

## **Culinary 561**

Chapter 561: The Secret to Delicious Hand-Torn Cabbage! Geng Yiji, You've Skipped Class Again! \_3

The method for making hand-torn cabbage isn't difficult; as long as you grasp a few key points, anyone can become a great chef.

The reason it tastes so good in restaurants is simply because they've mastered these tricks.

As for the issue of a home kitchen's stove heat output, that actually isn't the main reason.

Because this dish doesn't require very high heat.

Once the filming equipment was ready, Lin Xu took a head of cabbage, a small piece of slightly fatty pork belly, as well as garlic, dried chili, and Sichuan peppercorns from the storage room.

The ingredients for the hand-torn cabbage were then prepared.

When cooking at home, you can also substitute lard for the pork belly.

"Hello everyone, I'm Lin Xu. Today, at the request of many netizens, I'll teach you how to make the restaurant's best-selling dish, hand-torn cabbage. Let's start by introducing the ingredients."

Once recording started, Lin Xu automatically entered teaching mode.

He detailed the principles of selecting ingredients, such as adding garlic slices to prevent the dried chili and Sichuan peppercorns from burning, and choosing pork belly to enhance the aroma of the dish, and so on.

After explaining, he started cooking.

First, he tore off the outer two layers of dirty leaves from the cabbage. Then, he used a kitchen knife to pat it all over a few times, making it easier to separate the layers.

After patting, he cut the cabbage open and tore off the leaves one by one.

"Here comes the first little trick for making cabbage: you don't need to wash it!"

During their growth, cabbages form the outer leaves first, and then the inner leaves. This is completely opposite to how Chinese cabbages grow, so there's no need to wash them.

The main reason why homemade cabbage dishes often end up watery is because of washing.

As for whether pesticides inside the leaves exceed safe levels, washing won't help, since theoretically, the content of these substances can't be significantly reduced by soaking in water.

Lin Xu detailed why cabbage doesn't need to be washed.

Then he picked up a leaf, tore the leafy parts from both sides of the stem by hand and placed them in a basket, setting the middle stem aside.

"Here's the second tip: the thick stems are hard to cook and contain a lot of fiber, so they need to be torn off. This step is actually where the dish gets its name."

Tearing off the stems and eating only the leafy parts allows for quick cooking and a crispier texture.

As for these stems, don't throw them away; put them in a pickle jar to make crisp, sweet-sour pickles, which are more enjoyable than frying them.

"In the next episode, I'll teach you how to make quick pickles using these stems, radish, and other ingredients, adding another refreshing cold dish to your dinner table."

With these stems handy, and a video on pickling due soon, it made sense.

So Lin Xu directly previewed the next episode during the show.

At the kitchen door, Dou Wenjing, hearing this, immediately opened her phone's notepad to jot this down, and sent a message to Shu Yun:

"The boss mentioned pickles in the video, so we'll likely have customers ordering our crisp pickles. Have all the front-of-house staff taste the shop's pickles at noon, so they can describe the flavor if customers ask."

Soon, Shu Yun, who was inspecting cleanliness, sent back a message:

"All right, Director Dou, I will arrange it."

In the kitchen, after Lin Xu had torn all the leaves from the stems, he set the cabbage aside and started preparing the other ingredients.

He sliced the pork belly into thin slices—the thinner, the better.

He smashed the garlic and put it in a bowl, then cut a few segments of dried chili into it, and finally pinched a small bunch of Sichuan peppercorns.

The Sichuan peppercorns added a strong numbing taste, making the cabbage even more delicious.

Once everything was ready, he began cooking.

Lin Xu set up the wok and said to the camera,

"The restaurant's stove is powerful, so this dish is usually made all at once in a single wok. However, home stoves have weaker heat, so it's better to cook it in stages. I'll demonstrate the staged method now as a reference for you."

First, he heated the wok, then poured in a spoonful of cold oil, swirled it to coat the entire surface, and then poured the excess oil out.

He then poured the torn cabbage leaves into the wok and stir-fried them over medium heat.

This step requires patience. You need to slowly stir-fry the cabbage leaves to draw out their moisture until they soften. This way, when you cook them further, they won't release excess liquid, and the cabbage's bitterness will be gone.

While stir-frying, he explained the key points of this step.

For instance, while stir-frying, you should continually pat the cabbage leaves with the spatula. This helps release moisture more quickly, allowing the cabbage to cook faster.

When the cabbage leaves had wilted, he removed them from the wok.

The wok didn't need more oil. He slowly stir-fried the sliced pork belly in the wok, rendering out the fat. This resulted in a dish that was fragrant, with pork slices that weren't greasy.

Restaurants rarely make purely vegetarian dishes.

When cooking green vegetables, they often add a bit of lard or a few thin slices of pork. This not only enhances the aroma but also gives the dish a richer, more satisfying texture.

Soon, a considerable amount of fat had rendered from the pork belly, and the surface of the meat had turned golden brown.

At that moment, he threw in the crushed garlic, dried chili segments, and Sichuan peppercorns and stir-fried them in the fat rendered from the pork belly.

These should be stir-fried for as long as possible, until the aroma of the dried chilies is fully released, after which he would add the cabbage and stir-fry it.

The cabbage cannot be seasoned immediately after adding it to the wok, or it will still release liquid.

He kept stir-frying until the fragrance of the cabbage was brought out, and then he started to season.

First, he drizzled one-third of a ladleful of Steamed Fish Sauce along the side of the wok. After stirring a few times, he added a small spoonful of salt.

The secret to why hand-torn cabbage in restaurants is so delicious lies in the Steamed Fish Sauce.

Steamed Fish Sauce has a richer soy fragrance and umami than Light Soy Sauce. Adding it to the cabbage imparts a subtle seafood-like flavor. This not only stimulates the appetite but also eliminates the need for Flavoring or Chicken Essence to enhance savoriness, making the dish healthier.

After seasoning, he stir-fried the cabbage for another thirty seconds, ensuring the seasoning coated the leaves well.

Then he scooped some vinegar and splashed it along the side of the wok; this was another secret to delicious cabbage.

Splashing in the vinegar at this stage will enhance the dish's fragrance and umami, making the cabbage taste even more delicious and appetizing.

Once the vinegar was cooked in, he stir-fried for another ten seconds to allow the excess vinegar scent to evaporate, then the dish was ready to be plated.

Standing at the kitchen door, Dou Wenjing was attracted by the tantalizing aroma and couldn't help but rub her stomach. It hadn't even been an hour since she had finished her breakfast, but the boss's cooking had triggered her cravings again.

Working with this handsome boss had many perks; the only downside was probably the risk of gaining weight.

It couldn't be helped; such delicious food was irresistible to anyone.

Just as she was about to finish taking photos and grab half a bun from the kitchen to taste the delicious hand-torn cabbage, Geng Lele suddenly appeared at the staircase, holding a paper bag from Ziqiang Shengjian.

"Wow, Doudou, what a coincidence! Here for Shengjian Buns, huh? I've found that Master Yang's Shengjian Bun skills are getting better and better, totally on par with Master Wang's."

Dou Wenjing looked at Little Mushroom Head in surprise. "Skipping classes again?"

Geng Yiji certainly wouldn't admit it. "No, no, I ranked first in my grade again, so the homeroom teacher awarded me a special holiday to relax my brain... What's that delicious smell? Did Lin Xu make something tasty again?"

"Yes, he made hand-torn cabbage today."

Dou Wenjing tried a Shengjian Bun from the paper bag, appreciating just how much her cousin's skills had improved.

Just after she finished the Shengjian Bun, Geng Lele handed her another:

"Doudou, eat another one. If you're full, no one will fight me for the cabbage."

Dou Wenjing was speechless.

Damn, she tricked me again!

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In the kitchen.

After the hand-torn cabbage was ready, as soon as it was placed on the workbench, two cameramen crowded over to start filming close-ups.

"It smells so good."

"Boss, your cooking is amazing!"

The cabbage on the plate was light green, its surface glistening with oil. A few drops of brown Steamed Fish Sauce clung to the rim, making it look very tempting.

After filming the close-ups, it was time for the taste-testing segment.

For an even better effect, Lin Xu specifically went to the adjacent main kitchen to get some rice.

He sat at the kitchen workbench and said to the camera, "Last time, I saw everyone saying that Dundun hadn't come to taste-test for a long time. It's not that I don't let him eat; it's just that the recent dishes have been too plain, too vegetarian. That little guy turns his nose up at them. Even if I brought him over, he'd just jump away."

He put on a woeful expression, like a parent whose child was going through a rebellious phase, his face full of helplessness. This made Geng Lele and Dou Wenjing, who were peeking from the doorway, laugh.

If you don't want your son to work, then he won't work. Why make excuses? Do you think we don't know you're a cat slave?

A few days ago, a pet supply company had approached Chen Yan, wanting Dundun to endorse their products for a handsome price.

It was a win-win proposition, but Lin Xu rejected it outright.

He only wanted Dundun to grow up happily. He didn't want Dundun to be like those pet bloggers who constantly stage photos and torment their cats over and over again for clicks.

They call them 'fur babies' all the time, but all they care about is business.

Holding a bowl of rice in front of the camera, Lin Xu picked up a piece of cabbage, tasted it, and remarked, "Hmm, fresh, fragrant, and crisp. Those who like it spicy can add more dried chili. This dish should highlight the toasted aroma of the chili. The numbing sensation shouldn't be too strong; just a hint is fine."

He explained the key points of the dish as he ate. When he finished the rice in his bowl, the filming paused.

As soon as the camera was turned off, Geng Lele ran in excitedly with a bowl of rice, exclaiming, "WAHAHA, better lucky than early! I caught the hand-torn cabbage just in time! Let me help you taste the seasoning, Brother Xu."

Lin Xu looked at this quirky Little Mushroom Head and smiled helplessly.

No need to ask, she skipped class again.

I really wish The Buddha could keep this girl in line. If she keeps skipping school, what if she becomes a problem teen?

He said with a smile, "With so much rice, will you still have room for lunch?"

"I can't worry about that now! You made it so fragrant, I have to dig in and satisfy my craving."

Geng Lele took her bowl, sat on the stool Lin Xu had just vacated, grabbed a pair of clean chopsticks from the side, and then picked up a piece of cabbage and put it in her mouth.

The moment the savory, crispy cabbage entered her mouth, her eyes lit up with delighted surprise. "Wow, this is the first time I've had such delicious hand-torn cabbage! Skipping class for this was totally worth it!"

Lin Xu: "..."

That's what I call a self-confession.

He gathered the cabbage cores from the workbench into a basket, planning to film the pickled vegetable segment later.

Since he'd mentioned it in the video, he figured he might as well use the current downtime to film it.

After all, the method for quick-pickled vegetables was simple and easy to master. Even someone with no cooking experience could learn it; you could say it's so easy, anyone with hands can do it.

The two cameramen were also adjusting their cameras and lighting.

The pickling would mainly be done at the workbench, so the camera mounted above the stove had to be moved, and the fill lights also needed repositioning.

At this time, Geng Lele was still immersed in the deliciousness of the cabbage.

She shouted toward the doorway, "Doudou, hurry in! This cabbage is so delicious... No, wait, I have to take a picture and post some 'early poison' online."

After saying that, she took out her phone, aimed at the cabbage on the table to take a close-up shot, making sure her large bowl of rice was also prominent in the shot.

Mhm, dishes like this that go well with rice really need rice to make them even more appetizing.

After taking the picture, Geng Lele posted it in their group chat and on the Lin Ji's Food online topic page.

"Sampling Brother Xu's hand-torn cabbage. A big bowl of rice like this should be enough to properly taste it, right? 😊"

In the group chat, Shen Baobao, who was slacking off at work, saw the post and her stomach immediately rumbled.

"@Lin Xu, Xubao, I want to eat hand-torn cabbage for lunch."

Chen Yan also quickly chimed in, "@Lin Xu, brother-in-law, make some extra hand-torn cabbage for lunch. I've managed to secure a major feature on a short-video platform for you; it's guaranteed to make your follower count shoot up."

Posting such tempting food at this hour wasn't ideal, as everyone had just eaten breakfast and wasn't particularly hungry.

However, if the photo was good enough, stirring the appetites of these young folks wouldn't be a problem.

Led by Shen Jiayue and Chen Yan, others also expressed their desire for the hand-torn cabbage, strongly requesting Lin Xu make extra for lunch. Even Qiang Bro, who was in Xi'erqi, wanted to find a delivery person to go and buy some.

And on the Lin Ji's Food topic page, the comments on this post were even crazier:

"Seriously, Officer? Posting food temptation this early?"

"You used to post your food temptations at eleven. That was tough, but we could just about hold out until lunch. Now you've moved it up to nine! How am I supposed to get through the next few hours?"

"I thought it was the Boss Lady posting the temptation, didn't expect it to be the High Priest!"

"Gotta say, this hand-torn cabbage looks incredible. That huge bowl of rice would probably only half-fill me."

"Now that we have hand-torn cabbage, can we get a Crystal Vermicelli Pot or Minced Meat with Vermicelli too? These 'rice killers' are best when they commit their crimes as a group!"

"Rice: One 'killer' wasn't enough for you? Now you want them to team up against me?!"

"..."

While Geng Lele was happily scrolling through the comments, she noticed everyone else was busy. So, plate in one hand and rice bowl in the other, she slipped out of the kitchen.

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Hmm, although I can't be of much help, I'll try not to hold anyone back.

Just as I came out of the kitchen, I saw Dou Wenjing talking business on the phone. The beautiful general manager wore a spotless white shirt tucked into a gray skirt, beneath which her slender legs were wrapped in high-quality stockings. Visually, Manager Dou had fulfilled everyone's fantasy of a gorgeous female boss. But at that moment, this lovely lady boss held an out-of-place bun in her hand, her eyes glued to the plate in Geng Lele's hands.

While listening to the other party on the call, she mouthed to Geng Lele, "Save some for me, don't eat it all up!"

Little Mushroom Head immediately nodded vigorously and then gestured an "OK" to Manager Dou. "Don't worry," she declared, "I'll make sure it's all eaten up, not even the sauce will be left!"

Approaching the booth, she set down the plate and the rice, then took a mouthful of cabbage with her chopsticks and hastily scooped up a mouthful of rice. The salty, fragrant, and crunchy cabbage paired with the perfectly cooked rice was an exquisite match—so delicious!

While she was eating, Shu Yun, having just finished checking the cleanliness of a third-floor private room, came downstairs. Seeing Geng Lele eating the cabbage, she wanted to try some too. She glanced at Manager Dou, who was on the call, and noticed the bun gripped in her hand. Then, Shu Yun walked over in her high heels—CLICK, CLICK, CLICK—and took the bun.

She tore the bun in half, stuffed one half back into Dou Wenjing's hand, and then, holding the other half, she quickly walked toward the booth. As she passed the sterilizer, she remembered to grab a pair of chopsticks from it.

"Quick, Sister Yun, this cabbage is super tasty!"

Shu Yun sat down, eagerly picked up a mouthful of cabbage with her chopsticks to taste, and her face instantly lit up with a delighted expression. "Indeed, it's super delicious! Do we need to save some for Manager Dou?"

"No need," Geng Lele replied. "Sister Dou just told me not to waste food and to eat it all. I promised her I would."

"If she's not eating, then we really shouldn't waste it, especially since it's made by the boss himself. Others might not even be able to get a taste, even if they paid."

「In the kitchen.」

Lin Xu organized the cabbage stalks and then went to the storage area to bring back half a basket of ingredients suitable for making quick pickles. There were white radishes, yellow radishes, carrots, watermelon radishes, celtuce, celery, bell peppers, and beauty peppers, among other ingredients.

Yesterday, it was fried pork chops because of a bit of spicy soy sauce; today, it's quick pickles because of some cabbage stalks. These past two days felt like he was constantly 'making dumplings just for the vinegar'—getting drawn into bigger tasks from small starting points... Lin Xu muttered, arranging the ingredients on the worktable.

Feeling that there weren't enough cabbage stalks, he went to the adjacent kitchen area and cut half a cabbage.

Quick pickles weren't picky about ingredients; basically, any firm-textured stems and leaves could be used. However, for a more aesthetically pleasing and attractive presentation, a variety of colorful ingredients were generally chosen. Take radishes, for example: white, yellow, and red ones, combined with green and red peppers—all mixed, they were visually very appealing.

Beyond these vegetables, some other flavorings were also necessary, like bagged pickled chilies or wild mountain chilies, as well as ginger, garlic, coriander, and so on. These would make the pickles taste even more delicious and enticing.

After all the main and supplementary ingredients were ready, he washed the vegetables he would be using. Then, the recording began.

Quick pickles go by many names. For instance, in the Sichuan and Chongqing regions, they are commonly called "jump-in pickles," implying they're ready to eat almost as soon as the vegetables "dive" into the brine. Other places call them "instant pickles," "lazy pickles," or "simple pickles." The names might differ, but the methods were largely the same: ingredients were first salted to draw out moisture, then soaked in a specially prepared liquid. They were typically ready to eat after one night, making it very convenient.

After a brief introduction, Lin Xu boiled a pot of water on the stove, adding Sichuan peppercorns, star anise, and a few bay leaves to make a simple Sichuan peppercorn water. Using Sichuan peppercorn water for quick pickles could enhance their flavor.

The Sichuan peppercorn water didn't need to boil for too long. About five minutes was sufficient, then the heat could be turned off to let it cool. This brine had to be completely cooled before use. Otherwise, the resulting pickles would become soft and mushy, losing their crispy texture.

Once the Sichuan peppercorn water was ready, Lin Xu started processing the ingredients. All the radishes were cut into small, consistently sized strips, about 1.5 to 2 centimeters square in cross-section and five to six centimeters long. This not only made them easier to pickle but also ideal for plating. Celery was cut into sections. Cabbage leaves were first torn off one by one, then stacked and sliced.

Once all the ingredients were cut, they were placed in a basin. Lin Xu sprinkled them with half a ladleful of salt and then began to mix them by hand, ensuring each piece was evenly coated. The salt's dehydrating effect was immediately obvious. As soon as he started mixing, water began to seep out at the bottom of the basin. After mixing thoroughly, the ingredients were set aside for the salt to draw out their moisture.

Taking advantage of this time, he started to prepare the seasonings for the pickles. A bowl of washed and drained small hot chilies were cut in half lengthwise, ginger was sliced, garlic was halved, and coriander was cut into small pieces.

"These seasonings aren't absolutely necessary," Lin Xu explained to the camera as he worked. "You can still make tangy, sweet, and crunchy pickles without them. However, adding them will enhance the flavor, so I hope you won't skimp when making them. After all, who wants to eat imperfect pickles, right?"

After preparing these seasonings, the vegetables still needed more time for the salt to draw out their moisture. So, he signaled to the cameraman to pause filming, intending to resume after the process was complete.

Washing his hands, he stepped out of the kitchen and saw Geng Lele sitting at the booth, rubbing her belly, looking thoroughly stuffed.

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There was an empty bowl and an empty plate in front of her.

Aside from a few Sichuan peppercorns and dried chilies, the plate was devoid of even a hint of soup, making it impossible to guess what dish it had held.

"Just a serving of cabbage, was it necessary to eat until you're stuffed like this?"

As Lin Xu spoke, Dou Wenjing finally finished her phone call.

Clutching her steamed bun and clacking over in her high heels, she headed towards the booth. As she was walking, Geng Lele spoke up, "Originally, I was happy after eating the meal Sister Dou ordered for

me, but then Sister Yun came and fought over it with me, almost leaving me without enough... Sister Doudou, look how clean I ate, I didn't waste a bit."

Dou Wenjing was utterly bewildered.

"I meant you should have saved some for me!"

Just one phone call, and now I only have half a steamed bun left! The hand-torn cabbage I was craving has been completely devoured, so much so that I can't even dip my bun in any leftover sauce... What kind of tragic life is this?

Geng Lele was completely stunned.

So that's what she meant? Good thing I didn't understand!

Lin Xu didn't know whether to laugh or cry at these two. "How about I just fry another portion? It's not anything valuable. Do you two really have to be like this?"

One was engrossed in a ten to twenty-minute phone call yet couldn't stop thinking about the food, while the other was already full yet kept stuffing herself—anyone would think they hadn't eaten in generations.

"It's so delicious... It's your fault for making it taste so good..." Dou Wenjing muttered. She pulled apart a seam in the half of the steamed bun she held, then opened the jar of Chili Oil on the table, scooped up some with the small spoon inside, and drizzled it into the opened seam of the bun.

When it seemed like enough, she squeezed the bun and took a bite.

Mmm, delicious!

Although she hadn't gotten to eat the hand-torn cabbage, she couldn't very well send the steamed bun back to the kitchen. Chewing on the bun, she looked at Lin Xu and asked, "Are the pickled vegetables ready?"

"Not yet, the water still needs to be drawn out from them."

"Then this is a good time to report something. Brother Qiang's company is hosting a Mid-Autumn group meal, and at his strong insistence, the company's boss plans to use our restaurant's dishes for the event."

A Mid-Autumn group meal? That's good news.

He loved this kind of group meal business. It wasn't too much trouble but was quite profitable.

Plus, group meal bookings usually came from regular customers they had dealt with before, making the business easier to handle.

Dou Wenjing took a bite of her steamed bun and continued, "But we don't have a dedicated banquet hall, and their company office is relatively cramped, so they can't have all their employees gather for a meal. That's where the issue lies."

No venue?

In a place like Yanjing, where every inch of land is worth its weight in gold, finding a relatively large space was indeed not easy.

Lin Xu asked, "So, what's your plan?"

"I'm thinking of renting the tutoring center space upstairs in the building next door. We can do a simple renovation to turn it into a banquet hall and maybe add a small stage or something. The rent isn't high, and even if we only use it to host group meal clients, we'd still make a profit."

Lin Xu didn't understand these business matters, but it was true that many of the tutoring centers upstairs along Yingchun Street were vacant, and landlords were practically renting them out at bargain prices.

Renting one to set up a banquet hall exclusively for group meal clients seemed quite suitable.

He said to Dou Wenjing, "You decide, Sister Wenjing. I trust your judgment."

After all, there were funds in the account now, and the restaurant really did lack a space that could accommodate ten or so tables at once.

They might as well take this opportunity to get it sorted out.

Hearing Lin Xu's words, Dou Wenjing stuffed the remaining half of the steamed bun into her mouth. "Then I'll contact Zheng Xiaoguang to start the renovations. If we only do basic renovations, it can be ready in a few days and won't delay the Mid-Autumn group meal."

With that said, she clacked down the stairs in her high heels, bustling with energy.

Back in the small kitchen, the vegetables in the basin had nearly finished drawing out their water, and a considerable amount had collected at the bottom.

Although drawing out water was necessary for pickling, it shouldn't be overdone; otherwise, the vegetables would lose their crisp texture and become soggy.

Using a colander, he scooped the ingredients out of the basin, then added half a basin of cooled boiled water to rinse the vegetables that had their water drawn out, twice.

At this point, the ingredients had a high salt content, so they needed to be rinsed before being put into the pickling jar; otherwise, the pickled vegetables would turn out like ordinary salted vegetables.

From this rinsing step onward, the pickling jar, as well as all ingredients and seasonings added to it, had to be kept free from any contact with raw water or oil, to prevent the pickled vegetables from spoiling.

He placed the vegetables, now rinsed with cooled boiled water, into a glass jar, then added the prepared ingredients such as small hot chili peppers, ginger, and garlic.

Finally, he poured in a large spoonful of White Vinegar and three large spoonfuls of dark red Zhe vinegar.

The dark red Zhe vinegar was added for aesthetic appeal, lending the pickled vegetables a delicate rouge color, which was prettier than using White Vinegar alone.

Next, he added salt and twice as much sugar as salt.

Quick pickles were prized for their sweet and sour flavor and crisp texture, so a generous amount of sugar was necessary.

After that, he opened a packet of pickled wild chilies and poured both the chilies and their brine right into the jar.

The brine from the pickled wild chilies contained fermenting bacteria that pickles thrived on, allowing them to develop an enticing flavor in a short amount of time.

After adding them, he filled the jar to the top with Sichuan peppercorn water.

Then he covered the jar, sealed its rim with water, and set it aside to pickle.

"Remember to come over tomorrow morning to film the unsealing of the jar and the tasting. That will complete the video," Lin Xu said, as he moved the jar to a corner and instructed the two cameramen.

"Okay, Boss!"

"We'll come early and won't delay the recording."

After the two cameramen left, Lin Xu did a quick round in the main kitchen. Everyone was busy with their assigned tasks; the entire back kitchen was bustling but orderly.

Having checked everything, he was just about to go downstairs to the braised goods section when Chezi suddenly approached him. "Boss, the roasted gluten you asked me to buy has arrived. But it looks just like oil gluten. Why is it called roasted gluten?"

Identical?

Lin Xu smiled and said, "They're not the same. There's a clear difference between the two..."

Chapter 565: Top Five Rice Killers? Salted Fish Eggplant Stew is a Must-Have!

"What's the difference? They look the same to me."

Not only was Chezai curious, but Wei Qian also came over to have a look.

While Lin Xu was recording the program, Old Huang had brought over some roasted gluten and salted fish—ingredients less commonly used in Beijing—and Wei Qian had even helped Chezai move a box.

But when they opened it, they found the roasted gluten to be identical to wheat gluten.

It was both honeycombed and irregular in texture, and yellowish-brown in color. Isn't this just the type of gluten you can buy anywhere in the market, the kind that's steamed after being fermented?

There are three types of gluten available in the market.

The first type is the kind used for grilled gluten skewers, which has a smooth and slightly chewy texture; this is made by directly boiling washed raw gluten, without a fermentation step.

The second type is wheat gluten puffs, which are ping-pong-ball-sized gluten balls fried from raw gluten, also without fermentation.

The third type is the honeycombed wheat gluten often seen in night market stalls and small eateries' cold dishes, which is made by adding yeast to raw gluten and then steaming it.

The roasted gluten that they now had in the store looked almost exactly like the third type of gluten.

So, hearing Lin Xu say they were different immediately stoked Wei Qian's curiosity.

"Although roasted gluten and wheat gluten are mainly similar in composition, they differ in raw materials. Gluten is made by washing wheat flour with water, whereas roasted gluten is made by washing whole wheat flour with water, giving it an extra layer of bran—the wheat's outer shell."

Lin Xu took the roasted gluten and sniffed it, then added, "In traditional methods, roasted gluten needs to ferment naturally before it is steamed. So, roasted gluten has a strong sour taste, and it needs to be fried before it can be eaten."

The roasted gluten Old Huang brought was good; it had a strong sour smell. It was likely the authentic Four Happiness Roasted Gluten that Professor Cui wanted to eat.

After examining the roasted gluten, Lin Xu checked the two boxes of salted fish that had been delivered.

"He said these are all top-grade Plum-flavored Salted Fish, hard to come by even in the two Guang regions... I just opened a pack, and why does it smell so bad?"

Chezai's expression was somewhat conflicted. The ingredients delivered today were either sour or smelly—could they really be used to make delicious dishes?

Lin Xu said with a smile, "Roasted gluten is a memory for many people in the Yangtze River Delta area; outsiders might not be used to it. But this salted fish is truly a delicacy. The Salted Fish Eggplant Stew it makes can rank in the top five rice killers."

Chezai opened his mouth, hardly believing his own ears. The famous Salted Fish Eggplant Stew was made from this stinky, sticky Plum-flavored Salted Fish? That's truly surprising.

He curiously asked, "Boss, what are the top five rice killer dishes?"

Wei Qian, who was nearby, said, "You don't know? What kind of chef are you? Listen up, the top five rice killer dishes are acknowledged to be Fried Pork, Fish-flavored Meat Shreds, Salted Fish Eggplant Stew, Tomato Stew Beef Brisket, Stir-fried Pork with Chili Peppers, Boiled Beef in Hot Sauce, Dry Pot Fatty Intestines..."

He rattled off more than ten dishes in one breath, making the already somewhat bewildered Chezai even more perplexed. "Is that the top five?"

Lin Xu patted the young man on the shoulder. "In our country, there are more than ten universities considered to be in the top five. It's about the same with the number of 'rice killer' dishes."

He looked at the salted fish in the boxes; indeed, they smelled bad, but this was the source of the "Plum" fragrance.

Plum-flavored Salted Fish, to be precise, should be called moldy-flavored salted fish. Like Dried Vegetable and moldy tofu, these are fermented and pickled ingredients evolved by the Ke Family during their migrations.

But the character for "mold" sounds unpleasant, and the smell can be off-putting, hence the euphemism "Plum-flavored."

Since the salted fish had arrived, they might as well make a few Salted Fish Eggplant Stews for lunch and give it a try.

Hmm, just eating hand-torn cabbage is somewhat bland; adding a flavorful and rich-tasting Salted Fish Eggplant Stew would greatly improve the meal.

Thinking this, Lin Xu said to Chezai, "Wash a few clay pots later; we'll cook Salted Fish Eggplant Stew for lunch to test the taste. If it's good, we'll start serving it in the restaurant this afternoon."

"Okay, boss."

At the kitchen doorway, upon hearing that Salted Fish Eggplant Stew would be served for lunch, Geng, who had just stuffed his belly full of rice, was speechless. "..."

You should have said so earlier! If I'd known, I would have endured my hunger and saved some dishes for Sister Doudou. Poor Sister Doudou didn't even get to taste that delicious hand-torn cabbage. If she had eaten it, then I could have had more of the Salted Fish Eggplant Stew for lunch. What a miscalculation!

Geng lamented, pounding his chest and stomping his feet.

「Meanwhile.」

Tan Yajun found Shen Jiayue and said, "Yueyue, let's go to Lin Ji together for lunch. I have a flight to Yu Zhou at 2:00 PM. After lunch, I'll have to head to the airport for a research meeting."

"Okay, Uncle Tan. What would you like for lunch? I'll have Xubao make it for you."

Tan Yajun said cheerfully, "No need, no need. I've heard from netizens that Lin Ji's employee meal is the tastiest and most abundant. I'll experience it today at noon and see just how delicious it can be."

The buzz on the internet had piqued the Auditor's curiosity.

He planned to personally investigate just how delicious Lin Ji's employee meals were. If they were as good as rumored, he would start driving to Lin Ji for lunch from then on.

「Around ten in the morning.」

Having finished all the prep work, Lin Xu began preparing the Salted Fish Eggplant Stew.

This dish required simple ingredients: besides purple-skinned long eggplants and Plum-flavored Salted Fish, only a small piece of Pork Fat was needed.

Although called Salted Fish Eggplant Stew, in this dish, the salted fish only played a role in enhancing the umami and flavor; the real source of aroma was lard.

Chapter 566: Top Five Rice Killers? Salted Fish Eggplant Stew is a must! \_2

Pork lard not only adds fragrance but also gives eggplant a rich, meat-like texture. Many rice lovers are smitten with the enchanting flavor that comes from the combination of pork lard and eggplant.

Lin Xu took some salted fish from the storeroom. Since all the staff were eating that day, a larger quantity of the dish was needed, which meant using more salted fish. Normally, a small piece of salted fish is enough for one Salted Fish Eggplant Stew. The slimy Fish Skin on the outside was removed, then the fish was filleted, and the backbone and bones were discarded, leaving only the dense Fish. This type of salted fish was usually made from Mackerel, which has a dense and tender texture ideal for making Salted Fish Eggplant Stew.

In the Northern Region, there was a custom of stewing eggplant with salted Spanish mackerel. The flesh of the Spanish mackerel was tender and became mushy upon stewing; combined with eggplant in the dish, the fish enveloped the surface of the eggplant, lending it an entirely different texture and flavor.

Lin Xu thought that he might buy some to try when he had time. He wanted to see whether the Northern Spanish mackerel stewed with eggplant or the Southern Salted Fish Eggplant Stew was more appetizing and tastier with rice.

Lin Xu cut the salted fish into granules slightly smaller than peanuts and set them aside in a bowl. He then took a chunk of Pork Fat, weighing a little over a pound, and finely minced it. This Pork Fat was the soul of the Salted Fish Eggplant Stew; once the lard was rendered, the Pork Fat turned into golden granules that were mixed into the soft, mushy cooked eggplant to be eaten. The texture, that flavor—it was just fantastic with rice!

If preparing Pork Fat is too troublesome, one can use pork lard directly. However, lard lacks something compared to Pork Fat rendered into granules. While lard offers good aroma and texture, it doesn't have the surprising delight of Pork Fat granules melting in the mouth.

Once the Pork Fat was ready, Ma Zhiqiang brought over the washed eggplants. With many people eating that day, a whole basket of eggplants had been prepared.

The eggplants were peeled and cut into ten-centimeter-long, two-centimeter-square sticks. There was no need to wash the cut eggplants or dust them with flour; they could go straight into the hot oil for deep-frying. The secret to delicious eggplant lay in using plenty of oil; most eggplant dishes required deep-frying for the taste and texture to reach the next level.

When frying, the oil in the wok needed to be hot, about 70% of its smoking point. This way, the eggplant skins would crisp upon contact, preventing oil from seeping inside. If the oil was too cool—below 50% hot, for example—the eggplant sticks would absorb a lot of oil like a sponge. Later, during stewing, this oil would seep out, making the dish excessively greasy.

Patience was key when frying eggplant sticks; they had to be fried until the surface turned golden brown and they felt light and airy when stirred with a spoon. That was how one knew they were thoroughly fried. Only then was the unique aroma of the eggplant completely brought out by the frying.

The fried eggplant sticks were scooped out with a slotted spoon and immediately immersed in clean water. This was to remove excess grease, ensuring that the resulting eggplant stew would be delicious and not too oily.

High-end dishes relied on ingredients to stand out, while ordinary dishes relied on details. The Salted Fish Eggplant Stew had remained a bestseller precisely because these little details made the dish perfect, and customers wanted to eat it again and again.

After frying the eggplant sticks, Lin Xu poured out the oil from the wok. He ladled in a scoop of used oil. Used oil referred to oil that had already fried ingredients several times; it was relatively murky and unsuitable for stir-frying, only for flash-frying some strongly flavored ingredients.

Once the oil was hot, he added the prepared salted fish granules to the wok for frying. To enhance the dish with the fragrance of the salted fish, the Fish had to be fried to eliminate any musty smell from it

and to use the high-temperature oil to transform any faint off-odor into umami. That was the secret to the delicious taste of Salted Fish Eggplant Stew.

When the salted fish granules were first added to the wok, they were not to be stirred, because the heat would cause moisture to leach out from the Fish, making it soft and sticky. They needed to be fried in the wok for a while until their surfaces were dry before he could shake the wok to flip them. He fried the small pieces of salted fish until they were golden brown on the surface, then scooped them out with a slotted spoon and set them aside.

The oil in the wok now had to be discarded. This oil was not only very salty but also had an unpleasant fishy odor, making it unsuitable for any other dish.

He washed the wok clean and placed it back on the stove. Once hot, he seasoned it with oil. After pouring out the oil used for seasoning the wok, he added no extra oil. Instead, he poured the minced Pork Fat into the wok, spread it out, and rendered it over high heat.

Soon, the grease began to ooze from the Pork Fat. The finely minced Pork Fat pieces also gradually fried to a golden hue.

Ma Zhiqiang exclaimed, "Damn, no wonder Salted Fish Eggplant Stew is so delicious! With so much Pork Fat added, even cabbage stems would smell heavenly and make one drool."

While Lin Xu was busy, Zhiqiang stood by, watching. Seeing the Pork Fat in the wok, he, being adept at making large-pot dishes, finally understood the secret behind the deliciousness of Salted Fish Eggplant Stew. This dish might seem to only have eggplant as a vegetable and just a tiny bit of cured salted fish as an ingredient, but who would have thought that it also contained Pork Fat! Many people like Salted Fish Eggplant Stew, partly because they think it's a vegetarian dish. Yet, in truth, this so-called vegetarian dish has a higher calorie count than most meat dishes.

Lin Xu said with a smile, "To make vegetarian dishes delicious, fat is essential. Even high-end ingredients like Matsutake need to be cooked with fat to achieve the best flavor and texture."

When the Pork Fat pieces turned a crispy golden brown, Lin Xu added the prepared garlic, ginger, and Thai chilies to the wok to stir-fry. These aromatics, when flash-fried in the pork lard, would remove any off-flavors from the lard, making the dish's final aroma even richer.

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The aromatics sizzled, releasing their fragrance, as Light Soy Sauce and Dark Soy Sauce were poured in, along with some oyster sauce, a small spoonful of salt, and a small spoonful of sugar. After stirring everything evenly, the salted fish bits were added.

Two large bowls of water were added to simmer, allowing the savory flavors of the aromatics and the salted fish to meld into the broth.

The heat was turned up high. The eggplant strips, which had been soaking in water, were drained and added to the wok. After stirring them well, the lid was placed on the wok to braise for two to three minutes, allowing the broth to penetrate the eggplant.

Three minutes later, upon lifting the lid, a rich, savory fragrance wafted out from the wok, causing several kitchen assistants nearby to involuntarily swallow.

By then, the broth in the wok had visibly thickened considerably, and the eggplant strips were tender, quivering in the simmering liquid.

Paired with the rich fragrance, the dish became even more tempting.

At this point, the eggplant was exceptionally soft. Stirring it with a spoon could easily cause the pieces to break apart and spoil the dish's presentation. Therefore, it was necessary to toss the contents by shaking the wok instead.

Grasping the handle, he vigorously swirled the wok, causing the contents to tumble along its inner walls. This method not only achieved the purpose of stirring but also accelerated the evaporation of moisture, making the broth even thicker.

Once the broth had reduced sufficiently, the wok was taken off the stove.

Ma Zhiqiang had already heated several clay pots on an adjacent stove. The contents of the wok were transferred into these. The piping-hot clay pots subjected the dish to a second heating, intensifying its fragrance even more.

He seized the moment to sprinkle a handful of chopped Scallions over the dish, placed the lid on the clay pot, and it was ready to be served.

Efficiency is paramount in restaurants, so it's now rare to cook these types of stewed dishes entirely in clay pots from start to finish. Typically, the dish is nearly complete before being transferred to a preheated clay pot.

These portions were for the staff and were served in large clay pots. If this were a new item on the menu for customers, it would be served in smaller clay pots to avoid impacting the sales of other dishes.

After preparing the Salted Fish Eggplant Stew, Lin Xu washed the wok and then made the hand-torn cabbage with the ingredients he had prepared earlier.

Just as lunch was ready, Shen Baobao led Tan Yajun and his assistant, Yuan Fei, into the restaurant.

"What a wonderful smell! What delicious food are you making?"

A food enthusiast, Tan Yajun was immediately captivated by the rich aroma upon entering.

Shen Baobao was also curious. She only knew that hand-torn cabbage was being prepared today, but is the fragrance of hand-torn cabbage usually this intense?

Shu Yun, who was organizing customer information at the reception desk, smiled and said, "Today, we're having Salted Fish Eggplant Stew. The boss cooked it himself. You can all go upstairs to try it."

During staff meals, the servers ate on the first floor while the kitchen staff ate on the second. They dined separately so that the female employees with larger appetites wouldn't feel self-conscious eating in front of the chefs.

"Salted Fish Eggplant Stew? That's a classic dish that goes perfectly with rice!"

Tan Yajun's face lit up with a delighted surprise. Good gracious, I always thought the online jokes about Lin Ji's staff meals being the best were just that—jokes. Turns out, they're true! This trip was totally worth it. In the future, if I'm free, I should definitely come with my grandniece to the restaurant more often. This is how you get to eat the best food Lin Ji has to offer!

The group went upstairs, where the meal was already laid out on a table.

Dou Wenjing, who had recently rented the adjacent space, was sitting in a booth discussing the banquet hall's decor style with Zheng Xiaoguang, who was there to take measurements.

As for Geng Lele, having run a couple of errands to the company for Dou Wenjing, she felt she had worked up an appetite again. She was now gazing intently at the clay pot on the table, eagerly anticipating the start of lunch.

The diced salted fish and eggplant in that clay pot are practically taunting me! It'll be a crime against my taste buds if I don't devour them!

"Look, the missus is here! Let's eat!" someone exclaimed.

There was a sink for the staff to wash their hands by the kitchen door. Tan Yajun and Yuan Fei washed up, then joined Shen Jiayue at the booth.

When Lin Xu emerged from the kitchen with a large bowl of rice, the meal officially began.

When the lid of the clay pot was lifted, the rich aroma that billowed out drew gasps of appreciation from everyone.

The scent was simply intoxicating.

Tan Yajun held a bowl of rice and said with a smile, "I was planning to eat light since I have a flight soon—just one bowl of rice, I thought. But smelling this, I'm not sure even two bowls will be enough!"

When a 'rice killer' dish like this appeared, doubling one's usual rice intake was practically mandatory.

Lin Xu said, "Uncle Tan, please eat as much as you like. We definitely have more than enough rice today."

He picked up some of the sauce-drenched eggplant with his chopsticks and placed it in his bowl. Mixing it with the rice, he took a bite. The distinctive umami of the salted fish, the aroma of the lard, and the inherent fragrance of the eggplant exploded in his mouth.

The eggplant pieces were studded with tiny cubes of rendered pork fat. Paired with rice, the taste was absolutely divine.

It truly is a rice killer. When Uncle Tan said he might eat two bowls, I thought he was exaggerating. But after tasting this, I think I might need three bowls myself! This dish, paired with rice, was incredibly satisfying.

After a few bites of the Salted Fish Eggplant Stew, a mouthful of the hand-torn cabbage cut through the richness, its salty, savory flavor once again making the rice disappear at an alarming rate.

When such 'rice killer' dishes teamed up, the rice supply dwindled rapidly.

"This is so delicious! The hand-torn cabbage with the Salted Fish Eggplant Stew is a match made in heaven! Xu Bao, I'll need another bowl of rice soon!" Geng Lele exclaimed.

"Delicious, truly a delight! The boss's cooking skills are incredible!" another person chimed in.

"Wow, this is leagues better than the food at our design firm! If it weren't so far, I'd eat here every day. This feels like truly living; other meals are just about surviving," commented Zheng Xiaoguang.

"..."

The others were also eating with gusto, their mouths gleaming with oil, all showering Lin Xu with praise for his culinary skills.

Lin Xu looked around curiously and asked, "How come Sister Yan isn't here yet?"

Geng Lele, her mouth full and cheeks puffed out like a hamster's, replied, "She went to the TV station. Apparently, she needs to renegotiate the online broadcasting rights for the food show. She said she'll come eat after she's done and told us to save some cabbage for her."

Chen Yan probably doesn't know we made Salted Fish Eggplant Stew today; she's only thinking about the hand-torn cabbage, Lin Xu mused.

Shen Baobao immediately said, "In that case, let's finish all this eggplant. It would be such a waste if my cousin doesn't eat it, right?"

Lin Xu: "..."

No wonder you and Geng Lele get along so well. It's a good thing my wife's cousin isn't here, or she'd be lecturing us about 'plastic sisterhood' again.

He took a quick bite of rice and, looking at Dou Wenjing, asked, "Have you two reached a decision yet?"

"Pretty much," Dou Wenjing replied. "We can start with the plumbing and electrical work this afternoon and aim to finish it within three days."

For the banquet hall, she planned to lay carpet directly on the floor. This would save money on flooring and also cut down significantly on time. The walls, lighting, and other fixtures would also be kept simple.

While eating, Tan Yajun suddenly asked, "Xiao Xu, the Mid-Autumn Festival is just around the corner. Could the restaurant make some mooncakes? We've been racking our brains trying to figure out what to give the employees at the audit firm."

Mooncakes? Lin Xu took a sip of his egg drop soup before asking, "We were actually planning to make some. What do you think of Milk Yellow Mooncakes? I'm thinking of adding them to the menu, but I'm not sure if we can produce enough to meet demand."

The Mid-Autumn Festival is coming up. Those Milk Yellow Mooncakes from the last lottery draw recipe could definitely bring in some profit.

"Milk Yellow Mooncakes?" The people around Lin Xu looked at him, their eyes wide with pleasant surprise.

Having that kind of snack for the Mid-Autumn Festival would be absolutely fantastic!

Chapter 568: You can't eat this dish often, it uses too much rice! A different Four Happiness Roasted Gluten!

"Xubao, you can make Milk Yellow Mooncakes too?"

Shen Baobao's face was full of surprise. Today, she was truly astonished by Xubao—who would have thought he could even make Milk Yellow Mooncakes? What couldn't he do?

Tan Yajun was also somewhat surprised.

With the Mid-Autumn Festival approaching and the foot traffic in the store so heavy, the limited supply of snacks often sold out by noon. He thought that even putting out some five-nut mooncakes would sell well.

But who knew his nephew-in-law wasn't planning on making traditional mooncakes and was set to make Milk Yellow Mooncake instead?

Wouldn't these be a hit if introduced in the store?

Thinking this, the chief auditor immediately instructed Yuan Fei, "After we finish eating, go to the front desk and reserve fifty servings of Milk Yellow Mooncake."

There were more than thirty employees at the auditing office, plus friends and relatives they needed to gift, so fifty servings should be about right.

Lin Xu smiled and said, "Milk Yellow Mooncake isn't very difficult to make. You just need to prepare the filling and the dough properly. It's quite simple."

Upon hearing it was simple, Shen Baobao's inherent chef genes were eager to give it a try. "Then, can I make it too?"

"You could, but I wouldn't recommend it. If you got burned by the oven, I'd be heartbroken."

Lin Xu took a couple of sips of egg drop soup and continued eating his rice.

Worried that Baobao might want to learn, he quickly switched the topic to the Salted Fish Eggplant Stew. "It's been a long time since I had Salted Fish Eggplant Stew. I didn't expect it to taste this amazing. I'll try making dishes with salted fish like dried bean curd stew, glass noodle stew, and layered tofu stew next time."

Sure enough, upon mentioning this, the chef gene was instantly overpowered by the foodie gene, and foodie Baobao came online again. "Wow, that sounds so tempting. Can you make each one for me when you have time?"

"Sure, no problem."

Listening to their conversation, Tan Yajun said with a smile, "Lin Xu, if you're not too busy, you could also try steaming pork belly with salted fish. It tastes absolutely splendid. I had it once in Lingnan, but unfortunately, I don't know the recipe or the specific method."

Salted fish and pork belly?

Lin Xu said, "I'll give it a try when I have time and hope to achieve the flavor Uncle Tan is looking for. How many days are you going to Yu Zhou this time?"

"About three or four days, though the exact duration isn't set yet. I was actually planning to eat less here so I could go straight to Yu Zhou's spicy butter hotpot when I landed. Now, it looks like I'll have to wait until tomorrow."

Yu Zhou is a city known for its food, with various cuisines strewn through its streets.

Compared to the hundred dishes and flavors of Rong City, the taste of Yu Zhou's cuisine is as frank as its people—boldly spicy, satisfyingly numbing, and straightforwardly fragrant.

Just one bite can reveal the fiery passion of the people of Yu Zhou.

"For me, every business trip is a culinary journey. I enjoy walking the streets in my free time, buying local snacks, and eating as I go—it's simply wonderful."

Having just finished a bowl of rice, Zheng Xiaoguang asked with admiration, "Can you really wander about in Yu Zhou on your own?"

In that magical 5D city, even GPS could give up, and here was this expert, managing to wander alone—it was truly enviable.

Tan Yajun chuckled and replied, "I can, but I always need to take a cab back... The streets in Yu Zhou are just too confusing. Every time I go there, my head is all muddled."

His words resonated with everyone.

Almost every tourist in Yu Zhou has had the experience of getting lost.

The group continued to eat and chat. As they were eating, Shu Yun came up from the stairwell, carrying an empty rice pot.

Seeing Lin Xu, the beautiful general manager immediately said, "Boss, please don't make Salted Fish Eggplant Stew too often, especially not with hand-torn cabbage. It's too rice-consuming! An entire large pot was wiped clean, and people aren't even full yet. I'm going to get some more."

Lin Xu was speechless.

Do girls these days all eat so much?

No wonder they had to eat separately. If they were sitting together, perhaps some assistant cook's ideal image of a goddess would have been shattered.

He called out to Chezi, who was nearby discussing his interview experience with the kitchen assistants, saying, "Chezi, go to the kitchen and get some more rice for Manager Shu."

Then he said to Shu Yun, "Tell everyone not to eat too much. If they overeat and make themselves ill, it would be embarrassing if word got out."

"I know, Boss."

Previously, I had been worried about how the waitstaff would describe the dishes to customers, but now it was easy. Just saying that I once overate myself is more effective than any adjective.

Lin Xu felt that from now on, he must not only make it but make it often, so everyone could eat their fill and avoid situations like today's.

Moreover, the cost of Salted Fish Eggplant Stew wasn't high, making it quite suitable as a staff meal.

Soon, Chezi came over carrying half a pot of rice.

Before lunch, Lin Ji's Food's number one employee was still doubtful whether today's ingredients would turn into delicious dishes.

Now, he no longer had any doubts and was even looking forward to the Four Happiness Roasted Glutinous Rice.

"Boss, when are we making the Four Happiness Roasted Glutinous Rice?"

If the Salted Fish Eggplant Stew was this delicious, the Four Happiness Roasted Glutinous Rice must be tasty as well, right?

These words left Lin Xu unsure how to respond because making Four Happiness Roasted Glutinous Rice depended on Cui Qingyuan's schedule. The dish was prepared only when this particular customer came to eat.

He looked at Shu Yun, who was about to leave with the rice, and the beautiful general manager immediately said, "Professor Cui said he would come around seven tonight. Just arrange the preparation time as you see fit; he doesn't mind waiting."

People's tolerance for good food is often quite high.

Chapter 569: This dish can't be eaten often, it uses too much rice! A different Four Happiness Roasted Gluten! \_2

To get a taste of the delicious food, customers were willing to endure long lines, high temperatures, and direct sunlight. When Lin Ji first opened, patrons not only helped clear the tables but even stuffed the cleaned dishes and utensils into the dishwasher.

Since it's seven in the evening, there's no rush to cook now.

However, the dried shiitake mushrooms and dried daylilies needed to be soaked in advance to avoid being rushed during cooking.

"Roasted glutinous rice? Lin Xu knows how to cook this dish?"

Tan Yajun was somewhat surprised. He had eaten roasted glutinous rice several times in Shanghai. It wasn't incredibly delicious, but it had unique characteristics, especially the sweet and salty sauce it contained, which some people absolutely loved.

Lin Xu said, "Yesterday, we hosted some esteemed guests from Shanghai, and they specifically asked for Four Happiness Roasted Glutinous Rice. I plan to give it a try today."

"It's a shame I have to head to the airport soon; otherwise, I would definitely try your Four Happiness Roasted Glutinous Rice to see if it's tastier than the one at the Beijing office."

Lin Xu didn't know about that; after all, he only had the Superior recipe, not one from the Perfect Level, so he wasn't as confident.

He smiled and said, "When Uncle Tan comes back from Yu Zhou, I'll personally cook Four Happiness Roasted Glutinous Rice for you to critique."

"Great, I'll come straight after landing."

After lunch, everyone had eaten twice their normal portion of rice.

Tan Yajun got into the Audi driven by Yuan Fei, heading to the airport.

Meanwhile, Shen Baobao drove off with lunch, returning to the audit office to continue slacking off (strike that) working.

"Brother Xu, I'm heading back to school. I'll come over tonight to have dinner with you all. I've stuffed myself, so I need to work through two sets of test papers to digest."

On the second floor, Geng Lele burped and bid farewell to Lin Xu.

She had a big bowl of rice around nine o'clock. She had only planned to taste a small bowl of the Salted Fish Eggplant Stew, but once she started, she couldn't stop herself and ended up having two bowls of rice.

Now I have to take a walk, or it will affect dinner.

Well, since Brother Xu is cooking roasted glutinous rice tonight, I must try it. After all, as a food connoisseur's granddaughter, I have to help Lin Xu manage the flavors to prevent any mishaps.

Lin Xu didn't understand how doing test papers was related to digesting food.

But since this problem child planned to go back to school, he naturally supported her. "Be careful on your way. Do you want to take some snacks with you?"

"No, I have to save room for dinner; I can't eat till I'm stuffed again."

Geng Lele bid farewell to Dou Wenjing, who was sitting in a booth discussing renovation details with Zheng Xiaoguang, and headed downstairs with a THUMP, THUMP, THUMP, ready to return.

After finalizing the details of the renovations, Zheng Xiaoguang contacted the cooperating decoration company. Meanwhile, Dou Wenjing took out her phone and posted a photo of the Salted Fish Eggplant Stew in the "Tiantian's Single Squad" group, tagging Chen Yan and Zeng Xiaoqi. She wrote, "Today's lunch was Salted Fish Eggplant Stew—super delicious and perfect with rice. There's still a little left, so hurry up and come over. The boss said it'll smell fishy when it cools down."

In the group, Chen Yan posted a drooling emoji, then said, "I was just discussing today's lunch with Director Zeng. Since there's Salted Fish Eggplant Stew, we'll head over now. Thank you, President Dou, for being so generous."

Zeng Xiaoqi also expressed her thanks, "Our Wenjing is just too good. If I were a guy, I'd definitely chase after you relentlessly."

Dou Wenjing laughed, her fingers moving with a TAP, TAP, TAP as she typed a message back in the group, "I'm not as good as you all think. I just felt that Shu Yun and I were too full. What if you two end up skinnier than us? Good sisters have to slowly get fat together!"

Right after sending it, Zeng Xiaoqi was taken aback. "I didn't expect you to be like this, Wenjing! That's so sneaky!"

"Then you can choose not to come [image][image][image][image]," Dou Wenjing added, sending a slew of Salted Fish Eggplant Stew pictures. These made Zeng Xiaoqi's mouth water, and she swallowed back her harsh words about not going to the restaurant, retorting, "Sneaky people have small chests. I hope that's true for you!"

"Sorry, I'm a 32D~"

Zeng Xiaoqi: ????????

CEO Chen is a 34D, and Shu Yun matches the famed 36C. Who would have thought that the usually unassuming and sneaky Dou also boasts a 32D? So... it's just me who's flat-chested? Thank goodness the proprietress isn't in this group, or I'd be crying myself to death!

After Lin Xu finished up in the kitchen, he went outside. Seeing Dou Wenjing squabbling with Zeng Xiaoqi in the chat, he said to her, "Wenjing, let's go upstairs and chat, shall we?"

"Sure, I'll follow your lead."

The two walked up the stairs, found an unoccupied private room, and entered. After the waiter served tea, Lin Xu said with a smile, "Wenjing, in just over a month since joining the company, you've developed it from scratch and even managed a chain of shengjian bao franchises. You've really worked hard."

After saying that, he raised his teacup to toast her.

Pushing the rimless glasses on her nose, Dou Wenjing felt very happy.

Getting recognition from the boss meant her efforts over the past month had not been in vain.

She replied with a smile, "It's because you gave me the space to show my capabilities. If I were restricted, I definitely wouldn't have done as well."

Lin Xu had given me full authority, allowing me to truly showcase my abilities. Without his complete trust, I could never have achieved what I have today.

After a mutual appreciation session, Lin Xu shared his thoughts. "I don't know what agreement you have with my father-in-law, but let's talk about the present. Your abilities are evident to all, and your achievements are continuously rising. Therefore, I plan to raise your annual salary to 600,000. Additionally, there will be bonuses and dividends at the end of the year. Wenjing, are you satisfied with this?"

Chapter 570: This dish can't be eaten often, it uses too much rice! A different Four Happiness Roasted Gluten! \_3

"If you want a horse to run, you've got to feed it more grass."

The figure seemed substantial, but it was only two months' profit from Ziqiang Shengjian. If they opened a few more stores, that amount could potentially be earned in a single month.

Dou Wenjing's eyes widened in shock; she had not expected Lin Xu to give so much.

She had thought it would be good to get an increase to five hundred thousand.

But who knew this handsome boss would be more generous than she had imagined? People say a soldier would die for someone who appreciates him. Even though she didn't possess such high enlightenment, having a boss who treated her so well was indeed a stroke of luck.

She said excitedly, "Thank you, Boss. I will definitely work hard in the future!"

Six hundred thousand! Wow, that was almost catching up to the income of the financial director of the Shen Group.

And most importantly, managing a booming catering company personally handed to her was like a dream come true.

After chatting for a while longer, they left the private room.

Downstairs, Chen Yan and Zeng Xiaoqi had already arrived. A staff member had reheated the remaining dishes, and they were currently eating.

Seeing Dou Wenjing's face full of surprise, Zeng Xiaoqi pulled her aside and asked in a low voice, "What's got you so happy? Tell me about it."

Dou Wenjing didn't hide anything and shared the news about her raise.

Chen Yan scooped up a mouthful of rice and said with a smile, "My brother-in-law isn't stingy. Keep up the good work, and your compensation will be even higher in the future."

An annual salary of six hundred thousand might sound like a lot, but it broke down to fifty thousand a month, which still wasn't as high as Brother Qiang's, whose hair was gradually thinning.

In Chen Yan's eyes, it was just a normal income.

But Zeng Xiaoqi's eyes widened. "Damn, not only are you bustier than me, but your income is also so much higher! I'm so jealous I'm thinking of quitting my job to work for Boss Lin."

But then she thought about it. With 32D Dou Wenjing at the company and Shu Yun handling the store, there probably wouldn't be much room for her to shine even if she quit.

Ah, envy!

At three o'clock in the afternoon, Lin Xu finished his tasks and retrieved some dried shiitake mushrooms and daylily flowers from the warehouse.

For the dish Four Happiness Roasted Glutinous Rice, besides roasted glutinous rice itself, dried shiitake mushrooms, daylily flowers, black fungus, and peanuts were also needed.

These four accompanying ingredients were the so-called "Four Happiness."

Strictly speaking, the dish should have been called 'Four Happiness Braised Gluten,' so people wouldn't wonder why 'Four Happiness Roasted Glutinous Rice' apparently contained five ingredients.

First, he rinsed the dried shiitake mushrooms with warm water to remove any surface dust, then he soaked them.

More water was needed for soaking the mushrooms. During the cooking process, the mushroom-soaking water would be added to the dish to enhance its fragrance and flavor.

After setting the mushrooms to soak, he picked up another basin and put the daylily flowers into it.

Daylily was an ingredient found in many regions in China, derived from the flowers of the Forget Sorrow Grass.

Forget Sorrow Grass was a fascinating plant. Its fresh flowers were toxic and could not be eaten. However, once picked and dried, the toxicity was lost, and they could be safely consumed.

The high-end daylily was actually the unopened flower bud, which had a meaty texture when eaten.

After soaking the daylilies, Lin Xu clicked on the special items section in the points store. It was set to refresh in just over ten hours, which would be tomorrow morning.

I wonder what items will be refreshed then.

Feeling a little excited.

Recently, he had become proficient in using the Eye of Discrimination.

For all dishes and ingredients, just by focusing intently, he could get an explanation. A rating would appear if it exceeded the Qualified Level.

He had tested the skills of the chefs in the restaurant; everyone cooked with care, maintaining a consistent quality in the dishes.

Two hours later, the daylily buds had fully rehydrated.

Lin Xu rinsed the buds to clean them, then aligned their bottoms and trimmed off the excess stems, as the stem texture was tough and unappetizing.

Next, he picked out the daylilies that had started to bloom and used a small knife to remove the pistils from inside.

The pistil of the daylily had a slight bitterness and was best removed before eating to improve the overall taste and texture.

After preparing the daylilies, he also soaked some peanuts and then brought over the roasted glutinous rice that was needed for the evening.

This was fresh roasted glutinous rice, less commonly seen in the Northern regions. Lin Xu soaked the roasted glutinous rice in water. Once it had absorbed enough water, he pressed it firmly to squeeze out some of its inherent sourness.

He repeated this squeezing process several times. Once the water in the basin became murky, he changed the water and rinsed the roasted glutinous rice twice more.

After washing, he took a bowl and, using his hands, broke the roasted glutinous rice into pieces slightly smaller than mahjong tiles.

The modern way to prepare Four Happiness Roasted Glutinous Rice was to cut it into cubes. However, the traditional method involved breaking it by hand. This way, the surface of the roasted glutinous rice would become irregular, allowing it to hold more sauce.

However, the hand-broken appearance was not as aesthetically pleasing, so it had largely been replaced by the more visually appealing cut cubes.

After breaking it into pieces, it was time for an important step in making roasted glutinous rice—deep frying.

The biggest difference between roasted glutinous rice and regular Gluten was that roasted glutinous rice was more sour. To remove this sour taste and improve its texture, it needed to be fried in oil.

Before doing this, Lin Xu looked up tutorials online. They mostly advised frying it in high-temperature oil, similar to eggplants, warning that otherwise the roasted glutinous rice would absorb too much grease.

This was incorrect.

Because if one only fried the surface, the interior's sour taste couldn't be effectively removed with just high-temperature oil.

The correct approach was to fry it in lukewarm oil.

Lin Xu heated a pot of oil on the stove. Before the oil became hot, he added the broken pieces of roasted glutinous rice and stirred them a couple of times with a spoon.

He then turned the stove's flame to its lowest setting, allowing the oil's temperature to rise slowly.

As the temperature gradually rose, the sour taste from within the roasted glutinous rice would be fried out. Simultaneously, its internal, honeycomb-like porous structure would become more pliable and tender.

This tenderness, in terms of texture, was what Shanghai people demanded most from roasted glutinous rice—chewiness!

As he was busy, Dai Jianli suddenly sent a message:

"Brother, tomorrow morning in the back kitchen of Building 18, they'll be making dry dip seasoning. You should come. I'll teach you how to make it and also treat you to some exquisite Sichuan cuisine you can't find anywhere else!"