light Soy Sauce, a third of a spoonful of White Sugar, and half a spoonful of Rice Wine into a bowl, stirring with chopsticks until the White Sugar dissolved.

As the oil temperature continued to rise, Lin Xu placed a strainer over the oil drum used for collecting drained oil, getting ready to cook.

Zhuang Yizhou and Wei Qian quietly watched from the side.

Although everyone's cooking skills were considerable, dishes timed to the second were worth studying repeatedly. Even if one had completely mastered such a dish, it was still best to review it while others cooked.

When the oil was hot enough, Lin Xu poured the cleaned small green shrimp into the wok.

WHOOSH...

A loud sizzling sound erupted as the hot oil boiled violently, and the small river shrimp turned from green to red within two seconds.

Their previously varied appearances now transformed, each one curling tightly.

Lin Xu stirred slowly with a ladle in the wok, ensuring the shrimp heated more evenly, which would improve the texture of the finished Fried Shrimp.

Five seconds later, the sound of shrimp shells cracking echoed successively.

This was the sound of the shrimp meat contracting, and the heated air inside the shells bursting them.

After this sound, the shrimp meat and shell would separate, creating about a half-millimeter gap between them.

Ten seconds later, the cracking sounds ceased, indicating all the shrimp shells had burst open. At this point, the shells were quickly becoming crispy while the meat was rapidly cooking.

Stirring a few more times with the ladle, Lin Xu lifted the wok and then poured all the oil and shrimp into the strainer.

The hot oil drained into the oil drum, while the bright red-shelled shrimp were caught in the strainer.

The frying process was complete, but the cooking had to continue.

After setting the wok back on the stove, he stirred the prepared sauce again with a ladle, making sure no undissolved White Sugar had settled at the bottom.

After stirring, he immediately poured the sauce into the hot wok.

By this time, the little bit of oil remaining in the wok had heated up, and as soon as the sauce was added, its savory aroma was quickly released.

He stirred rapidly with the ladle, blending the sauce smoothly and ensuring the White Sugar was completely dissolved.

Once the sauce became slightly thick, he added the fried shrimp, tossed them quickly for a few seconds to ensure they were evenly coated with the sauce, and then removed the wok from the heat.

The standard method for this dish is quite straightforward. There's no need for Scallion and Ginger, Cooking Wine, star anise, or pepper powder. Simply fry and then stir-fry with the sauce.

But the difficulty was immense. Whether in the frying or the final stir-frying, a mere second's difference could make the taste worlds apart.

There were quite a few shrimp in the wok, so Lin Xu served them on one large and one small plate.

The large plate was sent to the private room upstairs for Yan Lin and the others to taste.

Then, Lin Xu brought the smaller plate out to where Shen Jiayue, Zeng Xiaoqi, and Chen Yan were still dining. Director Zeng once again publicly critiqued their secretive behavior from noon.

However, because Lin Xu was present, she did not repeat the curse about a cup size reduction.

"Try it, the classic Shanghai dish, Fried Shrimp. See if there's any difference from the shrimp we have here."

Upon hearing this, Shen Baobao picked up a shrimp and tasted it. Her eyes widened. "This shrimp shell is so crispy! The taste is a mix of salty and sweet, it tastes like... like Oil Braised Large Shrimp! Yes, that kind of salty-sweet flavor of Oil Braised Large Shrimp. But this shell is really nice, very crispy and delicious."

The same flavor as Oil Braised Large Shrimp? Lin Xu took a pair of clean chopsticks from the sterilizer beside him and tasted a shrimp.

The flavor was indeed very similar to that of Oil Braised Large Shrimp. However, because these shrimp were smaller and more tender, their shells were crispy and crunchy, offering a unique taste.

"Yueyue is right, it does taste like Oil Braised Large Shrimp."

"To be precise, it tastes like the Oil Braised Large Shrimp made by Boss Lin."

"Exactly. Many restaurants use tomato sauce for Oil Braised Large Shrimp, but my brother-in-law's skills are more authentic."

"..."

Listening to their discussion, and recalling the Scallion Roasted Large Shrimp he had made at noon, Lin Xu realized the connection between Shanghai cuisine and Lu cuisine was closer than he had imagined.

If one were to study the history of culinary development, this would indeed be an interesting topic.

Next time he saw his master, he could discuss this. He and Old Master Guo were planning a Cantonese cuisine museum, which might provide some inspiration.

While he was pondering this, Yan Lin and her friends upstairs were completely stunned.

"Wow, these shrimp are amazing!"

"Delicious! The shell is crispy, the meat is tender—such skilled craftsmanship."

"Today has really been an eye-opener!"

"Later, I must get the owner's business card. I'll make a reservation whenever I crave this; the flavor is just fantastic."

"..."

Among the friends, one plainly dressed, gentle, and refined-looking middle-aged man said, "I wonder if the owner here can make Four Happiness Roasted Glutinous Rice. If so, as long as my job doesn't transfer me, I'll make this place my cafeteria."

Four Happiness Roasted Glutinous Rice?

The others paused slightly, recognizing it as another old Shanghai dish. Could the chef here make it well?

Chapter 559: The Secret to Delicious Hand-Torn Cabbage! Geng Yiji, You've Skipped Class Again!

"Boss, your video account needs to be updated tomorrow."

At the booth, having finished her Fried Shrimp, Zeng Xiaoqi glanced at her phone's schedule and reminded Lin Xu.

Actually, there were still videos in stock for the bi-daily update. However, a couple of days ago, during the latest update, the company's operations department held an event allowing netizens to choose the next dish. To prevent things from going off course and ending up with bizarre dishes like intestine sashimi, they deliberately listed a few candidate dishes. Whichever received the most likes would be the one they made. The options included home-style dishes and popular restaurant dishes, such as braised chicken with soy sauce, Braised Tofu Skin, Pepper Meat Shreds, and hot and sour mung bean sprouts.

"I remember the deadline for voting is nine o'clock tonight. Has the result come out yet?"

Lin Xu ate a few more shrimp and then served himself a bowl of Pumpkin Soup, sipping it slowly.

Although the silky texture of the Pumpkin Soup is quite nice, I still prefer the millet pumpkin porridge Mom used to make, he thought. Unfortunately, since Mom and Dad went back today, I won't be able to enjoy it for a while.

Earlier, around three in the afternoon, his parents had made it back to the scenic area safely. His cousin, Chen Yuanyuan, even took a selfie with the mooncake she received to express her gratitude. From the crumbs of mooncake and bits of egg yolk at the corner of her mouth, it looked like his hapless cousin had eaten one before remembering to take a picture.

Shu Yun checked the online event page on her phone. "Although it's not yet the deadline, the result is pretty much decided."

"Oh? Which dish is in the lead?" Lin Xu was somewhat curious.

The operations team specifically asked for my opinion when deciding on the candidate dishes, making sure they were all popular choices before launching the event, he recalled. I thought it would be a close fight. How can there be a winner so soon?

Shu Yun held up her phone to show Lin Xu. "It's hand-torn cabbage. It has several thousand more likes than the second-place hot and sour mung bean sprouts. I really didn't expect so many people to share my love for this dish."

Zeng Xiaoqi ladled some of the sauce from the Braised Pork Belly onto her rice, shoveled a spoonful into her mouth, and said, "What a coincidence, I like it too! Boss Lin, let's record the hand-torn cabbage for the next episode. I'll steam more rice that day, and lunch will be sorted out. Ha, I'm really resourceful!"

We can't see how she's resourceful; we just think she can eat a lot... the members of the Fried Pork Chop squad silently grumbled in their hearts, unable to grasp what Director Zeng was so proud of. We might not be resourceful, but we're stationed at Lin Ji! We can eat whatever we want every day, unlike some people who only get to indulge during filming sessions.

After finishing his Pumpkin Soup, Lin Xu stood up and said, "Then let's have someone from the company come over to shoot it tomorrow morning and satisfy the netizens' requests."

His responsibilities were increasing. Although Lin Xu was capable of shooting videos himself, editing and filming still took up time, so he let the company handle it. To avoid holding things up, the operations department had even hired photographers and post-production editors whose style was very similar to Lin Xu's own 'portrait' aesthetic.

Dou Wenjing picked up a piece of Saddle Bridge Eel, took a bite, and sighed in appreciation of its rich and savory flavor. She responded to the boss's instructions, "Alright, I'll have someone come over earlier tomorrow to film the kitchen preparations. We can give the netizens a good look at how clean our kitchen really is."

After Lin Xu put down his bowl and went back to the kitchen, Shu Yun quickly finished the rice in her bowl, wiped her mouth, and said, "I guess they're about done eating upstairs. I better go check on them. Don't finish all the Jade Soup! Leave me a few sips. I'm counting on these cucumbers to help me slim down..."

She hurried to the upper floor.

Yan Lin and the others had indeed nearly finished eating and were currently chatting.

Shu Yun came in with a pot of Longjing Tea, pouring for them while instructing a server to clear the table and bring some fresh fruit platters and delicate tea Snacks.

These guests are clearly in the midst of a lively conversation and will likely continue for a while. Bringing some fruit and snacks is just right, Shu Yun thought.

With everything arranged, she was just about to excuse herself when Yan Lin spoke up, "Manager Shu, could you pass on a message to your boss?"

Having encountered many significant figures, I know from these words that this is a request not easy to make in person, Shu Yun thought. Having me relay the message will soften the atmosphere and, at the same time, spare them any awkwardness should the boss refuse directly.

She said with a congenial smile, "Of course, Director Yan. Please feel free to state any request. We at Lin Ji will try our best to satisfy every customer's needs."

Yan Lin pointed to the plainly dressed middle-aged man. "I'm not sure if Xiao Lin is skilled at making Four Happiness Roasted Glutinous Rice. If he is, my friend here is considering coming here to eat it every day."

No sooner had she finished speaking than the middle-aged man interjected, "Having been away from Shanghai for many years, I've never stopped missing the authentic taste of Four Happiness Roasted Glutinous Rice. I hope the owner of this establishment can fulfill my wish."

Maintaining a warm smile, Shu Yun said to the group, "I will go and ask on your behalf. Please wait a moment."

After she left, Yan Lin turned to the middle-aged man with a laugh. "Still craving good food despite being at Tsinghua University researching artificial intelligence! If I had known Professor Cui was such a foodie back then, I'd have let you eat more when you came to my home for meals as a kid."

Director Yan, now speaking in a soft Suzhou dialect, radiated the excitement and thrill of meeting a childhood friend, completely shed of her previous authority and imposing aura.

The professor, whose name was Cui Qingyuan, took a sip of his Longjing Tea. "It's really a love for gourmet food and life. You use words like 'greedy' and 'gluttonous,' which make me sound like a little kitten."

Chapter 560: The Secret to Delicious Hand-Torn Cabbage! Geng Yiji, You've Skipped Class Again! _2

At the mention of a cat, Dundun's hefty figure immediately popped into Yan Lin's mind.

"This shop has a cat; it's super cute," she said. "I didn't need to come this time, but I postponed several meetings just to see it."

She was talking about Dundun, but her companions were more interested in artificial intelligence.

Everyone knew it was a hot topic, a very big one, so they wanted to hear Professor Cui's opinion.

Just then, snacks and a fruit platter were brought in. Cui Qingyuan pinched a small piece of Black Sugar Shaqima, put it in his mouth, and spoke as he chewed, "Our country started early with artificial intelligence and is now in a leading position globally. However, Western countries have a greater accumulation of technology and a more solid foundation, so it's easy for them to leave us behind..."

He drank some tea and continued, "What we lack most in artificial intelligence is talent, especially those divergent, high-IQ talents. Just recruiting for my 'smart class' is enough of a headache. I really can't offer much advice on business matters... Oh, this Shaqima is fantastic! You all should try it..."

Nowadays, every Tom, Dick, and Harry wants to jump on the artificial intelligence bandwagon, but it's not that easy to get on board. One misstep could mean losing everything.

That's why Cui Qingyuan didn't encourage his friends to get involved. So many business tycoons have already failed in unfamiliar fields; why haven't you all learned from their lessons?

When Yan Lin saw him praising how tasty the Shaqima was, she picked up a piece and tried it. Her eyes lit up instantly.

"Exactly! It's fantastic. Everyone, try it... It's rare to find such delicious snacks."

She had seen people online praising Shaqima and Horse Hoof Cake, but snacks from the North are generally coarser, so Yan Lin hadn't thought they could surpass those from Shanghai.

But this taste proved her wrong.

The taste and texture of the snacks were impeccable; the egg aroma and the sweetness of the black sugar were perfectly combined. This shop is truly a hidden gem!

Most restaurants in the country establish themselves by relying on one or two signature dishes.

Some shops specialize in fish; others excel at chicken. Some are known for their braised dishes, while others have delicious staple foods. It's rare to find a place like Lin Ji where everything—cold dishes, hot dishes, main courses, and snacks—is flawless.

No wonder everyone is so enthusiastic about this restaurant.

It's truly worth visiting again and again.

Soon after, Shu Yun knocked and entered. She was carrying a serving of Horse Hoof Cake, and several waiters followed her, bearing some fruit yogurts.

"Miss Yan, our boss said that Four Happiness Roasted Glutinous Rice is no problem," she said. "But he's not sure if it would taste exactly as this guest described it. Four Happiness Roasted Glutinous Rice is a common home-style dish in Shanghai, and almost every family has its own version, so it's hard to guarantee the specific flavor."

Downstairs, as soon as Lin Xu heard someone wanted Four Happiness Roasted Glutinous Rice, he had immediately redeemed the Cooking Technique for it.

He gained a very clear understanding of this dish.

But it was precisely because he understood it so clearly that he had Shu Yun say this; everyone has different tastes, and there's no guarantee it would suit this particular guest.

Yan Lin said with a smile, "Don't worry, don't worry. My friend here is like a greedy cat; as long as it's made, he'll find it to his liking."

Cui Qingyuan gave a wry smile. This super-rich childhood playmate of mine, does she really think I'm such a glutton?

He had originally wanted to specify his requirements for the Four Happiness Roasted Glutinous Rice, but since Yan Lin had spoken, he just chimed in, "Miss Yan is right, I'm not picky."

After a pause, he added, "I have class during the day tomorrow, so I can't make it then. How about tomorrow evening? I'll come over to try it, and then I can walk back to Tsinghua University. It'll be perfect for digestion. Miss Yan gave me such a generous meal card; I can't let it go to waste."

Yan Lin smiled. "What's with all the 'Miss Yan'? We're friends here, not colleagues or bosses."

After leaving the private room, Shu Yun went downstairs, served herself a bowl of Jade Soup, and as she sipped, she remarked, "It's strange. I always feel Miss Yan looks at that guest a bit differently. Hearing them talk, it sounds like they were childhood sweethearts, but the man seems a bit reserved. I don't quite understand their relationship."

Zeng Xiaoqi shot her a look. "You should worry more about yourself. Aren't your parents pestering you to get married? Aren't your married friends trying to set you up? Aren't your classmates constantly posting pictures of their kids on social media?"

These words instantly extinguished Shu Yun's gossipy mood.

Unwilling to concede, she pointed at the Crucian Carp Tofu Soup on the table. "Director Zeng, drink more of this soup. Maybe your 34B will grow into a 34C."

Since you poked my sore spot, don't blame me for poking yours.

Bring it on! Let's trade barbs!

Shen Baobao quietly sipped her Pumpkin Soup, a smile playing on her lips, saying nothing.

TSK. It's like watching hens peck at each other!

「The next morning.」

Not long after breakfast, Dou Wenjing and the company's film crew arrived upstairs.

To facilitate video recording, a small kitchen had been specially set up next to the roast duck oven a few days prior. This way, the film crew wouldn't have to walk around the main kitchen and disturb others' work.

It also gave Shen Baobao and Chen Yan a place to practice whenever they impulsively wanted to cook or learn a new dish.

Although it was a small kitchen, it was fully equipped with a planetary engine-style stove, a complete set of stainless steel countertops, and a high-powered commercial-grade range hood.

"Now that it was confirmed he'd be making hand-shredded cabbage, netizens were eagerly waiting for him to share the recipe," Dou Wenjing said.

Last night, Dou Wenjing had specifically reviewed the online comments. Many people said that the hand-shredded cabbage they made at home ended up watery and tough, lacking the crispness and flavor of the restaurant version.

They were all eagerly hoping Lin Xu would share some tips for home cooking when he made the dish.

Lin Xu smiled and said, "After today's filming, my culinary peers are probably going to be cursing my name."