

Culinary 591

Chapter 591: The Rice Killer Lives Up to The Name! A New Special Item Has Been Obtained, Exchange!

Now that Lin Ji is about to serve this dish, let's just aim for the absolute best, making people subconsciously think of Lin Ji's Food whenever this dish comes to mind.

Moreover, compared to other dishes, Mapo Tofu truly is synonymous with low cost and high profit.

The cost of one serving is just a few bucks, but it can be sold for dozens of bucks.

Such a high profit margin beats many meat dishes, and more importantly, it can create a word-of-mouth effect that attracts more customers.

In short, it has numerous benefits.

Lin Xu said, "Mapo Tofu must be served in a bowl, don't mix it up."

He scooped some more food into his bowl and finished off the rice.

The small bowl of rice was gone before he'd barely touched it; the 'rice-killer' trait of Mapo-style dishes was truly formidable.

After putting down his bowl and spoon, Lin Xu looked at the remaining Chicken Cakes and said, "Let's make all these Chicken Cakes tonight so everyone can have a taste... This method of making Chicken Cakes is really troublesome. Chef Zhu, is making Fish Cakes just as difficult?"

Zhu Yong, who was busily eating his rice, hurriedly replied, "Not difficult, not difficult at all. Fish doesn't have sinews, so you can just scrape the meat into a paste. It's simpler than making Chicken Cakes... If you'd like to try some, I can make a bit for everyone later."

Zhuang Yizhou immediately suggested, "Then, when you do, make it into a Mapo dish too! Mapo Fish Cake—just the name is enough to make one's mouth water."

Following this idea, in the future, there could even be dishes like Mapo Shrimp Cake, Mapo Pork Cake, Mapo Lamb Cake, and more. Quite an interesting thought.

After eating and taking a sip of water, Lin Xu was about to go downstairs to find Dundun and claim that Perfect Level niche Sichuan dish. Suddenly, he remembered that the special items in the System Points Mall were due for a refresh. He opened the System Points Mall to see what new special items were available.

If possible, he would redeem it directly while he had plenty of points. That way, he could use it anytime.

Upon opening the special items section, that darn countdown had finally disappeared, and the page had refreshed.

He skipped past the Heartless Iron Hand, God of Wealth Artifact, and Eye of Discrimination—items he had already obtained. After scrolling for a while, Lin Xu finally found the newly refreshed special item.

[Hand is a Scale: A special item that can accurately measure the weight of objects, a favorite of Pastry Chefs. Redemption price: 2,888,888 points]

What?! Accurately measure the weight of objects?

He'd often heard that in the past, some street vendors had incredibly accurate hands, able to tell the weight of vegetables just by lifting them. He never thought he could achieve that too. What a pleasant surprise!

With this special Skill, he would no longer need an electronic scale when making pastries. He could just weigh ingredients with his hands, and the amount would be perfectly clear.

This was simply fantastic!

No wonder they specially added a line in the description saying it's a favorite of Pastry Chefs.

As a practitioner of Magic and Martial Dual Cultivation... oh, no, that's not it... as a young chef proficient in both savory cooking (red kitchen) and pastry (white kitchen) arts, I obviously have to get this special item!

The price of 2,888,888 points was acceptable. Although it was a million points more expensive than the Eye of Discrimination, with the current inflation of points and him having plenty, it was understandable for the system to raise prices.

Thinking this, Lin Xu didn't hesitate to choose to redeem it.

"Are you sure you want to spend 2,888,888 points to redeem the special item 'Hand is a Scale'?"

After pressing the redeem button for the Eye of Discrimination, the system's prompt tone immediately sounded in his mind.

"Yes!"

Once the redemption was confirmed, System Points were automatically deducted.

Then, the prompt sounded again: "Redemption successful. Congratulations to the host for obtaining the special item 'Hand is a Scale.' The item can accurately measure the weight of objects, with a current measurement error range of ± 25 grams. Spend 1,888,888 points to upgrade, and after the upgrade, the measurement error range will be ± 5 grams. Would you like to upgrade the special item?"

What in the world?! I spent a freaking 2,888,888 points on this item, only to get a semi-finished product? This system has truly mastered the money-grubbing tactics of freemium games... It only learns the bad tricks, not the good ones!

He was fuming, but ultimately, with no other choice, he decided to spend another 1,888,888 points to upgrade.

The reason was simple: without upgrading, the error range of his hands would be half a liang. This wasn't a problem for general pastries, but for the most refined Snacks, an error margin of ± 25 grams was too large.

To use it conveniently, he had to choose to upgrade so that the error range would shrink to 5 grams. In Chinese weight units, this equates to one qian, the smallest unit in Chinese weight measurement.

The conversion in Chinese weight measurement is simple: one jin equals ten liang, and one liang equals ten qian. As for anything smaller, it basically only exists in theory. Even the qian level of weight measurement is only used for Chinese herbal medicine and precious metals and is rarely encountered in everyday life.

"After spending 1,888,888 points, the special item 'Hand is a Scale' upgrade succeeded. The host's hands can now measure weights with an error within 5 grams. Congratulations to the host."

Stop congratulating me; I don't want to hear it.

Lin Xu wore a helpless expression.

He had originally planned to spend 1.88 million points on a special item. He hadn't expected that not only would the price increase by a million, but he'd also need to spend more to upgrade it.

This was downright robbery! Worse than bandits!

He once had over ten million points and was living a carefree life. But today, he first spent 2 million on the Mapo Tofu Technique, then nearly five million on this special item. His points had suddenly dwindled significantly.

While he was still annoyed, the system's prompt sounded again: "The host has spent over 5 million points today, completing the Hidden task 'Splurge Millions' and obtained a Perfect Level filling lottery draw. Would you like to draw immediately?"

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Heh, are they trying to make it up to me because they felt a bit guilty?

Lin Xu snapped back to reality and lazily walked downstairs. Since there was an extra lottery draw, he might as well take advantage of it. A lottery for fillings, and it doesn't even say what kind of gourmet fillings. Talk about perfunctory.

As he descended the stairs, he ran into Shu Yun.

"What was all that shouting and yelling about upstairs just now?"

"Oh, I steamed some Chicken Cake and then made it spicy by cooking it the way you do Mapo Tofu. They're eating it right now. If you want to try it, you might still make it in time..."

Lin Xu hadn't finished speaking when Shu Yun practically ran upstairs.

Such high heels, isn't she afraid of spraining an ankle? Are people on diets always this eager for good food?

He arrived at the reception desk and saw Dundun poking its head out curiously from its little house, pausing halfway to look around.

"What's going on? Why do you look so nervous?"

Lin Xu rubbed the little guy's head, curious. With Dundun's standing in the shop, no one should dare to bully him.

Song Tiantian, sitting inside the reception desk, said, "Today, Manager Chen must have stumbled upon some good fortune. She came down from the second floor and just started manhandling Dundun, and President Shu couldn't even stop her when she tried to intervene. The poor kid was terrified. It took President Shu and me ages to coax him out."

What's with this sister-in-law? How can she repay kindness with ingratitude? I gave her so much food, and she turns around to torment my son!

Lin Xu held Dundun in his arms. "Don't be scared, don't be scared. That silly auntie of yours was just playing with you. She's thirty and still doesn't have a boyfriend, so she's a bit wild. If someone were to keep her in line, she'd be completely tamed."

He was just teasing his sister-in-law about her excess energy with nowhere to vent, but Dundun, in his arms, suddenly brightened up, his previous listlessness swept away.

After walking around the first floor with Dundun in his arms and checking on the brined foods Xu Xinhua was preparing, Lin Xu started the lottery draw once Dundun's spirits had fully recovered.

"Congratulations, Host, for obtaining a Perfect Level obscure Sichuan dish—Snowflake Chicken Nao!"

"Congratulations, Host, for obtaining a Perfect Level filling—Fresh Flower Ham!"

The two notifications plunged Lin Xu into surprise once again.

Fresh Flower Ham? Isn't that a signature flavor of Yunnan-style mooncakes? Dundun is really something! I originally thought getting a bun or dumpling filling would be pretty good, but my son actually went and snagged the signature item for Yunnan-style mooncakes!

As for that Snowflake Chicken Nao, it was indeed quite obscure. So obscure that many Sichuan chefs hadn't even heard of it, let alone found it in restaurants. It was typically seen only in various cooking competitions or gourmet food promotional films.

The 'nao' in its name refers to 'mud,' signifying that the chicken is processed into a mud-like consistency.

This dish is similar to Furong Chicken Slices and Chicken Bean Curd. However, Furong Chicken Slices are fried then returned to the pot, while Chicken Bean Curd is shaped directly in Clear Soup. The Snowflake Chicken Nao, on the other hand, is stir-fried directly in the wok.

The stir-frying technique is somewhat similar to that used for 'Three Non-Stick.' However, 'Three Non-Stick' results in the ingredients forming a single clump, while this dish, when cooked, resembles delicate, scattered snowflakes. The snowy white color, combined with the light taste and the snowflake shape, gives this dish a poetic charm.

Snowflake Chicken Nao is best enjoyed with Ham Cubes. Since Fresh Flower Mooncakes also required ham, Lin Xu simply called Old Huang and asked him to send over a high-quality Xuanwei Ham.

Jinhua Ham is too salty and heavily cured. It's suitable for making soup but not for filling. Compared to that, Xuanwei Ham from the Southern Yunnan region is better. It's not as salty; instead, it has a fresh and faintly sweet taste, making it naturally perfect for Fresh Flower Mooncake filling.

"Apart from the Xuanwei Ham, get me some edible flower paste made from fresh flowers."

Lao Huang's interest was piqued. "Little Lin, are you planning to make mooncakes with Fresh Flower Ham filling? Can you make extra? My wife is from Southern Yunnan, and she's been craving this for ages..."

Lin Xu replied with a smile, "No problem, I can make some extra. It's no trouble at all."

"Brother Lin, you're really straightforward! How about this: the ham and flower paste are on me this time. Since you're so generous, Brother, I, Old Huang, can't be stingy!"

Then, he lowered his voice and added, "Bro, I've got some Moringa Seeds I brought back from Southern Yunnan. A friend told me they're good for... you know, men's vitality. I'll bring some along when I deliver the ham. You should give them a try."

Lin Xu was utterly bewildered. What's that supposed to mean? I've heard Moringa Seeds are for strengthening one's loins and kidneys. Why are you giving them to *me*? And 'a friend of yours said'... that friend is you, isn't it?

Concerned about his reputation, Lin Xu had intended to refuse firmly. But then, thinking that his senior brother seemed to need such a thing, he said, "In that case, bring some over. I don't really need them; I'm in good health. It's just that a friend of mine has been looking all over for nourishing ingredients..."

A friend? Lao Huang, on the other end of the phone, chuckled. So Brother Lin is also the type to use the 'friend' excuse, huh.

He laughed heartily. "Since it's for a friend, I'll bring you some extra."

After hanging up, Lin Xu sent his senior brother a WeChat message: "Lao Huang is going to send me Moringa Seeds. Do you need any? If not, I'll give them to someone else."

"Yes, yes, yes! A friend of mine is looking all over for them. Keep them for me; I'll come get them at dinnertime."

Tsk, another 'friend.'

Carrying Dundun back to the service counter, Lin Xu saw Shu Yun holding a small bowl of rice, spooning out the Mapo Chicken Cake from it.

"Oh, Boss, a package arrived for you earlier. It looks like some kind of mold," Shu Yun said, taking a tape-wrapped cardboard box from the cabinet under the service counter and handing it to Lin Xu.

Lin Xu put Dundun down, took the box, and after a glance, said, "These are the molds for the Milk Yellow Mooncakes. With these, we can start making our lava-center mooncakes."

Milk Yellow Mooncake? Shu Yun and Song Tiantian exchanged a smile. Another delicious treat to try!

They asked again, "Besides the milk yellow lava filling, what other mooncake fillings are we planning to make?"

"Fresh Flower Ham filling. The ham and flower paste should be delivered soon. If you want to try some, we should be able to make a batch before dinner. After all, Fresh Flower Ham mooncakes aren't as complex to make as the Milk Yellow Mooncakes with lava centers."

Lin Xu opened the package and began examining the molds.

Beside him, Shu Yun was so excited she forgot to eat her rice.

Fresh Flower Ham? Isn't that my favorite filling? AAAAAHHH! It looks like there's no way I can lose weight before the Mid-Autumn Festival!

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Old Huang would arrive soon, so Lin Xu didn't bother going upstairs again.

He stood in front of the service counter, playing with Dundun while accessing the system, curious about what the next special item would be.

Old sayings used to compliment someone's skill would usually say that their hand is a scale and their eye a ruler.

Now that I've gotten the "Hand is a Scale," surely the "Eye is a Ruler" can't be far behind?

He tapped on the special items tab, and a line of text appeared:

[This page will refresh after 719:52:35. Pay 5,000,000 points for an immediate refresh]

Over seven hundred hours?

He did some quick mental math and realized it was a month away.

Isn't this refresh wait time a bit too long?

Last time it refreshed weekly, and an immediate refresh required three million points. This time, it would take a month to refresh, yet it only needed five million points.

From that perspective, the system's discount was truly moving.

It really... I'm gonna cry!

Lin Xu complained about the system in his mind and started playing with Dundun in the hall with a cat teaser.

He used the cat teaser to guide the little furball, making it hop, run, and dodge agilely.

When it got tired, it would scamper behind the service counter, its chubby little butt wiggling, and plop down in front of the automatic pet water fountain Shen Jiayue had bought. Then, it would stick out its tiny, crimson tongue and elegantly lap up the clear water bubbling from the machine.

Just then, Old Huang slowly pulled up in a Jinbei delivery van, parking in the spot in front of the shop.

Before long, he exited the vehicle. He walked into the store with a large ham wrapped in cling film slung over his left shoulder and a glass jar filled with richly-colored flower sauce in his right hand.

Seeing Lin Xu there, he directly placed the ham and flower sauce on the service counter.

"Brother, here's the stuff you wanted. The ham was sent this morning from Southern Yunnan, from a time-honored brand. If it's not delicious, you can twist my head off."

Lin Xu: "..."

Next time, I'll have to call over Head Chef Dai and Senior Brother to figure out what to do with your head. That way, you might stop making these shameless claims.

He murmured this to himself as he looked at the ham.

As he focused his attention, a line of text emerged before him:

[High-quality Xuanwei Ham made with coarse salt and pork hind legs]

Tsk, looks like he wasn't exaggerating.

Then, looking at the jar of flower sauce, the prompt text appeared once more:

[High-quality flower sauce pickled with fresh flowers, edible salt, and White Sugar]

Not bad, not bad at all. No wonder Old Huang is always staking his head on it; the quality really is impeccable.

"This flower sauce was made by my wife," Old Huang said. "Usually, even if relatives ask for it, we don't give it out. Today I brought half for you. Make the mooncakes nice and tasty, huh? I'm too busy to go back for the Mid-Autumn Festival this year, so I'm counting on these mooncakes to soothe my homesickness."

Lin Xu patted the ham and smiled as he said, "Then I'll start making them soon. I'll make sure you and your wife won't be disappointed... If I start now, they should be ready by nightfall. Will you take the mooncakes tomorrow when you deliver the vegetables, or come pick them up tonight?"

"Tonight. Once I'm done with my work, I'll bring my wife over for dinner. She hasn't had a chance to try the food here yet."

Tsk, sounds like the two of them have a pretty good relationship.

After Old Huang finished speaking, he saw Shu Yun and Song Tiantian were busy organizing the electronic menu on the computer and hadn't noticed him. Only then did he sneakily pull out a transparent sealed bag from his handbag.

Through the bag, one could see it was filled with a good amount of brown, angular plant particles, resembling something like Jasmine Dragon Pearl tea or other similar flower teas.

After taking it out, he hurriedly handed it over, his voice lowered to the faintest whisper, "Brother, one piece at a time. It's miraculously effective!"

As Lin Xu took it, Old Huang patted his shoulder heavily, shook his head with a slightly regretful expression, and then turned towards the entrance.

This regretful look completely perplexed Lin Xu.

Bro, can you not act like you're attending a funeral?

He looked at the Moringa Seeds in the bag, not finding anything weird about them. Yet, every middle-aged man who mentioned these seeds always seemed to have that "you know what I mean" look.

"What is this stuff, Boss? Jasmine Dragon Pearls?" Shu Yun asked. Seeing the curious look on Lin Xu's face, she had thought Old Huang had given him some fine tea.

Lin Xu tossed the bag lightly and said, "These are Moringa Seeds. They're said to have kidney benefits. Old Huang was being all mysterious on the phone earlier, so I got some for my Senior Brother."

Having worked in the catering department for years, Shu Yun had, of course, heard of Moringa Seeds.

Once she heard that Old Huang had given these seeds to her boss, she promptly abandoned the idea of brewing some Jasmine Tea.

Lin Xu placed the Moringa Seeds on the service counter. "There are one hundred and thirty grams in this bag," he said. "Divide it up for me. Make one package of eighty grams and the other of fifty grams. The larger portion is for my Senior Brother, and the smaller one is for my father-in-law."

Senior Brother probably needs it more urgently, so he gets a larger share.

As for my father-in-law, I'll give him a small amount as a token gesture. This way, he can't complain later that I didn't save any of the good stuff for him.

After giving the instructions, he shouldered the thirty-something-pound ham and, carrying the flower sauce in his other hand, went up the stairs to the kitchen.

At the service counter, Song Tiantian curiously leaned in, looking at the packet of Moringa Seeds and asked, "Why didn't the Boss keep any for himself? Did he forget?"

"Only someone who's 'deficient' needs it. Do you think the Boss looks like he's deficient in any way?" Shu Yun replied.

Shu Yun took out a small electronic scale from under the counter. It had been used previously for packaging Shakima, but ever since the pastry department got an automatic sealing machine, this little scale had become redundant.

She turned on the device and placed the Moringa Seeds on it.

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The scale displayed 133 grams.

It was only 3 grams off from what the boss had said.

Wow, the boss is incredibly skilled, huh? Just a couple of hefts and the weight is that precise?

Just the thing for someone who's weak, Song Tiantian muttered, unconsciously thinking of the chubby boy who had recently been riding bicycles with her at night. He's so out of shape, sweating buckets just from riding a bike; this stuff would be perfect for him.

"President Shu... I have a friend..."

「In the kitchen.」

The bowl of Mapo Chicken Cake had already been cleaned out.

Lin Xu placed a whole pipa-shaped Ham on the workbench. Starting with the Pork Trotter section, he slowly peeled away the layer of cling wrap.

The Pork Skin was covered with mold spots and emitted a strong, moldy smell, but once this outer layer was removed, the delicious flavor would reveal itself.

Xuanwei is located in northern Southern Yunnan, at a higher altitude with dry and cold winter air.

Here, Hams are made with only a small amount of salt. This method preserves the meat and enhances its flavor while preventing spoilage.

It's precisely because so little salt is used that the Ham's flavor is exquisite. Top-quality Hams even possess a sweet taste, a characteristic not found in other Hams.

If Hams in other regions were made with the same low amount of salt as Xuanwei Ham, they would undoubtedly spoil and become infested with insects.

After tearing off the cling wrap and scraping off the surface Pork Skin, the Xuanwei Ham's reddish lean meat and pristine white fat finally came into view.

The Ham still felt tender, not at all like an ingredient that had been preserved for two years.

When cutting it with a knife, it even felt like slicing fresh meat.

Recalling the last time in the back kitchen when he practically had to use a saw on the Jinhua Ham, Lin Xu softly lamented, "Indeed, same Hams, different destinies."

Wei Qian came over, patted the Ham a couple of times, and said with a smile, "This Xuanwei Ham is truly as good as its reputation. If you patted a Jinhua Ham like this, your hand would probably ache from the impact."

The two types of Ham were like trains on the same track heading in opposite directions. Their uses, preparation methods, and so on were all contrary. Jinhua Ham is suitable for making stock, stewing, and other long-cooking methods.

Meanwhile, Xuanwei Ham is better for quick stir-frying, steaming, or as a filling. Its delicious flavor can be perfectly brought out in a short cooking time.

This Ham weighed dozens of pounds, far too much to be used at once. Lin Xu cut into about half of it, sliced it into large pieces, washed them, then arranged them on a tray and placed them in the steamer cabinet to steam.

If Jinhua Ham were used for filling, it would need to be soaked for at least six hours.

But Xuanwei Ham requires no soaking. Incorporated into fillings this way, it tastes just right.

If it were also soaked, the resulting filling would become too sweet, losing that delightful surprise of finding savory, umami diced meat within a sweet filling.

Once the Ham was steaming, Lin Xu took out some Medium Flour and began to prepare the Dough.

The most representative Yunnan-style mooncake is the hard-shell mooncake. Though called "hard-shell," this term is relative, used in comparison to flaky-crust mooncakes with their distinct, separate layers.

In truth, hard-shell mooncakes are also quite crumbly.

However, their crusts are somewhat thicker and slightly firmer than flaky crusts, which is why Medium Flour is chosen.

If one prefers a hard, crunchy exterior, then high-gluten flour is the way to go. The higher the Gluten content, the harder the crust, and the crunchier the bite.

Conversely, using low gluten flour results in a mooncake crust that is less firm and more crumbly, so much so that it might give the illusion of being made from Peach Cake.

Of course, while the flakiness and crispiness of the crust are related to the flour's Gluten content, this isn't the only factor, as the amount of pork lard is also crucial.

If you want a flakier, more crumbly texture, use more pork lard; for a crunchier texture, use less.

Although many households have abandoned pork lard due to health concerns, its use remains widespread in Dessert Making, especially in traditional Chinese pastry making.

In fact, many pastries would drop a tier in quality without pork lard.

For the crust of the flower and Ham mooncakes, in addition to Medium Flour and pork lard, Honey, powdered sugar, and water are needed.

The crust has a specific ratio: for every half-pound of Medium Flour, 25 grams of powdered sugar, 25 grams of Honey, 100 grams of pork lard, and 60 to 80 grams of water are required.

The water ratio isn't fixed because preparing the Dough is closely related to air humidity, temperature, and the flour's moisture content. Therefore, the amount of water cannot be rigidly set.

One pound of flour can make about forty mooncakes. Lin Xu prepared Dough with about ten pounds of flour at once, planning to make that many today. Since both the large and small ovens were free and no one had booked them for roast whole lamb or suckling pig, he could go all out with the production.

He gathered the ingredients and kneaded the flour into a Dough that didn't stick to his hands.

Thanks to the pork lard, this step was quite simple.

The fat acted as a lubricant, making it somewhat easier than kneading Dough with only water.

Once the Dough was ready, he placed it in a bowl, covered it with cling wrap, and then put it in the cold storage unit to chill.

Next, he found a stainless steel pot that hadn't been used for stir-frying vegetables, placed it on the stove, and poured in some flour. He slowly toasted the flour over low heat until it turned lightly golden, then removed it from the pot and spread it out to cool.

Two types of flour are indispensable in the making of Chinese pastries: Fried Flour and starch.

Fried Flour is the flour that was just toasted until lightly golden. This flour has a rich, nutty toasted aroma and a slightly powdery texture, making it perfect for fillings.

As for starch, it is flour from which all the Gluten has been removed.

This type of flour has no Gluten, thus possessing superior extensibility and plasticity. The wrappers of Shrimp Dumplings, one of the "Four Heavenly Kings" of Cantonese dim sum, owe their striking translucence to being made with starch.

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By now, the Ham was almost steamed through. He took it out, carefully separating the slices and setting them aside to cool.

The fatty oils that had steamed out onto the tray, with their rich Ham fragrance, were perfect for stewing and stir-frying dishes.

While waiting for the Ham to cool, Lin Xu grabbed the flower jam and began to strain it.

This so-called fresh flower jam involved picking buds about to bloom, washing and drying them, then placing them in jars or pots with White Sugar and a pinch of salt to pickle.

This candied fresh flower could be used not only in mooncakes but also in other snacks like fresh flower cakes, and could even be diluted with water to drink.

The saying goes, "Live off the land, live off the water." Since people in Southern Yunnan had an abundance of flowers, they chose to eat them.

As a northerner, Lin Xu expressed his envy.

He put a clean basin on the workbench, set a large strainer over the top, and then used a clean, oil-free spoon to scoop out the flower jam from the jars into the strainer.

When using flower jam as a filling, the syrup had to be strained out. Otherwise, the sweetness would be too overpowering and the texture would become cloying. Additionally, too much syrup could overpower the fragrance of the flowers.

The strained syrup wouldn't go to waste, though.

Later, it could be cooked with taro, Horse Hoof, old pumpkin, and such, to make a Cantonese sweet soup—a floral concoction that could make the neighboring kids roll on the ground crying with envy.

The strained flowers were put into the basin, followed by finely diced Ham the size of soybeans.

After mixing the two ingredients well, he added Honey, lard, cooked flour, White Sugar, and Maltose, and continued to stir until the filling became sticky.

Next, he put it in the freezer to freeze the mixture, which would make it less sticky when used later.

Half an hour later, he took the filling out. The stickiness had reduced significantly after freezing.

Lin Xu scooped out a lump of filling, rolled it into a ball, and placed it on the tray, then started on the next one.

"Boss, why aren't you using a digital scale? Aren't you worried about uneven sizes?"

Seeing Lin Xu work this way, Ji Minghui, who had come to help, felt a sense of absurdity, like a formally trained professional encountering someone using completely unorthodox methods.

Having made many Su-style Desserts in building number six, he knew that weighing the ingredients was a crucial part of dessert preparation, from measuring out flours, sugars, oils, and other ingredients at the start. And during the production process, the shortcrust, oil dough, fillings, and the like all had to be weighed individually to ensure uniform size.

This ensured the filling was perfectly encased during wrapping and that the desserts baked evenly.

As Lin Xu quickly rolled the fillings, he said, "I'm used to it. I can usually gauge the right size."

Ji Minghui was skeptical and secretly weighed a few, only to find that their weight was nearly identical, with an error of about two to three grams.

Now he was truly impressed.

Previously, everyone had always praised the boss for his exceptional skills in savory cooking and how delicious his dishes were.

It was only now, seeing Lin Xu's rapid technique for dividing the filling, that Ji Minghui realized the boss's natural talent for pastry might be on par with, or even surpass, his talent for savory cooking.

Most people would roll the filling into a long shape, then cut it evenly before shaping it into round balls.

But the boss went straight from scooping filling out of the basin to rolling it—an incredibly impressive feat.

All these years, only Qiu Minghai, the eldest uncle of Qiu Zhenhua, had been seen doing this.

He hadn't expected to see such a master class performance today.

Admiration!

Ji Minghui watched Lin Xu with the eyes of a fan, filled with respect.

What enviable talent!

The rolled fillings were returned to the freezer to firm up further, as the more solid they were, the easier they would be to wrap.

After preparing the fillings, Lin Xu took the relaxed dough, kneaded it again, then shaped it into a long roll and quickly tore off chunks using the web of his hand, turning them into portions of dough.

Once shaped, he quickly kneaded each into a smooth ball.

He placed them on a tray and covered them with plastic wrap to relax once more.

After another half an hour, he retrieved the fillings. He took a ball of dough, flattened it, placed a ball of filling in the center, then gathered the edges of the dough to encase it, forming a raw pastry.

The raw pastry was placed on a baking tray lined with Baking Paper and gently pressed down.

Then he took the Lin Ji's Food floral seal that Lele had carved in her spare time, cleaned it, dipped it in red beet juice, and stamped each mooncake.

Finally, he preheated the oven and placed the mooncakes inside to bake.

It was nearly dinner time when the mooncakes were in the oven.

While waiting, Lin Xu took out his phone and sent messages to his father-in-law and other relatives and friends, inviting them to come to the shop for dinner.

There were some leftover Chicken Cakes, which he had no plans to sell, so he decided to let everyone try them and give each person a few mooncakes as well.

The Mid-Autumn Festival was approaching, and it was time to ramp up the festive atmosphere.

After sending the messages, Lin Xu put away his phone and started making Mapo Chicken Cake.

At five-thirty in the afternoon, Chen Yan and Dou Wenjing each drove to the shop, arriving just as Shen Jiayue and Zeng Xiaoqi hurried over from the TV station.

The group entered the shop together.

Upon seeing Shu Yun after walking in, Chen Yan felt a twinge of self-consciousness, then cheerfully said, "I didn't expect President Shu to start eating tomatoes to lose fat."

Shu Yun smiled and replied:

Chapter 596: Are Flower and Ham Mooncakes Calorie Bombs? No, They Are Calorie Nukes! _4

"It can't be helped, it's for my diet... This afternoon, the shop has some great dishes. You all better save some room and eat plenty, because who knows when you'll get to eat them again."

As she said that, Zeng Xiaoqi, who had originally planned to share tips on fat reduction, suddenly lost the thought. Her mind was now fully occupied with wondering what that delicious dish could be.

「Upstairs they went.」

Just after glazing the Chicken Cake with oil, Lin Xu took the baking tray out of the oven. It held a large tray full of Yunnan-style mooncakes that made one drool at the sight.

Seeing these pastries, the girls couldn't take their eyes off them.

"Wow, what beautiful cakes!"

"Yeah, they look so crispy!"

"The surface seems dry; there shouldn't be much fat, right?"

"No fat means no calories. Go ahead and eat."

"..."

Shen Baobao skipped over to Lin Xu's side and wrapped an arm around his waist. "Xu Bao, are these cakes your surprise for me?"

"No, these are just some floral ham mooncakes I made on a whim. Your surprise isn't ready yet."

Mooncakes are common; they don't count as a surprise. Mapo Chicken Cake, however, is a real surprise, since you can't find it anywhere on the market!

"Floral Ham Mooncake?"

Chen Yan immediately grabbed one. Not minding the heat, she blew on it and took a bite. The crispy crust and the filling, rich with the fragrance of flowers and oil, instantly sent a thrill through her. "Wow! This is so delicious! You all must try it; the flavor is incredible!"

Among them, the conscientious Zeng Xiaoqi was still concerned about dieting. Looking at the bitten part of the mooncake with some hesitation, she asked, "Shouldn't the calories in a mooncake be high?"

Chen Yan said, "Not high at all. Flowers don't have calories, the fermented ham isn't caloric either, and although flour is a carb, there isn't much of it. Eat up, eat up! This isn't a calorie bomb."

Lin Xu had to laugh at his sister-in-law's persuasive manner.

If she were a huckster, she'd definitely be able to swindle Director Zeng into a limp.

Zeng Xiaoqi looked at Lin Xu and asked, "This mooncake really isn't a calorie bomb?"

Seeing her eager expression, Lin Xu smiled and said, "It's not."

Then he silently added in his heart: It's not a bomb; it's a nuclear bomb!

Inside the mooncake, there was greasy pork lard, ham, and candied flowers, plus powdered sugar, Maltose, flour, and other high-calorie ingredients. Altogether, those calories were definitely at a nuclear level. Even among mooncakes, Yunnan-style mooncakes might lead the pack... No, wait, the Milk Yellow Mooncake to be made tomorrow is also nuclear-level. Dundun's luck is indeed great, having drawn the two most calorie-laden mooncake fillings...

Just as he was reflecting, Lin Xu saw his sister-in-law had almost finished a whole mooncake and was now eyeing the tray, clearly ready for another.

Watching her eat like that and remembering Dundun's puffed-up face during the draw, a thought involuntarily popped into Lin Xu's mind: Could this little guy have drawn the two highest-calorie fillings to exact revenge on his boisterous sister-in-law? If that's the case... the Milk Yellow Mooncake to be

made tomorrow would be a real nuclear baptism for Manager Chen. I wonder if she's prepared to gain the proverbial holiday weight...

"Wow, these mooncakes are really delicious!"

Although this wasn't the surprise prepared for her, Shen Jiayue was still very excited.

Because the taste and texture of these mooncakes were truly beyond expectation.

The crust was slightly hard but crunched when bitten into. As for the filling, the flower paste carried a rich floral fragrance, while the Ham Cubes were salty and savory.

The two flavors intertwined under the influence of sugar and pork lard, simply irresistible.

Especially the scent of the flowers; closing your eyes, it was like bathing in fresh flowers.

Lin Xu said, "This is the most representative hard-shell Yunnan-style mooncake. I'll make some flaky-crust ones later and let you try those too."

"Okay, thank you, Xu Bao! You have a bite too; it's super delicious."

Lin Xu took a bite. It was indeed delicious. Despite all the pork lard, he couldn't detect any greasiness. Yunnan-style mooncakes truly lived up to their reputation.

But the Cantonese ones were equally anticipated.

Chapter 597: Stir-Frying Water Spinach with Ham Fat, Delicious! Brother Lin, Can You Make Steamed Pot Chicken?

"Wow, this mooncake is really delicious!"

"I can't resist these sweet and salty flavors."

"Me too, I really love it!"

"Yueyue, why aren't you eating? Don't you like this flavor?"

They were upstairs, at a booth near the kitchen entrance. Their flower ham mooncake party was still ongoing.

After finishing one, Chen Yan was about to pick up another when she suddenly realized her cousin hadn't eaten, and hadn't even touched the one she had shared with Lin Xu earlier.

What's going on? Such delicious mooncakes, and she's restraining herself. This means...

Chen Yan pushed up imaginary glasses on her nose and said in a Conan-like tone, "There's only one truth, and that is, there's something even more delicious coming up!"

Recalling that her brother-in-law was going to make Mapo Tofu without tofu for lunch today, Chen Yan figured her cousin must be waiting for that dish. If Yueyue was waiting, then she would wait too. She had already promised to help her brother-in-law with quality control, so she had to keep her word.

Upon hearing there was more food to come, the others also stopped eating. They were afraid they wouldn't have enough room for dinner, and that would be more agonizing than losing a billion.

Soon after, Lin Xu came out holding a small basin of freshly made Mapo Chicken Cake. "Whoever ate more mooncakes today will regret it," he announced, "because you can eat mooncakes any day, but this dish, I don't often have the time to cook."

Upon hearing this, everyone else wore expressions that said, 'Just as we thought!' They had bet correctly; there really was a more delicious dish.

A young man brought over a basin of rice and placed it on the table, then brought out bowls and chopsticks.

With all the dishes ready, what were they waiting for?

Let's eat!

Everyone gathered around the table and began to serve themselves rice. Shu Yun, having finished her mooncake, came over to Lin Xu and whispered, "Boss, Tiantian wanted some Moringa Seeds. I just gave her a small handful."

Moringa Seeds weren't a big deal, but she had to report it. After all, they belonged to the boss; taking them without asking would be tantamount to stealing.

Lin Xu heard this and smiled unconcernedly. "Give them to her then. Is a handful too little? Should you grab some more?"

He didn't use them himself, so if Tiantian wanted them, why not give them to her? These Moringa Seeds are for... wait. She's an unmarried young woman with no partner. What would she want with Moringa Seeds that tonify the kidneys and strengthen the loins? Do athletes need that kind of supplement too? But these are for men, unlike Chinese yam, which benefits both men and women.

Shu Yun didn't dare to mention Wei Qian, but said, "They're for a friend of hers. She said her friend is a bit weak and needs some nourishment."

Lin Xu laughed and said, "If she feels it's not enough, give her more. If she thinks that's enough, then when my Senior Brother and father-in-law arrive, give the rest of those Moringa Seeds to them. Be discreet."

"Okay, Boss. I understand."

Giving Moringa Seeds to his Senior Brother was fine; everyone knew he was frail. However, giving them to his father-in-law didn't feel quite right. His father-in-law valued his pride immensely. If he got the

idea, "What, you think Old Shen isn't vigorous and formidable?" it could backfire. It was better to be discreet about it. This way, it would be a tacit understanding, showing good rapport.

"Wow, what kind of ingredient is this? It's so tender!"

"At first, I thought it was tofu, but when I bit into it, it tasted like chicken! So fresh and tender."

"No wonder our dear Lin Xu said the flower ham mooncakes weren't the real surprise! This was definitely worth the wait!"

"My brother-in-law said at noon he'd make Mapo Tofu without tofu, and he actually did it! To celebrate this delicious dish, I'm going to perform 'three mouthfuls to a bowl of rice' for everyone. Want to see?"

"Pfft, you just want to eat more rice!"

Chen Yan, whose intentions were ruthlessly exposed by Zeng Xiaoqi, wasn't annoyed. Instead, she grinned, scooped some Chicken Cake into her bowl, mixed it with her rice, and shoveled it into her mouth.

Comfortable! This is how you enjoy rice, shoveling it in with gusto!

Her only regret was eating so many "tomatoes" that afternoon. It meant she could only manage two bowls of rice at most today. If it weren't for those braised snacks, three bowls of rice would have been easy.

After reporting back to Lin Xu, Shu Yun also served herself a bowl of rice and sat down, starting to eat with a spoon and explaining, "The main ingredient in this is Chicken Cake. It's made by pounding chicken breast into a paste, mixing it thoroughly with egg white and a starch slurry, then steaming it until it resembles a rice cake. After that, it's carefully cut into pieces. It's a very difficult dish to make, so everyone, savor each bite!"

A dish this laborious... who knows when we'll get to eat it again. So, I absolutely have to eat more of it today.

Chen Yan laughed and said, "Don't worry. Next time we want to eat it, just get Yueyue to tell Lin Xu. If we ask, Lin Xu might not make it, but if Yueyue wants it, he definitely will..."

Shen Jiayue, hearing how troublesome it was to prepare, immediately said, "This dish is too much trouble to make; I don't want to eat it. Yan Bao, if you want to eat it, get your boyfriend to make it for you."

Chen Yan: ??????

It's fine for you to dote on your man, but why do you have to stab me in the heart? I'm going to call the police if this continues! Ugh! Suddenly, I really miss that boyfriend of mine whom I've never met. I wonder how he's doing now, what he's busy with, whether he has eaten, where he lives, whether he's handsome, what his name is... For a moment, President Chen felt so melancholic she just wanted to eat two more bowls of rice. Trying to drown her sorrows with rice only made them worse!

「In the kitchen.」

Just as Lin Xu was about to add another dish for the fattening-up squad outside, Wei Qian came over with the oil that had rendered from the steamed ham, asking, "Lin Xu, what are you planning to do with this oil? It's so salty and greasy..."

Chapter 598: Stir-Frying Water Spinach with Ham Fat, Delicious! Brother Lin, Can You Make Steamed Pot Chicken? _2

What's this oil for?

Seeing some cleaned water spinach placed to the side, Lin Xu smiled and said, "Later, I'll use this oil to stir-fry some water spinach. It'll be water spinach with a cured meat flavor—so there's no need to even add salt."

I was just wondering what other dish to add. And here it is!

Though Mapo Chicken Cake is delicious and goes well with rice, one still needs to eat green vegetables. After all, it's autumn; gotta get those vitamins to prevent dry skin.

It also perfectly suited the ladies' desire to diet.

He took the cleaned water spinach, chopped off the tough ends, then separated the leaves from the stems.

Water spinach is a common green vegetable in major restaurants and sells well, especially in southern regions. There, delicious water spinach can even become a restaurant's signature dish.

Water spinach is also a frequent dish in daily home cooking.

However, it's rare to achieve the restaurant-quality appearance and taste at home. Most home-cooked versions end up too watery, turn black, or are simply overcooked. They lack the vibrant green color and crisp texture found in restaurants.

Actually, there's a trick to making delicious water spinach: an additional step called 'killing the greens' before cooking.

'Killing the greens' is a common step in vegetable preparation. For example, blanching Boiled Chinese Broccoli is one form of 'killing the greens.'

However, this water-blanching method isn't suitable for water spinach. Because there's too much water involved, the resulting dish becomes too soupy.

Vegetables like water spinach should have their 'greens killed' by flash-frying.

After chopping the water spinach, Lin Xu grabbed a handful of peeled and washed garlic cloves. He placed them on the cutting board, flattened each one with the side of his knife, and then minced them finely.

Flattening the garlic enhances its flavor, but one must be careful. Some knives can break easily, potentially causing accidents.

When stir-frying water spinach, a generous amount of garlic is needed for better flavor.

Besides garlic, he also chopped some dried chilies. These add a fragrant, dry aroma that makes the dish even more appetizing with rice.

With the garlic and dried chilies ready, Lin Xu also prepared a bowl of light brine.

He heated the wok and began to cook.

He poured oil into the wok, cranked the heat to high, and tossed in the water spinach stems and leaves.

Immediately after, he quickly poured the prepared light brine around the inner edge of the wok. Then, holding the wok handle with one hand, he rapidly stir-fried with a spoon in the other.

Adding oil to the water helps maintain the green color of the leaves.

The brine helps the vegetables soften and wilt quickly.

Meanwhile, the hot inner surface of the wok helps evaporate excess moisture from the leaves.

Once all the water spinach had wilted and changed color, he lifted the wok and poured the vegetables into a large colander to drain.

He quickly rinsed the wok, returned it to the stove, heated it up again, and added a spoonful of the rendered ham oil.

This ham oil contained some condensed water from the steaming process, so it needed to be heated in the wok first to evaporate this moisture.

When cold, the ham oil doesn't have much of a scent and looks similar to regular cooking oil. But upon heating, the rich, savory aroma of ham began to waft from the wok.

This was an oil practically made for green vegetables.

It not only imparts a rich mouthfeel to the greens but also adds the unique, savory flavor of ham.

It tastes so delicious that it can even surpass greens stir-fried with lard.

Soon, the moisture in the oil had evaporated. Lin Xu then divided the minced garlic he had prepared; he tossed half into the wok along with the dried chili sections, saving the other half to add later.

Once the garlic and dried chilies released their fragrance, he added the drained water spinach and stir-fried vigorously over high heat.

The water spinach, having already released some moisture and wilted during the initial flash-fry, would cook through quickly.

After stir-frying over high heat for about thirty seconds, he drizzled a little Light Soy Sauce around the edge of the wok to add a touch of soy fragrance.

He continued to stir-fry, further reducing the moisture on the vegetables' surface.

Finally, he added a small spoonful of salt to enhance the flavor, tossed in the remaining minced garlic, stir-fried until evenly combined, then removed it from the heat and plated the dish.

Since it was stir-fried with ham oil, no further salt was needed for seasoning.

The entire cooking process was simple and swift.

When Lin Xu emerged with the dish, the small basin of Mapo Chicken Cake he had made earlier was almost gone.

Only a few minutes, and more than half is gone?

TSK. You ladies are truly as formidable as any man when it comes to eating!

Zeng Xiaoqi exclaimed with admiration, "It has to be Boss Lin! He knew that just eating Mapo Chicken Cake might be too 'heaty,' so he stir-fried some water spinach for us." She picked up some water spinach with her chopsticks, placed it in her bowl, and then, looking at Chen Yan and Shu Yun, said, "This afternoon, I saw your social media posts about eating tomatoes, so I went to the supermarket across from the TV station to buy some too. Why do tomatoes these days taste so awful? They're harder to bite than an apple."

Chen Yan and Shu Yun exchanged glances. They both saw guilt in each other's eyes.

But in an instant, as if by an unspoken agreement, they reached a consensus.

Shu Yun said, "I specifically picked a few softer ones from the kitchen, and they tasted all right. How about yours, Chief Chen? Were they good?"

"They were okay. Aside from being a bit sour, everything else was fine."

Recalling Yueyue's social media post, Chief Chen couldn't help but mentally re-experience the sourness of those raw tomatoes.

While Zeng Xiaoqi was muttering about how you can't find those old-fashioned, mealy tomatoes anymore, she picked up a leaf of water spinach and took a bite.

Then, her large, expressive eyes—which netizens lauded as 'eyes that could speak'—suddenly widened in surprise. "Wow! This water spinach has a ham flavor! Was it stir-fried with ham?"

Chapter 599: Stir-frying Water Spinach with Ham Fat, Delicious! Brother Lin, Do You Know How to Make Steamed Pot Chicken? _3

He looked down at the water spinach on the table. Apart from a bit of minced garlic and a few dried chilis, there wasn't a speck of minced meat, let alone ham.

But the taste of this dish...

She took another bite and was sure it was that distinct ham flavor. She had just eaten a fresh flower ham mooncake, so the flavor left a strong impression on Director Zeng.

When the others heard, they each tried a piece of water spinach with their chopsticks and indeed tasted a rich ham flavor.

It was clearly a dish that looked entirely vegetarian.

But as they ate, it was filled with the kind of richness usually found only in meat dishes.

This was simply astonishing.

Lin Xu, who had just served himself a bowl of rice and sat down to eat, commented, "This dish was stir-fried with oil rendered from steamed ham. Feel free to eat more if you like; the kitchen has plenty of water spinach, enough for everyone to eat their fill."

Ham oil? No wonder it tasted so good.

Lin Xu picked up a piece with his chopsticks and tasted it. It was an explosion of fresh, savory flavor. The vivid green water spinach had a satisfyingly crisp texture, and the distinctive salty umami of the ham coated each strand, making the dish tender, delicious, appetizing, and a perfect accompaniment to rice.

"Anyone who says greens aren't a good match for rice should try this water spinach. It's absolutely beyond imagination!"

While everyone was enjoying their meal, Shen Guofu and Han Shuzhen returned home from work.

"Dad, Mom, come quickly and try this! It's a new dish today, and it tastes amazing!"

Shen Baobao sat next to Lin Xu, her face radiant with a joyful smile.

Ever since Lin Xu had sent her that heartwarming afternoon tea after lunch, her smile hadn't faded. Now, seeing her parents, she was eager to share her happiness.

YES! I need to find a photo studio to laminate that note later. Then, when I have a grandson, I can take it out and tell him the story. Hmm... I'll be quite old by then. I wonder if Xu will still like me. I've heard men are very consistent in their tastes; they only like young women in their twenties. I'll have to keep a close eye on this little rascal to stop him from going astray.

Lin Xu had no idea that his Baobao was already making plans for her life after retirement.

He stood up to serve his father-in-law and mother-in-law each a bowl of rice, casually explaining how to make the Mapo Chicken Cake.

While serving the rice, he made sure to give his father-in-law a slightly larger portion.

The father-in-law and son-in-law exchanged smiles; everything was understood without a word.

Earlier that afternoon, Shen Guofu had been dreading dinner, as those low-fat meals held no appeal for him.

After receiving his son-in-law's call, his mood had lifted; it was as if flowers were blooming and everything had become wonderful.

Now, holding his bowl of rice, eating the delicious Mapo Chicken Cake that paired so well with rice, and the garlicky water spinach infused with ham aroma, he couldn't help but marvel at the beauty of life.

After finishing his bowl of rice, Lin Xu went to the kitchen.

Since he planned to make Milk Yellow Mooncakes, he had to start the preparations now; otherwise, they might not be ready by tomorrow.

After all, making these mooncakes involved several steps requiring freezing, and no shortcuts could be taken.

He fetched some ready-made salted egg yolks from the cold storage.

After washing them, he arranged them on a baking tray, sprayed them with a layer of strong white liquor to remove any off-odors, and then placed them in the oven to bake until the oil rendered out.

Baking the salted egg yolks before use not only effectively removes any off-odors but also enhances their fragrance and texture.

These ready-made egg yolks were already cooked, so they didn't need to bake for too long.

Typically, when the surface starts to exude oil and bubble slightly, it indicates that the yolks are perfectly baked.

He took them out of the oven and crushed them while they were still hot.

This step needed to be done quickly. Hot salted egg yolks are somewhat soft and easier to crush into a powder. If they cool down, they not only harden, but the resulting particles are also less fine.

After the salted egg yolks were completely crushed, he sifted them through a fine-mesh sieve to ensure an even smoother texture for the filling.

The Milk Yellow Mooncake consists of three parts: the crust, the milk yellow filling, and the flowing heart filling.

During assembly, the milk yellow filling envelops the flowing heart filling. This is then encased in the crust. The entire process resembles nesting dolls.

But this "nesting" also requires technique.

Otherwise, the flowing heart filling might melt, the milk yellow filling could separate and leak oil, and even the crust might lose moisture and crack.

Making Milk Yellow Mooncakes had countless potential pitfalls, so every step of the cooking process had to be executed perfectly.

Only then could the final product achieve its most perfect state.

Lin Xu placed the crushed egg yolks in the refrigerator. These powdery, fragrant yolk granules, with their characteristic fine, sandy texture, were suitable not only for Milk Yellow Mooncakes but also for popular Cantonese snacks like Golden Flowing Sand Buns.

If there were any leftovers, he would steam a few for Shen Baobao, giving the young lady a chance to try something new and special.

Just as he was busy, Old Huang arrived with his wife for dinner.

Lin Xu made a point to put aside his work and brought out two mooncakes to greet them.

After all, they had generously given him such a large ham for free and even shared their homemade flower sauce; it was only right to show them respect, both out of courtesy and gratitude.

"Brother, your culinary skills are incredible!" Old Huang exclaimed after he and his wife tasted the mooncakes. "The filling is seasoned perfectly, with just the right balance of salty and sweet." They were both full of praise for Lin Xu.

Mrs. Huang hadn't expected much before coming; she had thought her husband might be exaggerating. But after tasting Lin Xu's creations, she realized her husband had merely been telling the truth.

"Such craftsmanship! It's hard to find mooncakes this delicious, even in Southern Yunnan," she complimented.

These days, mooncakes generally chase after excessive sweetness. Although ham is used, it's often soaked and boiled until its salty flavor is significantly diminished.

Then, when making the filling, people often add excessive amounts of sugar, fearing it won't be sweet enough.

This results in mooncakes that are overly sweet, lacking the ham's essential savory flavor.

Tasting such delicious mooncakes, Mrs. Huang's expectations of Lin Xu's skills grew even higher.

She asked with a smile, "Brother, can you make steam pot chicken?"

Steam pot chicken?

Old Huang added, "My wife gets homesick. If she doesn't eat Southern Yunnan cuisine for a while, she feels like something's missing. Brother, if you can make steam pot chicken, please make it for us once. Money is no issue."

Lin Xu responded with a wry smile, "To make steam pot chicken, you need a steam pot. It's very difficult to make it without one."

In Chinese cuisine, some dishes require specific cookware. For example, Claypot Rice needs to be cooked in a clay pot, and steam pot chicken requires a steam pot.

Without a steam pot, the dish would just be ordinary steamed chicken.

"We have steam pots! We have steam pots!" Old Huang took a big bite of mooncake and said while chewing, "We have several steam pots at home, big ones and small ones. But for some reason, the steam pot chicken never tastes authentic. Initially, I thought it was the pot's fault. I even went to Jianshui specifically to buy a handcrafted clay pot, but it still didn't work out."

"Didn't work out?" Lin Xu's interest was piqued. "How so? Was the pot leaking, or something else?"

Mrs. Huang chuckled sheepishly. "It has a gamey taste..."

Lin Xu was momentarily speechless. That's a problem with the cooking technique! What good does constantly changing pots do? Those poor steam pots must feel incredibly wronged!

He said with a laugh, "Alright, Old Huang, when you deliver the vegetables tomorrow, bring your steam pot from home. I'll find some time to make steam pot chicken. I can't promise much else, but I can guarantee it absolutely won't have any gamey taste!"

Hearing this, Old Huang and his wife were overjoyed. "Then we'll be eagerly awaiting it!"

Chapter 600: The Milk Yellow Mooncake that Fails as Soon as You Learn It, Won't You Try Making It?

Steam Pot Chicken is a unique delicacy from the Southern Yunnan region.

Chicken and ingredients are placed in a steam pot without adding any water and steamed over a soup pot. The steam condenses to slowly bring out the flavors of the food.

This cooking method allows most of the chicken's fresh taste and nutrients to be preserved.

However, if it's not cooked properly, it can indeed have a gamey flavor.

After Lin Xu used points to exchange for the Superior method, he discovered that the preparation was quite particular.

For instance, one must use a young hen that has never laid eggs. It must also be free-range and have yellow fat in its belly. Only such a chicken makes delicious Steam Pot Chicken.

Additionally, when cooking, one must not blanch the chicken, add any stock, or even use seasonings.

Adding a small piece of ham while cooking suffices for seasoning.

Besides the ham that acts as a seasoning, common ingredients in Steam Pot Chicken include precious foods like Chicken Mushroom, morels, or matsutake. Medicinal materials like notoginseng and astragalus can also be added.

After it's done, scooping a bowl of the hot soup and drinking it down is truly refreshing, opening up every pore in one's body.

While basking in this refreshing sensation, dipping a couple of pieces of chicken in Yunnan-style dipping sauce—that feeling is simply indescribable.

Unfortunately, this authentic method is very time-consuming, especially for small household stoves with weak heat and low steam, making it difficult to have ample condensing water in the pot.

Restaurants, in order to save time and cost, mostly add chicken broth while steaming.

They even add some chicken-flavored additives to artificially enhance the taste of the dish.

Mrs. Huang also started thinking of making it herself because she felt that the Steam Pot Chicken from restaurants was getting worse and worse.

But due to her lack of culinary skills, after several unsuccessful attempts, Steam Pot Chicken became an even stronger obsession.

Now, hearing that Lin Xu could make it and guarantee it wouldn't have a gamey taste, she quickly said,

"Then, let's have Old Huang bring the pot tomorrow. We'll give you all the pots. And morels, Chicken Mushroom, matsutake, cordyceps, notoginseng... we have all these ingredients at home, just let me know what you need."

As the wife of a high-end food supplier, Mrs. Huang was quite particular and immediately listed a bunch of ingredients far more expensive than the chicken for Lin Xu to choose from.

As for what ingredients to use...

Lin Xu glanced at Shen Baobao, his mother-in-law, and the small dieting squad, and said with a smile,

"Just take some morels and notoginseng."

As the saying goes, "Ginseng nourishes qi, notoginseng nourishes blood." Since there were many women around, he chose notoginseng to give everyone a taste of something fresh while exploring medicinal cuisine on the side.

Mrs. Huang heard this and said,

"Old Huang will bring some over with the vegetables tomorrow morning."

How generous!

Lin Xu felt that Mrs. Huang was much better than the stingy Old Huang. He said with a smile,

"Thanks a lot, sister-in-law, but I probably won't have time to make it before the Mid-Autumn Festival. I need to rush to make some mooncakes these next few days."

The mooncakes hadn't started selling yet, but one to two hundred sets had been pre-ordered already.

Although the Shen Group, where his father-in-law worked, didn't pre-order Lin Ji's mooncakes, they gave every employee a membership card for Lin Ji's Food with a thousand yuan deposited in it.

They wanted the employees to bring their families to Lin Ji's Food for meals during the holiday.

This intention was good, but his father-in-law didn't consider that with so many people from his company coming to eat all at once, even the banquet hall, which was being expanded, would likely not be enough.

「Back in the kitchen.」

He continued making the molten filling.

This had to be prepared tonight and frozen. After freezing overnight, it could be used without melting too easily.

The ingredients needed for the molten filling weren't too many. Besides the sieved salted egg yolks, the rest were condensed milk, butter, milk powder, and white chocolate.

There are several formulas for this kind of filling.

For example, gelatin sheets can be used instead of white chocolate.

Or cream and white sugar can be used instead of condensed milk.

You can also cut the condensed milk amount by half and replace it with coconut milk, which makes the molten center even more flavorful when eaten.

Regardless of the substitutions, the calorie content of the molten filling is off the charts.

Lin Xu added condensed milk, butter, white chocolate, and a third of the sieved salted egg yolks into a milk pan to simmer over low heat, stirring evenly with a spoon.

Near the end, some milk powder was added to the pan.

The milk powder not only increased the milky flavor but also made the molten center a bit thicker, so it wouldn't burst open at a bite.

After mixing the milk powder evenly, he poured it out to cool.

While waiting, he took out the silicone molds he had ordered online, cleaned them, and arranged them neatly on the workbench.

"This stuff is really troublesome. Can't you just knead it by hand?"

Zhuang Yizhou, looking at the workbench full of silicone molds, thought that the preparation for this mooncake filling was too cumbersome.

If it were a traditional double yolk lotus seed filling or the common Northern-style mixed nuts filling, it would probably be much simpler. Even Suzhou-style thousand-layered puff pastry mooncakes have a simpler process than the Milk Yellow Mooncake.

Lin Xu said,

"It's troublesome, but we just set a higher price for it. Besides, when mass-producing, it's not as complicated as you'd imagine."

This mooncake might appear to have many steps and a complex process. However, by following each step, it wasn't as difficult as imagined and could even be made during work breaks without taking up large blocks of time.

When it had cooled sufficiently, he poured the cooked filling into a piping bag and injected it into each mold.

The molds were little spheres, 2.2 centimeters in diameter, which translates to a weight of 5 grams—just the right amount for one mooncake.

The weight of a Milk Yellow Mooncake is quite strict: 5 grams for the molten center, 25 grams for the milk yellow filling, and 25 grams for the crust, resulting in a total weight of 55 grams, which is just over one liang (a traditional Chinese unit of weight).