

Culinary 64

Chapter 64: Chen Yan's Store Exploration Plan! Unexpected Lottery!

Lin Xu placed the dried black plum, dried hawthorn, licorice, and aged tangerine peel into clear water to soak. These ingredients, being dried goods, couldn't be cooked immediately. Instead, they had to be soaked and rehydrated first, as only then could their flavors and medicinal properties be fully extracted during cooking.

As for the Dried osmanthus, it wasn't needed for soaking. This ingredient doesn't withstand boiling. It could only be added after the Sour Plum Soup was finished and the heat turned off, using the residual heat in the pot to infuse the soup with its fragrance. If it were boiled, the osmanthus fragrance would dissipate with the steam, and its aroma would actually become milder.

Half an hour later, Lin Xu removed the soaked ingredients from the water. He placed them into a seasoning bag typically used for braised meat, tied the opening securely, and tossed the bag into a large, prepared soup pot. He then started the fire. Once the water in the pot boiled, he added some large chunks of crystal sugar, then lowered the heat and continued to simmer.

While the soup was simmering, Chen Yan and Wu Kexin pushed open the door and walked in. Upon entering, the two women unconsciously sniffed the air.

"This aroma is wonderful!"

"Indeed! It's a tangy scent mixed with sour and sweet notes. What delicious dish is Boss Lin preparing?"

Delicious? Lin Xu sniffed the air. The tangy scent of Chili Vinegar and the sweet-and-sour fragrance of the simmering Sour Plum Soup mingled in his shop, creating a rather pleasant aroma.

"I just made a pot of Chili Vinegar; it's cooling over here," Lin Xu said. "What brings you two here now? There's nothing to eat in the shop at the moment..."

He had originally intended to tell Wu Kexin about Panda trying to lose weight for love. But after some thought, he deemed it inappropriate. If Wu Kexin was deeply moved and decided to lose weight in

response to Panda, wouldn't that mean even greater losses for the business? Forget it; let them sort out their own affairs.

"Brother-in-law," Chen Yan said, "we're not here to eat. We want to make a business deal with you."

A business deal? Lin Xu looked at Chen Yan, dressed in a gray business suit, somewhat puzzled by what his older sister-in-law meant. Is she planning to acquire Lin Ji's Food? He was about to ask for clarification when Wu Kexin, beside him, explained, "My recent live streams have been quite popular, and several companies have sent business offers. However, the company isn't very satisfied with the proposed prices, so they want me to do another shop exploration live stream to boost viewership further."

A shop exploration live stream? Lin Xu thought. Didn't she just do one a few days ago? Would repeating it still be effective?

"I don't mean live streaming from here," Wu Kexin clarified. "I want to do one at the Fishing Platform State Guesthouse. Your senior apprentice brother is in management there, right? Could you possibly pull some strings?"

Explore the Fishing Platform? That idea isn't bad. But would the Fishing Platform State Guesthouse agree? Although my senior apprentice brother is part of the management, he's just the executive chef. He has decisive authority in the kitchen, but in other respects...

"Brother-in-law," Chen Yan chimed in, "the Fishing Platform State Guesthouse has been open to the public for a few years. Some streamers have booked rooms and filmed videos there before, but the content was limited because many areas are off-limits for filming. We want to do a live stream within the permitted areas and figure out the best way to arrange it."

Asking me about this is pointless, Lin Xu thought. It's something I need to discuss with my senior apprentice brother.

Just as Lin Xu was about to message Xie Baomin to inquire, Grandpa Gao, who was nearby instructing Chef Zai and Xu Xinhua, spoke up.

"When are you planning to go? I can take you in myself when the time comes. Only a few places are restricted from filming; you can film freely in the rest. No one will care."

Grandpa Gao had worked at the Fishing Platform for most of his life and knew everything about the place. Still, his casual tone, as if he were talking about strolling into his own backyard, took everyone by surprise.

"Really, Grandpa Gao? Thank you so much!" Wu Kexin quickly exclaimed, expressing her gratitude. Chen Yan also looked relieved, as if a huge weight had been lifted from her shoulders.

Lin Xu, however, looked curiously at his master and asked, "Is it really no trouble, Master?"

"No trouble at all," Grandpa Gao replied. "Just last month, the Fishing Platform was discussing how to increase its appeal to social travelers. This is the perfect time for a 'shop exploration' feature."

Looking at the cheerful Elder Gao, Chen Yan suddenly had a new idea.

"Elder Gao," Chen Yan proposed, "you've worked at the Fishing Platform for most of your life, so you must be very familiar with it. How about being Kexin's tour guide for the live stream? You could introduce the Fishing Platform to the fans watching, perhaps share some anecdotes. The company will pay you an appearance fee."

This is a genuine State Banquet master! Chen Yan thought. If he appeared on the live stream, it would definitely cause a huge sensation!

My master is such a highly respected man; would he really participate in something like a live stream? Lin Xu silently mused. He was just about to refuse on his master's behalf when Elder Gao readily agreed.

"No problem, no problem at all! I've been wanting to try out live streaming for a while. This is a good opportunity for me to learn too. Say, is 'old iron 666' no longer popular in the live streaming community?"

Ouch... my face stings, Lin Xu thought, taken aback. With such a playful, childlike master, you really can't predict his thoughts.

Wu Kexin naturally welcomed this development. "That's been out of style for a while, Elder Gao," she explained. "Now, the trend is 'family' – treating fans like family."

With that, she began to explain the conventions and jargon of the live streaming world to Elder Gao.

Meanwhile, Lin Xu returned to the kitchen and got busy again.

Another half an hour later, the Sour Plum Soup in the pot had simmered down to a slightly deep red color. It emitted a rich, sweet-and-sour aroma; closing one's eyes, it was as if you were transported to an orchard of ripe plums or hawthorns.

"It smells incredible! Is this a new drink you're launching?" one of them asked.

"Can we try some? It smells so delicious just from the aroma!"

Chen Yan and Wu Kexin, having finished their chat with Elder Gao, didn't leave. They claimed they were waiting for Shen Jiayue, using it as an excuse to stay at the shop and hopefully snag some dinner.

"Not yet," Lin Xu replied. "It needs to cool down to taste its best."

The Sour Plum Soup was currently too tart. It needed to air out and cool down. Once chilled, it would be refreshingly sweet and sour—perfect for stimulating the appetite and cooling off in the heat.

After speaking, Lin Xu turned off the stove.

Next, he rinsed the Dried osmanthus he had prepared earlier with fresh water to remove any surface dust, then added them to the soup pot, giving it a stir.

The liquid in the soup pot was still very hot. Before long, the osmanthus fragrance wafted out, making the already pleasant sweet-and-sour aroma even more enticing.

He and Xu Xinhua moved the large soup pot to a corner and aimed a fan at it to accelerate the cooling of the Sour Plum Soup.

While the Sour Plum Soup was cooling, Lin Xu noticed the Chili Vinegar set aside earlier was about ready. He used a slotted spoon to remove the Scallion and Ginger and other spices from it. Then, he took a cleaned vinegar cruet and refilled it with the infused vinegar.

After this infusion process, the vinegar had lost its harsh, biting acidity, now smelling enticingly tangy and fragrant.

He filled the vinegar cruets to about eighty percent capacity and had the servers place them back on each table.

No sooner had he finished than a system notification sounded in his mind: "Host has upgraded all vinegar-based condiments in the shop, earning one raffle draw for an Excellent Level Basic Cooking Technique. Would you like to draw now?"

Basic Cooking Techniques? Lin Xu wondered. What could those be?

Curious, Lin Xu selected "Confirm."

A circular roulette wheel appeared in his mind, densely packed with various Basic Cooking Techniques.

There were options like: Boiling, Knife Honing, Dough Fermentation, Filling, Porridge Cooking, Vinegar Stuffing, Alcohol Stuffing, Whole Pig Slaughter, Blood Sausage Stuffing, Cured Meat Production...

Lin Xu looked on, completely bewildered. What is all this nonsense?

Not even bothering to pray, he directly chose "Draw."

"Congratulations to Host for obtaining the Excellent Level Basic Cooking Technique: Pig Slaughter."

Lin Xu: ?????