

Culinary 651

Chapter 651: Surprising Shen Baobao! Watching them eat stir-fried pancake strips is so tempting, can you make it? _2

"Wow, I'm suddenly craving one! Director Zeng, can you save one for me? I'll send a red envelope!"

"I'll send one too! Can I still snatch one if I go to the TV station now?"

"This is like magic, so tempting."

"The moment it was torn apart, it just struck my soul."

"Director Zeng, Zeng Baobao, can you save one for me? Pleeeeease!"

"..."

The group nickname changed. The originally capitalized and bolded "34B" in Zeng Xiaoqi's name disappeared, replaced by the new and affectionate-sounding [Zeng Baobao].

Zeng Xiaoqi couldn't help but let the corners of her mouth curl up.

HMPH HMPH. This great beauty is finally enjoying being the center of attention.

But it was useless to shout now because the dozen or so little apples steamed by Xie Baomin had already been snatched up by everyone, leaving none to spare.

Chef Xie didn't have time to make more either, as Geng Lishan, Zhen Wensheng, and others were surrounding him to discuss the next dish.

Now that they finally had a full crew, they needed to record several more dishes.

"We won't make pastries next, as too many sweets might make everyone tired of them," Xie Baomin announced. "I plan to make Kung Pao Shrimp Balls. Since the 1960s, this dish has been a perennial favorite at the State Banquet—it's famous and visually appealing. However, there are many incorrect ways of making it now, so let's do an authentic version."

This was actually the first dish Xie Baomin had intended to cook today.

However, he thought the apple pastries were good, so he had intercepted the dish Qiu Zhenhua had prepared.

Now that the filming of the pastries was over, it was time to shoot a savory dish.

Upon hearing "Kung Pao Shrimp Balls," those still marveling at the pastries quickly perked up again.

A State Banquet dish!

And an old classic at that. The anticipation was immense.

Xie Baomin brought over the foam box he had intentionally left in the trunk. It was filled with ice to ensure the freshness of the shrimp.

Once everything was ready, filming continued.

「Meanwhile」

Lin Xu drove to the West Third Ring, following his navigation to the Dongming Building.

It was an office building on the edge of the ring road, not very tall but in a good location. A bustling car detailing shop occupied the ground floor.

Lin Xu circled the building but couldn't find a parking space.

The building's underground parking lot was also off-limits to outside vehicles. With no other choice, he drove into the detailing shop.

"Please wash my car, inside and out," he said.

He'd been driving the new car since he bought it but hadn't washed it yet. Today was a good opportunity to give it a thorough cleaning, inside and out.

After handing his car keys to the shop attendant, Lin Xu, carrying his handbag and a lunchbox filled with the apple pastries, strode briskly into the building.

「At that time」

On the 15th floor of the building, inside Tianpeng Audit Firm's office, Shen Baobao was still holding her phone, gazing at the pictures Zeng Xiaoqi had sent.

I really want to taste them. I wonder if Xu Baobao knows how to make them. Should I ask after work? No, no, he's so busy as it is; he's already got enough on his plate. How can I add to his burden? In the next few days, I'll ask around for high-end snack shops in Beijing that accept custom orders. I'll order some little apples and surprise Xu Baobao. HEE HEE, I may not be good at cooking, but I can spend money! Well, as long as it tastes good, it's worth spending the money.

As Shen Baobao was lost in her thoughts, the voice of Receptionist Zheng came from the doorway. "Shen Jiayue, someone's looking for you."

Me? she thought, confused. At this time... it can't be Xu Baobao arranging another afternoon tea for me, could it? Maybe it's a new surprise...

She got up, grabbed her phone, and quickly walked to the audit firm's entrance. Once there, she froze. "Xu Baobao, what are you—???"

OH MY GOSH! This is too much of a surprise! I thought Xu Baobao was sending afternoon tea, but I didn't expect Xu Baobao himself to show up! Too bad all my colleagues are watching, otherwise I'd definitely pin him against the wall and give him a fierce kiss. HMPH HMPH, giving me such a surprise! Which girl in love could resist such temptation?

She skipped over to Lin Xu. "Why are you here, Xu Baobao? Come on, I'll take you to the reception room. I really didn't expect you to come see me. Did you miss me?"

"Yeah, I haven't seen you all morning. I missed you."

AHHH! That darn Xu Baobao, flirting with me again! Just wait until we get to the reception room, I'll show you!

She took Lin Xu's hand and hurried to the reception room. As soon as they entered, she turned around, cupped Lin Xu's face, and kissed him without another word.

Lin Xu hadn't expected her to be so excited. Responding to her kiss, he used his foot to close the reception room door.

After the kiss, he finally had a chance to speak. "My senior, Chef Xie, made some apple-shaped pastries. I secretly brought two for you while no one was looking. They're still warm. You should try them while they're hot."

Pastries?

Shen Baobao stared at the lunchbox Lin Xu handed her, momentarily stunned.

These are exactly like the photos Zeng Xiaoqi shared in the group! They really are identical to real apples!

Her face lit up with delight, and she kissed Lin Xu on the cheek. "Thank you, Xu Baobao! You'll spoil me rotten like this."

The little apples were exquisitely made, looking just like real ones. Shen Baobao examined them for a long while and took a bunch of photos before finally breaking one open and slowly chewing it.

"Yum, delicious! The apple flavor is rich, and the outer crust is as soft as bread. Truly tasty."

The "apples" weren't large, weighing just over forty grams each, including the crust and filling—even smaller than a Milk Yellow Mooncake.

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"Xu Bao, will this little apple still taste good after work?"

After finishing one, Shen Baobao didn't continue to eat but curiously asked this question.

It was already past three o'clock, only about two hours left before the end of the workday. Other than cooling down, there wouldn't be any problems.

Lin Xu said, "It will still taste good, as long as it's not left overnight... Why? Planning to save it for after work?"

"No, I want to let my mom try it. She was once a girl too, and she liked these cute little snacks. But after she had me, she focused all her attention on me..."

Hearing this, Lin Xu immediately hugged her. "Do you want to eat more? If you want, I can make some more for you. Not only apples, I will also make persimmons, snow pears, mangosteens, figs, and jujubes..."

Once he mastered the pattern of these fruit-based treats, he could create new products based on his ideas.

A qualified chef should never be restricted by a fixed mindset.

Upon hearing this, Shen Baobao's face immediately lit up with anticipation. "Wow! Really? Thank you so much, Xu Bao! I must kiss you again, otherwise, I'll get moody... MMM~~ It's me kissing you, not you kissing me... MMM~~"

Since they were in a reception room, they restrained from too much public display of affection. After a few kisses, they stood up and left.

"I'll walk you downstairs."

Shen Baobao went back to the office to grab her bag, then looped her arm through Lin Xu's as they entered the elevator.

"Just now when I went back to grab my bag, everyone wanted to take a photo with you, but I refused. HEH HEH, I must keep an eye on my Xu Bao, lest someone steals you away."

Lin Xu laughed and said, "It's impossible. We promised to never part in this lifetime, so we won't separate."

He initially thought his Baobao would be very touched, but that girl immediately narrowed her eyes and said, "What about the next life? You mean we will separate in the next one, right?"

Lin Xu: "..."

He never expected that a girl's focus could always be so novel. He laughed and said, "In the next life, I'll be the girl and you be the boy. How about I steal snacks from home for you?"

Upon hearing that, Shen Baobao immediately grinned mischievously, "Then on the first day of university, I'll pin you against the wall and kiss you. If you resist, I'll spank you..."

The couple chatted and laughed as they arrived at the car beauty shop. Their car had just been washed and was still being wiped down.

The car wash boys must have been busy the whole time because they only now found time to eat.

Each of them held a big bowl of stir-fried pancake strips intensely flavored with soy sauce, eating with cloves of garlic. Every few bites, they'd have a bowl of egg soup. This made Shen Baobao hungry just watching.

"Does that stir-fried pancake taste good? It seems delicious the way they are eating it."

Lin Xu glanced over and said, "Stir-fried pancakes are like stir-fried noodles; they won't taste too bad as long as you are willing to use enough oil... Do you want to try it? If you do, I can go back and make some pancakes, cut them into strips once they cool, and make you a serving of stir-fried pancakes to try."

Stir-fried pancake is a common delicacy in North China. Sliced cooked pancakes are paired with streaky pork and Cabbage and stir-fried in the pan. Dark Soy Sauce is added for color, and the dish is slightly stewed with some soup to soften the pancake strips, creating a dish that haunts many with its delightful taste.

Lin Xu was quite familiar with this delicacy. When he first got into Yinzhou's top high school, he would often eat stir-fried pancakes at a shop near the school entrance.

That shop made their own pancakes. After they cooled, they were sliced into strips with a specially made large knife and then sold by weight.

In each jin of pancake strips, about four liang of pork belly and Cabbage would be added. These were stir-fried until fragrant and oily. The Cabbage was fresh and crispy, contrasting nicely with the soft and glutinous pancake strips.

Unfortunately, after the school gate was demolished, the elderly couple who made the fried pancake strips also disappeared without a trace.

Yinzhou City lost a fried pancake shop worth visiting again and again.

Now, watching those car wash guys devour the pancake strips, Lin Xu's thoughts were also hooked by the oily gleam of the strips.

"Is it troublesome? If it's too much trouble, I won't eat it."

Although Shen Baobao really wanted to try it, she didn't want to trouble Lin Xu.

After all, he had just agreed to make fruit-based treats. If he had to make pancake strips too, it would be too hard!

"It's not troublesome; I can make it with my eyes closed. Let's have this for dinner. It'll give you a taste of the food I often ate in high school."

"You often ate fried pancakes in high school? Then I must eat it!"

Since it was something Xu Bao had enjoyed, there was no question about it. Even if it tasted bad, I would still eat two big bowls to experience the flavor Xu Bao relished during his high school days.

I wonder what Xu Bao was like back then. It's said that the college entrance exam in the Central Plains is incredibly fierce, and since he got into Central Finance University, he must have been a nerd back then, right?

Thinking of Xu Bao's nerd-like demeanor, Shen Baobao felt like teasing him a bit.

With nothing better to do, she posted a photo she had taken on her Moments: "I was swamped this afternoon when Xu Bao suddenly showed up at the audit office, bringing me two adorable little apples. I tried one and it tasted great. I specially saved one for Mom, hoping it would cheer her up."

HUMPH. If you're going to show off your love, do it boldly.

No sooner had she posted it than her plastic sisters in the chat group came to comment one after another. They couldn't help it; they were provoked.

Shen Baobao replied to everyone's comments with a cheery smile on her face.

I don't know what happiness is. I just know that whenever I am with Xu Bao, I can't help but laugh.

Not long after, the car was washed and wiped clean; even the mats were dried.

After everything was installed, Lin Xu paid, got into the car, and said goodbye to Shen Baobao.

「Back to the shop.」

He washed his hands, changed into his chef's clothes, checked around the kitchen, and began making the pancakes for frying.

These pancakes were called "dry pancakes," which means they were cooked in a pan without oil. This method maximized the aromatic release from the flour, resulting in a delicious pancake that was tender and chewy. The more you chewed, the tastier it got.

He added half a basin of flour and divided it in the middle—half mixed with cold water into lumps and the other half scalded with boiling water to form dough.

This kind of dough was called semi-scalded dough. The semi-scalded dough combines the toughness of unleavened dough and the softness of scalded dough, making the pancake even more delicious.

He kneaded the dough from the basin into a ball, vigorously rubbing it smooth, then let it rest covered in the basin.

Taking advantage of this time, Lin Xu found a new frying pan, held it under the tap, and meticulously washed the bottom clean.

The best way to make these pancakes is to invert the pan on the stove, using the protruding bottom to cook it. This creates a deliciously soft and irresistible pancake.

Once the bottom of the pan was washed and the dough had relaxed, Lin Xu rolled up his sleeves and officially began the process!

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He took the dough out of the bowl and placed it on a board dusted with dry flour.

By now, the dough had relaxed for about half an hour. Its gluten development had reached the lowest level, so there was no need to knead it anymore. Simply forming it into a long strip and portioning it out would suffice.

If one kept kneading at this point, the gluten would develop again, making it difficult to roll out into sheets.

Even if forced into sheets, the resulting flatbreads would turn out dry and hard, unsuitable for making soft yet chewy stir-fried flatbread shreds.

The well-rested dough was very soft and could be formed into a long strip in just a few moments.

Then, one could start portioning the dough by hand. Each piece weighed about one liang, approximately 50 grams.

This weight was just right for rolling out a flatbread of even thickness.

The flatbreads for stir-fried shreds are quite thin. If one were making the thicker flatbreads common in the Central Plains, like simmered or braised flatbreads, the thickness would need to be doubled.

Otherwise, the thin flatbread shreds would certainly turn into a mushy mess in the pot.

Stir-fried flatbread, braised flatbread, and simmered flatbread share similar names but are three distinct delicacies. Stir-fried flatbread is the thinnest. It's cooked like stir-fried noodles and has a dry, fragrant texture.

Braised flatbread resembles braised noodles and is served with soup. Simmered flatbread is similar to simmered noodles, requiring broth to be stewed in the pot until cooked through.

After all the dough pieces were separated, they were dusted with a layer of dry flour to prevent them from drying out and cracking.

He picked up a dough piece. Using the web between his thumb and index finger, he pressed and rotated it, kneading it into a thick, round disc.

Then, using a rolling pin, he rolled out the dough disc into a thin, round flatbread over thirty centimeters in diameter.

Once rolled out, it was time to start griddling them.

He turned on the stove, adjusted it to a low flame, and placed the cleaned wok upside down over the burner.

Whether it's a household stove or a professional one in a restaurant, the temperature is highest in the center and relatively lower around the edges.

If the wok were placed normally, the hottest part—the bottom—would be closest to the flame. The cooler sides of the wok would be further from the heat, resulting in a flatbread that was burnt in the middle and undercooked around the edges.

A flat-bottomed pan would be slightly better, but inverting the wok was still the most suitable method.

This way, the bottom of the wok heated evenly, maintaining a consistent temperature—perfect for griddling flatbreads.

Griddling flatbreads for shreds demands such precise temperature control because these flatbreads are relatively thin. They need to be flipped within a few seconds to prevent burning.

To prevent burning and ensure both the edges and the center of the flatbread received even heat, the best method was to invert the wok over the burner.

After inverting the wok on the burner, Lin Xu rolled out two more flatbreads.

It took only about ten seconds to griddle each side of these flatbreads; they cooked very quickly. Therefore, it was essential to roll out several more while the wok heated up to avoid being flustered when starting the griddling process.

Soon, wisps of steam began to rise from the bottom of the inverted wok.

Lin Xu gently placed a rolled-out flatbread onto the hot surface of the inverted wok. It sizzled immediately upon contact. This sound came from the moisture on the flatbread's surface evaporating against the hot metal.

In the span of just two breaths, a pleasant aroma wafted from the wok, and the flatbread puffed up slightly.

This indicated that the side touching the wok had cooked.

After another two or three seconds, he quickly flipped the flatbread, pressing the other side against the hot surface of the wok.

The griddled side, now facing up, was covered with a golden-brown color. The unique, toasty aroma of the flour was so enticing it made one want to tear off a piece and taste it immediately.

That was precisely why he had waited those few extra seconds.

The flatbread's surface became much more fragrant when toasted to a light golden brown, resulting in more delicious stir-fried flatbread.

After another four or five seconds, the toasty aroma wafted from the flatbread on the wok again. It was done. Lin Xu picked it up with his bare hand and placed it in a nearby bamboo basket.

"Holy shit, Boss, you truly have a Heartless Iron Hand!"

Ma Zhiqiang had just finished washing the afternoon's ingredients. As he walked by Lin Xu, he was stunned to see him taking the flatbreads from the wok with his bare hands.

The flatbread's temperature must have been at least 100 degrees Celsius, yet he was handling it directly.

Wasn't that a bit terrifying?

Lin Xu smiled and said, "I'm used to it. Besides, tossing it into the nearby basket takes less than half a second, so it won't cause burns."

With that, he placed another new flatbread onto the hot wok.

Ma Zhiqiang asked, "Boss, are you making these flatbreads to be rolled with vegetables, or are you making flatbread shreds?"

"Flatbread shreds," Lin Xu replied. "We're having stir-fried flatbread for dinner."

"Oh, I definitely have to try that! It's been a long time since I've tasted the flavors of my hometown."

As soon as Ma Zhiqiang heard they were making stir-fried flatbread, his cravings were immediately triggered.

For someone who grew up in North China, the temptation of stir-fried flatbread shreds was irresistible.

He rolled up his sleeves and asked, "Need any help?"

Lin Xu thought for a moment and said, "Could you help me roll out the flatbreads? I'm a bit too busy to manage on my own."

Although the stove was on low heat, the inverted wok concentrated the heat, making its temperature higher than expected.

This directly increased the griddling speed. Lin Xu was so busy he didn't even have time to roll out more flatbreads.

Ma Zhiqiang agreed. He picked up a dough piece, first kneaded it into a round disc, and then rolled it out with a rolling pin.

Although not a pastry chef, Chef Ma was a professional cook. Furthermore, since the restaurant specialized in handmade noodles, he was no stranger to rolling out flatbreads.

He rolled out one flatbread with the rolling pin and immediately started on the next.

Lin Xu, meanwhile, stood before the stove, dedicated to griddling the flatbreads.

This method of griddling on the inverted bottom of a wok isn't very common in China. However, in the clean and hygienic Curry Country, most of their "flying flatbreads" are made this way.

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The method was similar to how Lin Xu did it. Just a quick griddle on both sides, and it was ready to eat.

Soon, another pancake was ready. Lin Xu picked it up and placed it on a steaming rack.

To make pancake strips, one couldn't use fresh pancakes. They had to be completely cooled and softened before use. Only then would they be flexible yet firm, not breaking even after being stir-fried multiple times.

A freshly made hot pancake's surface is dry and lacks elasticity. If stir-fried directly in a pan, it can easily turn into a mushy mess.

"Boss, I think our restaurant should start serving dry noodles and braised noodles as non-soup main dishes, giving our customers more choices. Otherwise, they might get tired of handmade noodles all the time," said Ma Zhiqiang.

As a part of the team, Ma Zhiqiang often browsed the posts under the Lin Ji's Food topic and also joined several fan groups to listen to the customers' opinions.

The taste and texture of the handmade noodles were unquestionably good, with a rich variety of toppings, but eating them too frequently could lead to taste fatigue.

After all, no matter how the toppings varied, the noodles themselves were always the same type.

With increasing calls for new main dishes on the menu, Ma Zhiqiang felt it was a good opportunity to convey this to the boss. The restaurant's main dish selection would become more diverse, and the customers would be more satisfied.

Lin Xu had seen some of these discussions, but since the Lin Ji's Food topic was now overflowing with posts, he simply didn't have time to read them one by one.

Adding a new main dish was indeed an option, but what exactly to serve needed further discussion.

Currently, the restaurant's main dishes were various handmade noodles with different toppings. Additionally, there were rice and Yangzhou Fried Rice, which meant the selection was relatively limited.

Large restaurants typically focus on their specialty dishes rather than staple foods, so their staple food menus aren't updated very frequently.

Since customers had brought it up, it was something worth considering carefully.

Common main dishes in restaurants fall into a few categories, primarily rice or noodles. Both ingredients have a plethora of derived delicacies. For example, rice dishes include not only plain rice and fried rice but also delicious secondary processed foods like rice noodles, flat rice noodles, rice cakes, kway teow, and er si noodles.

The variety of wheat-based dishes is even broader, including steamed buns, stuffed buns, fried noodles, bread soaked in soup, duck pancakes, spring rolls, large flatbreads, noodle soups, potstickers, and dumplings. The range was vast, making it quite challenging to select a dish that fit the restaurant's profile.

I'll post in the Lin Ji's Food topic later and see what answers netizens can provide, Lin Xu thought. While I can't always follow netizens' suggestions blindly when running a restaurant, they can at least serve as a reference.

Before long, all the pancakes were griddled. Lin Xu stacked them in tens on the steaming rack and then carried them to the cold storage.

This would speed up the cooling and softening of the pancakes, ensuring they would be ready for that evening's consumption without any delay.

「Shortly before 5 p.m.」

Shen Baobao got off work a bit early. After driving out of the Dongming Building's underground parking garage, she didn't head towards Yingchun Street on North Fourth Ring Road but instead went straight to the People's Hospital, planning to give her mom a surprise.

The hospital was less crowded in the afternoon. Shen Baobao found a parking spot on the street, slung her bag over her shoulder, picked up the meal box containing a small apple, and strode into the hospital.

According to her mom's duty schedule, she knew where to find her. Shen Baobao entered the outpatient building and went up to the fifth floor's gastroenterology department. After greeting the nurse at the reception desk, she pushed open the door to Han Shuzhen's office.

At that moment, Han Shuzhen was instructing a patient to take their medication on time. Seeing her daughter come in, she asked curiously, "What are you doing here? Having an allergic reaction again?"

The last time Shen Baobao had come was due to an allergy from eating silkworm pupae. It was unexpected that the girl would show up again today.

I won't ask for details this time, Han Shuzhen thought, to avoid another silly joke from my daughter about getting a tiramisu shot.

"I've brought you something to eat."

This surprised Han Shuzhen. What's going on? she wondered. Did my son-in-law make another delicacy that he's worried will go to waste if not eaten?

She gave a few more instructions to the patient. Once they left, she turned and asked, "What have you brought me? Your dad and I are currently trying to lose fat and stay fit. You shouldn't be hindering our progress, you know... What's this? An apple?"

Han Shuzhen was somewhat confused. She came all this way just to bring me a tiny apple, not even the size of a fist?

"It seems like you haven't looked at my Moments," Shen Baobao explained. "This is a 'Noodle Fruit' made by Brother Xie at the TV station. It's a type of snack. Lin Xu thought it was so cute; he brought two home for me. I ate one and brought the other for you because I couldn't bear to eat it myself."

Han Shuzhen instinctively glanced out of the window. The sun hasn't risen from the west, has it? What's gotten into this girl today?

Wait a minute... a snack? she thought. She looked at the small apple in the box. Isn't this just a real apple? To think it's a snack, and made so realistically...

Han Shuzhen stood up and went to the nearby sink. She washed her hands thoroughly with hand soap before picking up the delicate little apple.

Holding it, she realized it was indeed fake. This 'apple' was light and somewhat soft, quite different from a real one.

But to achieve this level of craftsmanship was truly impressive.

Han Shuzhen examined the little apple from all sides. The more she looked, the more impressed she became with its craftsmanship.

"Lin Xu said when he's less busy, he'll start making new 'Noodle Fruits.' I'll bring them to you then, so our Director Han can have a proper taste," said Shen Baobao.

My daughter has truly grown up, Han Shuzhen thought with satisfaction. She even knows to bring me things to eat now.

Looking pleased, Han Shuzhen broke open the little apple and couldn't help but take a bite of the filling.

Mmm, this little apple is really well made, she mused. The apple flavor in the filling is so rich, it makes me want to take a few more bites.

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While they were eating, Shen Baobao leaned over with a giggle and said, "Mom, Ferrari just released a new sports car..."

She had barely started speaking when Han Shuzhen placed the remaining half of a small apple back in the lunchbox and handed it to Shen Baobao. "This little apple is too expensive; Mom can't afford it..."

What in the world? Shen Jiayue thought. I was going to say I want to trade in my Ferrari F8, not buy a new one. I bought that F8 a few years ago and hardly drove it, except for a few times around graduation when I was trying to win Lin Xu over. Now that I've successfully won Lin Xu over, there's no need to let the F8 continue to gather dust. Trading it in for a more practical car would be better.

However, before she could finish speaking, her proposal was rejected by her mom.

BOO HOO HOO. What kind of superficial mother-daughter relationship is this?

She muttered her thoughts aloud, then grumbled discontentedly, "Next time I see Grandma, I'm definitely going to complain. I'll say you sneakily ate the high-end Snacks made for Grandma and even instigated me to steal her gold bracelet."

This time, it was Han Shuzhen's turn to be speechless. "If you want to trade in the car, just go ahead; you don't have to tell me. My daughter has grown up. She should have her own freedom and the right to manage her finances. From now on, as long as your single transaction doesn't exceed one million yuan, your dad and I won't interfere anymore, okay, my girl?"

As she spoke, she opened the lunchbox again and ate the remaining half of the small apple. She continued laying out her conditions while eating, "Remember to send some to Mom whenever Lin Xu cooks something tasty."

Shen Baobao chuckled and wrapped her arms around Director Han's shoulders, saying, "I knew Shuzhen was the best to me! Lin Xu said he's also going to make persimmons, pears, dates, mangosteens, and stuff. I'll send you one of each when he makes them."

"Good, my daughter is truly filial."

The mother and daughter reconciled and didn't bring up the topic of Grandma again.

「In the shop」

After cooling in the cold storage for over two hours, the griddled flatbreads had finally cooled completely and softened, ready to be sliced. Lin Xu took them out from the cold storage, folded the flatbreads in half on the cutting board, and then stacked them up. After aligning them, he began slicing.

For easier stir-frying, the flatbread strips needed to be relatively narrow, about five or six millimeters wide. Any wider, and not only would they be difficult to fry thoroughly, but they would also be

cumbersome to eat. If they were for braised or stewed flatbread dishes, the strips would need to be wider, about one centimeter. This way, the flatbread strips could absorb more broth during braising or stewing, making them more delicious.

After slicing, he shook the strips with his hands to prevent them from sticking together. Once sliced, he placed them in a basket to set aside.

Next, Lin Xu took a Cabbage, removed the slightly dry outer leaves, cut it in half, and removed the hard central stalk. Then, he placed it on the cutting board and sliced it into fine strips as wide as the flatbread strips. The Cabbage was crispy with a slight bitterness, which perfectly offset the greasiness of the stir-fried flatbread, making it a golden match for the dish. Indeed, many people would rather have no meat in their stir-fried flatbread than go without Cabbage.

Besides Cabbage, he also sliced some Carrots, and green and red peppers for color. Although these weren't essential, they significantly enhanced the presentation, so it was still good to include some.

Then, he took a piece of pork belly and cut it into strips approximately 0.5 centimeters thick. This helped to better release the meat's aroma and also made the dish more visually appealing. All the ingredients being strip-shaped was somewhat pleasing to the eye.

As for mung bean sprouts, commonly seen in stir-fried noodles, they weren't often used when making stir-fried flatbread strips. This was because bean sprouts easily release water, and mixing them with the flatbread strips would create a watery texture, making it difficult to achieve a dry and fragrant result. Moreover, when it came to cutting through grease, Cabbage was far superior.

After preparing these ingredients, Lin Xu also minced some scallion, ginger, and garlic, ensuring there was extra garlic, as it needed to be added both at the beginning of cooking and just before serving. Besides garlic, some cilantro stems were added just before serving to further reduce the greasiness of the stir-fried flatbread.

Once everything was ready, and with Shen Baobao about to finish work, he set up the wok to start cooking.

He heated the wok, swirled some oil in it and poured it out, then reheated the wok. He then added the sliced pork belly, using the wok's heat to render out the fat and release its aroma. This step didn't

require high heat. He stir-fried it slowly. Only when enough pork fat had rendered out would the stir-fried flatbread have a sufficiently rich aroma and delicious taste, and the pork belly itself would become more pleasantly crisp.

Once the pork's surface was stir-fried until slightly golden brown, he added the minced scallion, ginger, and garlic to release their fragrance. Next, he added Light Soy Sauce, sugar, and salt to give the pork a base flavor. Then, he added the chopped Cabbage, stir-fried it over high heat, and finally added the flatbread strips. He covered the wok, allowing the flatbread strips to absorb some steam and the Cabbage to cook more quickly.

After a minute of steaming, he lifted the lid, drizzled half a spoonful of Dark Soy Sauce along the edge of the wok, and stir-fried over high heat to evenly coat the flatbread strips. He continued to stir-fry. When it was almost done, he added the Carrot shreds and green and red pepper strips, stir-frying until evenly mixed. Then, he drizzled a little Chen Vinegar along the edge of the wok to enhance the flavor and aroma. Finally, he sprinkled in the remaining garlic mince and cilantro stems before plating the dish.

The freshly plated stir-fried flatbread strips were fragrant, with a reddish-brown, glossy appearance and a tempting sheen of oil. He picked up a mouthful with his chopsticks. The unctuous texture and rich aroma were irresistible. The richness of the fat, the chewiness of the flatbread strips, and the crispness of the Cabbage were all utterly captivating. He then grabbed a clove of garlic and took a bite, heightening the flavor once more.

Garlic truly is the best companion for dishes like stir-fried flatbread or noodles. Taking a bite of garlic with it makes even the greasiest strips feel perfectly palatable.

Lin Xu served himself a small bowl, initially just to taste. But after such a bite with garlic, "tasting" turned into "eating." Another bite, and "eating" turned into "devouring."

The flatbread strips in his bowl were swiftly devoured. Lin Xu then served himself another small basinful and, holding a small bowl of peeled garlic cloves, went outside and sat in a booth to continue his feast. No matter when, devouring carbohydrates always brings joy.

In the kitchen, Ma Zhiqiang and the others were also savoring their boss's culinary skills.

"Mmm, this flavor is really good."

"It's so satisfying! I love this feeling of devouring carbs."

"Isn't there a saying? 'Flatbread strips with garlic, the more you eat, the more energetic you feel.'"

"Is there any left in the wok? A small bowl isn't enough... It's all gone?"

"Didn't the boss say he wanted to leave some for the boss's wife? What do we do now?"

"..."

The group stared at each other, wide-eyed.

Wei Qian thought for a moment and said, "How about this, Zhu Yong, you go to the pastry department and get some thinly cut hand-pulled noodles from Old Ji. I'll make some stir-fried noodles to make up for it..."

Chapter 656: A Different Fried Noodles, A Different Delicious! New Main Dish Can Trigger Tasks?

"Stir-fried raw noodles? Like stir-frying pork ribs directly from raw?"

Zhuang Yizhou, being from Sunnan, found the term 'stir-fried raw noodles' somewhat unfamiliar.

Zhu Yong, who was from Hubei, was also surprised. He knew how to stir-fry noodles, but stir-frying raw noodles? Could those even be edible?

Nearby, Ma Zhiqiang, who had just snuck a few bites of the stir-fried pancake, actually knew about stir-fried raw noodles. His spirits lifted when he heard they were making this dish, and he exclaimed, "Chef, please make some extra! In all these years hustling in Beijing, I haven't tasted the stir-fried raw noodles from back home."

Wei Qian hadn't eaten his fill of the stir-fried pancake either. He nodded and said, "Don't worry. This time I'll use a bigger pot and make more, so Zhu Yong and Master Zhuang can have a taste too. This dish, aside from being labor-intensive, is every bit as good as the stir-fried pancake."

Zhu Yong and Zhuang Yizhou originally weren't interested in stir-fried raw noodles, thinking the flavor wouldn't be that great. But hearing that the taste rivaled the delicious stir-fried pancake they had just eaten, they immediately became eager.

As long as it's delicious, nothing else matters.

"Master Zhuang, you chop the meat. I'll go ask Old Ji for some noodles. The finer, the better, right, Wei Qian?"

"It's not necessarily about being the finest. They should be thin, but a bit wider than fine noodles—something like 'chive-leaf' noodles. Thinner noodles cook faster, while wider ones have a better chew."

If it were just for the chefs to eat, they would naturally make it however it tasted best. But since this was compensation to the Lady Boss for the stir-fried pancake, the more the noodles resembled pancake shreds, the better.

After Zhu Yong left for the noodle section, Zhuang Yizhou picked up a piece of pork belly and, following Wei Qian's instructions, began slicing it thinly. Meanwhile, Wei Qian was choosing the side dishes.

"Usually, stir-fried raw noodles are paired with celery and soybean sprouts... but the Lady Boss doesn't seem to like soybean sprouts, so I'd better use something else."

Wei Qian selected a few tender stalks of celery and grabbed half an onion. With that, the side dishes were all set. Adding onion enhances the sweetness of the noodles, making them taste even more savory.

Back at the stove, the meat was already sliced. Zhu Yong returned with two to two-and-a-half kilograms of noodles just as Ji Minghui wiped his hands and walked over, asking, "Haven't you all eaten dinner already? Why the sudden interest in noodles?"

"Wei Qian said noodles could be stir-fried raw. We didn't believe him, so he volunteered to cook a pot for everyone to try something new, and we just helped with the prep."

"Exactly, we couldn't stop him. He even claimed one bite of these stir-fried raw noodles would get you hooked."

The group tactfully avoided mentioning that they had finished Lin Xu's leftover stir-fried pancake strips, instead chatting about the stir-fried raw noodles.

Well, they couldn't let him know about the pancake situation. After all, they hadn't called him when they were eating it, and now making him help with the stir-fried noodles felt a bit out of line.

Wei Qian sliced the onion and cut the celery into thin strips before chopping them into inch-long pieces. After that, he prepared some scallion, ginger, and garlic. With that, the ingredients for the stir-fried raw noodles were ready.

Outside at a booth, Lin Xu had unknowingly eaten most of a small basin of stir-fried pancake strips, and only half of the garlic cloves in his bowl remained. This type of flour-based dish paired with garlic was simply irresistible.

He stood up and returned to the kitchen, intending to get himself a bowl of egg soup; eating only the pancake strips was a bit dry, and he needed a drink to wash them down.

Just as he entered, he saw Wei Qian placing a wok on the stove. Zhu Yong and the others were gathered around, watching with keen interest.

"What are you guys doing here?" Lin Xu took a sip of his egg soup and curiously walked over.

Ji Minghui said, "Wei Qian is making stir-fried raw noodles. We're here to learn from his experience."

Stir-fried raw noodles?

Why did he suddenly think to make that?

Lin Xu glanced at the basin where the pancake strips for Shen Baobao had been, only to find that the leftovers were gone. He instantly understood their motive for making stir-fried raw noodles.

So, they ate all the stir-fried pancake, and this is their way of making amends, huh?

Making stir-fried raw noodles isn't a bad idea, though. Shen Baobao probably hasn't tried it. He never expected Wei Qian to know how to make this old-fashioned type of stir-fried noodles; it's such a rarity these days.

Nowadays, most stir-fried noodles are made using machine-processed cooked noodles, which are stir-fried for just a minute or two with vegetables before they're ready to serve—simple, fast, and the noodles are easy to store.

But actually, before these machine-processed noodles, there was a type of stir-fried raw noodles popular in several provinces in North China. This method of making stir-fried noodles was relatively complicated and involved, requiring the meat and vegetables to be stir-fried into a flavorful gravy first. Then, the raw noodles are spread out in the wok and pan-fried. When both sides of the noodles turned golden brown, the gravy and vegetables were poured in, and the mixture was simmered on low heat for a few minutes. Once the noodles had absorbed the gravy, they were ready to be plated and served.

This kind of stir-fried noodles tasted fantastic, far superior to other dishes like braised noodles or noodles served with a thick sauce, but it was very labor-intensive for the chefs, which is why it has all but disappeared today.

In fact, it's not exactly extinct, as there are still quite a few chefs who know how to make it; it's just that hardly anyone is willing to make this dish anymore. It's not only laborious but also time-consuming. Customers, who often order stir-fried noodles because they're in a hurry, get impatient. If it takes over ten minutes to arrive at the table, who's going to wait that long?

Of course, the most critical issue is that after all that effort, if the price is too low, it doesn't even cover the chef's labor costs. But if it's priced too high, customers won't order it. So, they simply switched to using pre-cooked noodles bought from noodle shops, stir-frying them for just over a minute—quick, easy, with guaranteed profit, and customers don't have to wait long. Everything is perfectly balanced.

Lin Xu was no stranger to stir-fried noodles; it was one of his mom, Chen Meijuan's, specialties. In the past, when he came home from school and there wasn't enough time to cook a full lunch, she would chop some diced meat or fry a few eggs, then pan-fry the raw noodles before pouring in the sauce ingredients.

Chapter 657: A Different Fried Noodles, A Different Delicious! New Main Dish Can Trigger Tasks? _2

It wasn't long before a lunch with vegetables, meat, and a staple food was ready.

Although restaurant chefs complained that stir-frying noodles was slow and inefficient, when cooking at home, this old-fashioned stir-fried dish really fit the bill for producing a main course complete with color, aroma, and taste in about ten minutes.

Apart from requiring advanced cooking skills, it had no other drawbacks.

The first thing to ensure when making this dish was that the pan wouldn't stick; if the noodles stuck, they were ruined.

Also, one needed to know how to adjust the amount of sauce based on the volume of noodles, ensuring that after braising for a few minutes, the sauce in the pan would be completely absorbed by the crisply fried noodles.

Stir-fried noodles differed from braised noodles. Braised noodles had more vegetables and were meant to be soft, with the vegetables and noodles melding together.

Stir-fried noodles, on the other hand, needed to be dry and fragrant. The noodles were crisped by frying and then slightly softened by the sauce, so they still had a pleasantly charred texture when eaten.

This was exactly the same difference as between fried pancakes and braised pancakes.

Lin Xu sighed with emotion and took another sip of the Egg soup.

"Save me some for later; I haven't had stir-fried noodles in a long time," he said.

"Sure thing. Chef Ji made four or five pounds of noodles; it's definitely enough."

Wei Qian, holding a wok, gestured that it was too small to fry five pounds of noodles. He immediately switched his usual single-handled wok for a large, double-handled one.

First, he seasoned the wok, then added a little Seasoning Oil.

Using Seasoning Oil could bring out the maximum flavor from the noodles.

The most traditional method was to fry some Sichuan peppercorns and a Star Anise in the wok until fragrant, remove them, and then stir-fry the meat slices.

However, the stove flames in restaurant kitchens were too fierce, and this step was a bit complicated, so they just used Seasoning Oil instead.

After the oil was hot, he added the pork belly and stir-fried it until both sides were browned. Then, he added Scallion and Ginger, and garlic, stir-frying until fragrant.

Next, he drizzled a little Light Soy Sauce around the edge of the wok, then added a small spoonful of salt and sugar to give the meat a base flavor.

Finally, he added Celery and stir-fried it. When it was almost done, he poured a small bowl of stock and four bowls of water into the wok.

There were more noodles today, so the amount of liquid also needed to be increased.

After pouring in the water, he added Dark Soy Sauce, thirteen-spice powder, and onions in succession, then simmered it on low heat.

Ji Minghui asked curiously, "If you put the noodles on top now, wouldn't that be braised noodles?"

Ma Zhiqiang nodded. "Right. The difference between braised and stir-fried noodles is that with braised noodles, the vegetables are at the bottom and the noodles are on top. The noodles are steamed by the vapor from the vegetable broth, so they're somewhat soft. Stir-fried noodles, however, have the noodles at the bottom and the vegetables on top—they're completely the opposite."

Once the Celery and onions in the wok were nearly cooked through, Wei Qian picked up the wok and poured out the vegetables and broth together.

He washed the wok clean and heated it on the stove again. He seasoned it three times to ensure it was thoroughly prepped for the noodles, then Wei Qian added a large spoonful of vegetable oil to the wok.

After adding the oil, he moved the wok to the side of the stove, away from the direct heat.

Then came the crucial part.

Wei Qian scattered the noodles loosely into the wok.

There were so many noodles that he could only try to spread them out as much as possible.

Once they were all scattered, he rotated the wok a bit to let the oil coat the noodles at the bottom first.

The noodles had some moisture, but not much; they could burn if the heat was even slightly too high.

So, he had to be extremely careful while frying.

Wei Qian turned the stove's heat to the lowest setting. While frying, he continuously rotated the wok, trying to ensure every part of its surface that touched the noodles was coated with oil to prevent them from burning.

To ensure there was enough oil at the bottom, he deliberately drizzled some more cooking oil along the edge of the wok onto the noodles. This helped keep them lubricated and prevented them from sticking or charring.

Zhu Yong, his arms crossed, commented, "When you fry them like this, never mind noodles—even a handful of leaves would turn out fragrant."

His anticipation for this dish of fresh stir-fried noodles grew.

If it was delicious, even if the restaurant didn't add it to the menu, he could get Wei Qian to make some during staff meal prep to satisfy their cravings.

Zhuang Yizhou asked curiously, "There seems to be a lot of oil in the wok. Won't that make it greasy? If this were on a livestream, a bunch of people who can't cook would definitely be spamming comments like 'lethal dose'."

Lin Xu replied, "Once the noodles are properly fried, the excess oil will be drained off, so they won't be too greasy."

Soon, the noodles in the wok had mostly compacted, indicating that one side was pretty much fried, as hot oil seeped out from the gaps between the noodles while Wei Qian rotated the wok.

It was time to flip them.

For those present, flipping a regular noodle pancake wouldn't have been an issue.

But the noodle pancake in the wok now was huge, making it a real challenge to flip.

Wei Qian gripped one of the wok's handles and rocked it back and forth to make sure the noodle pancake wasn't sticking to the bottom. Then, with a forceful push, he tossed the large pancake of noodles into the air.

The noodle pancake flipped in mid-air before landing back in the wok.

The underside of the noodle pancake was fried to a golden brown, with occasional, tempting patches of dark, crispy brown.

The aroma was rich.

Lin Xu even caught the scent of fried dough twists.

Wei Qian, holding the wok steady, continued to fry the other side.

Just as Lin Xu was about to keep watching, Che Zai walked in from outside and said, "The lady boss is off work."

Oh?

She's here already?

If she's off work, why didn't she come to the kitchen door and call for me?

Carrying his bowl of Egg soup, Lin Xu walked outside, asking, "What's she doing now?"

"She's eating the leftover stir-fried shredded pancake you made."

What in the world?

Is work at the auditing firm that strenuous?

How hungry must she have been to start eating leftovers without a second thought?

He went outside and saw Shen Baobao sitting in her usual booth, voraciously eating the stir-fried shredded pancake from a large bowl.

This... this... this...

Chapter 658: A Different Fried Noodles, A Different Delicious! New Main Dish Can Trigger Tasks? _3

Is this someone aspiring to be Lu Tixia?

Just as he was about to say "eat slower," Lu Jiayue held up the bowl of garlic cloves, showing it off: "Hey, someone! Get me more garlic, peel another two heads!"

"Eat slowly, don't choke. They are making stir-fried noodles in the kitchen. Try them later. The taste is absolutely not inferior to these stir-fried pancake strips."

"I don't believe it, unless you bring the noodles over... I always feel like you are trying to cheat me out of my stir-fried pancake strips."

Yours? Lin Xu finished the egg soup in his bowl, then picked up the bowl containing garlic cloves and headed to the kitchen.

He grabbed a handful of peeled, washed garlic cloves from the vegetable basket, then served two bowls of egg soup, carrying them out on a tray.

"Eat with the soup, slowly, don't choke. I'll go to the kitchen to see when the noodles will be ready."

"Okay, thanks, Xu Bao!"

Back in the kitchen, both sides of the dough pancake had been fried.

Wei Qian poured the fried dough pancake into a large colander to drain the oil.

Once the oil had drained sufficiently, he poured it back into the pan and gently shook the fried dough pancake pieces with chopsticks to fluff them up again.

Then he dumped in the previously prepared vegetables and sauce, covered the pan, and simmered it on low heat.

"How long do we simmer it for?"

"Three minutes should do. The noodles are already fried; they just need to soak up some sauce."

After Wei Qian finished speaking, he placed several plates on the workbench behind him, ready to serve the noodles once they were done so everyone could taste them.

Three minutes later, there was noticeably less liquid in the pan, as indicated by the sizzling sound of hot oil.

Wei Qian turned off the heat but did not lift the lid.

Instead, he waited another three minutes.

Upon lifting the lid, a rich aroma wafted from the pan.

The scent included the aromas of meat, noodles, Celery, and onions.

The mix of smells was indescribably delicious.

"Damn, this aroma is really strong!"

"It doesn't have any raw noodle smell, but it's super fragrant. Teach me sometime, Wei Qian. It's perfect for quick home cooking."

"I want to learn too; it smells much better than the usual fried noodles at night markets."

"Don't let it spill! Hurry up, this aroma is so tempting!"

Wei Qian tossed the contents of the pan a couple of times; he had intended to use long chopsticks to toss the reddish, oily noodles again, but everyone was urging him on.

He could only quickly toss them twice before spooning noodles out for everyone with chopsticks and a spoon.

He picked up a chopstickful of noodles, twirled it, then lifted it up, his left hand swiftly catching it with the spoon.

He shook the noodles into the spoon and then tipped them onto a plate, thereby serving a portion.

No sooner had he plated the noodles than Zhu Yong picked up a plate and tasted a chopstickful of noodles, immediately expressing his admiration, "Oh my goodness, these noodles have revolutionized my understanding of fried noodles. I never thought noodles could be this delicious."

The moment the noodles were in his mouth, he could taste the distinctive scorched flavor typical of fried noodles.

This scorched flavor can't be found in braised noodles. The noodles were slightly dry, giving them a fried-then-refried sensation—crispy and crunchy, extremely satisfying.

As for the glossy layer of fat and the pork belly coating the noodles, it continually tantalized everyone's nerves and taste buds.

Delicious, truly delicious.

Zhu Yong had never imagined that fried noodles could be this delicious; it was simply unbelievable.

Others tasted it and found it delicious as well.

After everyone's noodles were served, Lin Xu, carrying two plates of fried noodles, came outside and saw Shen Baobao scraping the bottom of the bowl.

TSK TSK TSK. She just saw someone washing a car while eating stir-fried pancake strips, and now *she's* this desperate for food?

"Come on, try the fried noodles made by Wei Qian."

After setting down the plates, Lin Xu picked up his own used chopsticks, pinched a clove of garlic in his hand, and then tasted a chopstickful of noodles.

The flavor was indeed good.

The taste was smoky and savory, and the Celery perfectly balanced the greasiness of the noodles.

Delicious, it was really tasty.

Shen Baobao took a bite and immediately set down the empty plate that had held the stir-fried pancake strips, focusing on eating the fried noodles on her plate.

"This flavor is really great. Didn't the netizens say they wanted more new main dishes? Why not launch this one? These fried noodles taste much better than the usual ones. I believe everyone will definitely like it."

Like it? The flavor was indeed good, but what the other customers would think, he really didn't know.

As he was hesitating, Chen Yan, dressed in a chef's uniform, ran up from the staircase.

"What's the main dish today? Hurry and give me a serving, I need to play my role as the head chef."

Clearly, Ren Jie had arrived.

His elder sister-in-law had entered role-playing mode once again.

Lin Xu pointed toward the kitchen. "See if Wei Qian has any fried noodles left. If there are, take a plate... After taking it over, help me ask if it's good. I'm hesitating about launching it in the restaurant."

"Sure, I'll ask for you in a bit."

This type of fried noodles was complex and time-consuming to prepare, and in his hometown, because they couldn't sell for a good price, they had almost been phased out.

But Lin Ji's Food wasn't afraid. As long as the taste was good, there were plenty of customers in the restaurant willing to pay for a delicious meal.

Moreover, after launching this noodle dish, it might even attract a wave of customers who love fried noodles.

It wasn't long before his elder sister-in-law sent a message: "The young police officer said the taste is superb. If the chef in their police mess hall had such good skills, he would never leave and just stay there to eat and drink."

Wow, that's quite a high rating.

Since that was the case, he decided to launch the new fried noodles.

Lin Xu could make this noodle dish, but to be safe, he still spent 150 points to exchange for the Perfect Level recipe for stir-fried noodles from the points store.

"Host spent 1,500,000 points, exchanged for the Perfect Level Cooking Technique for stir-fried noodles, and triggered the Trial Task: Please manage diligently. Ensure that within three days, over 300 customers eat stir-fried noodles for two consecutive meals. Upon completion, the host will permanently acquire the Perfect Level stir-fried noodles Cooking Technique; if not completed, the Skill level will downgrade to Superior."

Over three hundred customers—that's quite a demanding requirement. If it were the old Lin Ji's Food, it might be fine, with only those few meals; not eating was not an option. But now, with so many dishes to choose from, customers rarely ate the same dish and the same main course consecutively, even if they found it tasty. They also wanted to try new flavors.

However, since it had already been exchanged, and unlike the roasting chicken where the timing started whenever he began cooking, these stir-fried noodles were already being timed from now.

Without delay, Lin Xu called Dou Wenjing, who hadn't come for a meal today. "Sister Wenjing, the restaurant is planning to launch a stir-fried noodle dish tomorrow noon. Remember to arrange some promotions. I will send you the specific content on WeChat."

"Okay boss. By the way, what is the name of the stir-fried noodles? So we can introduce it to the netizens as well."

What is the name? The name of these stir-fried noodles was Raw Stir-fried Noodles. But it sounded a bit like eating raw noodles.

To prevent customers from being put off by the name, Lin Xu thought for a moment and said, "Let's call it Hometown Fried Noodles. This kind of stir-fried noodles is available in various places in North China, and calling it this might even evoke customers' memories of their hometown."

Hometown Fried Noodles?

Dou Wenjing repeated the name over the phone, then said, "Okay boss, I'll arrange for the operations department to start generating some early buzz tonight."

The so-called early buzz was actually very simple: just let some insiders release a message that a new main dish was launching tomorrow noon.

These days, the more obscure the information, the more people believed it.

Maybe even before the major accounts made a move, the netizens would have stirred up the excitement.

After talking to Dou Wenjing, Lin Xu was about to continue eating when suddenly, the system's notification tone sounded in his mind: "Host has launched a new main meal, triggering the side task [Hot New Product]: Please ensure that within three days, one thousand servings of the newly launched main dish [Hometown Fried Noodles] are successfully sold. Upon completion, reward a Perfect Level soup—Hot and Sour Pork Stomach Soup."

Chapter 659: Yue Liyue: This stir-fry is truly delicious! Lin Ji's regular customers are tempted

Hot and Sour Shredded Pork Stomach Soup? Isn't this the perfect soup to pair with stir-fried noodles? The system is surprisingly thoughtful. After I bought the stir-fried noodle technique, it gave me a task for Shredded Pork Stomach Soup, making a complete set. This saves me the trouble of spending points to exchange for it. Has it become so considerate because I've been spending a lot lately?

As he was lost in thought, Shen Baobao, sitting opposite him, said, "Xu Bao, I want to trade in my F8. What car do you think I should switch to?"

Trade in? This question really stumped Lin Xu. The only time he'd casually change luxury cars like this was when playing Need for Speed. As for reality... a BMW X5 is already superb! He'd never imagined driving an X5 before; he would have been grateful just to afford an Audi Q5 after graduation.

"Why don't you want to drive the F8 anymore?" Lin Xu asked. That red sports car, though a two-year-old model, has beautiful lines, and Shen Baobao looks quite stylish driving it. I don't understand why she suddenly wants to change cars.

"The chassis is too low; I have to be extremely careful going over speed bumps. It's such an eye-catcher too, making it inconvenient to park anywhere. Plus, the seats are uncomfortable. My back gets numb if I drive for too long."

Well... it seems she's done with sports cars. In that case, the alternatives are obvious. She could switch to an SUV or a regular sedan; both are good choices.

"I was initially thinking of Ferrari's new SUV, but deliveries don't start until next year, and there's a waiting list. I can't be bothered with that kind of hunger marketing, so I gave up on it."

Hunger marketing really is annoying,

Lin Xu thought. Unable to offer any good advice himself, he saw Yue Liyue and a few of his friends coming up the stairs and asked, "Yue Liyue, what's a good car to buy these days?"

"I don't know, man. I only know what cars **not** to buy."

"Oh?" Shen Baobao's interest was piqued. "What car shouldn't I buy? So I can steer clear."

"Li Auto! Peng Lei from New Pants warned everyone against buying Li Auto in a song years ago, but nobody believed him. Such a pity."

Lin Xu was momentarily stunned. I didn't expect Peng Lei to be a prophet.

He asked curiously, "Which song was that? I'll give it a listen."

"'People Without Ideals Don't Get Sad!'"

Considering the recent outcry from Li Auto owners, that song title does seem remarkably fitting, Lin Xu mused.

After the banter, Yue Liyue asked, "What's your budget? Buying a car depends on the budget. I can't give any advice without one."

Shen Baobao spread her hands and showed him five fingers. "As long as it's under five million, it's fine. I'm planning to trade in my Ferrari."

Yue Liyue was speechless. Perfect, new material for my dreams tonight! Trading in a Ferrari for a car under five million—that's a dream that would definitely be something else. I can't offer any constructive suggestions. Instead, I just feel like this couple is getting more and more outrageous, not only with their public displays of affection but now flaunting their wealth too!

Lin Xu scrolled through his phone and said, "How about a grand coupé? It offers the comfort of a sedan and the performance of a sports car. Take this Bentley Continental, for example. It seems to fit your requirements quite well."

Other luxury cars are often over five meters long, but this one is only four point eight meters. While that might seem like a mere twenty-centimeter difference, parking is much easier in a city like Beijing where every inch of space is precious. It's genuinely tough to find a decent parking spot for a car over five meters long. All those scrapes on his father-in-law's Bentley—weren't most of them from parking?

"Hmm... this car is really pretty. I'll look into it."

Shen Baobao's idea of 'looking into it' simply meant checking out the exterior and interior. She didn't understand things like wheelbase, torque, power, or performance, nor did she care. She'd place an order based purely on the car's looks.

While the couple was discussing this, Yue Liyue chimed in again, "I saw someone on the forum mention a new main dish launching tomorrow. They were being all secretive about the name. What is it? Claypot Rice?"

We don't have enough of those 'little clay pots' to make Claypot Rice for everyone yet... Lin Xu thought, then said with a smile, "You'll have to wait a bit longer for Claypot Rice. This time, we're launching a stir-fried noodle dish from my hometown. Would you all like to try some? If you do, I'll go to the kitchen and make it now."

Within three days, I not only have to sell a thousand servings of stir-fried noodles, but three hundred customers also need to eat it twice in a row. That's quite a challenge. Most importantly, the timer on the

mission page started ticking the moment I received the task. To avoid failing, I need to start selling the stir-fried noodles immediately.

"Stir-fried noodles? Like the ones you two are eating? One for each of us, please!" Yue Liyue exclaimed. Since it's a new main dish they're about to launch, it must be good. This is a perfect chance to try it before the rest of the online crowd gets to. Regular customers like us deserve a few perks, after all.

Lin Xu had almost finished his meal. He ate the last garlic clove, took a couple more bites of his stir-fried noodles, then picked up his bowl of Egg Soup, sipping it as he headed to the kitchen.

After Lin Xu left, Shen Baobao, still mulling over the car exchange, took out her phone and posted a question on a Q&A website: "Thinking of getting a Bentley Continental. Can any current owners share their real-world driving experiences?"

As soon as she posted it, replies from supposed Continental owners started flooding in. Many even included photos of their "beloved cars."

At first, Shen Baobao read the replies earnestly, but she soon realized something was off. The number of people claiming to be owners already exceeded the Bentley Continental's total annual sales in the country, and more "owners" were still chiming in constantly... At this rate, it was probably only a matter of time before the number of respondents surpassed the total production of all Bentley models combined.

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She closed the issue and immediately sent a WeChat message to her dad, Shen Guofu:

"I'm thinking about exchanging the F8 for a Bentley Continental. Dad, what do you think?"

Shen Guofu soon provided his own response:

"Tomorrow I'll find a Continental for you to try. If it works out, we'll make the exchange; if not, we'll keep looking. Buying a car isn't like buying clothes. Don't rush it. Look at a few more models, compare them, then make a decision."

Upon seeing this message, Shen Baobao immediately sent him a picture of fried noodles:

"Lin Xu's Hometown Fried Noodles with garlic cloves are supremely delicious. I'll figure out a way to bring you a big portion tomorrow noon, so Dad can also indulge."

Just having finished a diet meal at home, Shen Guofu's appetite was immediately aroused. The oily noodles, those slightly charred slices of pork belly—weren't they just too tempting?

He rapidly replied with a message:

"Good girl, don't forget to bring a few more cloves of garlic tomorrow!"

"Don't worry, I won't forget."

Just as their chat ended, Han Shuzhen, who was eating fruit after her meal, asked, "Who were you chatting with? You look so sly."

Shen Guofu hurriedly exited the chat, swiped left, and deleted his daughter's messages. Then he turned off his phone and said cheerfully, "The company just landed another big order; I'm just happy... Hurry up, dear, I can't wait to do some exercises. I've felt much more flexible after exercising recently."

Han Shuzhen speared a slice of yacon and popped it into her mouth. "Without losing fat," she said, "all that exercise will just make you a flexible fat man..."

Although she said this, in her heart she was reminiscing about the small apple her daughter had brought in the evening. She wondered when her son-in-law would make such fruity noodles again; she was actually quite craving it.

In the restaurant, Yue Liyue and the others waited quite a while before the waiter finally brought over four servings of the glossy fried noodles.

"Wow, it smells fantastic!"

"And the portions are generous, a full big plate."

"It does take quite a long time to wait, though. In regular diners, fried noodles are usually served in about two minutes. It's strange that it takes so much longer here at Lin Ji's place."

"The flavor is so good, a bit of a wait is normal... 'Let's try the taste. If it's good, we'll come again tomorrow,' one of them suggested before they all dug in.

After the first mouthful of fried noodles, the perfect texture and rich flavor immediately made everyone understand the meaning of 'good food is worth the wait.'

"Wow, these noodles are incredibly delicious!"

"With this texture, I'd wait another ten minutes. It's so much better than regular noodles."

"Indeed, it's so tasty."

"Where's the garlic? Where's the garlic? You can't eat this kind of noodles without garlic cloves. No wonder I saw Lin Ji and his wife preparing so many cloves earlier..."

On the table, there were unpeeled garlic cloves.

The group, barely containing their craving, started peeling the garlic cloves by hand.

Yue Liyue initially didn't plan on eating garlic, but seeing his roommates starting, he followed suit and began peeling as well. He knew that if he didn't join in, the three rascals next to him would keep blowing garlic breath at him later. It was better to be safe than sorry and eat first as a precaution. That way, everyone could equally inflict olfactory assaults on each other.

While they were eating, Geng Lele and Professor Cui arrived upstairs.

"Yue Liyue, what's tasty today?"

"Fried noodles. Lin Ji will be introducing a dish of Hometown Fried Noodles tomorrow, and right now I'm nostalgic for home as I eat."

Geng Lele snorted, "Weren't you always obsessed with Claypot Rice? Why do you suddenly fancy our Northern fried noodles? Professor, let's join them for noodles, to see if they really make me miss home."

Cui Qingyuan: "... Your house is just a few streets away from here. What's there to miss?"

He chuckled and said, "If you want to eat, we'll eat. I guess I get to try them too, thanks to you."

Speaking of hometown, images of Suzhou's alleyways along the riverbank unconsciously flashed through Cui Qingyuan's mind, the place that had haunted his dreams for years. Of course, what he missed the most was still the girl in the red dress from those years. In the blink of an eye, so many years had passed; he had become a professor, while that headstrong girl in the red dress had become a major figure in the business world. Although both remained single, they were no longer on the same social stratum. A few years ago, he had declined an invitation from Fudan University to instead go to Tsinghua University, aiming to maintain some distance. I wonder if she has scolded anyone as a 'little bastard' lately... Cui Qingyuan smiled softly, then shook his head, dispelling those unrealistic thoughts from his mind. He began planning what to discuss in tomorrow's lecture.

"Professor, you haven't even tasted the Hometown Fried Noodles yet, and you're already mustering your feelings?"

Geng Lele twirled around, got some crispy fish fillet from a food cart, and crunched as she studied Cui Qingyuan's expression. She had been teaching herself microexpressions and wanted to observe people whenever she could.

Cui Qingyuan gave a dry laugh, "Not at all, I'm just considering what to teach tomorrow that will stump you geniuses... Is this fish fillet grilled? Let me have a taste..."

Ha! While the professor was talking, he blinked several times, but normally he doesn't blink when speaking. That means... he's lying! Oho, so even the professor can have his little mood swings.

Geng Lele pushed the plate forward and then started observing Shen Jiayue nearby, hoping to catch the hostess's microexpressions.

Just then, Lin Xu walked out of the kitchen.

Shen Baobao, who had been pouting while looking at cars, instantly beamed with happiness and joy. As Lin Xu approached, she even rubbed her head against him like a child.

TSK TSK TSK. The hostess's happiness is almost overflowing. No wonder netizens advise against eating on the second floor—it really is too easy to get a dose of PDA.