

Culinary 671

Chapter 671: Mission Accomplished, Reward Received! Qin Wei's Specialty Minced Meat with Glass Noodles! _3

At the beginning of sautéing, you can place it on the stove and stir-fry over high heat.

But once the ground meat has broken up, you should move the pan away from the flame, to the side of the stove, and use the residual heat to fry out the aroma and moisture of the ground meat.

Only then will the ground meat be sufficiently crispy and even more delicious.

When the ground meat in the pot becomes granular, and the oil at the bottom of the pot turns clear, it means that the ground meat is well fried.

Put the pot back on the stove, and add ginger slices and Thai chili rings.

Stir-fry for a bit to bring out the aroma of the ginger and Thai chilies.

Then add the chopped Doubanjiang and continue to stir-fry, letting the hot oil bring out the aroma and Red Oil of the Doubanjiang.

This step requires some patience, as you must fry the aroma out of the Doubanjiang for the sweet potato noodles to taste even better.

Two minutes later, Qin Wei added the sweet potato noodles into the pot and stir-fried briefly, then poured in two large bowls of Pork Bone Broth. The amount of broth should not be too much, but not too little either.

About level with the sweet potato noodles is good.

That way, as it stews and reduces, the liquid will be perfectly absorbed.

While stewing, add a small spoonful of sugar, drizzle in some Dark Soy Sauce for coloring, and sprinkle a little bit of white pepper powder to finish the seasoning.

"Just reduce it over high heat?"

"Ginger slices... pick... pick them out..."

"I get it. When serving, won't you have to drizzle some Seasoning Oil? This is Sichuan cuisine, which emphasizes spicy and numbing flavors. Since you've added Doubanjiang, should you drizzle some Sichuan peppercorn oil when serving?"

"Sichuan peppercorn... oil... and Seasoning Oil... both... both work!"

After Qin Wei responded, he covered the pot to let the sweet potato noodles simmer properly in the Red Oil and pork broth.

Before long, as the soup in the pot reduced and he lifted the lid, the rich aroma captivated him.

Only a bit of soup remained in the pot; its glistening sweet potato noodles, tinged with red, looked semi-transparent and inviting enough to make one want to grab some with chopsticks and slurp them in.

Stir-fry again briefly to effectively prevent the bottom of the pot from burning.

Then use chopsticks to pick out the ginger slices.

Stir-fry again for a bit, then drizzle in a bit of Sichuan peppercorn oil, and sprinkle in some chopped green onions and minced garlic to finish the smooth and fragrant ground meat sweet potato noodles.

After serving, Lin Xu, waiting for a delivery that hadn't arrived yet, went to the storeroom and grabbed two cabbages to make a delicious dish of hand-torn cabbage for the staff.

After he finished, it was almost 10:30 AM.

Lunch at the restaurant officially began.

"Wow, today's dishes are really great for pairing with rice!"

When the hand-torn cabbage and ground meat sweet potato noodles were brought out, the employees were all surprised.

Finally, no more stir-fried noodles, haha.

But after eating plain rice for two meals, they hoped to continue eating stir-fried noodles, as the taste was truly delightful, and they would probably miss it after two days without it.

Everyone served themselves a bowl of rice and then sat around the dining table, starting to eat.

Lin Xu picked up a chopstick full of sweet potato noodles and put it in his bowl, then picked up a strand to taste. The sweet potato noodles were coated in a glossy red oil, making them smooth as they entered the mouth.

It felt like slurping rice noodles.

But these were much heartier than rice noodles.

The sweet potato noodles were laden with the rich aroma of Doubanjiang, interspersed with the taste of minced garlic and green onions, giving a very rich flavor.

The bits of ground meat clinging to the sweet potato noodles were similar to those in Mapo Tofu, crispy to eat, adding a multidimensional texture to the dish.

Take a bite of sweet potato noodles, then scoop up some rice; the feeling is utterly satisfying!

"Wow, this is so delicious, Chef Qin! Your ground meat sweet potato noodles are truly amazing, a divine dish for pairing with rice."

"Exactly, it's so enjoyable to eat with rice."

"I was thinking about eating less, but with today's dishes being so rich, it looks like I can't do that."

"If we had this kind of meal every day, I guess everyone in the restaurant would turn into little chubsters."

While they were eating, Shen Baobao arrived.

"Wow, it's ground meat sweet potato noodles! I absolutely love this dish."

She didn't immediately go to serve herself rice, but first took a photo and posted it under the Lin Ji's Food topic:

"Just got to the restaurant in time for lunch. Today's menu is ground meat sweet potato noodles and hand-torn cabbage. What's everyone having for lunch? Feel free to leave a comment."

As soon as she posted it, comments from online users came flooding in.

"Damn, it's confirmed! Lin Ji's employees really eat the best."

"When we were still fighting over a bowl of stir-fried noodles, employees at Lin Ji's Food had already grown tired of ground meat sweet potato noodles and switched things up."

"May I ask, when will this dish be on the new menu?"

"A quick guess tells me it won't be until my son's engagement banquet."

"How old is your child, if I may inquire?"

"I'm currently single, without a child yet..."

"..."

The online discussions didn't affect everyone's meal progress.

Shen Baobao held a bowl of rice, placed a large chopstick full of sweet potato noodles in it, added some cabbage, and made herself a ground meat sweet potato noodles and hand-torn cabbage rice bowl.

The sweet potato noodles were spicy and smooth, and the cabbage was refreshingly sour and appetizing. When these two rice-complementing dishes came together, the rice didn't stand a chance.

"Oh right, I secured a business deal for our scenic spot today."

"Is that so? What kind of business?"

Lin Xu hadn't expected his Baobao, while slacking off at the Audit Bureau, to actually help secure a deal for the scenic area.

Shen Baobao shoveled a mouthful of rice, muttering as she ate, "It's the Audit Bureau. Uncle Tan mentioned he wanted to organize a group trip for National Day to let the employees relax a bit; family members can come along. As soon as I heard, I suggested going to Yinzhou, and he agreed."

So... Uncle Tan must have planned this trip because he heard my parents were going to Yinzhou, right? And here I was, thinking she'd landed an external client.

Lin Xu, curious, asked, "Are you going then?"

"If you go, I'll go; if you don't, I won't. I want to be with you."

Lin Xu had planned to go home, but then he thought there wasn't much to do there, and he might as well stay in Beijing to improve himself.

Shoot some videos, work on some drafts, and take Dundun out for a hike to enjoy the breath of nature. Yes, I won't go home for National Day this time.

The scenic area was bustling, and his parents would likely be too busy to entertain him. Besides, instead of joining the National Day holiday rush, it would be better to go back when everyone else was working.

That way, at least the family could sit down and eat together.

Having thought this through, he said to Shen Baobao, "Let's not go back then. After National Day, if we feel like it, we'll drive back."

"Great! I really didn't want to be with Mom and Dad. One is lazy, and the other is all talk but no game when it comes to traveling. Only I..."

As Shen Jiayue spoke, she subconsciously glanced around to make sure her parents weren't there, and then continued, "...am the one who runs all over the mountains; they can't keep up with me."

Tsk tsk, is she feeling a bit guilty for badmouthing her parents behind their backs?

Lin Xu smiled and flicked off the grain of rice at the corner of her mouth. "I'll try my best to keep up with you in the future, aiming to accompany you from start to finish."

"Hehe, thank you, Xu Bao."

After lunch, just as everyone returned to their respective posts, the delivery arrived.

Several boxes of pebbles, quite heavy; it took the delivery guy a few trips to finish delivering them.

After signing, Shu Yun opened a cardboard box and took out bags of Volcanic Stone.

Ten portions in total, and after taking them all out, there was even a small pack of Volcanic Stone about the size of sunflower seeds, labeled as a free gift.

Shu Yun looked it over and asked Lin Xu, "What's the use for these small stones?"

Lin Xu took a look and mumbled, "They can be used for sugar-roasted chestnuts."

Sugar-roasted chestnuts?

Shen Baobao and Shu Yun's eyes lit up instantly...

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"Xubao, can these small stones really be used for making candied chestnuts?"

Shen Baobao opened the package and fiddled with the handful of tiny black stones she had grabbed.

Hearing her tone, Lin Xu knew exactly what this girl was up to.

He said with a smile, "Yes, and it seems like they can only be used for making candied chestnuts, not really suitable for anything else. The new chestnuts have just hit the market, so I'll buy some and fry them for you to try."

"They can't be used for anything else? Can't they be used for stone-baked buns?"

"The stones used for stone-baked buns are a size larger. These are too small. They could easily get stuck in the buns, and if you're not careful, biting down on one might lead to a trip to the dentist."

What?

Shen Baobao had originally been coveting the stone-baked buns, but unfortunately, these smaller stones wouldn't work for that. What a real pity.

"Then can they be used for puffed rice? I've seen people use small stones to make puffed rice in videos."

"Stones for puffed rice are two sizes smaller than these, about the size of a rice grain, hence the name 'rice stones'."

How frustrating! The things she wanted to eat weren't doable with these.

Lin Xu thought for a moment and said, "Actually, they can be used for grilling sausages. Aren't the black pepper sausages at Uncle Yu's supermarket entrance placed on a bed of stones? That looks pretty unique."

"Then I'll just have the candied chestnuts."

"Okay, I'll make some for you when I'm less busy. It's relatively simple. You just need stones and chestnuts with some sugar, then stir-fry them in the pan for a while. I guarantee they'll be both fragrant and tender-chewy."

He could make the chestnuts, but not right now, as the lunchtime rush was about to start, and Lin Xu needed to go upstairs to make stir-fried noodles.

I'll have to redeem another training Technique task later to improve Zhu Yong's stir-frying skills. That way, I can free myself from making stir-fried noodles.

Though stir-fried noodles are popular, other dishes also need attention.

Less than five minutes after entering the kitchen, the first table of customers arrived, and as usual, they ordered stir-fried noodles.

The popularity of this main dish had led to a noticeable decline in sales of hand-pulled noodles and braised pork rice. They didn't dare prepare too many toppings in advance for fear they would go to waste.

After all, it's a new item on the menu, so its popularity is normal.

I guess that in a few days, once the novelty wears off, the number of customers ordering stir-fried noodles will decrease. People will probably go back to choosing braised pork rice or hand-pulled noodles.

"Boss, how should we clean these stones?"

Busy at work, Chezai approached and pointed to the pile of stones as he asked.

How should these be cleaned?

Lin Xu shook the frying pan to prevent the noodles from sticking and scorching, then said, "Separate the large and small stones. Wash them in the sink with detergent several times. Once clean, boil them in a pot, and then let them air dry."

These stones might have been machined. A layer of machine oil could have been applied to their surface during polishing to make them smoother. Therefore, they have to be washed very carefully to remove all the machine oil and polishing debris.

Washing and then boiling them will ensure the stones are as clean as possible.

Downstairs, after Shen Baobao left with her boxed meal, Shu Yun saw Dou Wenjing tagging Zeng Xiaoqi in the group chat:

"When do you plan to shoot the stir-fried noodle video?"

Zeng Xiaoqi sent a sticker that meant 'Hurry up!' and replied, "Of course, the sooner, the better. I can't wait to show the audience."

"Oh, please. Are you really eager for the audience to see it? I'm almost embarrassed to call you out. Our boss said if you want stir-fried noodles, just come over. No need to beat around the bush. He's very busy lately and doesn't have time to personally deliver food to you."

Seeing this, Shu Yun couldn't help but laugh. Dou really doesn't mince her words, she thought, amused. If she puts it like that, how could Director Zeng even consider coming?

She thought for a moment, then tagged Zeng Xiaoqi in the group chat: "Director Zeng, the show is becoming increasingly popular. I think you should inspect the dishes to be filmed beforehand. This will help prevent any culinary mishaps that could disappoint our loyal viewers... By the way, after today's lunch rush, our boss is planning to attempt making candied chestnuts. We hope you can come and witness it, Director Zeng."

Zeng Xiaoqi, who was in her office at the TV station, silently cursing Dou Wenjing and wishing her bra size would shrink by three cups, suddenly brightened. Haha, when it comes to smooth talking, Shu Yun is the best!

She replied to the group with feigned modesty, "Manager Shu, that's a very valuable suggestion. After careful consideration, the production team has formally adopted it. I'll get ready and head to the restaurant to check out the stir-fried noodles. Also, please help me change a certain someone's group nickname from '32D' to '32A'. Thanks."

Despite the curse, Dou Wenjing didn't mind at all. Her attention was entirely captured by the candied chestnuts. She asked, "When are we making candied chestnuts? How come I didn't know?"

"That was a recent decision. The boss bought some stones for Stone Cooked Chrysanthemum and got a small complimentary bag of pebbles for candied chestnuts. So, the boss's wife immediately craved them."

Girls simply can't resist snacks like candied chestnuts.

Even Director Zeng, who usually maintained such a dignified, leader-like composure, declared she wanted to eat three pounds.

While they were chatting, Zeng Xiaoqi suddenly remembered something: "Hey? When food is mentioned, President Chen is usually the first to pop up. What's with today? 34D, calling 34D! Respond if you copy!"

At that moment, Chen Yan couldn't join the chat. She was liaising with the head of a travel agency that specialized in high-end, customized tours.

With National Day approaching, it's about time to take the Joyful Media employees out for a relaxing trip, Chen Yan mused.

Chen Yan had initially planned to go to the Longqi Mountain Scenic Area in Yinzhou, partly to bring some business to Lin Xu's parents.

However, after a WeChat conversation with Chen Meijuan, she found out that the scenic area's tickets for National Day were completely sold out. They even had to implement crowd control measures.

As for the cliffside hotel, except for the rooms reserved for Shen Guofu, not a single one was left; they were all booked out. Even the previously unopened homestay section had to be opened ahead of schedule due to overwhelming demand.

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Starry Camp could still accommodate them; after all, setting up a few more tents would suffice.

However, they needed to limit the number of visitors. Otherwise, they wouldn't have enough staff to keep up, and the excessive noise would spoil the serene experience of sleeping in tents.

Since Yinzhou was not an option, Director Chen turned her gaze northward.

During the National Day holiday, every scenic spot was packed. Rather than feeling like sardines in a can, it was better to find a wide-open space to really let loose.

So, she booked a seven-day trip to Hulunbuir.

They planned to ride horses and admire the autumn scenery of the grasslands.

If they were lucky, they might even encounter frost, which would make the scenery even more unique.

Then they would roast two sheep, letting all the broadcasters from the company experience the joy of eating roasted whole sheep on the grasslands.

Once Joyful Media decided to go, Xinda Commerce, which was closely affiliated with Joyful Media, also planned to join. Along with Yue Liyue and his roommates, a formidable travel contingent was officially formed.

With so many people, their food, clothing, accommodation, and transportation all needed careful planning.

Therefore, Director Chen, as the leader, naturally took on the responsibility.

Upon learning that everyone was planning a National Day trip, Zeng Xiaoqi was instantly envious.

"I'm so envious of you all! I still don't know what I'm doing for National Day. Shu Baobao, do you have any good suggestions?"

Shu Yun said, "You could go back to your hometown. Didn't Hometown Fried Noodles start a trend of people going home for the holidays? Why don't you go back for a visit?"

"No way! Every time I go home, I get pressured about getting married. I want to be a career elite, not some kind of dating fiend going on thirty-two blind dates a day... Forget it. I'd rather just sleep in. When I wake up, I'll come find you to mooch some food and drinks."

In the restaurant, Yue Liyue was dining with a few roommates when he saw the travel itinerary Chen Yan had posted in the group chat. He instantly felt an urge to don a Mongolian robe and gallop across the plains.

He glanced at his roommates and asked, "Are you guys really not planning to go? As my assistants, the three of you can go for free."

"We're not going. We plan to catch up on our game boosting orders. The pay is doubled during the National Day holiday. Opportunities like this are rare, and we can't miss it."

"That's right. Making money is what's important; travel doesn't matter."

"Right now, all we want to do is make money. If we don't earn more, we won't be able to afford food from Lin Ji's Food."

In the past, their parents and teachers had always urged them to work hard. Now, for the first time, they felt pressure from Lin Ji's Food. If they didn't earn enough money, they genuinely couldn't afford to eat there.

Yue Liyue wasn't having fried noodles today; instead, he had braised pork rice.

He scooped some rice with his spoon, his face etched with regret, "There are quite a few pretty, single women among the company's admin staff, and a few of the new streamers too. I was thinking of introducing you, but oh well. Being single is fine too, I guess I won't bother setting you up..."

He hadn't even finished his sentence when his roommates, as if a switch had been flipped, started clamoring:

"Yue Bro, from now on, you're my real brother!"

"For this trip, Yue Bro, even if it rains knives, I'll carry your bags!"

"Yue Bro, just say the word if you need tea poured or water fetched from now on!"

Their income wasn't low, but they were busy day and night. Their only social interaction happened during their meals at the restaurant. Consequently, forget dating; they barely had any opportunities to meet girls.

Although they could meet girls in games, there was a high probability it was just some guy pretending.

After all, they themselves used female avatars in games.

Every time they encountered a girl in a game speaking in a sweet, feminine voice, they couldn't help but be reminded of their own online personas, and then... well, then nothing.

Around two in the afternoon, Lin Xu finished his work and came out of the kitchen with a cup of Sour Plum Soup. Just as he was about to take a break in a booth, he noticed Dou Wenjing and Zeng Xiaoqi sitting out in the dining area.

He asked curiously, "What's up?"

Dou Wenjing nodded. "There's a document that needs your signature."

Beside her, Zeng Xiaoqi couldn't help but call her out, "Are you really here for a signature? I'm almost too embarrassed to expose you. The moment you heard about roasted chestnuts, you rushed over, terrified you wouldn't get your share. How are you ever going to slim down like this? I'm genuinely worried for you..."

Zeng Xiaoqi had cleverly repurposed Dou Wenjing's earlier pronouncements, blending them with the typical parental pressure about marriage, and thrown it right back at Director Dou.

Wow, roasting someone like that felt so good!

Lin Xu laughed when he heard this. "Wanting candied chestnuts? That's easy. Chezai, go get a few pounds of chestnuts from Uncle Yu's supermarket. I'll roast them later."

Just this morning, Uncle Yu had mentioned while eating at the restaurant that he'd gotten a new batch of fresh chestnuts. This was a perfect opportunity to support his neighbor's business.

A few pounds? How could a few pounds possibly be enough?

Zeng Xiaoqi said, "Maybe buy a bit more. Shu Yun said these are her absolute favorite; she can eat five pounds of them in one go without stopping!"

Hearing this, Dou Wenjing chimed in, "Right, right, Shu Yun did say that... Oh, by the way, since we're making candied chestnuts, why not film the process? It would be perfect as pre-recorded content for National Day."

Although the restaurant wouldn't close for National Day, the media company would be on holiday.

At that time, if Lin Xu wanted to film any videos, he'd have to manage it all himself.

So, while the staff were still available, it was best to film as much content as possible.

Lin Xu said, "Sure, have them come over. We'll start preparing once they arrive... Chezai, get ten pounds of chestnuts this time. Remember to pick through them carefully and don't get any bad ones."

Before roasting, any spoiled chestnuts needed to be removed; otherwise, the entire batch would acquire a sour taste during the cooking process.

Lin Xu rested in the booth for half an hour.

Half an hour later, the camera in the small kitchen was set up, the chestnuts had been purchased, and Lin Xu, having changed into a clean chef's uniform and apron, began to cook.

Chapter 674: Everyone's National Day Plans! How easy is it to make sugar-fried chestnuts? Just need hands! _3

"Hello everyone, I'm Lin Xu, and today we're going to make sugar-roasted chestnuts!"

After a simple introduction, Lin Xu brought over the washed chestnuts, the stones that the assistant had previously washed and boiled, and a bag of fine white sugar to the workbench. With that, all the ingredients for sugar-roasted chestnuts were ready.

There were too many chestnuts to cook in one pot, so Lin Xu divided them into portions.

He took a chopping block and started to score the chestnuts.

This 'scoring' involved notching a cross on the flatter side of each chestnut. The shell would crack open when heated, not only making it easier to peel and eat but also allowing the sugar's sweetness to penetrate, making the chestnuts taste even more delicious.

Additionally, making these cuts helped further weed out any bad nuts.

Any chestnut that showed black or red inside the cut shell was likely bad and was thrown away.

This part of the filming would only require a few shots and wasn't too complex.

After filming, Lin Xu waved over the assistant and several kitchen helpers to help with the scoring.

Soon, all the chestnuts were scored.

Filming continued as Lin Xu then soaked the scored chestnuts in clear water.

Soaking the chestnuts would help them shed their shells more easily, and the additional moisture would prevent them from burning during the roasting process.

After soaking the chestnuts, Lin Xu took a large wok and set it on the stove.

He added the stones and turned on the burner, heating them up on high heat.

While heating the stones, it was essential to continuously stir them with a spatula to maintain a uniform temperature and avoid uneven heat, which could cause the chestnuts to burn.

The stones' temperature shouldn't be too high—being able to feel the heat with a hand held above them was usually enough.

If it was too hot, the chestnuts would burst open when added.

Lin Xu, holding a large slotted spoon, scooped out the soaked chestnuts from the basin, drained them slightly, and then poured them into the wok.

As soon as they were added, the water on the surface of the chestnuts created a lot of steam when it met the hot stones.

Once the chestnuts were in the wok, they had to be stirred constantly with a spatula.

This was a very laborious task; the stones were heavy, and the chestnuts were large, making them difficult to stir.

The reason street vendors selling sugar-roasted chestnuts used shovels to stir is that using spatulas is too laborious.

After stir-frying for a while, Lin Xu felt it was time for Lin Ji's Food's culinary team to shine, so he let Wei Qian take over the stir-frying.

"This is Wei Qian, the head chef of Lin Ji's Food's back kitchen. You all should have seen him during the competition last time, right?"

Wei Qian had slimmed down recently, but his strength hadn't decreased much. He wielded the spatula vigorously, making Lin Xu worry the wooden-handled iron spatula might break in the middle.

Before long, the water in the wok dried up again, and all the chestnuts had cracked open.

The originally cut crosses had turned into large openings, and the unique fragrance of the chestnuts drifted out of the wok.

Lin Xu took a small spoon and added two spoonfuls of fine white sugar. He explained, "Adding sugar is mainly to give the chestnuts a caramel flavor, which makes them tastier. Sweetness is actually secondary because chestnuts themselves have a sweet aroma, and even without the sugar, the taste wouldn't be bad."

There are no specific requirements for the sugar. White Sugar, Maltose, or even brown sugar powder can be used.

After adding two spoonfuls of white sugar, white steam drifted out of the wok again, and the caramel aroma quickly emerged.

The advantage of using this type of white sugar is that it melts quickly and produces flavor earlier.

After adding the sugar, the stones in the wok immediately took on a glossy sheen, and the chestnuts started to look shinier as well.

Continue stir-frying, allowing the heat and caramel aroma to fully penetrate the chestnuts. This makes them even tastier.

As the caramel aroma became more intense, Lin Xu picked one from the wok.

Wei Qian, who was still stirring on the side, couldn't help but remark, "It's at least over a hundred degrees in there, and you just picked it right out, truly the Heartless Iron Hand."

Lin Xu smiled, "I dipped my hand in water. Without dipping, even the Heartless Iron Hand would get burned."

He peeled off the shell, blew on the aromatic chestnut, and then popped it into his mouth.

Mmm, delicious!

Aromatic, sweet, with a pleasant mealy texture, and wonderfully soft.

Not just girls love it; boys can't get enough either.

"How is it?"

"It's ready. Turn off the heat."

After they served the chestnuts on a platter and took a close-up shot, Zhu Yong asked from the side, "Boss, don't you usually cook homestyle meals? Using so many stones isn't common for households, and they are pretty hard on woks. Is there a more suitable home cooking method?"

This...

Lin Xu thought for a moment and said, "Actually, there is. Let's keep filming. One type of chestnut, two methods of cooking. Later, everyone can taste and see which method makes the tastier chestnuts."

「Back in the small kitchen, they resumed filming.」

Lin Xu took the previously scored chestnuts that hadn't been used, placed them in a flat-bottomed pan, and added water until it was level with the chestnuts. Next, he added half a ladleful of White Sugar. He brought the water to a boil, covered the pan, and let it simmer for ten minutes.

After ten minutes, he removed the lid. The water in the pan had almost dried up, and the chestnuts had burst open. He continued to stir-fry them with a spatula, further drying out the water while evenly coating the chestnuts with the syrup.

The prepared chestnuts had a sticky syrup coating, giving them an appearance reminiscent of Crystal Sugar Haws.

"This is the simplest way to cook chestnuts: boil them in water, and then just reduce the liquid over high heat. It's easier than queuing up on the streets to buy them. Everyone at home should try this; it's really simple."

Carrying the cooked chestnuts out of the kitchen, Lin Xu called out to the people outside who were eating chestnuts, "Come and taste these chestnuts and see if they are tastier than those cooked with stones."

Seeing these chestnuts coated in syrup, everyone was captivated. Never mind the taste; just the appearance alone was pretty impressive.

After setting down the plate, Lin Xu grabbed a chestnut, peeled it, and popped it into his mouth.

This one, because more sugar was added, had a noticeably richer sweetness.

However, the fragrance was not as good as those cooked with stones. This one had only the natural aroma of chestnuts compared to the dry and slightly caramelized scent of those cooked with stones. The difference was quite apparent.

"Wow! This one is really sweet."

"It kind of feels like eating Crystal Sugar Haws."

"If I were only having a few, then definitely these sugar-coated ones. But if I were binge-watching dramas or anime for a long time, then the ones cooked with stones are better."

"For me, either way is fine. As long as they're chestnuts, they're delicious."

Lin Xu, holding a plate, took some chestnuts cooked with stones to one side, just about to munch on the sugar-roasted chestnuts and play Sheep A Sheep when Wei Qian suddenly asked from not far away, "Lin Xu, what do you plan to do with the remaining chestnuts? Are you going to make more sugar-roasted chestnuts with them?"

What does he mean?

Is he trying to show off a bit?

Lin Xu asked, "Do you have any ideas?"

"This afternoon I want to make some braised pork with chestnuts. Putting chestnuts and pork belly together to stew, what do you think..."

"Deal!"

It seems chestnuts will soon be in season. Everyone can try making them at home using a frying pan to boil with sugar for ten minutes. But remember, you have to score them, or the chestnuts are likely to burst.

Chapter 675: The Irresistible Rice Companion Dish - Chestnut Braised Pork! Million Fans Reward!

"Damn, what is this hellish game?"

Lin Xu played Sheep Tag for a while before promptly quitting. Playing other games was supposed to be relaxing, a way to enjoy the fun of clearing levels. But this game offered no fun, only depression.

I'm so sorry, my delicious sugar-roasted chestnuts.

Lin Xu opened his regular 3D billiards game and managed a three-win streak, which finally cleared away the gloom in his heart.

Feeling cheerful, he opened the latest anime he was following and started to peel and eat the tasty chestnuts while watching.

Can't deny it; these things are really addictive.

He peeled off the cracked outer shell, revealing the egg-yolk-like chestnut meat inside. The soft, glutinous texture when chewed gently was simply irresistible.

The weather had turned cold, and the season for eating chestnuts had arrived. This delicacy was truly versatile. It could be made into sugar-roasted chestnuts, added to various desserts, or even used in porridge, rice dishes, and stews with meat or chicken. Basically, chestnuts were up to the task for any culinary creation one could imagine.

Perhaps the only drawback was peeling them. Chestnuts needed to be eaten hot. Once they cooled, the shell became difficult to peel. Even if one managed to peel off the hard outer shell, the inner membrane was also difficult to remove.

When he had almost finished eating, he got up and went to the next booth. By then, Zeng Xiaoqi, Shu Yun, and Dou Wenjing had all left with their sugar-roasted chestnuts. Half of the stone-roasted ones remained. As for those boiled and coated in syrup, the three women had divided them all.

Tsk, they claim it's too sweet and not tasty, yet their bodies are quite honest, aren't they?

Lin Xu carried the stone-roasted chestnuts to the small kitchen. He scraped aside the pebbles he had used for roasting them. They were still very hot, and he guessed the temperature wouldn't drop

anytime soon. He buried the chestnuts among the pebbles, covering them to keep them warm enough to be slightly hot to the touch.

By the time Shen Baobao got off work, there would be no need to re-roast the chestnuts. Care had to be taken not to bury them too deep, otherwise the residual heat from the pebbles would scorch the chestnuts.

「In the kitchen.」

Wei Qian, after finishing his tasks, brought over the unroasted chestnuts. Braised Pork Belly with Chestnuts simply meant simmering chestnuts with braised pork. This required advance preparation, particularly reserving enough time to make the Braised Pork Belly.

To make this dish, the first step was to prepare the chestnuts. Use a kitchen knife to score a cross on each chestnut. After scoring all of them, dump them into a pot of boiling water. Soon after being placed in the pot, the chestnuts cracked open. After boiling for about ten minutes, fish out the chestnuts and peel them while hot.

"It's time to test your 'Heartless Iron Hands'! Come on, let's see who isn't afraid of the heat," Wei Qian called over the nearby kitchen assistants to help.

"Chef, are these chestnuts cooked?"

"They're cooked... Hey, why are you stuffing that in your mouth? We're making Braised Pork Belly with Chestnuts tonight. Anyone who eats chestnuts now won't get any Braised Pork Belly later!" Chef Wei playfully threatened them, then said, "Tonight, not only will we have Braised Pork Belly with Chestnuts, but I bet the boss will also make Stone Cooked Chrysanthemum. You'd better save your appetite for the good stuff tonight. What's so special about these plain boiled chestnuts?"

Hearing about the delicious food to come, all the kitchen assistants perked up. The staff meals at the restaurant were becoming increasingly lavish. If photos were posted online, they would definitely stir up a buzz. Whenever they saw envious online comments praising the great meals at Lin Ji, everyone felt a strong sense of pride.

Our Lin Ji staff meals are just that awesome!

Tonight at dinner, they had to show it off too. Couldn't they score a bunch of likes?

Many hands make light work, and the boiled chestnuts were quickly peeled.

Wei Qian then fetched some pork belly. First, he scorched the pork belly skin with a blowtorch to remove impurities and any gamey smell. Then, he cut it into two-centimeter cubes, chopped some Scallion and Ginger, and prepared to start cooking.

Although it was called cooking, it was actually the method for making Braised Pork Belly. However, there was an additional step—frying the chestnuts.

For the Braised Pork Belly with Chestnuts, to make the chestnuts even tastier than the meat, they needed to be fried in hot oil before being added to the pot. The high-temperature frying thoroughly released the chestnuts' natural fragrance. Moreover, after frying, the chestnuts wouldn't disintegrate during stewing and wouldn't end up crumbly.

He heated a wok and added enough oil to fill it halfway. When the oil reached medium heat, he added the chestnuts to fry them. Since the chestnuts were mostly cooked during the ten minutes of boiling, the oil temperature shouldn't be too high; medium heat was sufficient. Fry them over medium heat for two minutes. Once the surface of the chestnuts turned slightly golden, he removed them and also poured out the oil from the wok.

He then placed the wok back on the stove, heated it, and tossed in the pork belly cubes. This step could be done without adding extra oil, as the pork belly itself contained plenty of fat that would render out during stir-frying. This made the pork belly fragrant but not greasy. The rendered fat was perfect for stir-frying the aromatics.

However, not too much fat should be rendered out, or the Braised Pork Belly would lose its melt-in-your-mouth texture. Generally, stir-frying until just a little fat remained at the bottom of the wok was sufficient.

Once some fat had rendered, he added a few slices of ginger and a handful of Crystal Sugar to the wok, continuing to stir-fry. He stir-fried until the Crystal Sugar melted and coated the meat surface with caramel. This way, the sugar caramelized as the meat seared.

This method of searing the meat and caramelizing the sugar together saved cooking time but was quite challenging to execute. It's not recommended for those without a solid culinary foundation.

Chapter 676: A Rice Dish That Makes You Fall in Love at First Bite—Chestnut Braised Pork! Million Fans Reward! _2

After stir-frying, he added water to the pot along with a tied bunch of scallions, then salt and Light Soy Sauce for seasoning. He then covered the pot and started to braise the contents.

When the braising started, Lin Xu just happened to wander over.

Although he could cook Braised Pork Belly, he had never made chestnut braised pork. Seeing Wei Qian busy and enthusiastic, he curiously asked,

"When do you put the chestnuts in for this stew?"

"The meat stews for one hour first. After an hour, pick out the Scallion and Ginger, add the chestnuts, and stew for another half hour. Finally, finish with high heat to reduce the sauce."

Got it. Chestnuts go in after the meat is well-stewed, Lin Xu noted. He planned to try it himself sometime, but for now, he had a ton of other things to do.

Online, when the video for the old-fashioned stir-fried noodles came out, fans promptly supported it with their likes, comments, and shares, then dragged the progress bar straight to the end.

Finding no segment featuring Dundun taste-testing, they immediately expressed their dismay in the comments:

"Damn, why's there no Dundun again?"

"I really hope to see Dundun taste-testing once more! Boss Lin, please shoot some of Dundun's daily life. You've hooked fans from the pet zone, but now you neglect us. How can you do this?"

"Dundun~~ My Dundun~ Mommy misses you~~~~"

"A blood-signed petition for a Dundun video!"

"..."

After making a round in the kitchen, Lin Xu came out and ran into Shu Yun.

"Boss, a lot of people online want to see Dundun's videos. Someone even called the front desk just now. I told them Dundun doesn't want to make videos right now and that they should wait a bit longer."

That's a pretty good excuse, Lin Xu mused. He realized he hadn't filmed Dundun much recently. Since they weren't together during the day, even their usual playful interactions were gone. It seemed like it was time to film a Dundun episode before these fans started showing up at his door.

But if he was going to film, it couldn't be for nothing. Lin Xu took out his phone, opened the short video platform, and seeing that his followers had already surpassed nine hundred thousand, he posted an update:

"If my followers exceed one million, I'll post a video of Dundun getting into some mischief, and it will be no less than ten minutes long."

Well, since they're all so eager, this is a good chance to boost the follower count. I wonder if there's a reward from the system when my followers break one million. But that's not important. The priority now is to increase the topic's popularity. Currently, the Lin Ji's Food topic is lingering around fourth or fifth place. The follower count isn't low; it just lacks that catalyst to stir up all the fans' emotions. There haven't been any breakthroughs in the culinary realm recently. To ignite the fans' emotions, I'll need to try a different angle. Hopefully, that opportunity comes quickly so the main mission can be completed and the reward obtained.

The moment the update was posted, comments from netizens flooded in:

"I just realized Boss Lin's follower count hasn't hit a million yet. Why do I always feel like he already has over five million fans?"

"I just realized I forgot to follow. Doing it now."

"SHOOT! Me too, my bad, my bad!"

"I've only subscribed to the topic, not his account. I'll go post over there in a bit. There are probably a lot of people like me who have only subscribed to the topic and haven't followed Boss Lin's personal account."

"I just called and asked. The staff said Dundun doesn't want to be filmed, so there's no shoot. Given how Boss Lin has treated Dundun in the past, it seems like he even asks the little guy's opinion before filming."

"Thank goodness Dundun is with Boss Lin. If Dundun were with someone who saw him as just a money-making tool, it'd be too dreadful to imagine."

"My Dundun's so smart. How could he have chosen his owner poorly?"

"..."

Seeing the fans' calm reactions, Lin Xu put away his phone and said to Shu Yun,

"Let's have a staff tasting for the Stone Cooked Chrysanthemum tonight. We'll officially launch it tomorrow and see how the sales go."

"Got it, Boss. I'll let Manager Dou know right away."

Returning to the back kitchen, the ingredients for the stir-fried noodles were ready. Lin Xu washed his hands, set up the wok, and began cooking.

He planned to prepare the vegetables and sauce for the stir-fried noodles first, and then make the Stone Cooked Chrysanthemum so the staff could also taste this delicious dish.

That way, after its launch, the servers could describe it to customers in more detail.

「One hour later.」

Wei Qian approached the stove and lifted the pot lid. Inside, tender, reddish chunks of meat trembled in the boiling sauce.

Clearly, the Braised Pork Belly was stewed perfectly.

Using chopsticks, he picked out the Scallion and Ginger, then promptly poured the pre-fried chestnuts into the pot. He stirred them with a spoon to mix them thoroughly with the meat.

He covered the pot and continued to let it stew.

However, this time it couldn't stew for too long.

Twenty minutes later, he lifted the lid again, turned the heat from medium to high, and began reducing the sauce.

Once added, the chestnuts, rich in starch, made the sauce noticeably thicker.

Under the high heat, the sauce in the pot grew increasingly concentrated, while the meat and chestnuts took on an even richer, more appealing color.

When the sauce had reduced until it was thick and glossy, he turned off the heat and plated the dish.

The sauce for this dish shouldn't be completely reduced. Some should remain to be mixed with rice, as it offers an unexpectedly delicious taste.

After the Chestnut Braised Pork was dished out, Lin Xu also finished preparing several portions of the Stone Cooked Chrysanthemum.

"All ready. Shall we start eating?"

Wei Qian came over. Hearing the Chrysanthemum leaves SIZZLING as the hot stones in the pot cooked them, he couldn't help but lick his lips.

Last time, he had only tasted one stalk, and it was hardly satisfying. Since several portions were made today, I'll definitely have a few more chopsticks' worth later and really savor the charm of these stone-cooked dishes! Wei Qian thought excitedly.

Lin Xu poured Brandy over the last portion of Stone Cooked Chrysanthemum and set it alight, saying,

"Let's start. By the time it's served at the table, the Chrysanthemum leaves should be just about ready to eat."

Chapter 677: A Rice Dish That Makes You Fall in Love at First Bite—Chestnut Braised Pork! Million Fans Reward! _3

I'll break down the recipe steps later and fix the seasoning quantities. That way, all the chefs in the restaurant can prepare it.

You can't do everything yourself, or you'll work yourself to death and still not keep up.

Wei Qian then asked, "Should I serve some for the Lady Boss?"

It was getting dark earlier in the evenings now, so dinner at the restaurant also needed to be earlier. Basically, they had to finish eating by 4:50 PM, or they might overlap with the first wave of customers.

At this point, not only was Shen Baobao still at work, but even her older sister, who often used the restaurant as her canteen, hadn't arrived yet.

"Serve some. Put it in a small basin, cover it, and keep it warm in the steamer. That way, she can eat whenever she arrives, without any delay."

"Alrighty!"

Soon, everyone was gathered around the dining table.

Lin Xu took the rice handed to him by Che Zai, picked up a piece of chestnut from the basin, and took a bite. He was instantly captivated by the chestnut's sweet and tender texture.

He'd initially thought that stewing them for so long would make the chestnuts mushy and fall apart, but surprisingly, they tasted great.

Moreover, having absorbed the meat's savory aroma, the chestnuts' flavor was even richer; they seemed even more delicious than the meat itself.

After swallowing the chestnut, Lin Xu shoveled up a mouthful of rice. He then immediately picked up a piece of Braised Pork Belly. The meat, gleaming with a reddish-brown hue, carried a rich chestnut flavor.

This aroma made the Braised Pork Belly even more delicious and a perfect accompaniment to the rice.

After a few bites, half a bowl of rice was gone.

He wasn't very hungry, having eaten some chestnuts around three o'clock. But after tasting the fragrant chestnuts and the rich, non-greasy meat, Lin Xu felt he would need at least two bowls of rice to start.

"Damn, these chestnuts are really good!"

Zhuang Yizhou, who was rather slender and usually indifferent to fatty meat, instantly took a liking to the flavor after trying the chestnuts.

Zhu Yong scooped some soup into his bowl and stirred it as he said, "I think we could introduce some chestnut-based meat stews. They're suitable for autumn and quite nourishing. Customers should like them, and there's a good variety of such stews we could offer."

As soon as this was mentioned, Wei Qian perked up, "Yes! We could make braised pork, braised pig tails, braised Pork Ribs, braised Pork Trotters, braised elbows... We could also stew chicken, duck, goose, or pigeon... Basically, any dish you can stew with potatoes could also be made with chestnuts."

He listed so many options that Lin Xu started thinking about a menu update.

However, this wasn't something to rush. He needed to check with Old Huang first to see if he could source higher-quality chestnuts. If so, they could launch a new range of dishes.

During autumn and winter, it's good to eat more nourishing dishes.

In addition to various meat stews with chestnuts, dishes like Pork Ribs stewed with Lotus Root could also be introduced.

These all-in-one soup and main course dishes are very popular in the Hubei Region, so Lin Xu planned to have Zhu Yong try making a few.

If it turned out well, he planned to go to Fishing Platform to learn from Song Dahai, as it had been a while since his last visit. He might as well pick up some supplies—scratch that—pay a visit to the head chefs.

When the time was about right, Ma Zhiqiang, using a towel to protect his hands, lifted the lid off the Stone Cooked Chrysanthemum.

The unique fragrance of the Chrysanthemum wafted from the pot.

As Ma Zhiqiang went to remove the lids on other tables, Shu Yun quickly took a short video with her phone and posted it to the "My Sisters' Cup Sizes Don't Shrink" group: "Tomorrow, we're officially launching the new Stone Cooked Chrysanthemum! It's made by heating stones and then placing them in a basin with the Chrysanthemum. As for the taste... I won't say much. You'll have to act fast, or it'll be sold out!"

Hmph, hmph. You all are always saying this person's food post is 'poison' or that one's is 'toxic.' Well, today I'll let you see the true power of our staff meals!

After posting it, she didn't bother checking the group members' reactions, just stuffed her phone into her pocket and started eating.

She picked up a stalk of Chrysanthemum. Biting into it, the fresh, tender, and crisp texture not only perfectly offset the greasiness of the Braised Pork Belly with chestnuts but also paired wonderfully with the rice.

After the Chrysanthemum, another big mouthful of rice.

Deliciously satisfying!

At the same time, in an upscale mall near the International Trade Area, Shen Guofu, Han Shuzhen, and Shen Jiayue, who was enjoying a cup of Häagen-Dazs, were strolling around, picking out gifts to take to Yinzhou.

Originally, Shen Guofu and Han Shuzhen could have handled it themselves. But, unsure about the number of relatives on the Lin Family's side, they'd called Shen Baobao, who was slacking off at her desk, and dragged her along.

"Are you sure we haven't forgotten any relatives, dear?" Han Shuzhen asked Shen Baobao.

She then shot her other daughter, Shen Jiayue, a helpless glance. She's always eating, no matter where she is, just like a little glutton. Even if she finds a boyfriend, she can't let herself go like this, can she?

"Nope," Shen Baobao replied. "Just remember, when you get there, don't be like the other relatives, urging Yuanyuan to find a partner. She's like my Sister Yan; she wants to find someone but can't, and she's not willing to just settle."

Shen Guofu said with a smile, "Your mom and I aren't the meddling kind... By the way, Jiayue, are you eating ice cream because you're hungry? If you're hungry, let's just find a place to eat something. If we head back to West Fourth Ring at this hour, who knows how long it'll take to get home."

After speaking, he covertly winked at his daughter, Shen Baobao.

She immediately made an "OK" gesture with her hand. Message received!

She pretended to take out her phone and said, "Then I need to let Xu Bao know, so he doesn't keep waiting at the restaurant... Oh? They're serving Stone Cooked Chrysanthemum today at the restaurant? Wow, it looks so delicious!"

She showed the short video Shu Yun had posted in the group to her parents.

Shen Guofu glanced at it and immediately lost interest.

It's so plain. How good can it possibly taste?

Just as he was about to look away, he caught sight of a dish next to the Stone Cooked Chrysanthemum. He froze. If I'm not mistaken, that's Braised Pork Belly, isn't it? It's been ages since I last had that 'vegetarian' dish!

With that in mind, he said, "The food out isn't very clean. Why don't we just go to the restaurant? I think this Chrysanthemum dish looks pretty good, nice and refreshing. After all that rich food, I'm actually craving some greens."

Han Shuzhen gave him a look, "Just the Chrysanthemum?"

"Of course! And as elders, shouldn't we go and help Lin Xu with quality control? If there are any issues, we can point them out."

"Alright, let's go then. It'll be a good time for me to play with Dundun too."

After deciding, the family stopped shopping and went directly downstairs to get in the car and leave.

Back at the restaurant, Lin Xu had just finished a bowl of rice and was getting up to serve himself another when the system's notification suddenly sounded in his mind:

"Host has surpassed one million fans, completing the Hidden Task: [Million Fans]. You are awarded one Perfect-Level dish lottery draw. Congratulations, Host."

What? Over a million fans? The enthusiasm of Dundun's fans is just incredible, isn't it?

Chapter 678: The Festival Arrives, Netizens from Out of Town Group Up to Check-in at the Capital! An Encounter on the Grasslands!

Lin Xu had never imagined his followers could grow so quickly.

It had been less than two hours since he posted the update, and he had gained nearly one hundred thousand followers. Was Dundun's influence really that strong?

He scooped himself some rice while thinking about the lottery.

The rewards for these hidden tasks seem pretty average, so there's probably no need to bother Dundun with the draw, right? Besides, I'd have to go downstairs, which is a pain. Why not just do it myself and relive that excitement and nervousness from the draws back when the shop first opened? Yeah, after raising Dundun for so long, I refuse to believe my luck will stay this bad.

With that thought, he silently wished in his mind:

"Lottery!"

The Perfect Level food reward wheel immediately appeared in his mind.

Lin Xu glanced at it; the names of dishes were densely packed on the wheel, impossible to distinguish clearly.

The wheel slowly started to turn, and not long after, a stop button appeared next to it.

"Stop!"

The wheel gradually came to a halt.

The system's notification sound echoed in his mind once again:

"Congratulations, Host, for obtaining a Perfect Level dish—Hand Shredded Spicy Chicken!"

Wow! This is great! It's perfect with drinks and also goes well with noodles. Has my luck finally turned around?

Lin Xu was somewhat surprised; he never expected his unlucky streak would allow him to draw such an excellent dish.

Back in school, there was a Northwest cuisine stall where he would always go to eat Spicy Chicken in the summer.

The numbingly spicy and refreshing chicken was delightful and had a compelling taste. After eating most of it, he would add some cooked belt noodles, mix everything well, and take a big mouthful.

It was truly extraordinary!

The weather forecast said that the temperature would rise to thirty degrees Celsius again in a couple of days.

I definitely have to make a large batch to satisfy my cravings then.

"Lin Xu, are you going to make Stone Cooked Chrysanthemum for regular customers tonight?" Wei Qian curiously asked, as Lin Xu was reflecting on the Hand Shredded Spicy Chicken.

Lin Xu said, "If someone wants it, I'll make it. The holiday is almost here. Who knows, maybe some customers will leave Beijing to have fun as early as tomorrow."

These past few years, every time a holiday came around, the highways out of Beijing would always get congested.

So, experienced drivers would hit the road early, perfectly avoiding the congested segments.

While many car owners were still inching along the highways near the Sixth Ring Road, these seasoned drivers were already hundreds of kilometers away.

"All right, then I'll have someone wash some chrysanthemum greens and get them ready later," Wei Qian replied.

The two chatted as they ate.

Lin Xu placed a piece of Braised Pork Belly and two chestnuts in his bowl, crushed them with a spoon, and then mixed everything with the rice. After mixing thoroughly, he took a big spoonful.

The sensation of the rice grains, each enveloped in fat, was simply intoxicating.

The chunks of meat and crumbled chestnuts within it were soft, fragrant, and mealy, enriching the mouthfeel.

Eating such delicacies, feelings of happiness and contentment naturally arose.

It was as if the entire world had become a better place.

"Wei Qian, have Old Huang send over a few more chickens tomorrow. We'll have Chestnut Braised Chicken for lunch."

Since I've made Braised Pork Belly with Chestnuts, I certainly can't skip Chestnut Braised Chicken. Besides, compared to the richer pork, the fresh and aromatic chicken seems to highlight the sweet, mealy texture of the chestnuts even more.

Speaking of braised chicken, Lin Xu suddenly remembered he still hadn't cooked the Perfect Level braised chicken.

The task requires selling two thousand chickens within a week. Why not take advantage of the seven-day National Day holiday to make them and let everyone try something new? But selling two thousand chickens in a week means averaging nearly three hundred a day. That's a challenging target. Moreover, with everyone traveling during the holiday, business at the shop might even decline. Maybe I should wait?

Lin Xu pondered this as he ate his rice, pulling out his phone to see if there were any holidays after National Day.

Then he noticed that people in Lin Ji's Food fan group were talking about the holiday.

"Haha, I snagged a high-speed train ticket to Beijing! When I get there, the first thing I'm doing is gorging myself at Lin Ji's to thoroughly satisfy my cravings."

"Whoa, bro, what day is your high-speed ticket for? Arriving at South Station or West Station? My friends and I have booked our tickets too! We're all set to feast on Lin Ji's food in Beijing. I've been craving it for so long; finally, I can have my revenge!"

"So many fellow fans coming to Beijing to check in! We should grab a few drinks."

"Definitely! We've got to have a couple of rounds."

"Question: For my return trip, I bought a regular train ticket since I plan to travel back leisurely. Does Lin Ji have any meals suitable for taking on the journey?"

"What a coincidence, I've planned the same! I'm also thinking of taking the train and eating Lin Ji's food all the way back. Let us know if there's any suitable food, please!"

"..."

Lin Xu was somewhat surprised as he scrolled through his phone. He found that many netizens from other cities were planning to come to Beijing during the National Day holiday.

And their first stop upon arriving in Beijing was to dine at Lin Ji's.

Besides the fan groups, under the Lin Ji's Food topic, many out-of-town netizens were also showing off their purchased high-speed rail tickets. Some big eaters even declared they planned to break their previous dining records at Lin Ji's.

Seeing this, Lin Xu suddenly thought,

Introducing the braised chicken during the seven days of National Day... that might actually sell really well.

This was because many of those coming to "check in" were students with limited funds. They usually took high-speed trains to Beijing and slower "green-skin" trains to leave—swift on arrival, leisurely on departure.

Taking a slow train meant they'd have to eat on board, and braised chicken was undoubtedly the ideal food for that.

After all, wasn't the Daokou Braised Chicken from my hometown made famous nationwide largely thanks to the Jingguang Railway line?

Lin Xu clearly remembered that whenever relatives from out of town visited Yinzhou and were about to leave, his grandmother would always buy some Daokou Braised Chicken for them to eat on the journey. She would repeatedly tell them not to buy it at the train station, as those were fakes.

Chapter 679: The holiday is coming, and netizens from other places group together to sign in to Beijing! Encounter on the grassland! _2

Now that fans from other places were coming, it was time to let them experience the joy their parents felt eating roasted chicken on the green-skinned trains of their era.

Seeing the lively discussion in the group, Lin Xu sent a message: "There will be roasted chicken for National Day. You all can bring some for the road when you leave Beijing."

This message made everyone in the group pause.

"Who changed their nickname to 'Boss Lin' to make us laugh again?"

"No way, it's really Boss Lin! Oh my god, my idol has parachuted into the fan group!"

"Are we really having roasted chicken, Boss Lin?"

"Then I'll cancel my high-speed train ticket and switch to a regular train. Eating roasted chicken on a high-speed train just doesn't feel right."

"I'm switching too. Brothers, I'm from Hui. Anyone on the same route?"

"I'm so looking forward to Boss Lin's roasted chicken! Tearing it apart on the train... won't the kid in the next seat cry himself hoarse?"

Just as he was watching everyone discuss, Shen Guofu and his family of three came upstairs.

"Xubao, is there anything to eat? I'm starving after all that shopping."

So he didn't come home after work because he went shopping? Lin Xu thought.

Lin Xu said, "Yes, there's a pot of leftover chestnut braised pork. I'll bring it over. Later, let's also make a Stone Cooked Chrysanthemum. We can have Dad and Mom help with the tasting and offer some suggestions."

Shen Guofu's mouth split into a grin upon hearing this.

My son-in-law sure knows how to talk... Wait a second, chestnut braised pork?

He glanced at the dishes on the table, and his eyes immediately widened.

Well, I'll be! Isn't this just Braised Pork Belly with chestnuts added?

Han Shuzhen knew Shen Guofu hadn't insisted on eating at Lin Ji for any good reason, so she couldn't help but remind him, "You said you were going to eat vegetarian."

"Aren't chestnuts vegetables? Look how vegetarian this dish is!" Shen Guofu retorted.

Fine, keep arguing with me, Han Shuzhen thought. You better bounce on that dance machine for two hours tonight before you even think of getting off!

Lin Xu put down his bowl, went to the small kitchen to get the sugar-fried chestnuts that were still slightly hot, and brought them out. "I made these this afternoon. Try them first. I'll go to the kitchen to bring out the dishes."

Upon seeing the sugar-fried chestnuts, Shen Baobao immediately grabbed a handful. "WAHHAHA! I've been craving these all afternoon! My friends even deliberately sent photos to the group chat. I almost skipped out of work early to come eat them."

The chestnuts had been scored with a cross-cut, cracking the shells and making them easy to peel.

She peeled a fragrant chestnut kernel and offered it to her mother. "Here you go, Director Han. Let me feed you."

Han Shuzhen pushed her daughter's hand away with distaste. "You haven't even washed your hands. Eat it yourself."

Shen Jiayue: "..."

Their mother-daughter bond fractured once more!

She popped the chestnut into her mouth and, while chewing, went to wash her hands at the sink by the kitchen entrance.

The family of three washed their hands one by one and sat down in the booth to start peeling and eating chestnuts.

Soon, the chestnut braised pork and a freshly made Stone Cooked Chrysanthemum were brought out.

The Chrysanthemum still needed to cook for a while longer, so Shen Guofu could only "reluctantly" eat the chestnut braised pork.

He picked up a plump piece of pork belly, popped it into his mouth, and said, chewing with relish as his mouth slicked with oil, "I didn't expect to have to wait. This dish isn't quite perfect yet! My heart was all aflutter with anticipation for the greens, but now I can only fret. Let me have another piece. This is so agonizing..."

Shen Baobao glanced at the meat in the pot. "Dad, stop your 'agonizing.' If you keep at it, you'll finish all the meat!"

Shen Guofu cleared his throat. "I've already ordered a Bentley Continental GT, the hardtop, high-spec version, no less..."

He hadn't even finished speaking when Shen Baobao pushed the pot of chestnut braised pork closer to him. "Dad, I suddenly feel like you're a poet. Continue your melancholy. Maybe our family will produce a Bei Dao or a Hai Zi."

Shen Guofu picked up another piece of meat. "Don't dismiss it; it's actually possible. Back when I was in fourth grade, my teacher praised my essays, saying they were like poetry..."

Just as he was about to launch into a boast, Han Shuzhen, who was beside him, couldn't help but interject, "You mean by breaking one sentence into several lines, right?"

Shen Guofu: "..."

Honey, it's no fun when you undermine me like that, he thought.

A few minutes later, Lin Xu came over and lifted the lid.

The delicious aroma of the Stone Cooked Chrysanthemum made Shen Guofu's spirits lift.

Damn, can vegetables really be this delicious?

He didn't even mind that it was hot, picking up a stalk of Chrysanthemum and popping it into his mouth. The crisp texture and fresh, savory taste astonished this meat-loving big boss.

He'd never imagined vegetables could be this tasty.

Lin Xu said, "On this trip to Yinzhou, you should be able to eat wild chestnuts from the mountains. You might even get to try chestnut jelly. It's very fragrant; the mountain folk are especially skilled at preparing such delicacies."

Hearing this, Han Shuzhen's curiosity was piqued. "Then we must try them when we get there. Xu, are you sure you're not coming back with us?"

Shen Guofu took a mouthful of rice and chimed in, "Why don't you come back with us for a look?"

If they had asked before the meal, Lin Xu might have hesitated. But he had just decided to make roasted chicken for the holiday.

I'll go back next time, he thought. After National Day, I'll take a few days off to go back, enjoy Mom's dumplings, and experience the autumn scenery of the local scenic area.

「Two days later, the National Day holiday officially began.」

Shen Guofu and his wife got up early, took their prepared luggage and gifts, and Lin Xu drove them in his car to the high-speed train station, as they planned to take the high-speed train to Yinzhou.

Yinzhou was an essential stop on the Beijing-Guangzhou high-speed rail line, making it an easy trip by train.

At the station, after watching his in-laws enter the business class VIP lounge, Lin Xu and Shen Baobao drove back home.

"I'm going to go back and sleep some more. I'm dead tired..." Shen Baobao yawned.

Last night, she had painstakingly tried to beat "Sheep Game Level 2" until two in the morning. Eventually, she gave up on the depressing game, deciding to stick to "Protect the Carrots" from now on and swore off such viral games forever.

Chapter 680: The Festival Arrives, Netizens from Out of Town Group Up to Visit Beijing! An Encounter on the Great Prairie! _3

"Xu Bao, what are you planning to do?"

"I'm planning to make some Roasted Chicken. Master Xu has already cleared the steam-jacketed pot for me. I'll give it a try first, and if it's tasty, we'll start selling it in the shop."

It's definitely going to be delicious; after all, it's a Perfect Level Technique.

I'm making it today for two main reasons. Firstly, I promised the fans. Secondly, I want to test how many Roasted Chickens the large steam-jacketed pot can handle at once. That way, I'll have a better idea for future preparations.

"Roasted Chicken? Is it the kind of Roasted Chicken that you tear up to eat?"

"Yes. If you want some, it'll probably be ready by the afternoon. It won't be ready for lunch because the Roasted Chicken needs to be stewed for several hours in the braising liquid until the skin is crispy and the meat is fall-off-the-bone tender."

Hearing that Lin Xu was making Roasted Chicken, Shen Baobao, who had initially decided against sleeping, felt drowsiness wash over her again upon learning it wouldn't be ready until the afternoon.

"Then what are we eating for lunch?"

"Spicy Chicken!"

Today, the temperature had risen, and the sun felt intensely hot again. Coupled with having eaten too many chestnuts over the past two days, it was the perfect time for some refreshing Spicy Chicken to reset their appetites.

Hmm? Spicy Chicken?

A certain sleepy Baobao perked up instantly.

"Is it the Northwest style of Spicy Chicken, where the chicken is shredded?"

"Correct. However, Spicy Chicken isn't technically a cold dish; it should be called a 'warm-mixed' dish. This is because the sauce for Spicy Chicken shouldn't be too cold; it tastes best when warm."

This dish is quite interesting. The chicken must be thoroughly chilled to make its texture firmer and chewier.

But the sauce can't be too cold; warm is best, as it makes the numbing flavor more intense and the dish more aromatic.

"I remember you liked Spicy Chicken when we were in school, right?"

"Yeah, I was a regular at our school's Northwest cuisine window. After eating Spicy Chicken, I'd add some belt noodles. So satisfying."

"Then I want to eat it that way too, with you."

"Alright."

Back at the shop, Shen Baobao yawned and returned to their apartment in the back to get some sleep. Lin Xu entered the shop, placed the car keys on the front desk, gave Dundun's head a quick rub, and then strode into the Braising Department.

The worktable in the Braising Department was covered with numerous prepared whole chickens—the ingredients for today's Roasted Chicken.

"Two hundred in total, all cleaned, with their toenails clipped."

Xu Xinhua wiped the sweat from his forehead. Although he found the boss's decision to make Roasted Chicken somewhat abrupt, he was pleased with anything that could increase the Braising Department's revenue.

Lin Xu said, "Then I'll start preparing the Maltose Water."

Roasted Chicken is a dish that is first fried and then braised.

To achieve a reddish-brown skin, the chicken must first be soaked in Maltose Water. This coats the surface with Maltose, ensuring the fried chicken develops a richer color and making the final Roasted Chicken more appealing.

Maltose Water is easy to prepare: take a basin of warm water, add Maltose, stir until dissolved, and then mix in a tiny bit of baking soda.

Baking soda helps make the chicken skin crispier. After frying, when the Roasted Chicken is soaked in the braising liquid, its skin will look even more beautiful.

Once the Maltose Water was ready, the chickens couldn't be soaked immediately. First, they needed to be prepped: the chicken feet were tucked into the abdominal cavity, and the wings were folded with the tips tucked into the neck cavity.

This method effectively saves space in the braising pot.

It also prevents less meaty parts like wingtips and chicken feet from overcooking and falling apart, which would affect the final product's appearance.

Furthermore, when the chicken legs and wings are folded this way, the whole chicken resembles an ingot. This is not only visually appealing but also considered a good omen.

Lin Xu quickly trussed a chicken and said to Xu Xinhua, "You guys can start trussing them. Once they're properly trussed, soak them in the Maltose Water for a while. After soaking, take them out and deep-fry them. I'll get the braising liquid ready."

The braising liquid for Roasted Chicken and the one for Tiger Skin Chicken Feet are very similar. The only difference is that Roasted Chicken uses less sugar.

Roasted Chicken should be savory with a hint of sweet aftertaste. Tiger Skin Chicken Feet, on the other hand, can be quite sweet. Therefore, the amount of sugar needs to be reduced for the chicken. Additionally, the quantities of seasonings like Star Anise and Angelica dahurica should be increased to give the Roasted Chicken a distinct Star Anise aroma.

Besides these adjustments, the base still needs to be Pork Bone Broth. Using Pork Bone Broth as a base makes the Roasted Chicken juicier and more fragrant.

If plain water were used instead, the meat's texture would be much drier.

When making a braising liquid for the first time, the amount of spices should be two to three times the usual quantity.

Lin Xu gathered all the spices; there was easily a basinful.

After rinsing the spices with water and soaking them briefly, he added them to the steam-jacketed pot, which was already more than half-full of fragrant Pork Bone Broth.

After adding the spices, he put in a small basket of dried chilies and two bags of salt.

Then, he began to simmer it.

To create a good braising liquid, one must first simmer it to fully develop its fragrance. While simmering, lard, Scallion Oil, and ginger juice are added to enhance the aroma.

Because this type of braising liquid is simmered for a long time, it's not suitable to add fresh ginger and scallions directly. They can develop an unpleasant 'stale scallion' odor over time.

However, the aroma of scallions is essential, so Scallion Oil is used as a substitute.

Besides lard and Scallion Oil, chicken fat is also an indispensable ingredient for making Roasted Chicken.

After simmering the braising liquid for an hour, a large handful of Crystal Sugar and a small basin of caramel coloring are added. With that, the braising liquid is essentially ready.

Just as he finished preparing the braising liquid, Xu Xinhua and several helpers from the Braising Department also finished processing the chickens and had soaked them in Maltose Water.

They set up a large wok for deep-frying and began to fry the chickens.

While they were bustling about in the Braising Department, far away on the Hulun Grasslands, thousands of miles from Beijing, Chen Yan and her group finally arrived after a night of travel.

"Wuhu! What a beautiful place!"

"After being cooped up in Beijing, where every nook and cranny is packed with people, seeing such vast, open land instantly lifts my spirits."

"This is a place that can heal your inner turmoil."

"I can't wait to get to the camp, put on a Mongolian robe, and ride a horse!"

"Youth demands bright clothes and spirited horses!"

As everyone gazed out the windows of the tour bus, they noticed a few RVs parked on the nearby grassland. The largest RV, converted from a coach bus, looked like a mobile palace.

Of the two smaller RVs, one was a common C-class RV with an over-cab bunk, and the other was an off-road RV converted from a truck.

As they watched, the door of the large RV opened, and an elderly man in a Mongolian robe stepped out.

Chen Yan looked closer. Good heavens, isn't that Grandpa Gao?

Back when I was in school, I could eat a whole Roasted Chicken by myself, along with a large bowl of stewed noodles. Times have changed, and I no longer have such a good appetite...