

## Culinary 711

Chapter 711: Isn't this soup a perfect match for fried noodles? Are there any exercises that aren't tiring but still strengthen the body? \_3

Beyond these ingredients, the most classic pairing is still garlic chives and cilantro. At the final stage before serving, grab a handful and sprinkle it into the soup, which will instantly enhance its presentation.

Split the Pork Stomach in half, stack them, and then use a kitchen knife to slice them into thin strands. Once cooked and allowed to cool, the Pork Stomach will become chewy again, and even if sliced into very fine strands, it will not break.

After slicing the Pork Stomach, Lin Xu also cut some scallion strands and placed them directly in the soup bowl. When the soup was ready and poured in, the aroma of the scallions would infuse into the soup, making it fresh and delicious to drink. Beyond scallion strands, segments of cilantro and garlic chives could also be prepared this way.

Having prepared these three, he then cut some Scallion sections, ginger slices, and dried chili segments for the initial sauté. Lastly, he cut some carrot strands and rehydrated black fungus.

Originally, Lin Xu had also planned to cut some Bamboo Shoot strands, but since the store didn't have any—only sour bamboo shoots—he decided against it. Sour bamboo shoots could not be added to Spicy Soup; otherwise, it would turn into a snail soup permeated with a foul smell.

With everything ready, he began the cooking process.

He added some Pork Bone Broth to the pot, brought it to a boil over high heat, then blanched the black fungus in it. After blanching, he added the carrot strands, and finally the Pork Stomach strands. Blanching the ingredients before cooking them helps to effectively remove any odd smells. At home, you can simply use water for this. But when conditions permit, it's better to use Pork Bone Broth, as blanching the ingredients in it gives them a rich aroma, making the resulting Spicy Soup even more fragrant and delicious.

After the ingredients were blanched, he drained them in a colander.

He cleaned the pot, added a bit of lard, and then poured in the dried chili segments, frying them slowly over low heat to bring out the spicy aroma. Then, he added the Scallion and Ginger, continuing to fry. When they were nearly done, he added more than half a pot of Pork Bone Broth.

With other soups, using such a large amount of Pork Bone Broth and lard would result in a greasy dish. But this wasn't the case with Spicy Pork Stomach Soup. Due to the extensive use of vinegar and White Pepper powder, this dish not only completely suppressed any greasiness but instead offered a tangy fragrance that induced sweating, making it very refreshing to drink.

Once the broth in the pot boiled, Lin Xu didn't add the ingredients immediately. Instead, he used a fine strainer to scoop out all the dried chili segments, Scallion sections, and ginger slices from the pot. When preparing the initial sauté, there's no need to prepare ginger strands since ginger slices were used. This makes the soup more palatable as one won't drink ginger strands that are hard to swallow, which is friendly to those who don't eat ginger.

Once he had removed all the residues, he boiled it a bit longer before pouring in the blanched ingredients, then added half a ladle of White Vinegar. White Vinegar is quite volatile. Adding it at this stage allows its acidity to evaporate quickly, carrying away any off-flavors from the soup and making it even more fragrant and delicious. At the same time, the adherence of the White Vinegar also leaves a faint tanginess in the ingredients.

After adding the White Vinegar, he boiled it over high heat for a minute, and then added table salt, a bit of sugar to enhance the flavor, a little Flavoring, and an amount of White Pepper powder equal to the salt. White Pepper powder is an indispensable ingredient in Spicy Soup and can even be considered its defining element. This is also a characteristic of Central Plains cuisine, which uses a lot of pepper and vinegar for seasoning. For example, various soups and dishes in the famous Luoyang water banquet, Spicy Soup, and Dumplings in Broth all include vinegar and pepper.

After adding the seasonings, he gave the pot a couple of stirs, followed by pouring in a spoonful of Light Soy Sauce and a touch of Dark Soy Sauce, to add a savory flavor and color to the dish. He mixed everything well, then slowly added the Water Starch to thicken the soup.

When it was almost ready, he took another large ladle of fragrant vinegar and poured it down the side of the pot. To give the Spicy Pork Stomach Soup its appetizing tanginess, vinegar needs to be added twice. The first time, White Vinegar is used to give the ingredients a sour taste and cleanse the broth of any unpleasantness. And the second time is just before serving, with fragrant vinegar. Fragrant vinegar has a lower acidity and a rich taste, making it perfect for adding right before serving.

After stirring everything evenly, he turned off the heat, then carried the pot and poured the soup into a bowl containing the scallion strands, cilantro segments, and garlic chive segments. After pouring, he stirred with a spoon, bringing the ingredients at the bottom to the top, to prevent the scallion strands, cilantro, and garlic chives from becoming overcooked.

Having done all this, a delicious and tangy Spicy Pork Stomach Soup was complete—the soup taking on a reddish hue and a slightly thick consistency. White strands of Pork Stomach and scallion strands, the red hue of carrot strands, the green of cilantro, the tender yellow of garlic chives, and the black of black fungus... all these colors gathered in the bowl, lending the whole soup an extraordinary beauty.

The soup had just been made, and Zhu Yong and Wei Qian had each cooked up a pot of Hometown Fried Noodles. Similarly, they served it in a basin and brought it outside. Time to eat!

Outside, Xie Baomin's two kids had already arrived from the swimming pool by subway, and they were being prodded by Geng Lele to study their respective courses. The two brothers, one in eighth grade and the other in the first year of high school, were not much younger than Geng Lele. But Little Mushroom Head could easily crush them in terms of IQ.

As she taught, she said, "You two, wanting to get into Tsinghua University and become my juniors is going to be tough. How about this: come over every weekend, and I'll give you extra lessons."

After entering university, Geng Lele realized how sophomore and junior girls often acted all bossy, like upperclassmen telling the lower-grade students what to do. She wanted to experience the joy of being an upperclassman, so she got the idea to cultivate her own juniors. It wasn't just Xie Baomin's kids; even Lin Xu's cousins, who often lurked around Lin Ji's Food topic, had been recruited by Geng Lele. However, what frustrated her was that Lin Xu's cousins, no matter what, refused to aim for Tsinghua University, fixated on getting into Central Finance, which left Geng Lele quite speechless.

"Time to eat! Time to eat!"

For lunch today, they were having Hometown Fried Noodles and Spicy Pork Stomach Soup. Each person had a plate of noodles and a bowl of soup. When it was Big Spring's turn, Lin Xu said to the young man, "Switch his to a basin, and the soup to a smaller basin too."

A plate of noodles could be challenging to finish for those with a smaller appetite. But for Big Spring, if he took more than three bites, that counted as his loss. So, it was more appropriate to change to a basin.

Shen Baobao and the others had just sat down with their served meals when they eagerly began to taste the Spicy Pork Stomach Soup and the Hometown Fried Noodles they hadn't eaten in a few days. The fragrant and delicious Hometown Fried Noodles, paired with the tangy and appetizing Spicy Pork Stomach Soup, had just been eaten when exclamations arose:

"Wow, these Hometown Fried Noodles with Spicy Pork Stomach Soup are simply divine."

"Tangy and appetizing! I used to dislike sour food, but I can't stop drinking this soup."

"So delicious! I feel like this is the right way to enjoy Hometown Fried Noodles."

"Truly a perfect match!"

"Boss, we have to add this soup to the menu! It's just perfect for Hometown Fried Noodles."

"Exactly, exactly, I think so too. With the Spicy Pork Stomach Soup, I feel like sales of Hometown Fried Noodles will skyrocket."

"..."

While everyone was eating, Xie Baomin and his wife returned. Compared to when they left, the couple's faces were tinged with worry.

Lin Xu, curious, asked, "What's the matter, senior brother? Why the long face?"

Didn't they go off happily to handle things? Why does he look like he's just returned from reporting a telecom scam at the police station?

Xie Baomin opened his mouth to speak, but before he could, Big Spring, who was eating, came over with his basin and asked, "Brother-in-law, what did the doctor say?"

Doctor? Lin Xu's heart leaped with amusement. Had his senior brother taken such a long detour just to finally try trusting modern medicine? From this perspective, Big Spring confiscating that packet of Moringa Seeds seemed quite right.

Xie Baomin looked at his brother-in-law, speechless for a moment, then asked, "The doctor said there's a kidney stone, but it's small, no need for surgery, just exercise more... Big Spring, do you know of any exercise that's not too tiring but good for the health?"

Chapter 712: The Strongest Behind-the-Scenes Ever! Dundun: I'll blow your minds in three seconds!

"Why are you always thinking of the easy way out, Brother-in-law?"

Da Chun looked at Xie Baomin with disdain. If there were truly such a way to improve health without getting tired, there wouldn't be so many people in a state of subhealth.

After thinking for a moment, he said, "Your body is too frail, and your foundation is weak. You could start with jogging or jumping rope. Yes, jumping rope. Gradually increase the duration. After a month of jumping rope, your body will see a big change."

Jumping rope? Xie Baomin was somewhat surprised. Isn't that something only children do?

"Is there anything else?"

"Swimming: swim 3,000 meters a day. It not only strengthens your body but also doesn't strain your back or knees. Jogging: you can jog home from work every day, and you won't have any health issues. Additionally, you can do jumping jacks, burpees, aerobics... As long as you want to exercise, there are plenty of methods."

I want to exercise, but I don't want to feel tired... Xie Baomin thought for a moment and decided he would take up jumping rope.

Although he couldn't do it at home, the Fishing Platform was suitable. The basement was quiet and spacious, making it an ideal place for jumping rope. Moreover, exercising during work hours gave him the pleasant feeling of being paid to keep fit. Thinking this way, it felt like quite a bargain.

Seeing that even his master had an eight-pack at his age, it was time for Old Xie to work on getting his abs, which had long since merged into one, to show themselves again.

He took a bite of the fried noodles, deeming them fragrant and delicious—much better than last time.

"Junior Brother, did you make this?"

"Wei Qian and Zhu Yong made it. I made the pork strip soup today."

Wei Qian and Zhu Yong? Xie Baomin had never tasted fried noodles made by Zhu Yong, but he had tried Wei Qian's. The last batch of fried noodles was tasty, but not as delicious as these, nor did they have this perfect texture. Such progress in just a few days! Their talent is really something special. Luckily, Junior Brother scooped them up. If someone else had snagged them, it would have been a loss for the Fishing Platform.

After finishing the fried noodles, he took a bowl of the soup. As a senior chef, Xie Baomin wasn't usually very keen on this kind of soup. It appeared a bit thick, and the color from the Dark Soy Sauce made it seem rather greasy. But since his junior brother had made it, he had to at least taste it to see if it was as good as his sister-in-law had claimed.

As he brought the pork strip soup to his lips, an enticingly sour and fragrant aroma rushed into his nostrils.

With a tiny sip, the appetizing, sour soup revealed its rich flavor. The combination of the vinegar's sourness and the pepper powder's spiciness washed away any greasiness from the fried noodles. It was amazing. Although the soup was quite rich itself, its sour and spicy flavors effectively cut through the greasiness.

The spiciness of the pepper not only alleviated greasiness but also induced sweating. A gulp of hot soup sent a comforting warmth spreading through his entire body, making him feel thoroughly invigorated.

So satisfying!

No wonder everyone raved that this soup was a perfect match for fried noodles. It truly was different when eaten together.

"Junior Brother, you've really mastered this soup. It's rare that anyone can make sour and spicy soup this refreshing yet still full-bodied."

The most crucial aspect of this soup dish was controlling the sourness. Too much vinegar made it too sour. Too little, and it would be greasy. Adding it too early caused it to evaporate too quickly. Adding it too late, and the vinegar taste would be too pungent. In summary, it required a lot of experience.

Lin Xu said with a smile, "It's simple. Just add vinegar in two stages."

No sooner had he said this than Xie Baomin immediately understood the trick.

"Junior Brother, your talent is impressive! To think of adding vinegar twice... According to the sequence, the vinegars added must be of two types. The first, for its sour aroma, should be White Vinegar or Rice Vinegar. The second, added just before serving, should be a fragrant vinegar or similar type that can be consumed directly, right?"

At that moment, Lin Xu felt a sense of awe at the technical prowess of a master. I'm only getting by thanks to the Skill granted by the system, yet Senior Brother figured it out so easily. There's no way to explain this. No wonder Master took him as a disciple. Such talent is truly astonishing!

"Senior Brother, you're amazing! You figured out the recipe just by tasting it."

"Ah, I've just seen a lot, that's all. It's not like I have any great experience... The last time I had these fried noodles, they were a bit greasy. But paired with this soup, they're perfect. These two should definitely be eaten together."

Apart from the wood ear mushrooms, the ingredients in the pork strip soup were all shredded, making each mouthful fragrant, smooth, and crisp. The pepper powder made it incredibly refreshing.

While savoring the delicious fried noodles, Xie Baomin asked his sons, "How's the meal? Is it better than what the chef at your school makes?"

The elder son, Xie Yufei, said earnestly, "Uncle Lin's fried noodles are certainly better than the school chef's. There's been a lot of hype about it online, and we've been looking forward to trying it."

The younger son, Xie Yuhang, chimed in, "But Dad, you're not as good as the school chef. Your dishes always lack flavor."

Xie Baomin: "..."

You two have definitely inherited your uncle's unrefined palate. That saying about 'wild boars not appreciating fine bran' fits you perfectly.

Meanwhile, Shu Yun, enjoying the tasty fried noodles, turned to Zeng Xiaoqi, Dou Wenjing, and Shen Baobao and asked, "You three were at the mall all morning. You're not going back this afternoon, are you?"

"No, we'll continue shooting videos this afternoon. Today, I plan to film Dundun playing billiards, which is something it has always enjoyed. It sorts out the striped balls from all the others, piles them to one side, and then plays with the solid balls."

Dou Wenjing blinked. "Dundun can actually distinguish between the patterns on the billiard balls? I get confused quite often."

Zeng Xiaoqi smiled and said,

Chapter 713: The Strongest Highlights in History! Dundun: I will take away your 'holy sh\*t' in three seconds! \_2

"Clearly a good student who doesn't hang out in pool halls. The larger-numbered balls are white mixed with other colors, called striped balls or big balls, while the solid-colored balls with smaller numbers are called small balls or solids... But Dundun, being a cat, can you really tell the difference?"

Director Shen said with a laugh, "My son is so talented, there's definitely no problem. Right, his godmom?"

Shu Yun nodded, "Yeah, our Dundun is so amazing. It's totally normal for him to play pool... I'll go too this afternoon. I haven't seen my godson play pool yet."

Dundun used to enjoy playing pool like that. At the time, Shen Baobao hadn't paid much attention, thinking Lin Xu was the one who separated the balls for him. But after watching the little fellow's pantomime, she figured Dundun must have arranged all those pool balls himself.

Lunch had just ended, and everyone hurriedly left with Dundun, planning to film him playing pool.

Meanwhile, Lin Xu went downstairs to check on the roast chickens. After confirming they were ready, he had Xu Xinhua start bringing them out for sale. He also took the opportunity to greet the neighbors queuing outside, asking them to be patient, as the roast chickens would be on sale soon.

Xie Baomin had just eaten a big serving of fried noodles and a bowl of hot and sour soup. He was about to wander around the shop and discuss some cooking techniques with Lin Xu when Da Chun dragged him away for a workout.

"Brother-in-law, you're seriously out of shape! You'd better start working out soon. As long as you follow my instructions, I guarantee you'll have an eight-pack in no time."

Upon hearing "eight-pack," Chef Xie, who initially hadn't wanted to go, immediately waved his hand. The whole family piled into the car and left, eager to see what was so different about Da Chun's suggested workout.

Seeing his senior brother so full of confidence, Lin Xu really wanted to give him a heads-up.

The fitness exercises and routines that Da Chun, a titan forged in a sports school, could easily perform didn't mean a novice could handle them too.

Sitting back and waiting for Chef Xie's fitness fail.

After sending off his senior brother and his family, Lin Xu took out his phone and posted an update under the Lin Ji's Food topic:

"A new soup to complement the fried noodles will be served in the restaurant tonight. Don't miss it if you love fried noodles."

Then he checked the popularity rankings. Today, Lin Ji's Food's popularity had dropped slightly but was still second on the Yanjing Region's hot search list, while on the national list, it ranked somewhere in the twenties.

Ahead of it, apart from two or three trending topics criticizing tourist spots, the rest were videos of celebrities checking in at various tourist attractions.

During National Day, with so much buzz, it was normal for celebrities to ride the wave of popularity.

Especially topics that resonated with ordinary people, such as crowded tourist spots or traffic jams, could incite people's desire to complain.

Everyone joined the celebrities in complaining, and just like that, the topic's popularity shot up.

Looking at the national list, the name 'Lin Ji's Food' stood out starkly amidst a crowd of celebrities complaining, grandstanding, or even making a fuss about nothing.

Switching from the national list to the regional list, the topic #Beijing Travel Tips# was still soaring at the top spot.

Besides the large number of tourists visiting Beijing, the main reason for its top ranking was that many guesthouses, hotels, and attractions featured in this trending topic were actively boosting their presence. Driven by this advertising effect, the topic's popularity had surged significantly in a short period.

We need to figure out a way to get to first place!

After reviewing the list, Lin Xu decided to release the behind-the-scenes footage, originally planned for the evening, in the afternoon instead.

He decided to act while the competition for trending topics in the Yanjing Region wasn't too intense. He'd try to surge ahead and complete the 'main task' first. This way, he could avoid Beijing celebrities jumping in to ride the wave, which might cause him to miss the opportunity to hit number one.

After settling this, Lin Xu put away his phone and continued cooking.

Under the post about the new soup, there were loads of responses from netizens:

Blind Taxi Driver: To go with fried noodles? I'm guessing hot and sour soup. What do you think, Brother Hao Han?

Dry Mountain Liang: They have hot and sour soup at the shop. I had it with fried noodles yesterday. It was quite good.

Bobo Not Happy: I made a special trip to the tourist area, and it turned out Boss Lin wasn't back! I was so annoyed I ordered two whole roasted sheep. Any friends coming to the tourist area tomorrow who happen to be around can eat for free!

Two Hundred Pounds Cutie: AAAHHH, is that for real? I'm in the tourist area right now! Brother Bobo Not Happy, you're so generous!

Tianyi 3G is Fast: Brother Bobo Not Happy, you're awesome! I can't get to the tourist area until noon tomorrow. Could you save a piece of lamb for me?

Lost Roasted Whole Sheep: I'll try the new soup at the shop tonight. Also, I'm planning to bring roast chicken to my relative's house for lunch tomorrow. Should I buy it today or tomorrow?

Invisible Chicken Wings: It depends if you and your relatives prefer it hot or cold. If you like it cold, buy it tonight. If hot, buy it at noon tomorrow. Let me share a little secret: the shop starts selling roast chicken at 11 a.m., right out of the oven; it's crazy delicious. Even a picky eater like me can devour a whole one.

Blind Taxi Driver: Forgive my poor eyesight, but did you miss the word 'not'? Shouldn't it be 'not a picky eater'?

Invisible Chicken Wings: ?????? Blind man, just you wait! Next time I get your cab, you're getting a scathing one-star review!

...

「West Fourth Ring, Shen Family Villa.」

When everyone arrived on the basement floor, they discovered it was a fully equipped gym.

"Wow, it's so beautiful! A dream gym! I absolutely love houses with gyms. I could work out every day and get enviable abs and perfect peach hips..."

Zeng Xiaoqi fell in love with the place immediately.

She even tried the barbell Shen Baobao used for squats.

Shu Yun said with a smile, "You have such a small chest, and yet you still insist on not training it."

Zeng Xiaoqi wanted to retort, but regrettably, it was indeed the case.

Chapter 714: The Strongest Highlights in History! Dundun: I will take away your 'holy sh\*t' in three seconds! \_3

Dou Wenjing's 32D was equivalent to a 34C, and Shu Yun's 36C was equivalent to a 34D. After doing the math and considering the conversions, her own 34B, which she had originally thought was decent, suddenly seemed to be at the very bottom of the pile.

Alas, the once-college belle of Communication University had now descended to the bottom of the pecking order. My apologies to my alma mater; I've brought shame upon you.

Geng Lele, who had tagged along, tossed a pool ball in her hand and said, "You guys are so boring. Grown-ups, yet no different from kindergarteners... Dundun, don't look at them. Watching them too much might lower your IQ."

Dundun had initially been quite interested in watching the aunties playing around. Upon hearing this, he immediately turned his round, furry head aside.

Zeng Xiaoqi: "..."

Dou Wenjing: "..."

Shu Yun: "..."

This kid is too smart, isn't he?

Not long after, Director Shen came over and said to everyone, "Let's start shooting. I think if we turn off all the surrounding lights and leave only a few hanging incandescent bulbs above the pool table, it will create a better atmosphere."

The incandescent lights had lampshades, which perfectly directed all the light onto the pool table. When the surrounding lights were turned off, the entire pool table seemed to be shrouded in darkness, giving it an air of mystery.

After the test, Zeng Xiaoqi said repeatedly, "The boss lady's directing skills are impressive; the video suddenly looks much more high-end."

Once everything was ready, Shen Baobao arranged the pool balls and then placed Dundun on the table, saying, "Son, in three seconds, blow these aunties' minds!"

As soon as he was on the pool table, Dundun pawed at the cue ball and pushed it hard. It struck the arranged stack of balls squarely, not from the side. All the balls scattered at once, and three sank into the pockets.

Zeng Xiaoqi, who prided herself on her pool skills, couldn't help but let out an unladylike curse, "Damn!"

Shu Yun and Dou Wenjing also gasped in amazement. They had never expected Dundun to play like that.

Geng Lele, on the other hand, who had been somewhat bored, now had bright eyes, her gaze filled with surprise.

Such a smart cat. I can chat with him when I'm bored in the future.

Truly worthy of being our Holy Master. So impressive!

After that, Dundun played pool merrily. At times, he would roll around on the table, kicking the surrounding balls away; at others, he pushed the black ball as if navigating an obstacle course, weaving through the scattered pool balls. When he got really excited, he even stood upright and tried to mimic human walking. However, the pool table wasn't smooth enough. After a few steps, he felt tired and went back to playing with the balls aimlessly.

Everyone around was dumbfounded.

Good heavens, is this really a cat?

"Dundun has always been clever," Shen Baobao explained, "but not exceptionally so. Animals trained in circuses are even more impressive than Dundun."

Shen Baobao chose to film the pool scene not only to capture more Dundun-related content while he was trending but also to let her own staff witness Dundun's amazing abilities firsthand. This way, her staff wouldn't be overly shocked when the videos went online, sparing them from freaking out before the netizens did.

Once she explained, everyone felt it made sense. After all, many trained animals could perform arithmetic or ride bicycles; simply learning to walk and play pool didn't seem that miraculous in comparison. Still, it was quite impressive that a little cat could be so clever.

It feels like we can't deceive Dundun anymore.

"Honestly, it's wrong to deceive a child in the first place. Dundun, I'm your Aunt Zeng. May I shake your paw?" Zeng Xiaoqi extended her fair right hand towards Dundun. He crouched and hesitated for a moment before finally extending his own right paw and lightly touching hers.

"Wow, hahaha, he actually shook my hand! Dundun's paw pads are so soft, and they feel so good to touch. His fur is so smooth and silky too..." Zeng Xiaoqi was chattering when Dundun pulled his paw back.

Shaking paws is one thing, but were you trying to make a move and take advantage of this cat? Woman, please have some self-respect!

「On the other side」

After Lin Xu finished the lunch rush, while everyone else was cleaning the kitchen, he took his keys and returned to the residential complex behind the restaurant. He turned on his computer and found the video he had made the previous night. He cut it in the middle, splitting it into two parts, then added an intro and outro. After generating the video, he uploaded the first part to the short-form video platform.

To attract viewers, he crafted a particularly catchy title: "The behind-the-scenes footage you asked for is here! Dundun: In three seconds, I will blow your minds!"

After uploading, he patiently waited for it to be reviewed. Before long, the video appeared on Lin Xu's personal feed. To increase engagement with the topic, he also shared the video under the relevant discussion thread and pinned it.

In the video's comment section, he pinned another message: "This video is in two parts. The second part will be released after this one gets over 500,000 likes—it's even more thrilling and explosive! This message was edited by Dundun; please forgive any typos."

Yes, phrasing this message as if Dundun wrote it made it seem even more mysterious.

As soon as the video was released, netizens who had been eagerly awaiting an update swarmed in.

"Such a bold title! Let me see what this video is all about."

"I hope Lin Boss isn't just a clickbaiter."

"As long as Dundun is in it, who cares if it's clickbait or not?"

"Exactly! As food lovers, we adore Dundun."

"Hey, person above, are you implying our Dundun is an ingredient?"

"OH MY GOD! Hurry and watch the video! My perception of reality has been shattered! How can such an intelligent cat exist in this world? Was he a professor at a film academy in his past life?"

"Lost his mind in under a minute! Take him away! Next!"

"Aaaah, Dundun is incredible! See? I told you the Holy Master of our Meow Meow Sect was no ordinary cat!"

"What's going on? Another one's gone mad?"

"..."

On the afternoon of the second day of the National Day holiday, countless viewers who opened the video were stunned by Dundun. He performed whatever the people in the "meeting" discussed, hardly behaving like a cat at all.

Boss Lin's cat is truly amazing, isn't he?

In the barrage of comments, countless exclamations of shock scrolled past, so dense they sometimes completely obscured the video.

Under the Lin Ji's Food topic, more and more people also chimed in, sharing their reactions after watching the video. The topic's popularity continued to soar.

Finally, at half-past three in the afternoon, it successfully topped the Yanjing Region topic chart.

While Lin Xu was working in the kitchen, a system notification suddenly sounded in his mind:

"Congratulations to the Host for completing the main mission [Fame]! You have received: one Perfect Level Lost Dish draw, one Perfect Level Dry Pot Dish draw, one Perfect Level Raw Pickled Dish draw, three Perfect Level Cooking Learning Cards, and one thirty-minute Special Tool Experience Card!"

"The popularity of the Lin Ji's Food topic has surged into the top twenty nationwide! You have received one Perfect Level Cooking Technique draw. Congratulations to the Host."

Huh? Why did it come with an extra reward?

Chapter 715: The joy of a bountiful harvest must be expressed with lotus cakes! Kid, come and draw the lottery!

From before the engagement until now, nearly two months had passed, and at last, the main quest was completed. This brought Lin Xu a wave of relief. For someone with OCD, finishing a task is truly relaxing.

He began to take stock of the rewards: a Perfect Level lost dish, a Perfect Level dry pot dish, a Perfect Level cured dish, three Perfect Level learning cards, a thirty-minute special prop Experience Card, and an additional Perfect Level Cooking Technique prize draw.

No wonder everyone says autumn is the season of harvest, he thought. I can truly feel the joy of abundance now.

Although the last Hidden Task prize draw had directly resulted in Spicy Chicken, Lin Xu didn't dare to claim his rewards carelessly today. It would be better to let Dundun do it. That little guy seems able to directly pick out the dishes that best suit Lin Ji's Food, which is much better than me blindly trying my luck.

"Boss, we're number one on the trending search!"

As he was musing to himself, Zhuang Yizhou approached, showing Lin Xu his phone.

Lin Ji's Food was number one on the Yanjing Region's hot search list, followed by a deep red "Boom" icon—a clear indication that its popularity was skyrocketing.

Underneath the Lin Ji's Food topic, confused netizens who had watched the video flooded in:

"Is this fake? Can cats really be that smart?"

"Can any pro tell us if this is a CGI performance?"

"It didn't look like it. The people at the conference table were conversing so naturally during their meeting. It didn't look like acting; it seemed more like Dundun had deliberately caused a commotion while they were recording a video of their conference."

"Buddy, you can't just call it 'causing a commotion.'"

"Right, how could such dedicated acting be called 'causing a commotion'?"

"Let's be real, is it even a challenge for Dundun's acting to trounce those so-called 'little fresh meats'?"

"Ever since short videos became popular, people have been saying any random person's acting skills surpass professional actors. Now, even a little cat can outclass professional actors in performance."

"We'd better not let the film academy professors see this, or they'll add Dundun to their curriculum."

"..."

Online, it was common for standout scenes from some actors to be touted as teaching material for professional film academies like The Central Academy of Drama or Beijing Film Academy. It reached a point where the schools themselves had to publicly debunk these claims.

If every actor's slightly expressive scene were listed as teaching material, students at film academies might not graduate even in eight years.

Lin Xu glanced at the online discussion. Considering the unintentional yet impactful contributions from the Fat-Loss Squad and the Silly Squad, he felt it was time for a reward.

Heroes, after all, deserve to enjoy good food. But what to make? Apart from Dundun, the entire crew consisted of girls, and girls generally liked dishes with an appealing presentation... Presentation?

Lin Xu immediately thought of a snack he had obtained before the Mid-Autumn Festival—lotus cake.

In terms of presentation, few dishes could compete with lotus cake, right? Yes, that's the one.

He hoped the Fat-Loss Squad would continue their great work, keep producing those incredible short videos, and take Lin Ji's Food's trending popularity to an even higher level. At the same time, it would also boost the follower count on his personal account. Using cute pets to gain followers is a time-honored tradition among food area UP hosts. Today, I'll embrace this tradition and take it up a notch! Since I'm making lotus cakes, I should get started right away.

Making this type of palace dessert wasn't overly difficult, but it was quite tedious and required advance preparation.

First was the filling.

To make the lotus cake's filling resemble lotus stamen, it needed to be yellow. Lin Xu gathered butter, eggs, milk powder, powdered sugar, and coconut shreds.

He separated the egg yolks and beat them with the butter, powdered sugar, and milk powder until a thick, viscous paste formed. The mixture needed to be beaten thoroughly to ensure the powdered sugar, butter, and milk powder fully dissolved, and the egg yolks were completely incorporated.

The butter and egg yolks gave the filling a color similar to lotus stamen. However, to make it look even more realistic, coconut shreds needed to be added. Coconut shreds would increase the filling's viscosity. The white shreds would also make the filling look more like actual stamen.

After adding the coconut shreds and mixing them in, he carefully rolled the mixture into a large ball. Then, he divided it into small portions, about 20 grams each, and rolled these into smaller, perfectly round balls. To prevent them from melting, the small balls needed to be placed in the freezer.

With the filling ready, it was time to make the dough for the lotus petals.

The lotus pastry dough consists of two parts: a water-oil dough and an oil-based shortening dough. The water-oil dough is used to encase the shortening dough, and repeated folding creates the distinct, layered petal effect of a lotus. This is a standard technique for making flaky pastries; almost all Chinese snacks with a flaky crust use this method.

Unlike ordinary flaky pastries, the dough for lotus cakes also requires coloring. This is to mimic the pink hue of a lotus, enhancing its realistic appearance. There are many coloring options. One could choose more stable artificial food colorings or natural ones like red rice flour.

Lin Xu chose red rice flour. When diluted by the flour, it would produce a beautiful light pink color.

He placed low-gluten flour into a mixing bowl, adding a suitable amount of lard and powdered sugar. Finally, using a measuring spoon, he added half a spoonful of red rice flour to the bowl. He then mixed it all with warm water to form a dough of moderate consistency.

The process of creating layers in Chinese Dessert Making is known as "opening the flake." This process invariably involves lard. Indeed, one could say that the characteristic "flakiness" in Chinese snacks primarily comes from lard. Without lard, a significant portion of flaky pastry snacks would simply cease to exist.

Although some bakers dislike using lard and opt for butter, commonly used in Western pastries, truth be told, butter doesn't even come close to lard when it comes to creating truly flaky pastries.

Chapter 716: The Joy of Harvest Must Be Expressed with Lotus Cakes! Son, Come for the Lottery! \_2

"These days, those bakers on short video platforms are so critical when it comes to lard—high in calories, greasy, and they're always recommending butter instead. It's honestly too much to watch."

Wei Qian, a staunch supporter of lard, approached as soon as he saw Lin Xu using it to make dough. Seeing the pale pink dough in the bowl, he looked somewhat astonished. "Holy crap, what kind of snacks are you planning to make now? This tender pink color is totally in line with my aesthetic."

His aesthetic? Lin Xu glanced at the man. No wonder Tiantian treats him like her wifey. Such a big guy, and he actually likes pink. Tsk, tsk, tsk...

"Real men use pink," Wei Qian quickly added, realizing his words might have sounded off and trying to salvage the situation with the 'macho pink' meme.

"We hit number one on the trending list today, so I'm making some lotus cakes to celebrate," Lin Xu said.

"Holy crap, you're really clever with your hands! I just get confused looking at dough. Savory cooking is definitely more my speed."

Lin Xu kneaded the pale pink dough until smooth, then began to portion it out. Each portion was 25 grams. He divided them and rolled them into little balls. Having prepared forty balls of filling earlier, he divided the dough into forty small portions as well. After rolling all of them into little balls, he covered them with plastic wrap to rest. In his haste, he had forgotten to calculate the amount of flour precisely, which resulted in a bit too much pink dough.

I'll just set this aside for now, he thought. If I need more later, I can whip up some more filling and make a few extra.

He sealed the excess dough in the mixing bowl with plastic wrap and immediately began making the oil-pastry.

The ingredients for the oil-pastry were relatively simple: just lard and low-gluten flour. But even though the ingredients were simple, the process was quite difficult. Lin Xu cleaned the workbench, then poured the prepared flour onto it, adding a dollop of solidified lard on top. Next, he took handfuls of flour and pressed them onto the lard, using the heel of his palm to push down. Then, using a bench scraper, he lifted any lard stuck to the workbench, covered it with more flour, and continued to work the flour into the lard bit by bit.

This step couldn't involve water or any other ingredients. It was solely about kneading the flour into a dough with solidified lard, and the dough's softness had to match that of the pink water-oil crust. For beginners, this step was very difficult. Carelessness could lead to lard-covered hands, or, if the temperature was too low, the lard might not incorporate into the flour at all. If lard got on your hands, there was no need to worry; you could simply rub it off with dry flour.

However, if the lard stuck to your hands, it meant it was melting. In that case, you should try to handle the dough and lard mainly with your fingertips to prevent your hand's warmth from melting it further. Conversely, in colder conditions, you should knead as much as possible inside the bowl using the heel of your palm, leveraging your body heat to soften the lard. Once it softened, incorporating it into the dough became much easier.

The finished oil-pastry was a dough with a smooth, oily surface. Just like the water-oil crust, the oil-pastry also needed to be divided into small portions. Lin Xu made each portion 20 grams, dividing it into 40 pieces. After portioning, he rolled them into small balls, placed them in a corner of the workbench, and covered them with plastic wrap to prevent them from drying out.

As for the leftover oil-pastry, he put it in a bowl, covered the bowl with plastic wrap, and placed it in the refrigerator to chill. Oil-pastry not needed immediately should be refrigerated or frozen. It couldn't be left at room temperature, otherwise the lard would melt and seep out, causing the oil-pastry to become dry and hard.

Next, using his palms, he pressed the rested water-oil crust into small, round discs and carefully wrapped a ball of oil-pastry inside each. After sealing and rolling them back into balls, he placed them under plastic wrap to rest further.

Each subsequent step required the dough to rest for ten minutes; they couldn't be worked on continuously.

The round, pink balls arranged on the workbench attracted the other chefs, who gathered around to take pictures.

"See? I told you real men like pink!" Wei Qian exclaimed. "What guy could resist such a lovely, tender pink color? I definitely have to try some once they're done."

Wei Qian came over, snapped a photo, and promptly posted it on Lin Ji's Food with the caption: "To celebrate Lin Ji's Food hitting number one on the trending list, the boss himself is cooking up a storm! With this lovely, tender pink color, can you guess what snack it is?"

No sooner had he posted it than netizens already discussing Dundun flocked to the comments:

"Holy smokes, that looks so tempting!"

"Isn't this exactly the color we guys like?"

"Just curious, is Dundun really that smart?"

"That video—was it staged or actually filmed live? Can you guys at Lin Ji please clarify?"

"Why clarify? Did the video break any laws or regulations?"

"Exactly! These newcomers must have grown up eating bony fish, otherwise, how did they get so good at nitpicking? My Dundun is the Holy Master of the Meow Meow Sect; isn't it normal for him to be a bit smart?"

Wei Qian was about to reply, but seeing that netizens were already arguing in the comments of his post, he wisely kept his mouth shut.

He, too, was puzzled by that video and couldn't understand how it had been filmed. If Dundun really is that smart, he wondered, does that mean every time Tiantian and I were... you know... making eyes at each other on the stairs, that cat saw the whole thing from start to finish? The thought of having such a spectator during those moments made Wei Qian wish the ground would swallow him whole.

He scrolled through the Lin Ji's Food discussion topic. Some new commenters were questioning the video's authenticity, but the number of likes was climbing rapidly. At this rate, it would probably reach the 500,000 likes Lin Xu required by tomorrow. Once the second part is released, Wei Qian mused, maybe we'll finally get the answer to how Dundun is so smart.

Chapter 717: The Joy of Harvest, Expressed with Lotus Cake! Son, Time for the Lottery! \_3

In the West Fourth Ring Villa, the video shoot of Dundun playing billiards was complete. Now, everyone was gathered around the piano in the corner of the living room on the first floor, planning to film Dundun playing it.

"Can Dundun play?"

"Not likely, but it's good enough if it can just pose; it doesn't need to actually play."

"That's a Steinway, isn't it? A piano worth over a million, and you're letting a cat play with it? Aren't you afraid it will get damaged?"

Shen Baobao came over with cat nail clippers, gently holding Dundun's paws and snipping the tips of its claws one by one.

Cat claws grow constantly and need their sharp tips trimmed regularly; otherwise, if they grow too long, they can pierce the paw pads, leading to inflammation and other issues.

Moreover, long nails are uncomfortable for cats.

Shen Baobao squatted next to the piano stool, clipping Dundun's nails while the little guy cooperated nicely. After they were clipped, it pulled back its paws, seemingly to check if the claws had been cut too short.

This compliant behavior left Dou Wenjing and Zeng Xiaoqi utterly dumbfounded.

Just a few minutes ago, the two had been watching a video from a pet vlogger who got scratched badly while trying to clip their cat's nails. The comment section was filled with messages from users too scared to trim their own cats' claws.

At the time, they had remarked that with Dundun's temper, it would probably take several people to hold it down for a nail trim.

But Dundun was very cooperative and quite patient.

It was as if the cat in the vlogger's despairing video and Dundun weren't even the same species.

"Our Dundun is indeed not like other cats."

Geng Lele said with a chuckle, "Of course. He's the Holy Master of the Meow Meow Sect, after all. How could ordinary kittens compare?"

After the nail clipping, the lighting equipment was set up, and the camera was adjusted to the best angle.

As everyone was busy, Zeng Xiaoqi took out her phone. She wanted to check for any inappropriate comments under the Lin Ji's Food hashtag and delete them immediately to prevent any negative impact.

Then she saw Wei Qian's update.

The sight of those plump little round balls suddenly made the film crew's chief photographer lose interest in her work. She exclaimed, "Hey, Boss Lin is preparing some delicious food at the store. Should we go have a look?"

After saying that, she showed her phone to everyone.

The girls, who had originally planned to film until dark, were immediately captivated by these snacks.

"I think since we have seven days for the National Day holiday, we can afford to mix work with leisure."

"Exactly. It's not a big deal if we get tired, but what's important is Dundun. Continuous filming is too hard on the little guy."

"I was thinking the same thing. Felines are known for their bursts of energy but have poor stamina. Let's head back."

"Yeah, even if we come back to film tomorrow, we can't just think about the shooting schedule. We also need to consider the little one's physical limits."

"..."

Having found themselves a plethora of excuses, everyone began to pack up their equipment.

They decided not to take the equipment back this time, to save the trouble of hauling it back and forth.

However, it needed to be packed away properly, especially the delicate fill lights, which had to be stored in their special bags.

After packing up, Shen Baobao planned to go upstairs to change clothes and also bring down a few sweatshirts suitable for autumn.

Some went to the bathroom, others to the kitchen for water, all preparing to leave.

At the piano, Dundun sat up straight and pressed a key with its paw, then another one next to it. It played slowly and awkwardly, the notes disconnected and hesitant.

But if Han Shuzhen had been there, she would have definitely recognized it as "Butterfly Lovers," the very piece she had played when she first brought Dundun home and was helping it get familiar with its surroundings.

「At the store.」

Lin Xu flattened the well-rested dough with his hand. Then, using a small rolling pin, he rolled it out into a long, tongue-like shape.

After rolling it out, he folded the lower half of the tongue-shaped strip upwards, then folded down the upper, shorter half on top, creating a standard three-fold.

He folded it neatly, placed it back under the plastic wrap, and let it rest for another ten minutes.

Once it had rested sufficiently, he took it out. He rolled the tri-folded dough on the cutting board, again into a tongue-like shape. After rolling, he tri-folded it once more and set it aside to rest.

Through this repeated folding and rolling, the dough was gradually pressed thinner than paper. The shortening gradually became interspersed with the water-oil dough, with only a little fat separating the layers.

When heated, this fat would cause the layers of pastry to separate and puff up.

This is how Thousand-layered Puff Pastry is made.

After another rest, he lightly rolled out the tri-folded dough, making it as round as possible. Then, he took the filling from the refrigerator and wrapped it in the light pink dough.

He tucked the sealed edges underneath, forming a smooth, round ball on top.

Then, using a thin, sharp knife, he made three intersecting cuts on top, dividing the surface of the ball into six equal sections.

After making the cuts, he mixed some red rice flour with water. He then dipped a small brush into this mixture and evenly painted the sides of each cut.

This way, when the pastry bloomed, the petals would have a deep red outline, complementing the light pink dough and giving them an ethereal charm.

Once all the pastries were prepared, Lin Xu added vegetable oil to a wok. He heated it to a low temperature, then reduced the flame. He gently placed the uncooked lotus cakes into a shallow mesh strainer and slowly lowered them into the hot oil.

As they fried in the low-temperature oil, the 'petals' slowly unfolded. The outermost layers bloomed completely, wrinkling slightly in the hot oil, beautifully resembling a lotus flower just past its prime.

The light pink petals, delicately edged in dark red, looked irresistible even before they were taken out of the wok.

These were, by far, the most visually stunning pastries ever made in the shop.

So beautiful, one would almost hesitate to eat them.

Frying lotus cakes required patience; they had to be cooked continuously in low-temperature oil so the petals could gradually bloom.

When they were almost done, he carefully lifted them out with a fine-mesh sieve and set them aside to drain off the excess oil.

By now, the petals were perfectly fried and so delicate they would crumble at the slightest touch. Therefore, every step had to be handled with extreme care; a little too much force, and the 'flower' might shatter.

"Wow, such a beautiful lotus flower!"

Just as he was busy with this, Shen Baobao's amazed cry came from the kitchen doorway.

She hadn't expected to walk back into the shop just as Lin Xu was lifting a delicate, pink-edged lotus blossom from the oil.

Is this the culinary creation for today? Its beauty is simply breathtaking!

"You all produced such a great video, so I made some lotus cakes as a reward. This was also something I promised Lele before, and today I'm fulfilling that promise."

Lin Xu brought out the fried lotus cakes. These exquisite pastries immediately drew gasps of admiration.

Everyone took out their phones and cameras, starting to photograph these blossoms.

"So beautiful!"

"They look just like real ones."

"The red edges are so vivid; they look too precious to eat!"

"I can't bear to eat it either. How about you eat mine, and I eat yours?"

"This feels like exchanging our children for food!"

"..."

Lin Xu returned to the kitchen to fry the rest of the lotus cakes.

While everyone gathered around the exquisitely beautiful pastries, praising them endlessly, Lin Xu took off his apron and headed down the stairs.

My boy, time for the prize draw!

Chapter 718: Another dish to go with rice! What to do with leftover dough? Try making Doodle Cakes!

"The famous lotus cake! I can't believe I'm seeing it in real life!"

"Seeing it isn't that special; the key is its incredible visual appeal. You'd be hard-pressed to find many others like it online."

"Exactly! The lotus cakes the boss makes have petals that are perfectly unfolded, far better than those online that look like blooming steamed buns."

In front of the booth on the second floor, everyone gathered around the table, gazing at the lotus cakes, yet no one reached out to taste them.

It was too beautiful, so beautiful that it felt wrong to take a bite.

So, everyone just kept taking pictures, posting on their social feeds, and sharing status updates to show off the lotus cake made by their boss.

Shen Baobao sat among the crowd, initially wanting Lin Xu to teach her how to make it. But considering the difficulty of this delicacy, she soon thought better of it. Even though Yan Bao, that unhelpful assistant, isn't around this time, this lotus cake looks really challenging. Ugh, forget it. I'd rather just be a quiet, pretty face.

「Downstairs.」

Lin Xu, holding Dundun in his arms, stood before the aquarium, watching the various fresh fish swim about. He quietly asked, "Son, want some fish? If you do, I'll steam one for you tonight. But you have to help me draw a better prize; otherwise, it's Chicken Breast for dinner."

On any other day, he would have definitely played with Dundun for a while before casually drawing a prize. But today he was busy upstairs, and the little guy seemed a bit worn out too, so he cut to the chase.

Dundun stretched out his paw and laid it in Lin Xu's palm.

Clearly, father and son had reached an agreement.

Lin Xu gripped Dundun's paw and silently commanded in his mind, Draw prize!

Soon, a prize wheel appeared in his mind.

After the wheel started spinning, a new button appeared next to the draw button: [Draw All Prizes]

All prizes? Lin Xu thought. Today's draw is for three dishes and one Cooking Technique. Drawing them all at once would indeed be much more convenient than one by one. In that case, let's just do it all in one go. It'll save time for both me and Dundun.

After selecting "Draw All Prizes," the wheel slowly came to a stop.

Soon, the system's notification chimed in his mind again: "Congratulations to the host for acquiring: Perfect Level lost dish — Silver Shrimp Soup; Perfect Level Dry Pot dish — Dry Pot Cauliflower; Perfect Level raw marinated dish — Drunken Crab; Perfect Level Cooking Technique — Dry Burning."

This... Is that all? Lin Xu mused. This draw feels pretty ordinary. I have no idea what Silver Shrimp Soup is; it seems like some kind of soup. And Drunken Crab... apart from people in the Yangtze River Delta region, anyone else eating it would probably get an upset stomach, right?

He looked at Dundun cradled in his arms and asked, "Son? Have you been too tired from filming videos these past few days?"

Dundun flashed his claws, giving Lin Xu a look that clearly threatened a scratching if he wasn't taken back to sleep immediately. Lin Xu couldn't help but sigh. It seems the little guy really is exhausted. But that's fine. At least I got Dry Pot Cauliflower, one of the restaurant's top five bestsellers, to count on. It's not a total loss. The Lin Ji Rice Annihilator squad gains another new member! As for Silver Shrimp Soup and Drunken Crab, I'll just set them aside for now. Who knows, they might come in handy someday. That Dry Burning Technique, though... Although it's a niche technique, it's also a rising star among dishes that pair exceptionally well with rice. Take Dry Burning Fish, for example, found in both braised dishes and Sichuan cuisine. Aside from the bones, it's amazing for pairing with rice. When I have time, I'll go to Fishing Platform to spar a bit with Chef Song or Chef Dai. They both excel at Dry Burning Fish. I want to see how my Perfect Level technique stacks up against those two State Banquet chefs, and if there are any flaws or areas for improvement.

After taking Dundun back to the service counter, the little guy immediately lifted his tail, dove into his little house, flipped onto his small blanket, exposed his belly, and started snoring loudly.

Back upstairs, just as he exited the stairwell, Lin Xu saw Shen Baobao and the others, each holding a small plate, delicately tasting the lotus cakes.

They didn't commit sacrilege by biting off a whole piece; instead, they carefully worked from the base, tearing off the petals one by one.

Each torn-off petal was popped into their mouths, and with every chew, a delightful CRUNCH could be heard.

"Wow, it's so incredibly crispy! Eating it is even more fragrant and satisfyingly crisp than those fried dough twists or other light pastries."

"And these petals are so, so thin, like cicada wings."

"If the petals alone are this delicious, I can only imagine how tasty the filling must be."

"I need to savor this slowly, eat the petals one by one, and then the filling."

"Mhm, save the best for last, right?"

"..."

Listening to their discussion, Lin Xu couldn't help but give a wry smile. You're supposed to eat lotus cake with the filling to truly experience the layered, crispy, fragrant deliciousness of the petals. Eating it petal by petal actually makes it rather bland. It's just ordinary low-gluten flour mixed with a bit of powdered sugar and lard. All you get is crispiness and a hint of sweetness, completely missing the essence of the lotus cake.

"Don't eat it like that!" Lin Xu said as he walked over. "Eating it that way is a complete waste of my skills. You might as well just be munching on plain fried crisps."

He picked up a lotus cake and bit off half the flower in one go. The layers of crispy petals contrasted sharply with the soft, fragrant, and sweet Coconut Shreds and custard filling.

The richness of the filling was perfectly balanced by the crispiness of the petals, and the petals themselves were no longer monotonous.

One delicacy, two textures, perfectly combined.

If eaten separately, one would completely miss out on this delightful contrast and exquisite sensation.

Watching Lin Xu's "destructive" way of eating, an expression of "How could he be so heartless?" flickered across everyone's faces.

Such a beautiful flower, devoured so crudely, like an ox trampling peonies!

Chapter 719: Another dish to go with rice! What to do with remaining dough? Try making Doodle Cake!  
\_2

"Don't look at me like that; this is how you're supposed to eat it."

Lin Xu took another bite of the lotus cake he was holding. The originally six-petaled lotus was instantly reduced to one petal, with only a small corner of the filling left.

Seeing him enjoy it so much, Shen Baobao took a bite of her flower, and her eyes immediately widened. "Eating it like this is really satisfying!" she exclaimed. "You guys don't want to bite into it, do you? How about we switch?"

She offered to exchange the lotus cake she had bitten for others but was refused by Director Dou, Director Shu, and Director Zeng.

At that moment, Geng Lele wasn't eating. She was seated in a booth nearby, seriously taking a short video of the lotus cakes on the table with her phone. Then, she posted it on her social media:

"At the last promotion banquet, Brother Xu said he would make lotus cakes for me. I thought he was just teasing, but it turned out to be true. It's good to have a brother! Unfortunately, Grandpa beat me to it and became sworn brothers with Brother Xu, \*sob sob\*..."

Soon, classmates and some familiar online friends quickly liked and commented.

First was Li Qiang, who was still busy earning overtime pay during National Day.

"What a complex set of generational relationships!" he commented.

Geng Lele typed back rapidly, "It's the kind of relationship where you can hang out at Lin Ji all day on National Day without needing to work overtime."

Brother Li: "..."

Now she's not mocking my hair, but starting to mock my overtime. Damn, now it's my turn to sob.

The others didn't pay much attention to the text; they were all praising how good the lotus cakes looked.

"Lele, the lotus cakes look really pretty! When will Lin Ji release new products?"

"I really want to try it. Does Boss Lin still need a sister? Does he like tea-style sisters or cute-style sisters? I can cross-dress for either."

"Psh, it's definitely fake unless you let me have a taste."

"Making it so fancy, but it's all just for eating. So I'd rather have two packs of Wangwang Little Cakes; they're definitely better than lotus cakes! (I'm not jealous or anything!)"

While Geng Lele was looking at her phone, she noticed that Professor Cui, who handled the routine teaching for the smart class, had liked the post.

Huh? Teacher? Didn't he go back to Shanghai for National Day?

Little Mushroom Head immediately clicked on Cui Qingyuan's profile and sent a message rapidly, "Teacher, are you still in Beijing? Come to Lin Ji and have some lotus cakes! A taste that'll remind you of your first love."

Sitting in his study tinkering with his computer, Cui Qingyuan saw the message and immediately grinned.

Other students avoid their teachers, but this girl, on the other hand, teases her teacher. Does my first love still need food as a preamble? It's always been on my mind.

After thinking, he replied, "I'll come by this evening to eat. I'm currently waiting for a package and can't leave."

After receiving the message, Geng Lele immediately said, "Then I'll ask Brother Xu to set aside a few lotus cakes for you. He doesn't make this delicacy often, so if you catch him, you'd better eat it. Otherwise, who knows when you'll get another chance."

"Okay."

After replying to the message, Geng Lele checked her social media feed, then picked up the visually appealing lotus cake in front of her.

CRUNCH! She bit off nearly half of the lotus cake.

Hey, Brother Xu was right; lotus cakes have to be eaten like this to be delicious.

In the booth next door, the ladies who had just been nibbling on their petals as delicately as Lin Daiyu were now opening their mouths wide, devouring their lotus cakes vigorously.

Meanwhile, Lin Xu had already eaten an entire lotus cake and was ready to return to the kitchen to figure out what to do with the unused water-oil dough and crisping fat.

Crisping fat and water-oil dough can't be stored for too long, or they'll dehydrate and leak oil.

Back in the kitchen, Lin Xu looked around at everyone and asked, "Aside from making lotus cakes, what else can this water-oil dough and crisping fat be used for?"

This question left everyone a bit lost. You're the expert when it comes to pastry; asking us this feels a bit out of our depth.

At that moment, Ji Minghui was communicating with Wei Qian about the amount of noodles needed for the evening.

He glanced at the soft, pink water-oil dough and smiled. "If the boss doesn't mind the trouble," he said, "he could try making some Doodle Cakes. It follows the same process as lotus cakes but is more complex and looks better."

Doodle Cakes? Lin Xu was somewhat perplexed. What's this now? Another court delicacy?

He searched on his phone and finally found pictures of Doodle Cakes. For these, the layered pastry is woven to form the Dough, the filling is then encased, and finally, they are slowly deep-fried in oil.

Just by the looks, it was clearly a more challenging creation than the lotus cakes.

But this appearance... Shen Baobao would probably really like it, wouldn't she?

Lin Xu thought it over, searched for Doodle Cakes in the points app, and exchanged some points for an Excellent Level recipe.

To attempt it without preparation would likely result in failure. Better to exchange for a Cooking Technique to be safe.

After the exchange, he quickly learned how to make Doodle Cakes.

Just like with lotus cakes, this snack also required preparing the filling first.

At that moment, there weren't many ingredients suitable for fillings in the kitchen. Lin Xu looked around and saw some steamed pumpkin, which had been prepared for the Pumpkin Soup to be used later in the evening.

Since there was pumpkin, why not make a pumpkin filling? He hadn't made snacks with pumpkin filling before, so today was a good opportunity to try.

Based on the amount of dough, he took about half a basin of pumpkin, grabbed a metal spoon, and crushed the soft, sweet flesh into pumpkin mash.

This step required patience; the pumpkin had to be completely smashed to use as a filling.

After turning it all into mash, he passed the pumpkin through a fine mesh sieve to filter out some plant fibers and bits of uncleaned pumpkin peel.

Chapter 720: Another dish to go with rice! What to do with leftover dough? Try making Doodle Cakes!  
\_3

The purpose of this was to give the pumpkin filling a silkier texture.

After straining, he prepared some light cream and granulated sugar. Then, he set up a frying pan. First, he heated the pan, added cold oil to coat it, poured the oil out, reheated the pan, and coated it again. When frying paste-like ingredients, it is essential to coat the pan several times to effectively prevent sticking.

After coating the pan, he added a spoonful of lard, heated it on high, then poured in the strained pumpkin filling and began to stir-fry. This step was to release the pumpkin's aroma and cook out its moisture, making the filling thicker and more suitable.

Initially, the pumpkin and the fat did not blend, but as he continued to fry, the fat permeated the pumpkin filling. When the pumpkin was fried until it was fragrant and thick, he poured in the granulated

sugar, added some light cream to enhance the milky flavor, and continued to stir-fry. When the pumpkin was slightly dry and dough-like, he turned off the heat and removed the filling from the pan.

He spread the pumpkin filling on a tray, then moved it to cold storage to speed up its cooling.

During this time, Lin Xu took the pink water-oil dough out of the basin and kneaded it a bit to prevent it from fermenting while resting. After kneading, to complement the pink dough, he also used Matcha Powder to make some light green water-oil dough. The light pink and light green doughs together had a very refreshing look. It looked better than using just pink.

With both types of dough ready, Lin Xu took out the oil dough again, kneaded it, and began the process.

First, he rolled both types of water-oil dough into rectangles about ten centimeters wide and twenty centimeters long. He then rolled the oil dough to the same size and cut it in half. One half was placed on the pink water-oil dough, and the other half on the light green water-oil dough. He folded each water-oil dough in half, wrapping the oil dough inside. While wrapping, he used a rolling pin to seal the edges, preventing the oil dough from leaking out.

Then, he folded both ends of each dough towards the center, folded it in half again along the center, and used a rolling pin to roll it back into a rectangle. After another fold, he placed the dough under plastic wrap to rest.

Once both pieces of dough were folded, Lin Xu took the cooled pumpkin filling out of cold storage. By this time, the pumpkin filling was no longer hot to the touch; he rolled it into balls of about thirty grams each. After rolling, he placed them on a tray, covered them with plastic wrap, and returned them to cold storage to cool further.

「Outside the kitchen」

Shen Baobao, after eating two lotus cakes, felt they were a bit rich. She asked Chezi to get some chestnuts that had been fried that morning from the small kitchen, and she began peeling and eating them. Ever since they acquired specialized pebbles for frying chestnuts, the store fried a pot of chestnuts or other nuts like cashews almost daily.

"Chezi, what is Lin Xu busy with in the kitchen?" Shen Baobao asked.

"The boss is preparing to make pumpkin-filled Doodle Cakes," Chezi replied. "To match those pale pink doughs, he specifically made some light green ones too. I don't actually know what Doodle Cakes are, but I'm waiting to try them."

Doodle Cakes? Shen Baobao mused. Today, he reached the top of the trending searches. Is Lin Xu planning to go all out?

Ah, with a husband like this, when will I ever slim down! Shen Baobao sighed deeply, her eyes filled with blissful melancholy.

Listening to Shen Baobao, the warm chestnuts suddenly seemed to leave a tart, lemony taste in the mouths of Zeng Xiaoqi and Dou Wenjing.

Even the lady boss has started humblebragging, huh? they thought. How are we supposed to deal with this?

「In the kitchen」

Lin Xu repeatedly folded and rolled the dough several times. Finally, he rolled it into thick sheets, ten centimeters wide, one centimeter thick, and over ten centimeters long. The thicker the dough sheet, the more pronounced the effect of the Doodle Cake. He then brought over the cooled pumpkin filling and began the assembly.

First, using a kitchen knife, he sliced both types of dough into two-millimeter-thick strips and began weaving the Doodle Cake pattern.

He laid a pink strip of dough on the work surface. He then wove light green strips across it, alternating one over and one under the pink strip, pressing gently to make them adhere.

To add the next pink strip, he first folded upwards all the light green strips that were currently passing \*under\* the laid pink strip(s). He placed a new pink strip parallel to the previous one. Then, he folded

the raised green strips back down over this new pink strip. Next, he lifted the alternate set of green strips—those that were now lying underneath the newest pink strip (having passed \*over\* the previous pink strip). He placed another pink strip and continued this weaving process. He continued this pattern until all ten pink strips were laid, completing the woven sheet.

He took a small bowl, inverted it over the woven dough, and pressed down hard to cut out a circle, removing the excess dough from the edges. This created a round woven piece. He gently rolled the circular woven piece with a rolling pin, especially around the cut edges to help them meld. He then placed a pumpkin ball in the center and wrapped the dough around it like a bun, pinching the seam tightly shut.

A pink and light green Doodle Cake was now ready.

Following this method, Lin Xu finished making all the Doodle Cakes. The trimmed edges weren't wasted either; he playfully twisted a few pieces together to make colorful dough twists.

Once everything was ready, he heated the oil for deep-frying. Unlike the lotus cakes, the Doodle Cakes had a thinner outer layer of dough and didn't need to bloom, so they could be fried directly in oil at medium heat.

Shortly after the Doodle Cakes were placed in the hot oil, their surfaces began to puff up. This wasn't due to fermentation, but rather the pastry layers becoming flaky, which caused them to expand and fill any small gaps in the woven pattern. This gave the Doodle Cake its characteristic intertwined and layered appearance.

Among Chinese pastries, the Doodle Cake is considered relatively difficult to make. However, once the technique is mastered, it isn't too difficult. The weaving process, in particular, could be quite satisfying for someone with a penchant for precision.

While Lin Xu was busy in the kitchen, a delivery driver arrived at the Tsinghua University faculty dormitory. After the driver made a call, Cui Qingyuan hurried out from the building.

"Cui Qingyuan, right? Could you confirm the last four digits of your phone number?" the driver asked, unloading several cardboard boxes from his vehicle.

"7866... Excuse me, what's in these?" Cui Qingyuan asked. "A friend sent them. He just told me to wait for a delivery at the dorm but didn't say what it was."

The driver glanced at the boxes. "Seems like crabs, from Yangcheng Lake."

Crabs? Cui Qingyuan stared at the cardboard boxes on the ground, each larger than a nightstand, a mix of amusement and exasperation on his face. Boss Yan, why on earth would you send me so many crabs? Do I look like someone who knows how to cook? All I did was casually mention on social media that Hairy Crab season was approaching, and you send me all these? If I'd mentioned wanting a beachfront villa, would you have bought several?

He fretted, looking at the boxes on the ground. So many crabs... how am I supposed to eat them all?