

## Culinary 601

Chapter 601: The Milk Yellow Mooncake that Fails As Soon As You Learn, Won't You Try Making It? \_2

Don't be fooled by the small size of the mooncake, weighing just a couple of ounces; the calories it contains far exceed those of two bowls of rice.

The title of "calorie bomb" is no joke.

After pouring the mixture into molds, the molds are placed in the freezer.

The firmer the molten filling is frozen, the better, to prevent it from melting during the making process.

After finishing these tasks, Lin Xu walked out of the kitchen. He was about to sit down with a cup of water to take a break when Shen Baobao, who had eaten her fill, approached him.

"Xu, I have something important to announce to you."

Seeing her serious expression, Lin Xu curiously asked, "What is it?"

"I've taken a day off tomorrow to make Milk Yellow Mooncakes in the villa's kitchen. Don't call me unless it's urgent. I don't want to be distracted while making them."

What? You're making Milk Yellow Mooncakes? Lin Xu almost choked on his water; this was totally unexpected.

He coughed dryly and asked with a hint, "Making those snacks is best done with a helper. Who are you planning to have help you? Aunt Liu?"

As a nanny for a wealthy family, Aunt Liu should learn quickly, even if she doesn't know how to make this kind of snack. With her help overseeing things, the Milk Yellow Mooncakes might not look professional, but at least they'd be edible.

However, Shen Baobao pointed at Chen Yan, who was discussing autumn skincare with Zeng Xiaoqi. "Yan Bao. She'll be my assistant tomorrow."

Her? Although he didn't want to use the term "Dragon and Phoenix" to describe his Baobao and her elder sister, in this situation, that was the only combination Lin Xu could think of.

Just a few minutes ago, Zhuang Yizhou, a top chef from Yanjing Hotel, had complained about how troublesome Milk Yellow Mooncakes were to make. Yet here were these two, more accustomed to making fruit salads and steamed egg custard, ready to take on the challenge.

And they seemed utterly confident they could succeed.

Truly, the fearlessness of the inexperienced.

He put down his cup and took Shen Baobao's delicate, boneless hand, asking, "No calls, no messages... what if I start missing you?"

These words went straight to Shen Baobao's heart. "Oh, you flirt, Xu! We'll still come back for lunch tomorrow. Don't worry, MWAH~ Baby, I'm not going anywhere."

She happily planted a kiss on Lin Xu's face.

Hehe, I love Xu's casual flirtations the most.

Lin Xu had initially planned to persuade the girl not to do it and just remain comfortably as the shop's boss. But seeing her so filled with confidence, he held back his words.

If she wants to do it, let her. It'll be like playing a game.

Tomorrow morning, I'll call Aunt Liu and ask her to keep an eye on the kitchen. As long as they don't start a fire, let the sisters mess around as they wish.

While the lovebirds were in the midst of their affectionate exchanges, Chen Yan walked over. "Brother-in-law, tomorrow I'm going to make Milk Yellow Mooncakes, and Yueyue will help me. Do you think we can pull it off?"

I think you two should first decide who's head chef with a game of rock-paper-scissors...

Lin Xu silently commented to himself, then raised his cup as if toasting, "Definitely! Remember to save some for me when you're done. I'm waiting to eat them."

"No problem, no problem! I guarantee you'll want more after tasting them!"

Just then, Shu Yun was also on the second floor. Lin Xu said to her, "Take a note: remind me after the holiday to make steamed pot chicken. I promised Mr. Huang. And remind me to ask him for two hens that haven't laid eggs yet."

Nowadays, with so many things on his mind, Lin Xu had Dou Wenjing and Shu Yun remind him of important matters.

"Sure, boss. I've got it." Shu Yun opened her phone's memo app and noted it down.

「The next day.」

Just after breakfast, Shen Baobao, who had specially changed into her sportswear, and Chen Yan bid farewell to Lin Xu and drove home to prepare to make Milk Yellow Mooncakes.

Lin Xu finished his bowl of sweet potato porridge, took out the molten fillings that had been frozen overnight, and began to demold them.

After one night in the freezer, all the molten fillings had turned into small round balls.

After taking them out of the molds, he placed these small balls on a tray lined with baking paper and continued to freeze them.

The white chocolate in the molten filling melts very easily, so it's essential to keep these balls frozen throughout the process.

Actually, using gelatin sheets is better than white chocolate, but the molten effect isn't as good. Moreover, excessive gelatin can turn the filling into jelly, which only melts when heated.

This completely loses the essence of Milk Yellow Mooncakes.

After placing the trays of small balls back in the freezer, Lin Xu prepared the ingredients and started making the milk yellow filling, which is the second layer of the mooncake.

This part required slightly more ingredients: sieved low gluten flour, cornstarch, and milk powder, along with light cream, milk, fine granulated sugar, egg liquid, unsalted butter, and the remaining salted egg yolks.

He thoroughly washed a large frying pan, repeatedly seasoning it with oil before pouring out the excess. Then, he poured all the ingredients, except for the salted egg yolks, into the pan.

When making milk yellow filling, it's crucial to ensure the bottom of the pan does not stick. Otherwise, the whole batch would be ruined.

Lin Xu seasoned the pan twice specifically to prevent sticking and scorching.

Once all the ingredients were in, he continuously stirred with a wooden spatula.

Initially, the mixture was as thin as porridge, but as the temperature increased, the golden ingredients, emitting a rich milky fragrance, became increasingly thick.

Wei Qian, carrying his cycling helmet, walked into the kitchen. Watching Lin Xu's actions, he asked curiously, "What are you making? Is that the 'Three-Non-Stick' dish?"

"Eating Three Non-Stick in the early morning can be a bit greasy, huh? It's all lard and sugar; one bite and you gain three pounds."

His words made Lin Xu realize that this custard filling was indeed quite similar to Three Non-Stick. Even the final product looked quite a lot like it.

"This is the custard filling for the Milk Yellow Mooncake. Aren't you on the night shift today? How come you're here so early?"

Lin Xu noticed that Wei Qian seemed a bit thinner these days. It seemed that cycling to and from work every day really helped with fitness.

Unfortunately, he lived too close to the store, just a stone's throw away, so he couldn't even get exercise by commuting. If he had money, he'd buy a villa like his father-in-law's, convert the basement into a gym, play some pool, and work out after his shift. Just thinking about it felt incredibly comfortable.

"I... Lin Xu, help me analyze this. I haven't offended Tiantian, have I?"

Lin Xu: "..."

You're really stuck in a dead end.

He stirred the ingredients in the pot and asked, "What now?"

Wei Qian took a small, transparent, sealed bag out of his pocket and shook it in front of Lin Xu. "Last night after biking home, Tiantian gave me this packet. She told me to eat one every day, saying it can treat physical weakness... Out of nowhere, she says I'm weak! We're colleagues; how could she say that?"

Looking at the Moringa Seeds in the sealed bag, Lin Xu had a helpless expression.

Was Wei Qian the friend Song Tiantian mentioned? Still, Moringa Seeds were mostly for strengthening the loins; they didn't do much for general physical weakness. For a bachelor like Wei Qian, eating them might even cause a nosebleed.

Lin Xu said, "Wei Qian, think about it seriously. When a girl suddenly starts caring about a boy, what do you think her purpose might be?"

Wei Qian scratched his head, pondered for a moment, and then said with conviction, "She wants to borrow money!"

Lin Xu: "..."

My goodness, man, what kind of experiences have you had to come up with such an idea?

To prevent this guy's thinking from straying further off track, Lin Xu gave an example. "Since starting university, Yueyue has always been nice to me, often bringing me snacks and things, and eventually, we became a couple. Now Tiantian is doing the same for you. What do you think she wants?"

This time Wei Qian perked up. "She wants to be my sugar mommy!"

Lin Xu: ???????

He suddenly felt tired. Maybe later he should persuade Tiantian to consider someone else. Wei Qian's thought process was as incomprehensible as a tangled ball of yarn.

He didn't want to deal with Wei Qian anymore, so he stood in front of the stove, concentrating on the ingredients in the pot.

As the moisture evaporated, the paste-like ingredients in the pot became increasingly thick.

But this was when he had to be most careful because the ingredients were very sticky and could easily adhere to the bottom of the pot. He had to keep scraping the bottom with a wooden spatula while stirring.

As he was busy, Wei Qian came over again and asked quietly, "Lin Xu, do you think Tiantian... likes me?"

"Otherwise, why would she cycle with you every day?"

"Then what's she after? I don't have money, no house in Beijing... Although my family has some savings, it's only enough to buy a small house back home..."

Wei Qian's face showed a mix of anxiety and hesitation.

Being liked was a good thing, but was he worthy of such a girl's devotion?

Lin Xu patted his shoulder and said with a smile, "This is an answer you'll have to find for yourself. Maybe she likes that your plumpness means you're not bony to the touch, or perhaps it's because your cooking suits her taste. Anyway, the girl has already taken the initiative, so you might as well give it a try. For example, let her encourage you to lose weight or something. That can deepen your bond and also reduce your anxiety about your figure."

Wei Qian was a skilled cook and an honest person. Although he once took revenge by swapping holidays at the Fishing Platform, that was only because he had been bullied first.

His only flaw might have been his weight, which made him extremely insecure about his personal charm.

This situation was especially suited for a vigorous weight-loss campaign.

Losing weight could not only reshape one's physique but was also a process of rebuilding confidence.

Transforming one's least perfect aspect into perfection could greatly enhance both one's image and inner self.

These words deeply stirred Wei Qian, and he went outside to ponder.

Meanwhile, the custard filling in the pot had completely solidified, its surface slightly glossy—a sign that the filling was well-cooked.

Lin Xu poured this solidified filling into a large basin, then added the remaining salted egg yolks and began mixing.

Salted egg yolks shouldn't be added during stir-frying because prolonged heating would render the fat from them. This would make the custard filling greasy, not only cloying to eat but also prone to causing the pastry skin to break during wrapping.

Mixing them in after the base was cooked avoided this issue.

Moreover, mixing at this point also sped up the cooling process of the custard filling, allowing the temperature to drop more quickly.

Finally, after thoroughly mixing the filling, he covered the basin with cling film and carried it to the cold storage to cool.

Taking advantage of this time, Lin Xu started making the mooncake's crust—the outermost layer, like a nesting doll.

The dough for the crust was simple. Besides sieved low gluten flour, it only needed egg yolks, icing sugar, milk powder, cream, and butter.

If you wanted the mooncakes to have a nicer color after baking, you could add a tiny bit of lye water. This is an important additive in making Guangdong-style mooncakes, as it makes the crust more enticing and appetizing.

However, you shouldn't add too much lye water; just a tiny bit was enough.

Once the dough was ready, he covered it with cling film to let it rest. By this time, the custard filling had cooled down. He took it out of the cold storage, removed the cling film, and portioned the custard filling into small pieces weighing about 25 grams each.

After portioning, he rolled them into small balls. Then, holding a ball, he used his thumb to press a small indentation into it, much like when shaping a small dough nest.

This made it easier to encase the frozen lava core balls inside.

After preparing all of them, he placed them on a tray and returned them to the cold storage to continue chilling.

By now, the dough had also rested properly. He rolled it into a long strip and then portioned it into pieces, each weighing about 25 grams.

After portioning, he kneaded them again and covered them with cling film to continue resting.

He began to wrap the filling.

He took the frozen lava core balls from the freezer and, while they were still cold, placed them into the small indentations in the custard filling. Then, he quickly sealed them and re-rolled them into balls.

After rolling, he continued to freeze them.

The lava core balls needed to remain frozen at a low temperature.

This was to prevent any spillage.

After all the lava core filling was encased in the custard filling, he took the rested dough, pressed a piece by hand into a flat disc, and wrapped the custard filling inside, much like wrapping a steamed bun.

Once wrapped, he re-rolled them into balls and then put them into the refrigerator to continue resting.

He couldn't rush to press them in the molds at this stage. They had to be chilled in the refrigerator first to rest, otherwise the crust could easily crack. This would not only affect the appearance of the finished product but could also cause the lava core to leak.

The chilled mooncake balls needed to be dusted with a layer of cornstarch to prevent the crusts from sticking to the tray.

After finishing these tasks, Lin Xu came outside and saw Wei Qian walking downstairs as if he had made a significant decision.

Just as he was about to follow him to see what was happening, Shen Baobao, who had agreed not to contact him during the day, suddenly called.

"Xu Bao, we might not be able to make the mooncakes!"

"What happened?"

"Just now, Yan Bao and I were melting the ingredients for the lava core filling, and we found it was quite good to scoop out with a spoon and eat, so... so we accidentally ate it all..."

Chapter 603: When it comes to curbing cravings, nothing beats custard-filled mooncakes! The most satisfying way to eat Xuanwei Ham!

Lin Xu had been waiting for these two to mess up.

But he didn't expect this kind of outcome.

They hadn't even started making the mooncakes before they gobbled up all the filling.

Without a car, there's no possibility of a crash.

However, it must be said, simmering the white chocolate, condensed milk, Butter, Milk Powder, and mashed egg yolks together does create an amazing flavor and texture.

The egg yolk is slightly salty, its fine grains giving a sandy texture in the mouth; the condensed milk is sticky and sweet; the white chocolate is both sweet and fragrant; and the Milk Powder adds richness and body.

This delicacy—sweet yet salty, salty yet fragrant, fragrant yet grainy—scooping up a generous spoonful into the mouth is indeed quite tempting.

If chilled, it might even be more satisfying than ice cream.

But eating like this, his sister-in-law was bound to gain three pounds during the Mid-Autumn Festival, and it was looking more like five!

On the other end of the phone, Shen Baobao was still worrying about making mooncakes.

"Xubao, I can't make the mooncakes I promised you. What should I do?"

Without the molten filling, there's no way to make Milk Yellow Mooncakes!

It's all Yan Bao's fault, insisting on tasting it for sweetness and saltiness, and then...

Lin Xu laughed and said, "If you can't make Milk Yellow Mooncakes, just make regular milk custard mooncakes. That's relatively simpler and easier to start with..."

In the world of Guangdong-style mooncakes, the Milk Yellow Mooncake is probably the most difficult to make.

That's why Lin Xu was so surprised when he heard Shen Baobao intended to make that kind.

But if you remove the molten center, it becomes an easy-to-make, entry-level mooncake, perfectly manageable even for someone with little cooking experience.

Perhaps this 'dream team', in their greed, would manage to whip up some mooncakes after all.

On the other end of the phone, Shen Jiayue's face was filled with shock.

Without the molten center, it's still possible to make milk custard mooncakes? Is it really that miraculous?

She said to Chen Yan, who was still scraping the sticky molten filling from the bowl with a spoon, "Yan Bao, stop eating. Xubao said we can still make milk custard mooncakes without the molten filling. Should we give it a try?"

Chen Yan, having eaten her fill, immediately wiped the cream from her mouth. "Sure, sure, it's time to show off my cooking skills!"

In the store, Lin Xu hung up the phone. He was just about to go downstairs to watch the fun when he saw Wei Qian walking up the stairs, looking relaxed.

Uh... The fun hadn't even started yet, and it was already over?

Later, once he was free, he'd have to ask Shu Yun what happened downstairs.

Hmm, this isn't gossip; it's concern for the staff's well-being and mental health (serious face)!

"Lin Xu, I talked things through with Tiantian, and I feel so relieved. Thanks for your advice."

Lin Xu was utterly bewildered.

Just from the first half, it sounded like Wei Qian had rejected Tiantian and felt a wave of relief.

But then he thanked Lin Xu for his advice.

This... Lin Xu felt like he was watching a TV show that was going along fine, and suddenly the plot jumped ahead twenty episodes.

Just how much romantic melodrama unfolded downstairs while I took that phone call?

「Downstairs.」

Song Tiantian, sitting nervously at the service counter with her phone, was rapidly typing messages in the "Tiantian's Singles Escape Squad" chat group:

"Boss Dou, Boss Shu, Boss Chen, Director Zeng: Wei Qian just came over and asked me to supervise his weight loss starting today. He said I have free rein to scold or even hit him... Do you think it's because I didn't let him win when we were biking tonight, and he got angry?"

Song Tiantian was somewhat at a loss when Wei Qian suddenly came over and said such things while she was handling the accounts. It just so happened that the banquet hall was wrapping up renovations today. Both Dou Wenjing and Shu Yun were there, leaving Song Tiantian with no one around to consult. So, right after Wei Qian left, she hurriedly messaged the group to seek the wise counsel of the advisors.

Chen Yan, the chief advisor, was about to adjust her batter when she heard her phone ring. Taking a glance, she broke into a grin. "Silly girl, he's letting you hit and scold him. What's there to fret about? This is a done deal."

Shen Jiayue, arms coated in batter, leaned in. "What are you mumbling about, Yan Bao?"

"Previously, Tiantian wanted to pursue Wei Qian but didn't know how to begin, so she was asking for our opinions."

Our opinions?

Shen Baobao observed the group members with a hint of surprise. "You bunch of single dogs giving out advice blindly, aren't you afraid of messing it up for her... Wait, why wasn't I added to this group?"

Ha! So you all sneakily formed this little clique behind my back. And it seems it's been more than a day or two. Impressive. I thought of you as sisters, but this is how you treat me!

Shen Jiayue's pretty face fell. "One minute. If you don't add me to the group within one minute, brace yourself for the relentless pressure from all the relatives to get married at this year's Mid-Autumn family dinner. You have my word!"

Hmph, Baobao is not happy!

Chen Yan was aghast. !!!!! It's just a small group, and you want to drop the nuclear option?

She quickly added Shen Baobao to the group and, while holding onto her cousin's arm, said, "Don't be mad, Yueyue sis. Getting angry will make Xiongxiang shrink. Be good. Next time we make a group, I'll add you first, or else may Shu Yun's cup size shrink by one!"

The Mid-Autumn family dinner was always a room packed with noisy relatives.

Being pressured about marriage in that kind of setting would be a disaster.

So, it was crucial to soothe her cousin's feelings quickly.

The words made Shen Baobao feel a bit better, but she immediately asked, "Why Shu Yun?"

"She's a 36C, close to my 34D, so..."

Shen Jiayue was bewildered. ?????? As a 34E, I really don't get the point of you bunch of chickens pecking at each other!

At ten o'clock in the morning, Lin Xu took out the chilled Dough from the refrigerator, spread a thin layer of starch in the mold, and then placed the slightly relaxed Dough into it.

Chapter 604: To satisfy a craving, you need custard lava filling! The most satisfying way to eat Xuanwei Ham! \_2

With a gentle press, the mooncake's shape emerged.

The top of the cake was stamped with the four characters "Lin Ji's Food" in a seal-like font. This mold was designed with Lele's help and belonged to the same series as her carved seals.

This helped establish a unified brand identity.

Once shaped, the mooncakes couldn't be baked immediately. They had to be placed in the freezer for about three hours. This effectively prevents the filling from bursting or the crust from breaking during baking.

Making these mooncakes required patience; only by taking one's time could the perfect effect be achieved.

At one o'clock in the afternoon, while everyone else was busy cooking and attending to guests, Lin Xu took the frozen mooncakes out. He arranged them one by one on a baking tray lined with baking paper, sprayed a layer of water on their surfaces, and placed them into the preheated oven to begin baking.

In front of the oven were two bowls containing liquids to brush on the mooncakes: one with egg yolk liquid and the other with honey water.

Many baked snacks require a brush of egg yolk liquid to give the surface a golden hue, making them more visually appealing.

However, there was a knack to making the egg yolk liquid. For instance, the yolk should be mixed with an equal amount of water. Too much water would lighten the color of the egg yolk liquid, while too little would make it too viscous and difficult to spread.

Free-range chicken eggs should be used, as their yolks are a brighter yellow. Ordinary eggs from poultry farms have paler yolks, which wouldn't create the perfect effect when brushed onto the food's surface.

Moreover, after the egg liquid and water were thoroughly mixed, the mixture had to be strained through a fine sieve. This filtered out the chalazae in the egg yolk, preventing it from marring the food's appearance.

As for the honey water, it was relatively simple. Stirring a small amount of honey evenly with water was sufficient. Brushing with honey water helped to moisturize the crust and prevent it from drying out and cracking in the oven.

After baking for five minutes, Lin Xu took the mooncakes out and slowly brushed their surfaces with the egg yolk liquid using a fine brush.

Once brushed with the egg liquid, the "Lin Ji's Food" lettering on the top became even clearer and more distinct.

Then, he returned them to the oven to continue baking.

After another six minutes, he opened the oven again. He took the mooncakes out and began to brush them with honey water.

After a few more minutes of baking, once the surface of the mooncakes turned golden, it signified they were ready.

He took them out and placed them on a tray lined with oil-absorbing paper to cool.

The crust of a freshly baked mooncake is dry and crisp, making the texture slightly less than perfect. It's best to let it rest for a day until the crust softens as it reabsorbs oil. That's when the mooncake is soft and at its most delicious.

But who would be willing to wait a day at this point? No one wanted to wait even an extra minute.

The mooncakes were still hot to the touch when several people had already gathered at the kitchen door, waiting to be fed.

As Lin Xu came out with the mooncakes, Shen Baobao and Chen Yan also returned from the villa, each carrying a food container, which surprised Lin Xu.

Are the Milk Yellow Mooncakes ready so soon?

"Xu Bao, come try the Milk Yellow Sticky Rice Cakes Yan Bao and I made."

Sticky Rice Cakes?

Lin Xu asked curiously, "Weren't you two going to make mooncakes? How did it turn into Sticky Rice Cakes?"

Shen Baobao pouted. "We had already made the filling. However, Aunt Liu said making mooncakes was too troublesome. It required mixing dough, molding, baking, brushing with water, and waiting for the oil return before they could be eaten. So, we switched to Sticky Rice Cakes."

"Are Sticky Rice Cakes less troublesome?"

Chen Yan opened her food container, smiling, and said, "Not troublesome at all! Just mix the glutinous rice flour to make dough, wrap the filling inside, and pan-fry both sides in a flat-bottomed pan until golden. It's super simple! Come on, everyone, try it! Milk Yellow Sticky Rice Cakes, the fighter jet among Sticky Rice Cakes, passionately presented by Galaxy's chief baker, the beautiful Chen Yan, and her assistant, Shen Hanhan!"

Shu Yun, who was waiting for mooncakes, couldn't help but laugh. "Even so... aren't those pan-fried? There was no baking involved!"

Chen Yan's face turned bright red with embarrassment, and then she retorted indignantly, "Are you going to eat them or not? Whoever doesn't eat will go down a cup size!"

Hardly had she spoken when several hands reached into the food container to grab Sticky Rice Cakes. Zeng Xiaoqi, who had specifically taken a taxi to eat mooncakes, even grabbed two, afraid that Chen Yan's ethereal curse might actually come true.

Lin Xu also took one to try. He wasn't worried about his chest shrinking; he was more curious about the taste. If this was good, he'd try making some Sticky Rice Cakes himself later—for example, Date Sticky Rice Cakes, Bean Paste Sticky Rice Cakes, Black Sesame Sticky Rice Cakes, and so on.

The outer crust of the Sticky Rice Cake was pan-fried to a crisp. A bite revealed a soft and slightly sticky interior, carrying the unique fragrance of glutinous rice.

Once bitten open, the custard filling inside exuded a rich milky aroma, while the taste offered the sandy texture and faint saltiness of salted egg yolk.

Mm, not bad, the flavor is great.

You had to admit Aunt Liu was good at making suggestions. She knew these two weren't strong on the basics. Making mooncakes would have kept them busy for ages just portioning the dough. With Sticky Rice Cakes, however, precision wasn't as necessary as long as the filling was wrapped, regardless of size. There was no concern for appearance either, as the method was simple yet delicious.

After finishing the Sticky Rice Cakes, everyone started eating the Milk Yellow Mooncakes. Lin Xu said to Dou Wenjing, "Post a notice online. Starting now, the shop will add sixty boxes of Milk Yellow Mooncakes and one hundred boxes of Flower Ham Mooncakes each day. Customers can preorder them at the front desk."

Dou Wenjing nodded. "I'll have the operations team post it right away."

Lin Xu took a mooncake and broke it open. The golden, molten center had already melted and was now slowly oozing from the break. However, due to its viscosity, it flowed very slowly, so there was no worry of it dripping onto oneself.

"Oh, and remind people in the promotional material that our shop's mooncakes contain no additives. Therefore, after purchase, they are best consumed within three days. They can be stored in the refrigerator for up to five days."

Chapter 605: To satisfy a craving, go for custard lava! The best way to enjoy Xuanwei Ham! \_3

Although it was close to the Mid-Autumn Festival, the temperature was still quite high, and mooncakes couldn't last long at room temperature.

"Okay, boss... These mooncakes are really delicious."

"The presentation is simply perfect. Don't sell them too cheaply, brother-in-law, or it wouldn't do justice to their good looks."

"Don't worry, Manager Chen. These are handmade by our boss, one by one. We definitely won't sell them at a low price; otherwise, it wouldn't do justice to the boss's efforts."

"It's these kinds of mooncakes that satisfy cravings. Even if I gain two pounds, I accept it!"

"Three pounds is okay too. As long as it's in the right places, I don't mind gaining a little more weight."

"..."

Lin Xu and Shen Baobao shared the mooncake they had broken apart and ate it.

These mooncakes, both in appearance and taste, were impeccable. The salted egg yolk in the middle added a unique savory taste to the otherwise sweet flavor.

Not bad at all.

Apart from the high calories that could lead to weight gain, they were flawless.

After finishing the mooncakes, just as Lin Xu was about to go inside to continue baking the remaining ones, Shen Baobao suddenly said, "Xu Baobao, we haven't had dinner yet. What's there to eat now?"

Haven't had dinner yet? That's easy to fix. Being in a restaurant, especially during mealtime, no one should go hungry.

Lin Xu asked, "Tell me, what do you want to eat? I'll go inside and get it ready right now."

"Hmm... I ate too many sweets this morning, and my mouth feels cloyed from all the sweetness. I want to eat something spicy and refreshing, preferably something that goes well with rice."

This request...

Lin Xu said, "All right, then you and Sister Yan just wait. I'll go inside and prepare it now."

For other requests, he would have had to give it some serious thought. But since she just wanted something spicy that went well with rice to counteract all the sweet desserts, the kitchen happened to have the perfect ingredients.

Returning to the kitchen, he took out some of the Ham left over from making flower Ham mooncakes the day before.

These pieces were the off-cuts of the Ham, either with too much fat or too salty to be used in the mooncakes, but they were perfect for cooking.

Unlike Jinhua Ham, Xuanwei Ham can be used directly for cooking. Even the greasier and saltier parts that dripped oil, which are located at the bottom of the hanging Ham, were only a bit more intensely salty. In terms of taste, it was on par with regular salted pork and ideal for stir-frying with chilies.

He sliced the Ham and prepared some thin-skinned chilies suitable for stir-frying. After cutting everything, he was ready to cook.

He heated the pan and coated it with cold oil. There was no need to add more oil; he just poured the cut Ham into the pan to dry-fry it. The high heat rendered the excess fat from the meat, so the Ham wouldn't be greasy. This process also allowed the fermented flavors within the meat to volatilize, making the aroma purer.

In Xuanwei, stir-frying chilies with Ham is a very common dish and one of the most gratifying ways to eat Xuanwei Ham. Moreover, the cooking method was super simple, requiring no seasoning, not even oil. He simply dry-fried the sliced Ham in the pan until the fat became slightly translucent, then added the cleaned and cut green chilies to stir-fry. He cooked the chilies until they were just tender-crisp and then plated the dish. Nothing else needed to be added, and the taste would be delicious.

The Ham was savory and spicy, while the chilies offered a rich texture. The spicy flavor was enhanced by the distinct freshness of the green chili peppers—a dish that was impossible to stop eating without at least three bowls of rice.

Originally, Lin Xu hadn't planned to make this dish because everyone had eaten quite a lot these past few days. Continuing to eat like this might lead to indigestion. But since his darling Baobao had requested it, what was he waiting for?

Let's get it done!

Soon, the fat from the meat slices started to render out. When the Ham turned translucent, he used a spoon to scoop out the excess fat from the pan. This Ham fat was perfect for stir-frying vegetables and couldn't go to waste.

After scooping out the fat, he poured the chili peppers in and began to stir-fry them. To improve the flavor and make it closer to Northern tastes, Lin Xu drizzled some Light Soy Sauce around the edge of the pan, adding a touch of soy aroma to the dish. He then drizzled a little Dark Soy Sauce to improve the color of the meat.

Once the green chilies in the pan were cooked until just tender-crisp, he added a bit of White Sugar to enhance the flavor, stir-fried them evenly, and then the dish was ready to be plated.

Very soon, the plate of Xuanwei Ham stir-fried with spicy peppers, filled with an aromatic spiciness, was brought out.

Shen Baobao, who was drinking tea to cut through the greasiness, was immediately captivated by the spicy aroma.

"Wow, after eating so many sweets, this spicy aroma is truly satisfying!" she exclaimed.

She and Chen Yan each grabbed a large bowl of rice and started eating with the dish. Both had tasted a bowl of runny filling earlier in the morning and hadn't refrained from sampling while making Sticky Rice Cake. Coupled with the Milk Yellow Mooncakes they had just eaten, they felt their mouths and stomachs were full of that cloying sweetness.

Now, eating the spicy and savory Ham slices, that sweet sensation was instantly swept away. Eating it with rice was just too wonderful.

"I never thought Ham could be eaten like this! It's craving-satisfying without being greasy, and it goes so well with rice... Brother-in-law, next time Mr. Huang delivers Ham, get me two pieces. I'll have my maid make it at home. This Ham stir-fried with chili peppers is just exceptional."

"Okay, I'll need to buy several pieces anyway for the mooncakes this time, so I'll order them all together," he replied.

Having said that, Lin Xu headed back to the kitchen to continue baking mooncakes.

After finishing all the Milk Yellow Mooncakes, he started making today's portion of fresh flower Ham mooncakes and runny filling.

In the morning, Mr. Huang had delivered another Ham and a drum of top-tier flower paste shipped through logistics. The ingredients were more than sufficient; now it all depended on the sales of the mooncakes.

In the afternoon, while making them, he innovated a bit. Besides the hard-shell fresh flower Ham mooncakes, he also made flaky-crust flower pastries and Ham Cakes. Since there was plenty of raw material, why not make several types for everyone to try something new?

The moment these new items were placed into the gift boxes, a system notification chimed in his mind:

"Host has created five new gift boxes, completing the side quest 'New Gift Box Launch' and earned one Perfect Level palace delicacy lottery draw. Do you wish to draw now?"

Palace delicacies?

Lin Xu had forgotten about this task; he hadn't expected his unintentional actions to complete it as well.

Taking advantage of the quiet evening, he went downstairs to play with Dundun for a while and also took the little guy to the Ziqiang Shengjian store near the subway entrance for a visit.

After coming back, he began the lottery draw.

A series of operations later, the system's voice rang in his mind:

"Congratulations, Host has obtained the Perfect Level palace delicacy – Lotus Cake!"

Chapter 606: How many ways do you know to eat Youtiao? Midnight hunger rescue guide! [Subscribe to find out!]

Lotus cakes?

It really is Mid-Autumn Festival. Mooncakes and lotus cakes are popping up everywhere; snacks are crowding the scene. But just selling snacks won't do; we also need to serve as many main dishes as possible.

Lin Xu scratched Dundun's chin and placed the little guy on the service counter before heading upstairs.

The time for relaxation was over; it was time to get back to work.

Online, as soon as Lin Ji's Food's official account posted about the new mooncakes, netizens were stunned by the unexpected news.

Invisible Chicken Wings: Milk Yellow Mooncake? Floral Ham Mooncake? Is Boss Lin not letting us save a single penny?

Did the graphics card prices plummet today: Before going to Lin Ji, I planned to save up for a 3090. But after eating at Lin Ji for a while, I felt a 3070 wasn't bad either. Now, seeing the mooncake news... I guess I'll stick with the 1066 for another three years!

Lost Roasted Whole Sheep: Everyone says you shouldn't make the kids suffer, but the guy above is just making his graphics card suffer.

I Swear Off Gambling and Drugs: I'm from Southern Yunnan. I saw the Floral Ham Mooncake and couldn't resist. I'll be heading to Lin Ji early tomorrow to queue up, aiming to get a box to try.

V me 50, I'll teach you an anti-scam trick: I'm from Guangzhou. Although I'm indifferent to the Milk Yellow Mooncake, I still want to buy some to give to friends. See you tomorrow!

When you are lying in bed, your culinary skills grow in your heart: Squatting for a mooncake tutorial, how do you keep the liquid filling from melting while wrapping it? If there's a knowledgeable bro out there, give me a shout.

...

「Third floor, end of the hallway.」

There used to be a wall here, but now a metal door had been installed.

Pushing open the door revealed a corridor inside.

The corridor wasn't long; a few steps led into the newly renovated banquet hall.

The "renovation" was simple. It merely involved laying carpet on the floor, putting up festive wallpaper, and installing some fancy lighting on the ceiling.

It's a temporary rental, after all, so there's no need for extensive decoration. Besides, the space isn't used every day anyway.

It was only used when group meals were booked. If the clients had a large enough venue of their own, they might not even think much of the environment here.

The banquet hall was filled with round tables, each seating ten people. A small stage was set up at the far end, convenient for leaders of organizations booking group meals to give speeches.

Behind the stage hung a projection screen, suitable for playing corporate promotional videos.

"How is it, Boss? Is everything alright?"

Dou Wenjing was inspecting the decorations and promptly greeted Lin Xu when she saw him arrive.

"It's fine. For many who book group meals, just having a place to eat is all that matters. They aren't fussy."

Those who booked group meals at Lin Ji primarily came for the food. They were discerning eaters. If they were after grandeur and extravagance, five-star hotel banquet halls were much more luxurious.

Lin Xu took a look around and felt everything was quite nice.

It was separate from the main restaurant, so they wouldn't affect each other. Guests could go directly downstairs after eating without passing through the shop, which perfectly suited the low-key preferences of some customers.

Dou Wenjing said, "Besides Brother Qiang's company, eight other companies have confirmed bookings to dine here. Starting tomorrow evening, we'll host eight group meals in a row. The largest group will have about one hundred and forty people, and the smallest will have over sixty. All of them have already paid their deposits."

So many people coming to eat just for Mid-Autumn Festival? That sounds like a pretty good achievement.

Lin Xu said, "Make sure to confirm the menus with them, then hand the orders over to the kitchen for purchasing. When they're setting the menus, have Wei Qian go. He's more knowledgeable about dish prices, and his involvement will ensure our profits don't suffer."

"Got it, Boss."

In the following two days, the kitchen became even busier.

Besides the increase in regular customers, the group meal business also put some pressure on the kitchen staff.

Lin Xu became busier too. Almost all the companies booking group meals ordered roasted whole sheep, so in between making mooncakes, he also had to roast lamb.

However, this kind of busyness was fulfilling. The busier he was, the better the business did, and it also meant a greater hope of establishing a home in Beijing. At this rate, perhaps in five years, he'd be able to afford a decent villa. Then he could bring his parents over and no longer have to endure the pain of family separation.

As Mid-Autumn Festival drew nearer each day, not only was the shop's business booming, but the limited-edition mooncakes were also increasingly in high demand.

Every morning, well before opening hours, many people would appear at the door, lining up to snap up the mooncakes. Even scalpers mingled among them.

In light of this, Shu Yun had no choice but to limit the purchase quantity.

Ordinary customers could only buy two boxes at a time. Those with membership cards were allowed up to three, while high-value top-up customers could purchase five.

Everyone knew this would dampen customer enthusiasm.

But it couldn't be helped. From the very first day, customers had been constantly requesting to buy out all the mooncakes.

Without purchase limits, it would ultimately only benefit the scalpers.

"Wow, is this the legendary notoginseng?"

On the evening before Mid-Autumn Festival, after Lin Xu finished making that day's mooncakes, he sat with Shen Baobao at a booth, examining the traditional Chinese medicinal herbs Mrs. Huang had sent over via Mr. Huang.

Lin Xu had previously mentioned in passing that for pot-steamed chicken, a bit of notoginseng and some morels would suffice.

He had thought the ingredients were rather expensive, and just a few pieces—enough for a couple of meals—would be sufficient. To his surprise, however, Mr. Huang had sent over four or five pounds of the finest Wenshan notoginseng.

Besides the notoginseng, there was also a packet of dried morels, two packets of dried Chicken Mushrooms, and several other rather expensive warming and nourishing ingredients.

Chapter 607: How Many Ways Do You Know to Eat Youtiao? Midnight Hunger Rescue Guide! [Subscribe Request]\_2

Although Old Huang kept saying, "Happy Holidays," it was obvious this was a reminder not to forget to make the steam pot chicken.

Shen Baobao placed a piece of notoginseng on the table, trying hard to break it open to look inside, only to find she had left small dents on the table while the notoginseng remained immovable.

"It's as hard as a rock, how are we supposed to eat this?"

Lin Xu picked it up, sniffed it, and said with a laugh, "Either grind it into powder with a grinding machine or stew it directly in soup. Stop messing with it; be careful not to hurt your hands."

"I got it, I got it!"

Just then, Chezi came over with a basket of freshly steamed buns and said, "Boss, the buns are steamed."

"Okay, let me try one and see how it is."

Early that day, Ji Minghui and Zhuang Yizhou, feeling that everyone had been working hard the past few days, decided to deep-fry some dough sticks. However, they lost track of the amount and made far too many.

The leftover dough sticks wouldn't taste good if refried, so Wei Qian simply chopped them up, mixed them with glass noodles, Egg, Chives, and dried shrimps, and made a batch of buns.

In the past, Lin Xu would eat dough sticks directly whenever he got them. It wasn't until he came to Beijing for school that he discovered they could be wrapped in pancakes. Some breakfast stalls would even inject Egg into the dough sticks, creating an "Egg-filled dough stick" similar to an "Egg-filled pancake."

There was also a breakfast shop near the school from Jinling that would wrap dough sticks with rice, sprinkling some pickled mustard tuber bits in during the process, which tasted quite delicious.

He had thought these ways of eating were already classics, but today, a new method of mixing them into a filling had emerged.

"Wow, that smells amazing!" Shen Baobao took a bite of a bun and immediately exclaimed in admiration.

The glass noodles were fragrant and slippery, enriched with the taste of lard. The pieces of chopped-up dough sticks inside, after soaking up the juices from the buns, were soft and chewy, almost like eating meat.

Lin Xu hadn't expected that such a simple preparation of dough sticks could be so delicious.

He remembered taking some dough sticks home that morning, and Shen Baobao had a few left over. At the time, he had been rushing to the shop to make mooncakes and had carelessly stuffed them into the refrigerator.

If only I had known, I would have brought them to make filling, so they wouldn't go to waste.

"It really is good. We've got a new idea for making buns in the future."

Lin Xu thought dough sticks were an interesting food—delicious on their own, yet also usable as an ingredient for other dishes.

Moreover, with the addition of dough sticks, the originally plain vegetarian buns immediately jumped a notch in texture.

As they were eating, Shu Yun, having finished attending to the group meal customers, came downstairs from the third floor. Seeing the buns were ready, she took one and bit into it. "Hmm," she said, "this bun isn't bad, quite tasty. It would be even better without Chives..."

As the store's general manager, she often had to communicate directly with customers, so she tried to avoid eating foods with strong smells, such as Chives, garlic, raw onions, and the like.

Shen Baobao said, "No worries, just wear a mask."

"That will just make me suffer from the smell... I'll eat something else later to avoid leaving a bad impression on the customers."

Seeing how concerned Shu Yun was about her image, Shen Baobao thought about sharing a bed with Xu later that night. Having bad breath would definitely be worse. So, after eating one bun, she joined Shu Yun for some fried rice instead.

This amused Lin Xu, though he also found it a bit frustrating.

I've already eaten it, so what if you don't? Just rinse your mouth after eating. Besides, we brush our teeth before bed, so even a slight hint of Chive smell can be brushed away.

Lin Xu continued to eat his buns.

After eating, he rinsed his mouth, chewed two pieces of chewing gum, and then got back to work for the evening.

Around nine in the evening, the shop officially closed for the day.

He carried Dundun, and with Shen Baobao, he returned to their apartment in the residential complex behind.

Upon entering their home, Dundun immediately snuggled into a cardboard box lined with a mink fur blanket—a Mid-Autumn Festival gift from Han Shuzhen that the little guy really liked—and fell fast asleep.

After they both showered and changed into pajamas, Shen Baobao sat on the sofa, holding her phone and video calling Chen Meijuan.

"Mom, did you receive the Mid-Autumn Festival gifts I bought for you? The imported camel milk is for Grandma and Grandmom; drinking it is good for their health."

"Thank you, Yueyue, Mom received everything. Tomorrow is the Mid-Autumn Festival, what are you two planning to do?"

The mother-in-law and daughter-in-law were chatting away on the phone, their bond closer than even that of a mother and daughter.

Lin Xu was curled up on the other end of the sofa, scrolling through social media to see what funny things netizens were sharing about their holiday experiences.

"Our company gave us a 2,000 yuan bonus. After handing it out, the boss said in the group chat that the money would be deducted from our salaries. He said he gave so much because he was worried we couldn't keep up with others... he really... I'm crying!"

"Your boss at least got you all mooncakes; that's not bad. Our boss took the easy way out and just painted us a big picture of the company going public in three years. Not only did we not get any bonuses, but we also had to work two extra hours tonight."

"Our company gave us nearly expired products personally selected by our boss. He said they have a shelf life of more than three days and are safe to take when visiting relatives... I've already nominated him for one of the top ten most touching figures awards."

"You're all better off than us. Not only did we not get any benefits, but our boss also said today is the '99 Charity Donation Day' and called on each of us to donate two hundred yuan."

"..."

As he was browsing, Shen Baobao stood up, still holding her phone, and said to Chen Meijuan, "Mom, don't hang up. I'm going to find something to eat; I'm a little hungry now."

Lin Xu was just about to tell her she shouldn't have eaten only one bun that afternoon when Chen Meijuan's voice suddenly came from the phone, "Xu, what are you waiting for? Go make something for Yueyue to eat. Goodness, this boy... how can he be so thoughtless?"

Chapter 608: How Many Ways Do You Know to Eat Youtiao? Midnight Hunger Rescue Guide! [Subscribe Request]\_3

"Mom, don't say that. Xu Bao spoils me rotten," Yueyue said.

"Spoils you rotten? Well, that just means he hasn't *\*completely\** spoiled you rotten yet."

The conversation between his wife and mother made Lin Xu feel a bit like a third wheel. He stood up and said, "There doesn't seem to be much to eat in the house right now. Let me see what we have."

A few days ago, the Dieting Squad had launched another vigorous fat-loss campaign. To demonstrate her determination, Shen Baobao had moved all the household snack reserves to Lin Ji's Food.

And since no one had been cooking at home, there was hardly anything to eat.

Aside from rice, flour, and daily condiments, the fridge held only a few Eggs, several leftover youtiao from the morning, and a couple of cucumbers Shen Baobao used for her facial masks.

This...

Lin Xu grabbed a cucumber, shook it at Shen Baobao, and asked, "Want one?"

"No, thanks. I want some carbs... Do we have any at home?"

After another search, Lin Xu found a few packs of instant noodles hidden in a corner of the cupboard. His mom had likely shoved them there to make space when she was around; it was a clever hiding spot that had escaped Shen Baobao's last snack purge.

He took them out and said, "I'll boil some water and make these for you..."

Before he could finish, his mother, Chen Meijuan, piped up again from the phone, "Make them how? The seasoning packets in instant noodles are full of additives. Just boil the noodles, then fry them with some Eggs to make stir-fried noodles. Smash those two cucumbers, make a cold salad with those leftover youtiao, and that'll be perfect, won't it?"

A cold salad?

Lin Xu pulled out the chilly youtiao from the fridge, looked at his mom on the phone, and asked, "These can be made into a cold salad?"

"Why not? Cut them into small pieces, give them a quick fry in hot oil, then mix them with the cucumber. They'll taste great... Hurry up and get started; Yueyue is waiting to eat."

This was truly beyond Lin Xu's expectations.

Heeding his mother's urging, he began to prepare.

First, he put a pot of water on to boil for the noodles. Then, he placed a frying pan on the adjacent burner, poured oil into it, and prepared to re-fry the youtiao as his mother had instructed.

While the oil was heating, he cut the youtiao into pieces slightly larger than mahjong tiles.

Next, he washed the cucumbers, smashed them flat, and then cut them into irregular chunks with diagonal slices.

After chopping the cucumbers, he put them in a bowl. He then mashed some garlic to make Garlic Paste, added a couple of spoonfuls of Chili Oil, and mixed in Light Soy Sauce, vinegar, salt, Sesame Oil, and other seasonings, tossing everything together.

By the time he finished these tasks, the oil in the pan was moderately hot.

He dropped the youtiao pieces into the pan. In the hot oil, the previously soft youtiao puffed up and became crispy again.

After fishing them out and draining the oil, he added them to the bowl with the cucumbers and mixed well.

Once mixed, Lin Xu tasted it and found it surprisingly delicious.

The youtiao, having been refried, were crispy on the outside and soft on the inside. Coated with a bit of the tart and spicy dressing, they were delicious and appetizing—a perfect match for the cucumbers.

He had never imagined youtiao could be eaten this way; it was a real eye-opener.

He didn't bother plating it, simply carrying the bowl out of the kitchen. His wife and mother were still chatting. Lin Xu offered a piece of the youtiao to Shen Baobao. Her eyes lit up as soon as she tasted it, and she exclaimed, "Wow, this youtiao is so delicious!"

He'd thought using youtiao as a filling for buns was surprising enough. And now there was another new surprise waiting.

Lin Xu handed her the chopsticks, saying, "Take your time eating. Keep chatting with Mom for a bit. I'll go stir-fry the instant noodles."

Watching the loving scene between her son and daughter-in-law, Chen Meijuan, on the other end of the call, smiled contentedly and said, "Go ahead and eat, Yueyue. I won't disturb your meal. Rest early after you finish, and don't stay up late."

"I know, Mom. You and Dad should rest early too!"

After ending the video call, Shen Baobao checked the "Tiantian's Singles-Free Squad" group chat and found Zeng Xiaoqi complaining about being hungry because she hadn't eaten enough that afternoon.

Chen Yan, Dou Wenjing, and Shu Yun were there, comforting her and encouraging her to stick with the diet.

Resist today, and a more beautiful self awaits tomorrow.

Just as they were all giving Director Zeng motivational pep talks and encouraging each other, Shen Baobao posted a photo of the cucumber and youtiao salad in the group chat, asking, "I really didn't expect this! The youtiao and cucumber salad tastes surprisingly good. Have any of you tried this before?"

Nobody in the group had.

But seeing the Lady Boss eating at that moment, they instantly felt their resolve crumble.

A short while later, Zeng Xiaoqi posted a screenshot of her takeout order, declaring, "I ordered crayfish takeout, plus spicy stir-fried clams, grilled bread slices, roasted eggplant, and meat skewers. What about you guys?"

The others silently posted their own takeout orders.

After everyone had posted, Dou Wenjing said, "Today doesn't count. Let's start fresh tomorrow; no more eating at night!"

"It's all Yueyue's fault! If you're going to eat, just eat! Why did you have to post pictures? You made me order over two hundred yuan worth of takeout... Is this youtiao with cucumber salad any good?"

"I wanted to ask the Lady Boss too. It looks tempting, but I feel like those two ingredients don't quite go together."

"I also think they don't match, but why does it look so incredibly enticing? Seeing it makes me want to try it... Can the boss make some for us tomorrow? I'm getting a craving..."

Knowing their takeout hadn't arrived yet, Shen Baobao deliberately recorded a short video of herself eating the youtiao, saying with relish, "These youtiao were refried, so the outside is super crispy, and the inside is so fluffy and soft... Listen to this crunch! Sounds good, right? If it sounds good, it tastes good!"

Everyone: "..."

No wonder Dundun always called the Lady Boss the Demon King.

At this very moment, she truly was a demon king!

「In the kitchen.」

The water in the pot was already boiling.

Lin Xu took the noodle cake out of its instant noodle packet and dropped it into the water.

In the boiling water, the noodle cake quickly separated.

Once all the noodle cakes had separated into strands, he immediately lifted them from the pot with a slotted spoon and rinsed them under cold water. This prevented the residual heat from overcooking the instant noodles and causing them to lose their pleasantly chewy texture.

Once the noodles were cooked, he rummaged through the fridge again, found half an onion, sliced it, and set it aside on a plate. Then he cracked two Eggs.

Next, he poured out most of the oil used for frying the youtiao, leaving just a little in the bottom of the pan.

He heated the pan over high heat, poured in the beaten Eggs, and stir-fried them until they formed chunks, then removed them.

He poured in more oil, added the onions, and stir-fried them briefly. Then, he added the drained, cooled instant noodles to the pan. He quickly stir-fried them to cook off any surface moisture, which would improve the texture.

After stir-frying for a minute, it was time to season.

He added a small spoonful of salt, a small spoonful of Cumin Powder, and a small spoonful of Chili Powder to the pan. Then, he drizzled a little Light Soy Sauce and Dark Soy Sauce along the edge of the pan for color.

He continued to stir-fry.

He stir-fried until the seasonings were thoroughly mixed and fragrant, then added the cooked Eggs.

The Eggs couldn't be added too early, or they would absorb the color from the Dark Soy Sauce, affecting the dish's appearance.

After stirring everything evenly once more, he dished it out.

Having been busy for a while, Lin Xu was also feeling a bit hungry.

He served two plates, one large and one small.

After plating, he brought them out. Shen Baobao, who was "poisoning" the group chat, caught a whiff of the aroma, and her face instantly lit up with delight. "This smells incredible!" she exclaimed. "It's like the stir-fried noodles from a barbecue stall. How did you make this?"

Lin Xu smiled, popped a piece of youtiao into his mouth, and said, "Just add some Cumin when stir-frying... We're a bit short on ingredients at home today. If we had bean sprouts or something, it would have tasted even better."

"This is already fantastic! Thank you, Xu Bao!"

Shen Baobao puckered her oily lips and planted a kiss on Lin Xu's cheek. She then snapped a photo of the stir-fried instant noodles on the table with her phone and sent it to the group, captioning it, "Tonight's main dish: stir-fried instant noodles! Added some Cumin Powder while stir-frying, so it tastes just like the ones from a barbecue stand. I'll get Xu Bao to make this for you all to try during the day sometime!"

Try it later? What's the use of that? We're hungry \*now\*, lady!

The members of the dieting squad in the group chat realized for the first time that waiting for takeout could be an agonizingly long affair.

Nearby, Lin Xu took a couple of bites of the youtiao and cucumber salad, followed by a mouthful of the chewy and delicious stir-fried instant noodles.

Mm, not bad. Delicious!

He glanced at the bright moon outside and then posted an update under the Lin Ji's Food topic: "Wishing all friends a happy Mid-Autumn Festival!"

Chapter 609: Grandma's Best Specialty - Nourishing Stomach Congee with Greens! A High-end Dish for Mid-Autumn Festival Reunion!

Early in the morning, Lin Xu woke from his sleep.

As soon as he opened his eyes, he heard Shen Baobao's gentle voice.

"You're awake? The surgery was very successful."

Huh?

This statement jolted Lin Xu to full wakefulness. After sitting up, he realized that Shen Baobao was still in her pajamas, playing with her phone, her small, fair feet swinging in the air.

Seeing how alert she looked, she must have been playing for a while.

What's going on? Doesn't she usually sleep like a log? She never wakes up whether I get up or go out to wash my face and brush my teeth. I even have to come over from the shop specifically to wake her up every day. What's different today? How come her drowsiness has vanished just because it's the Mid-Autumn Festival?

Lin Xu turned over and wrapped his arms around this cute and obedient big baby.

"Why haven't you slept?"

Shen Baobao turned off the match-3 game on her phone and burrowed her head into Lin Xu's chest.

"My stomach feels a bit off; I probably ate too much cucumber salad. I got up around five. I didn't want to wake you, but I wanted to watch you, so I muted my phone and played on it."

"Then don't lie on your stomach; it'll put more pressure on it."

"Oh..."

Shen Baobao turned over, resting her head in the crook of Lin Xu's arm.

Heh! This is so comfortable. I could lie like this forever without getting tired of it. I wonder if Lin Xu would get tired of it... She wriggled in the crook of his arm, trying to find the most comfortable position.

Holding the fragrant, soft, and well-behaved Baobao, Lin Xu finally understood why ancient emperors often skipped morning court sessions.

He had the system, so all his fatigue would automatically disappear every morning. Still, he didn't want to get out of bed, wanting to hold his big baby forever.

"By the way, Lin Xu, Grandma told us to go to the courtyard for breakfast."

After some more affectionate cuddling, Shen Baobao finally remembered there were more pressing matters.

Lin Xu was curious.

"Why would Grandma suddenly ask us over for breakfast at her place?"

Usually, Old Lady Shen would only call everyone over for lunch and seldom for breakfast.

"I posted on WeChat Moments when I got up at five, saying my stomach wasn't feeling well. Grandma saw it and made some special stomach-soothing porridge. She said we should come over after getting ready."

This warmed Lin Xu's heart.

It's always the elderly who worry about their grandchildren the most. Just seeing a post on Moments, and they're already making porridge. No wonder everyone only shares good news on Moments and not their troubles; it's to avoid making their elderly family members worry.

He patted Shen Baobao's shoulder and said, "Well, don't stay in bed then. Get up and get ready so we don't keep Grandma waiting too long."

"Then you have to kiss me. If I don't get five kisses, I can't get out of bed!"

Lin Xu smiled and kissed the girl's forehead.

"I haven't brushed my teeth yet. Get up first, and I'll make it up to you after we brush."

"Then it needs to be double, ten kisses!"

"Alright, alright, no problem."

Lin Xu got out of bed. Instead of washing up immediately, he first boiled two eggs on the stove. Once cooked, he put them in cold water to soak.

After washing his face and brushing his teeth, he went back to the kitchen.

He peeled the eggs, ate the whites for protein, and then crushed the yolks, placing them in Dundun's ceramic food dish.

While he was busy with this, Dundun kept rubbing against him, looking impatient.

For cats, a moderate amount of egg yolk helps increase taurine, which not only makes their fur glossier but also boosts their immune system, making them healthier.

Previously, Shen Baobao had read online that cats could develop cervical spine issues from looking down while eating, so she had specially bought a small, elegant dining table about ten centimeters high.

Placing the dish on the little table, Dundun, with his little butt perked up, began to hungrily gobble down his favorite egg yolk.

By the time Lin Xu and Shen Baobao were dressed, the dish was licked so clean it looked like it had been scrubbed.

"Good job, my boy!"

Lin Xu rubbed Dundun's head, washed the dish, then carried the little fellow downstairs with Shen Baobao, and they drove straight to South Third Ring.

In the car, Shen Baobao was busy replying to messages on her phone from her parents, relatives, and friends who had seen her Moments post.

"No wonder everyone only posts good news on Moments. I almost want to start a group chat just to tell everyone my stomach is fine now."

Even though she had already posted an update saying she was feeling better, relatives still sent messages asking what had happened, along with recommendations for stomach-soothing foods.

"They all care about you. Isn't that better than posting something and only getting a few likes from classmates who do micro-businesses on WeChat?" Lin Xu comforted his Baobao while driving.

Meanwhile, Dundun was lying alone in the back seat, earnestly playing with a catnip lollipop made by Liao Tianmu, looking every bit like a big boss smoking a cigar in the back seat on his way to work.

Arriving in the alley at South Third Ring, Shen Guofu's Bentley was already parked out front.

It was the Mid-Autumn Festival today. He was about to take the old lady to the villa, as relatives would be visiting at noon, and the small courtyard couldn't accommodate so many people.

In the courtyard, Shen Guofu and Han Shuzhen were using plastic bags to pick up fallen parasol leaves.

These leaves weren't completely dry yet and were a bit slippery to step on, so they had to be collected to prevent Old Lady Shen from accidentally slipping and falling.

Seeing her daughter come in, Han Shuzhen stopped picking.

"What happened? Should we schedule an endoscopy?"

The mere thought of the painful experience of an endoscopy made Shen Baobao decisively refuse.

"No, it's fine. I just ate too much cucumber salad last night and went to bed before it digested properly. That's what caused the discomfort. There's no need for an endoscopy..."

Chapter 610: Grandma's Best Specialty - Nourishing Stomach Congee with Greens! A High-end Dish for the Mid-Autumn Festival Reunion! \_2

After saying that, she picked up a relatively intact parasol leaf from the ground and placed it on Dundun's head.

"Ha, Dundun with an umbrella."

Dundun raised its paw, pushed the leaf aside, and let out dissatisfied whimpers. Han Shuzhen's heart ached as she hugged Dundun, saying, "You naughty girl, always bullying Dundun! How many times have I told you not to eat so much before bed? You just don't listen. Later, I'll show you some illustrations; then you'll understand the dangers of eating recklessly before sleeping."

Seeing her daughter still in the mood to tease her grandcat, Director Han finally felt at ease. Still, she knew eating at night was something to be cautious about. One might not notice any issues when young, but as people age, their stomachs become more fragile, so it was best not to overburden them before bed.

Shen Baobao muttered, "I know, but the cucumber mixed with fried dough that Lin Xu made was really yummy! Mom, look at the photos; I bet you can't help but crave it."

She showed the photos she took last night on her phone, and Han Shuzhen indeed found them quite tempting.

Shen Guofu, who was nearby, took a glance and said, "That looks delicious? I don't buy it at all. Honey, don't listen to Yueyue's nonsense; she's definitely bluffing you."

With Dundun perched on her shoulder, Han Shuzhen looked again, hesitated, and then said, "It looks okay... Lin Xu, is this really tasty?"

Shen Guofu replied, "You're asking the cook; of course, he'll say it's tasty. How about this: I'll go to the alley entrance and buy a few fried dough sticks. Whether it's good or not, we'll know once we taste it."

After saying this, he winked covertly at Lin Xu, signaling his good son-in-law that it was time to play his part.

Lin Xu, holding back his laughter, said to Han Shuzhen, "This is a way of eating from my hometown; Yueyue found it tasty, so maybe you should try it too, Mom."

Tempted, Han Shuzhen said to Shen Guofu, "You can't eat greasy food. Just buy a couple for us to taste... We agreed to eat sandwiches at home, but you insisted on coming here for porridge. Now, instead of cutting fat, we're adding more!"

"Don't worry, I'll just buy a couple to taste. I won't get more."

Success! Shen Guofu thought. He stopped picking up leaves, dropped the plastic bag on the ground, and hurriedly walked outside.

This task should have fallen to Lin Xu, but he didn't dare offer. Since he wasn't sure how many fried dough sticks his father-in-law wanted to eat, he let Shen Guofu go buy them himself.

As Lin Xu approached the kitchen door, a tantalizing rice aroma wafted out. Stepping inside, he saw a clay pot of rice porridge simmering over a low flame. On the adjacent stove stood a large, three-layer steamer. It was presumably filled with steamed buns, as Lin Xu could smell them in the steam escaping from the cracks around the lid.

Just then, Grandma Shen was slicing pickled vegetables. When Lin Xu saw this, he immediately offered, "Grandma, let me do it. Are these for stir-fried mustard greens?"

"Yes, your dad has been craving them. As a child, he loved hot steamed buns filled with shredded pickled vegetables. Since we came across some today, I thought I'd stir-fry a little for him to taste."

Lin Xu washed his hands and took the kitchen knife from her, saying, "I can handle it, Grandma. You don't need to worry."

It would be one thing if he didn't know how to cook, but since he did, how could he let an elder do the work?

He skillfully sliced the mustard greens into fine shreds. After cutting them, he tasted a piece; it was extremely salty. So, he filled a basin with fresh water and put the shredded mustard greens in to soak. These kinds of pickled vegetables are very salty and need to be rinsed several times before cooking. Only then will the stir-fried pickled vegetables taste their best.

While they were soaking, Lin Xu sliced some dried chilies and scallion shreds to be stir-fried with the greens, and also cut half an onion, which would help neutralize the saltiness.

By this time, the steamed buns on the stove were ready. Lin Xu turned off the heat and let the buns continue to steam with the residual heat for another two minutes. Then, he lifted the lid and used tongs to transfer the buns from the steamer into a basket.

The first layer was entirely filled with plain steamed buns, while the second layer contained flower rolls made with regular dough and a chocolate-flavored dough. As for the bottom layer, it held scallion oil rolls.

However, Grandma Shen's oil rolls were different from the usual kind. These savory rolls had been brushed with Soy Sauce, giving them a rich, savory aroma reminiscent of meat rolls.

"When your dad was a kid, he would crave meat rolls when he saw others having them, but we couldn't afford meat," Grandma Shen explained with a smile, seeing her son-in-law's curiosity. "So I'd use Dark Soy Sauce to pretend we had meat, just to fool the children."

If his father-in-law's life story were written down, it would definitely be a phenomenal rags-to-riches tale... Lin Xu mused, then asked, "Grandma, would you like to eat some meat rolls? If you want, I'll steam some for you later."

"You don't need to worry about me. I can cook anything I want. And if I don't feel like cooking, I can just go stay at the villa. I won't let myself be uncomfortable."

After taking out all the steamed buns, flower rolls, and oil rolls, Lin Xu removed the large steamer and placed a wok on the stove. He rinsed the soaking mustard green shreds twice more with fresh water, then transferred them to a colander to drain.

Once everything was ready, he lit the fire under the wok to begin stir-frying. He added oil to the wok. Once it was hot, he tossed in the dried chilies and scallion shreds, stir-frying them to release their fragrance. The fragrance of the dried chilies would enhance the flavor of the mustard greens, so it was important to stir-fry them long enough to fully draw out their aroma.

Once the aromatics were fragrant, he poured the drained mustard green shreds into the wok and began to stir-fry vigorously. This kind of dish required patience. It was crucial to stir-fry until all the excess moisture from the greens evaporated and the fermented aroma from the pickling process was completely gone. Only then would the mustard green shreds be truly fragrant and delicious.

While Lin Xu was busy with this, Shen Guofu returned, walking into the yard carrying a bag of fried dough sticks and a few cucumbers. As he walked toward the kitchen, he was grumbling to himself,