

Culinary 721

Chapter 721: Does Professor Cui like to eat Drunken Crab? Arrange it! Senior brother, are you okay?

"Holy cow, isn't this just too beautiful?"

The freshly fried Doodle Cakes had just been scooped out of the pot when Wei Qian and the others gathered around.

The intertwined pink and pale blue exterior, with delicate, clearly visible lines, looked just like neatly threaded silk on an embroidered ball, a truly pleasant sight.

Especially at the junction of the two types of dough, the slightly pinched creases resembled the intentional tightening of threads while weaving such an embroidered ball.

This shape, this appearance.

It's just like the real thing.

No, even more real than the real thing!

"Awesome, Lin Xu, your pastry skills are getting more and more impressive."

Wei Qian exclaimed in admiration but didn't rush to taste it.

After all, the Lady Boss was just outside, and he didn't dare to sample it first.

And with the Doodle Cake looking so lifelike, I feel like biting into it might get my teeth tangled in all those threads, he thought. Better let someone else try first.

Lin Xu scooped out all the Doodle Cakes from the pot, put in a new batch to fry, and then walked outside carrying a whole plate of the finished ones.

No sooner had he stepped out of the kitchen than a series of exclamations erupted from outside.

Apparently, everyone was stunned by how beautiful the Doodle Cakes were.

They had encountered many surprises today: Dundun knew how to play pool; the video was a big hit; the topic had soared to number one on the Yanjing Region trending list; and they had tasted the exquisitely presented lotus cakes.

Zeng Xiaoqi, Dou Wenjing, Shu Yun, and Geng Lele had never expected that while they were discussing things in the meeting room that day, Dundun had actually been taking selfies in front of the camera the whole time.

Zeng Xiaoqi, in particular, regretted not checking the footage at the time. If I had only looked at it then, she thought, I wouldn't have needed to make that feeding video.

Now that the behind-the-scenes video was out, the feeding video released the day before yesterday immediately turned from the main feature into a mere teaser.

Compared to how shocking this behind-the-scenes video was, it didn't even qualify as a proper preview.

But this approach, where the main feature is weaker than the behind-the-scenes content, is actually quite captivating, Zeng Xiaoqi mused. If I had just released Dundun's selfie video straight away, it might not have been as sensational as it is now.

"Stop getting emotional, Director Zeng! Hurry up and try this. This Doodle Cake is absolutely perfect!"

Dou Wenjing held a Doodle Cake on a small plate, snapping photos wildly with her phone.

The interwoven pale pink and light green colors gave off a delicate, refreshing vibe.

Aaah, what's gotten into the boss today?

Dou Wenjing wondered. Why is he making all these cute, adorable little snacks? They're so pretty; how could we possibly bring ourselves to eat them?

Shen Baobao was the most pleasantly surprised. She placed a Doodle Cake on a small plate, took photos with her phone, and combined them with the pictures of the lotus cakes she had taken earlier into a nine-square grid, posting it to the Lin Ji's Food topic:

"To celebrate hitting number one on the trending list, Boss Lin made two kinds of snacks: traditional Chinese lotus cakes and Doodle Cakes! What do you think of their appearance and presentation? Pretty decent, right?"

After she posted it, netizens were immediately captivated by the gorgeous-looking treats.

West 2nd Flag's Brother Qiang: I get off work at 6 today, you absolutely have to save a few for me!

High Quality Human Waste: Off work? Brother Qiang, seriously, you're not working overtime on the holiday, are you?

Lin Daiyu Pulling Down the Willow Branches Backwards: Can I try these at the store right now, Lady Boss?

Lost Roasted Whole Sheep: Boss Lin's hands are truly skillful. It's like Qiaoqiao's mom opening the door for Qiaoqiao—skill taken to the extreme!

Me and Drugs & Gambling Sworn Enemies: Boss Lin, please teach us how to make these two snacks! I've been wanting to learn them. Please give us a tutorial so even us clumsy folks can give it a try!

Spring Breeze Cannot Blow You: I just finished watching Dundun taking selfies and haven't even recovered yet, and now Boss Lin pulls out a big move too! Are you and your son planning to dominate our screens today, or what?

Invisible Chicken Wings: My god, are these Doodle Cakes really edible? They look even more perfect than handmade ones!

...

Everyone marveled at how beautifully these snacks were made.

「In the store.」

After everyone had finished taking photos and posting on their social media, they each picked up a Doodle Cake to hold.

The Doodle Cake was roughly the size of a ping-pong ball. Holding it in hand and observing it closely, the more one looked, the more it resembled an intricate ball woven from colorful threads.

There was still another batch of Doodle Cakes frying in the pot. Lin Xu didn't linger and said to everyone,

"Eat them while they're hot. I added lard to the pumpkin filling, so they won't taste as good when they cool down."

And these are still just regular snacks, Lin Xu thought. If I were to make Awakening Lion Cakes, they'd probably have to be displayed in transparent glass boxes as souvenirs!

But an Awakening Lion Cake isn't something I can tackle at my current skill level. I'd better wait for a chance to learn from Chef Qiu first.

After Lin Xu returned to the kitchen, Shen Baobao took a bite of the Doodle Cake in her hand.

The crispy, flaky, colorful outer skin, resembling layers of fine silk, was delightful. As she chewed, it was both fragrant and delicious, while the pumpkin filling inside was thick and semi-molten.

The filling exuded a rich pumpkin aroma, subtly infused with a milky fragrance, and was incredibly silky smooth.

There was no need to chew; with a gentle suck, the golden filling flowed into her mouth.

It was a little hot in her mouth, but that only enhanced the sweet flavor of the pumpkin.

"Wow, this pumpkin filling is incredibly delicious!"

Shen Baobao exclaimed in admiration.

It seems like everything my dearest Xu makes is just so tasty!

Zeng Xiaoqi, after taking a bite, also couldn't help but exclaim in admiration,

"It's truly delicious! It's like a whole bowl of Pumpkin Soup has been condensed into this filling. Next time Boss Lin films a video, I'll definitely get him to make Doodle Cakes."

If we hadn't posted those pictures online, it wouldn't matter if he didn't make a video about it, she thought. But now that the hype is real, if we shoot a video of him making Doodle Cakes, the viewership would surely skyrocket!

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Now, partnerships were in place with businesses for range hoods, kitchen equipment, and seasonings.

Food ingredients were also provided by Boss Huang's company.

They were just missing the main sponsor for the title broadcast.

But there was no rush because the first three months were all sponsored by Lin Ji. Even if they secured a deal now, it wouldn't start for another three months, so they might as well wait.

Wait until the viewership stabilized at a high level before discussing it.

As for how to maintain that high level, naturally, that was by having the chefs prepare more appealing dishes.

Like the Dough Figurine Chef Xie filmed last time, and today's Lotus Cake as well as the Doodle Cake. These were dishes that could make viewership skyrocket.

"The boss said he added lard. Won't that make it very high in calories?"

Shu Yun, who was blatantly slacking off in front of the boss and the company's general manager, bit into a Doodle Cake, worried about gaining weight on her belly if she ate too much.

Zeng Xiaoqi, who was fantasizing about landing a big sponsorship deal, said, "No way. The Doodle Cake is so small, how much space could the lard take up? Maybe Boss Lin didn't put any lard in at all and is just saying that to make us eat them."

Having said that, she stuffed the remaining half of the Doodle Cake in her hand into her mouth. Two bites for one of these little darlings—so satisfying!

Geng Lele thought the self-deceiving antics of these older girls were even cuter than the Doodle Cakes. She was about to mock them when suddenly her phone rang.

She picked it up to see it was a call from Professor Cui and quickly answered.

"Professor, where are you? Hurry over! My Brother Xu didn't just make Lotus Cakes; he also made Doodle Cakes! Hurry up and come taste them. They're absolutely sweeter than first love!"

On the other end of the phone, Cui Qingyuan was silent. What did my first love ever do to you to deserve being used as a constant backdrop?

He said, "I'm almost there. Can you get a couple of people from the restaurant to help me carry some things? I've brought some ingredients for tonight, and there's quite a lot."

Ingredients? Just carrying stuff doesn't interest Geng Lele much. But if you're talking about ingredients, then I, Geng, cannot just stand by and watch!

She immediately replied, "Sure, sure! We'll come to the entrance right away to help you carry them."

After hanging up, she said to the older girls who were deceiving themselves, "Stop worrying about calories. My professor brought some ingredients for tonight, and it seems like a lot. Who can help me go down and carry them?"

Upon hearing about food, everyone sprang to their feet, ready to go down and check it out.

At that moment, Lin Xu had just finished frying the second batch.

To prevent the ladies from shirking, Lin Xu specifically had his kitchen helper take the elevator down with the kitchen trolley used for transporting ingredients, to help carry the load.

Soon, a delivery van stopped at the restaurant's entrance.

Cui Qingyuan pushed open the passenger door and got out, waving at the kitchen helper. Meanwhile, the driver had already opened the back of the van and started unloading several large cardboard boxes.

Shen Baobao and the others stared, baffled. What kind of ingredients requires such large cardboard boxes? Crocodile?

"Professor, what's this? You didn't bring our computer lab's server over, did you?"

While helping the kitchen helper load the boxes onto the trolley, Cui Qingyuan replied, "Hairy Crabs. Your Aunt Yan sent them from Shanghai. The quality should be good. My dorm doesn't even have a single pot, so I thought I'd bring them here for everyone to share."

Hairy Crabs! A wave of delight flashed in everyone's eyes. It looked like there was going to be a feast tonight! Being at Lin Ji was great; all sorts of delicious food practically stuffed itself into your mouth.

"I'll help carry!"

"I'll help you lift!"

"I'll steady it!"

Soon, the beautiful ladies, who were previously just onlookers, transformed into porters, helping to lift those large, instantly appealing cardboard boxes.

After everything was loaded onto the trolley, they all helped push it up the gentle slope at the restaurant's entrance, then chattering excitedly, they went inside.

Just as Cui Qingyuan was about to follow, Geng Lele suddenly asked, "Professor, why did Aunt Yan suddenly send you so many Hairy Crabs? I remember just yesterday you were posting on your social media about crab season arriving, and today the Hairy Crabs are here..."

Tsk tsk, feels like there's some juicy... cough, some history here.

Cui Qingyuan smiled. "We were just childhood playmates who got along very well. Lele, can you focus on your studies instead of digging up gossip all day? We're not in a gossip club, you know..."

With that, he walked into the restaurant first.

Following behind, Geng Lele smirked slightly. Just now, her professor's breathing was hurried, his facial expression slightly unnatural, his speech quickened, and he pushed up his glasses three times—clear signs of being flustered. Next time I see Aunt Yan, I'll have to observe her reactions and discreetly inquire about her personal situation. If they're both single, I'll find a way to play matchmaker. Whether it's helping her professor snag the billionaire Boss Yan or helping Aunt Yan land a highly intelligent Tsinghua professor, it seems like a remarkable achievement either way. Hmph, you like playing these

little games of ambiguity and subtlety, but I'm going to pierce right through that paper-thin veil. Rebellious.

Upstairs, after opening the outer cardboard boxes, they found another layer of boxes inside.

Opening these revealed the Hairy Crabs, tightly bound with string.

Each crab was lively, with a perfect appearance and a large size—absolutely top-tier quality.

"Isn't this too many?"

All those large cardboard boxes were full of them, giving Lin Xu the feeling he was facing a crab invasion.

Since there were so many crabs, well, they had to be eaten.

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Crabs can't withstand hunger—their flesh may shrink and deteriorate in just two or three days.

He brought over a large basin, filled it with water, and released the crabs into it one by one after untying their ropes.

"So many! We can't finish them in one meal!"

Lin Xu looked at Cui Qingyuan and asked, "Professor Cui, how do you like to eat crabs?"

Cui Qingyuan smiled and said, "For live crabs, steaming is the natural choice. Steamed crab with Floral Carving Wine is perfect, especially if the wine is over ten years old. You warm the wine in hot water, then enjoy it with the steamed crab—it's an absolute match made in heaven."

Wow, a real gourmand, Lin Xu thought.

Once it came to eating crabs, Cui Qingyuan seemed to get excited. He squatted by the basin, picked up a feisty crab waving its claws, and continued, "But the most delicious flavor of crab comes from the traditional Shanghai Drunken Crab. The live crabs are soaked for several days in seasoned brine. When you cut one open, the crab roe has congealed, and the crab meat is fresh with a hint of wine aroma—it's indescribably delicious."

Drunken Crab?

This really piqued Lin Xu's interest. He had thought about making Drunken Crab when he first saw the Hairy Crabs, but he was worried that Professor Cui might not like the taste of this raw, marinated delicacy, so he hadn't brought it up. After all, the crabs were Professor Cui's. Now that Drunken Crab was mentioned, it would be a shame not to prepare some.

Lin Xu said, "There are too many crabs today; we certainly won't finish them all. How about I use some Floral Carving Wine to make Drunken Crab? It would also preserve their freshness for a few more days."

"You know how to make Drunken Crab?" Cui Qingyuan looked at Lin Xu with surprise and delight, as he was just craving this delicacy. He hadn't expected Lin Xu to know how to make it. That's right, Cui Qingyuan mused. If he can make roasted wheat gluten and large pork chops—those Shanghai local dishes—so masterfully, it's not surprising he knows how to prepare Drunken Crab.

"Then I'll have to trouble you, Boss Lin. What ingredients do we need? I'll go buy them right now."

Despite growing up in Shanghai, Cui Qingyuan only knew how to enjoy local dishes, not how to make them.

Lin Xu smiled and said, "No need, no need. I'll just have someone deliver them."

He took out his phone and called Old Huang. "Boss Huang, do you have any good Floral Carving Wine?"

"Yeah, I have some that are over ten years old, fifteen years old, you name it. Why, are you having Hairy Crabs?"

Old Huang's nose is sharp indeed, almost like a bloodhound's... Lin Xu thought. He then said, "A regular customer brought some Hairy Crabs to the restaurant. I'm planning to steam some tonight and also prepare Drunken Crab. Send me some Floral Carving Wine that's over fifteen years old, and send plenty since we have a lot of crabs."

As soon as Old Huang heard there were many crabs, he got excited. "Do you need help eating them? My wife took the kids to Southern Yunnan, leaving me wondering where to eat dinner. How about this: the Floral Carving Wine is on me, in exchange for a meal. How does that sound?"

That sounds more than okay, Lin Xu thought.

He replied, "Then come on over. It's a good opportunity for you to check the quality of these Hairy Crabs and see if you can get your hands on some yourself."

With Hairy Crabs this big, it wouldn't do to keep them all to himself. In two days, his parents-in-law would be returning from Yinzhou, and he had to let them taste these excellent crabs. Moreover, he would send several boxes back to his hometown in Yinzhou for his family to enjoy these top-grade Hairy Crabs.

After hanging up the phone, Lin Xu said to Zhu Yong and Zhuang Yizhou, "You two are skilled at handling seafood, so please take care of these Hairy Crabs. Besides those we're steaming tonight, make the rest into Drunken Crabs."

If they were just ordinary crabs, they could be steamed to extract the roe and meat to make Crab Yellow Sauce. But it would be a waste to turn such large Hairy Crabs into sauce; it's better to eat them as they are. As for Crab Yellow Sauce, he could always make some later with smaller crabs.

Zhu Yong and Zhuang Yizhou carried the large basin back to the kitchen. They planned to soak the Hairy Crabs for a while, changing the water frequently to help them settle before cleaning.

Lin Xu placed the lotus cakes and Doodle Cakes he had made earlier on a plate and brought them to Cui Qingyuan with a smile. "Professor Cui, please try these two new snacks I made today."

"Wow, they look absolutely fantastic!"

Although Cui Qingyuan had seen the pictures Geng Lele had posted in her Moments, the real things were much more impressive than the photos. He took out his phone, snapped a picture of the exquisite snacks on the plate, and immediately shared it in his Moments, writing: "Came to Lin Ji for a meal with Hairy Crabs, just in time to catch Boss Lin making snacks. Lucky me!"

After posting, he picked up a Doodle Cake, took a bite, and was instantly enchanted by its crispy texture and sweet flavor, exclaiming, "Hey, these snacks are really something special! Delicious!"

"Professor Cui, you flatter me; they're just simple snacks," Lin Xu said modestly.

Lin Xu chatted with Cui Qingyuan for a few more moments before heading back to the kitchen to get busy.

He had originally intended to make Dry Pot Cauliflower, but now that there were so many Hairy Crabs, he decided to wait. It was best not to have too many dishes at once, which might overshadow the fresh, delicious taste of the Hairy Crabs.

On the kitchen workbench, Zhu Yong and Zhuang Yizhou changed the water for the Hairy Crabs several times before starting to clean them with a brush. Cleaning the Hairy Crabs primarily involved scrubbing the shell, joints, and belly to ensure all mud was removed, making the steamed crabs delicious. During cleaning, they also needed to lift the abdominal flap on each crab and squeeze out any waste. After a thorough cleaning and a couple more rinses, they also washed the ropes used to tie the Hairy Crabs. They then retied the crabs neatly, placed them belly-up on a steaming tray, and laid a piece of ginger on each belly. Then, they put them in the steamer to begin steaming.

After closing the steamer door, Zhuang Yizhou took some ginger to make the indispensable dipping sauce for Hairy Crabs—ginger vinegar. He cleaned and peeled the ginger, then placed it on the chopping board. He smashed it a few times with the flat side of his knife to spread it out. Then, flipping the knife, he used its spine to chop the smashed ginger into a fine mince, discarding the fibers to achieve the perfect texture. Whether eating Plain Chicken in Cantonese cuisine or shrimp and crab in the Yangtze River Delta region, minced ginger is an essential accompaniment.

Lin Xu made a round in the kitchen and decided to go downstairs to check on the marinated foods section.

At the stairway entrance, he saw his senior apprentice-brother Xie Baomin limping in, supported by Da Chun. Following them were Xie Yufei and Xie Yuhang, trying to suppress their laughter, and Su Peipei, who wore a look of helpless resignation.

"Brother-in-law, you need to grit your teeth and bear it..."

"Shut your mouth! I asked you for a fitness recommendation, not a suicide method!"

"But swinging the heavy ropes is genuinely for body conditioning..."

"Don't talk to me about heavy ropes! I don't want to see any kind of rope today!"

Lin Xu watched the scene in astonishment. "Senior Brother," he asked, "are you... are you okay?"

Chapter 724: Hurry, help me up to try it! Super Simple Drunken Crab Recipe!

Upon seeing his Junior Brother, Xie Baomin's face revealed a trace of desolation.

Pointing at his leg, he said, "I wanted to exercise, but I almost turned into the lame Li... Never listen to athletes' fitness advice; that's not exercising, that's suicide!"

Is it that miserable?

Lin Xu, putting aside his plans to visit the marinated foods section, helped Xie Baomin sit on a temporary seat next to the stairs intended for resting, "Don't get worked up, take a breather first..."

Then, he turned his face towards Xie Yufei and asked, "What happened to your dad?"

"Uncle said the most fat-burning workout in the gym is battle ropes, you know, swinging the heavy ropes. The calories burned in a few minutes exceed those of jogging for half an hour, so my dad wanted to give it a try. But he didn't swing properly and ended up pulled down..."

Battle ropes? You guys really know how to pick 'em.

This thing seems simple, like the jump rope games you played with neighborhood kids, just flinging two ropes to and fro. But it's quite difficult. Because professional battle ropes are heavy and usually ten or even twenty meters long, it requires full-body strength to swing them.

That part isn't actually the hardest. The difficult part is that once the ropes are swinging, they generate a huge pull through inertia. This force is swift and direct. Without proper preparation or if you're caught off guard, it's easy to be pulled down.

This is why battle ropes can rapidly burn fat: when swinging, you not only have to activate all your muscles to make the ropes move like waves, but you also have to counter the pulling force from the ropes. If you're not careful, the ropes could slip from your hands, or you could simply be pulled down by inertia.

Lin Xu knew so much about this because back in university, he had experienced the power of battle ropes in the school's equipment room. He'd also nearly been pulled down by the ropes that time. Fortunately, he played basketball regularly and was physically fit, which allowed him to barely hang on.

Looking at his Senior Brother's miserable state, Lin Xu couldn't help but sigh inwardly. Weaklings really shouldn't try such dangerous fitness programs.

Xie Baomin rubbed his leg, sounding a bit depressed, "It's a good thing Building Two doesn't have any reception duties recently. Otherwise, with this limp, the leaders would definitely have made me take time off..."

Time off? Isn't that a good thing? As a worker, you should be happy about that, Senior Brother.

Lin Xu said, "I have some Snacks I made upstairs. Senior Brother, why don't you go up and rest? You can try my cooking too."

Xie Baomin waved his hand, "Let your sister-in-law take the kids upstairs to eat. I won't go up. Just get me something simple to eat later. My leg is throbbing with pain, and I don't want to move around anymore."

Su Peipei took out a tissue, wiped the sweat off her husband's face, and said, "Didn't we just get a checkup at the hospital? It's just a ligament strain, nothing serious. A couple of days' rest should do it... Why are you becoming so delicate?"

Xie Baomin smiled, "It's because you spoil me."

Tsk, even when he's like this, you're still going to be all lovey-dovey?

Lin Xu said, "I'm steaming Hairy Crabs upstairs, all top quality. How about..."

He was just about to say he'd bring a few down for his Senior Brother to try once they were steamed, but was interrupted when Xie Baomin reached out his arm to Da Chun, "The doctor is right. I need to gradually move around to let the ligaments recover. It's not good to keep sitting. Da Chun, help me up. I'll try walking a few more steps..."

Just moments ago, he was acting like he'd broken a bone, and now he was getting up on his own.

Senior Brother, oh Senior Brother, aren't you afraid your wife will deal with you tonight?

After helping Xie Baomin into the elevator and going upstairs, this head chef, who just moments ago supposedly needed support to move, was now able to walk independently.

The therapeutic effects of crabs on legs are truly outstanding.

Lin Xu went downstairs again. After making a round in the marinated foods department, he was confident that today's roasted chicken would sell well. Although the neighbors might not eat roasted chicken every day, they could help spread the word. Quite a few nearby residents had been convinced by others to come and buy the roasted chicken.

It wasn't just the roasted chicken; other marinated dishes from Lin Ji were also popular items for these residents. Buying some marinated roasted chicken, pouring a cup of Liquor, and savoring the meal—this was the best pleasure of the holiday.

While checking the remaining ingredients in the marinated foods department, Lin Xu saw Lao Huang's Jinbei delivery van pull up and park steadily in a spot by the storefront. The door opened, and Lao Huang, wearing a baseball cap, stepped out. He took two cardboard boxes from the trunk, locked the car, then stacked the boxes and strode towards the shop entrance.

Lin Xu hurried out to open the door for him, "Welcome, welcome."

Lao Huang slipped inside, "One box, four jars. One jar, 1.25 kilograms of Floral Carving Wine. Ten kilograms of Floral Carving Wine in total. Enough for you, right?"

That's definitely enough. There's even enough Floral Carving Wine for when my father-in-law comes back from Yinzhou to have with crabs.

Lin Xu said, "Bringing so much Floral Carving Wine for just one crab meal, you're making me feel a bit embarrassed."

Lao Huang laughed heartily, "No need to be embarrassed. Just make steam-pot chicken a couple more times when you're free. Later, as it gets colder, we'll rely on that chicken soup to keep warm."

If that's what you're asking for, then it's absolutely no problem.

"I see Baomin's car parked outside. He's here too, isn't he?"

Lin Xu took one of the cardboard boxes, and they headed upstairs together, "My Senior Brother's family and his brother-in-law are all here. We're planning to have dinner together."

"Ho! I didn't even know Baomin had a brother-in-law. Well, I'll definitely have to have a couple of drinks with him later. And Baomin, too! I've known him for so long and had no idea he had a brother-in-law."

They arrived upstairs.

Chapter 725: Hurry, help me up to try it! Super Simple Drunken Crab Recipe! 2

Old Huang greeted Zeng Xiaoqi. He then looked at Xie Baomin, who had just emerged from the kitchen, and asked, "Why are you limping?"

"Twisted my foot... Didn't you say you were out of Floral Carving Wine? How come there's more now? Damn it, not a single truthful word comes out of your mouth."

Old Huang was probably wary of his senior brother and Dai Jianli freeloading all the time. So he declared some of the sought-after ingredients as unavailable.

"I found them while rummaging through the warehouse. I was planning to keep them to savor slowly myself, but since your junior brother wanted them, I brought the whole lot over."

"Tsk, 'the whole lot' is a fine choice of words."

Xie Baomin patted Old Huang's shoulder and pointed to Cui Qingyuan, who was sitting not far away chatting with Geng Lele. "That's Professor Cui from Tsinghua University. Go and say hello; today's Hairy Crabs are all sponsored by Professor Cui."

Upon hearing this, Old Huang knew this was an opportunity to expand his connections. He knew Professor Cui; the refined professor had even spoken at Geng Lele's university entrance celebration previously. But it had been crowded then, and they hadn't had a chance to chat. Since today presented such a great opportunity, he definitely needed to get acquainted.

Old Huang was in the business of high-end ingredients. This field was one where connections mattered immensely, as his clients were all people of considerable social standing, and regular advertising had little effect. Only introductions between acquaintances could connect him with potential clients.

While Old Huang went to greet them, Lin Xu and Che Zai moved the Floral Carving Wine to the kitchen.

Opening the cardboard box, they found black ceramic jars inside, each sealed with sealing wax. The packaging alone indicated that this Floral Carving Wine wasn't cheap; otherwise, the cost of the packaging itself wouldn't be recouped.

The sealing wax was stamped with a date: brewed in '06. Although he wasn't sure if the stamp was genuine, the packaging itself was quite impressive.

Using a knife to scrape off the sealing wax, they opened the lid, and the distinctive, delicate fragrance of Floral Carving Wine drifted out.

"Boss, this wine doesn't smell much different from ordinary Rice Wine," Che Zai sniffed, a little suspicious they might have been ripped off by Old Huang. He was now in charge of purchasing. With a kitchen full of knowledgeable head chefs and master chefs, he was terrified of buying subpar ingredients and earning their disdain.

"Rice Wine needs to be warmed," Lin Xu explained. "This allows the wine's aroma to fully develop and any off-flavors to dissipate."

The crabs in the steamer were almost done. Perfect timing to warm some wine and get ready to eat.

He filled a pot halfway with water, placed it on the stove, and heated it to just over fifty degrees Celsius. Then, he turned the flame down low and placed the ceramic jar of Floral Carving Wine into the pot to warm.

Normally, one would heat a pot of water to seventy degrees Celsius, turn off the heat, and then place the wine container inside. However, today's black ceramic jar was quite thick and a poor conductor of heat. Coupled with the substantial quantity of wine, it needed to be gently heated in a water bath for a while.

Compared to Liquor, the production process for Rice Wine is somewhat cruder, which can result in some off-flavors. Warming it before drinking helps these dissipate and intensifies the wine's true aroma. Additionally, a small amount of methanol is unavoidably produced during the winemaking process. Gently heating the wine allows the highly volatile methanol to evaporate, making it healthier to drink. Actually, decanting red wine serves a similar purpose.

As the temperature inside the ceramic jar rose, the rich aroma of the Rice Wine soon began to permeate the kitchen.

Once the wine was warmed, Zhu Yong opened the steamer and brought out the crabs, which had turned a vibrant red.

"Dinner's ready!"

The crowd, eagerly awaiting the crabs, gathered immediately at the call.

A basin of shredded ginger and vinegar dip was ready. Those who liked ginger could scoop from the bottom, while those who didn't could simply take some vinegar from the top. Either way, the potent, ginger-infused vinegar was the perfect dipping sauce for the crabs.

The men who were drinking set up a separate table to avoid disturbing the ladies enjoying their crabs.

Lin Xu brought over the warmed Rice Wine, set out several wine bowls, and, holding the ceramic jar, began to pour.

Sitting beside him, Cui Qingyuan took a deep breath and said, "This Floral Carving Wine has such a rich aroma! Excellent wine, Boss Huang."

Old Huang picked up a crab and lifted its carapace. The rich roe and fat immediately began to ooze out. He slurped it up and said, "Professor Cui, if you like it, I can drop off a case for you next time I'm passing Tsinghua University."

Xie Baomin kicked him. "Damn it, didn't you say you were out?"

Old Huang chuckled awkwardly. "There's just a tiny bit left in the warehouse. I'll get you a case too, but you absolutely mustn't mention it at Fishing Platform. Those head chefs there are like wolves; they even try to snatch the purple sweet potatoes I buy..."

Cui Qingyuan asked curiously, "What's so special about them that they'd fight over them? Is the quality that good?"

Xie Baomin shook his head. "It's because free food always tastes better."

With that, he picked up a crab. Just as he was about to untie the string binding it, he suddenly remembered his earlier declaration about not wanting to see any more string today and couldn't help but chuckle.

I really shouldn't make such absolute statements in the future. Otherwise, they come back to bite you in an instant.

Luckily, Da Chun wasn't at this table; otherwise, who knows what that guy might blurt out.

Everyone ate crabs and chatted, occasionally taking a sip from their bowls of aromatic Floral Carving Wine, thoroughly enjoying themselves.

After eating several crabs, Lin Xu had satisfied his craving.

He returned to the kitchen and made himself a plate of Yangzhou Fried Rice. Just as he was about to dig in, a certain young lady with the surname Shen hijacked it, lamenting, "Why is it that they all get to eat with such relish, while I can't get any meat out of these crabs?"

Lin Xu was speechless. Could it be, he thought, that you just don't know how to eat a crab?

He asked curiously, "I saw there are also swimming crabs in the villa's fridge. How do you eat them at home?"

"Aunt Liu picks out the meat for me," she said. "She just pokes it with a crab leg, and the meat comes right out. I tried that earlier... but the crab leg broke off inside the meat."

Chapter 726: Hurry, help me up to try it! Super Simple Drunken Crab Recipe! 3

"Then let me peel one for you," Lin Xu said with a smile.

"Yes, please!" Dundun nodded eagerly.

Seeing his own Baobao so eager, Lin Xu smiled helplessly.

He had been waiting for that response, hadn't he?

In the past, Lin Xu's crab peeling skill was just average. However, after acquiring the Drunken Crab Technique, which included some crab peeling tricks, he swiftly extracted all the meat from a crab.

The crab meat was added to Shen Baobao's fried rice, while the shell was reassembled to look like a whole crab again.

It wasn't mealtime yet. Lin Xu, having nothing else to do, peeled a few more crabs and creatively reassembled their shells into shapes like Transformers, Kamen Rider, and Predators, astonishing Xie Baomin's two sons.

After Shen Baobao had eaten to his heart's content, Lin Xu made himself another serving of fried rice.

After finishing the fried rice, he began preparing the ingredients and seasonings needed for the Drunken Crab.

Drunken Crab holds a prestigious place in local cuisine, perfect as a complement to drinks or congee. A serving of tender, flavorful Drunken Crab is definitely the best accompaniment.

Of course, that's the case for people from the Yangtze River Delta region.

But for outsiders, rashly consuming this kind of raw crab marinated in liquor would likely lead to symptoms of diarrhea.

Raw marinated dishes, whether it's the local Drunken Shrimp and Drunken Crab or the notoriously risky Chaoshan raw marinated dishes, pose a significant challenge to the stomach.

It's not recommended for non-locals to try.

The method for preparing Drunken Crab is simple: wash the live crabs, get them drunk in strong liquor, clean them again, and then marinate them in a drunken marinade.

The so-called drunken marinade is made by combining Floral Carving Wine with a simmered sauce made from Crystal Sugar, Light Soy Sauce, and spices.

The ingredients for the simmered sauce weren't many. Besides ginger and garlic, it also needed Star Anise, bay leaves, Aged Tangerine Peel, and Sichuan peppercorns. The Aged Tangerine Peel effectively removed any fishy smell, while its slight bitterness enhanced the crab's sweetness.

As for other spices, they are used sparingly, mainly to give the drunken marinade a hint of spice.

If too many are used, the original aroma of the crab will be overwhelmed.

Without them, a fishy taste might develop.

In fact, in the Yangtze River Delta region, ready-made drunken marinades for Drunken Shrimp and Drunken Crab are easily available, with the main components being these few.

Once he had prepared the spices, ginger, and garlic, Lin Xu began working on the seasonings for the simmered sauce.

The seasonings needed for Drunken Crab are simple: just Light Soy Sauce and Crystal Sugar.

The Light Soy Sauce enhances the savory, salty flavor, while the Crystal Sugar helps in enhancing and preserving freshness, effectively preventing the drunken marinade from spoiling.

Today, as he was preparing dozens of crabs, Lin Xu naturally needed more seasonings.

He brought over four full bottles of Light Soy Sauce and a large bowl of Crystal Sugar.

Then he placed a clean stainless steel pot on the stove. He poured in the Light Soy Sauce and Crystal Sugar, added slices of ginger and various spices. He first brought them to a boil over high heat, then simmered them on low heat.

Once the Crystal Sugar had melted, the simmered sauce could be poured out and taken to the cold storage to cool.

This step is similar to making the sauce used for pickled cucumbers.

However, the simmered sauce for Drunken Crab is lighter, more in line with the Yangtze River Delta region's taste preferences. It uses Soy Sauce for flavor and a large amount of sugar, giving the sauce a rich, sweet-salty taste.

While the simmered sauce cooled, he cleaned the remaining crabs with a brush.

When making Drunken Crab, it was essential to clean the crab shells thoroughly; otherwise, even locals might suffer from upset stomachs.

The cleaned crabs were put in a deeper basin, and then a whole bottle of strong liquor was poured over them.

After pouring, he quickly covered the basin with a lid, securing it with a heavy object to prevent the crabs inside from pushing it off.

This step is actually what makes them "Drunken Crabs."

Soaking in strong liquor allows the crabs to get drunk and expel any dirt from their stomachs. This step not only cleans the crabs but also begins to marinate the crab meat.

In the process of making Drunken Crab, this step is indispensable.

Furthermore, the liquor must be high-proof. The higher the alcohol content, the more thoroughly the crabs get drunk, and the tastier the Drunken Crabs turn out.

Fifteen minutes later, the crabs in the basin stopped moving.

Upon opening the lid, the crabs inside had mostly flipped onto their backs.

The originally clear liquor at the bottom of the basin had turned cloudy.

He took out the slightly twitching crabs and rinsed them again with clean water.

The reason it's called a rinse is that these crabs should not be washed for long; otherwise, the liquor absorbed by the meat would be lost, and all the effort would be for naught.

After cleaning, he dried the crabs with paper towels and set them aside.

By then, the simmered sauce was also mostly cool. Lin Xu took a medium-sized, clean, dry glass jar and began the marinating process.

He placed the dried crabs one by one into the jar, poured in the cooled simmered sauce, and then added two cans of Floral Carving Wine.

For a better flavor, Lin Xu added half a bottle of grape wine.

The grape wine enhanced the aroma of the liquor and made the crabs taste even more delicious.

After completing this step, he covered the jar, sealed it, and moved it to the refrigeration room of the cold storage. In a few days, these Drunken Crabs could be unsealed and ready to eat.

While Lin Xu was moving the jar from the kitchen to the cold storage, Cui Qingyuan, who was clearly a bit drunk, took photos with his phone and immediately posted them to his social media feed:

"Had too many crabs and couldn't finish them. Luckily, Boss Lin knows how to make Drunken Crab. In three or four days, the deliciousness will emerge."

Sending this message was to tell Yan Lin that the crabs she had given him were not wasted and would be fully consumed.

Yan Lin, who was in Shanghai planning to dine with clients, saw this and immediately turned to her secretary and asked, "What are my plans for the next three or four days?"

The secretary adjusted her glasses, looked at a neat little notebook, and read, "The day after tomorrow, you're scheduled to leave for Yangcheng to attend an expo, then go to Shenzhen to explore the market there, before flying to Hainan..."

She was interrupted by Yan Lin before she could finish. "Cancel them."

"Ah?" The secretary was a bit taken aback. "President Yan, which stop are you canceling?"

"Cancel them all! Arrange for me to go to Beijing the day after tomorrow or the day after that. Contact President Shen to see if he is in Beijing. If he is, I plan to discuss some further cooperation with him."

This?

The secretary was somewhat surprised.

Why has President Yan been so keen on going to Beijing lately?

Yan Lin finished speaking and picked up her phone, looking at the photo on her social media feed.

I paid for those crabs, so swinging by to eat a couple of Drunken Crabs afterwards—that's reasonable, right?

Thinking of Lin Ji's delicious food, the image of Dundun's adorably clumsy look unconsciously appeared in her mind. She wondered how that plump cat was doing recently.

"Before you go, help me pick out a gift for Dundun. You know the store manager, right? Talk to her and find out what Dundun likes."

Not long after, Shu Yun, who was still savoring the taste of steamed crabs, received the message.

What does Dundun like?

Recalling Dundun's posture earlier that day as he sat upright on the piano stool while they were filming a video, she tapped out a message:

"A Steinway grand piano!"

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"A Steinway grand piano?"

Yan Lin curiously looked at her secretary, Xiao Qing, and asked, "Did the store manager really say that?"

If a piano student or someone studying music wanted a Steinway, that would be normal, since the quality of Steinway pianos is universally acknowledged as good. But a cat liking a Steinway always felt somewhat magical.

Xiao Qing tapped on her phone, enlarged the photo Shu Yun had sent, and handed it to Yan Lin. "Yes, she even sent me a photo. Look, President Yan, this afternoon Dundun was sitting in front of the piano, with that serious little expression. Doesn't he look like a concert pianist about to perform on stage?"

Yan Lin took the phone and immediately laughed. "You're right, the little guy really looks the part... Since he likes it, go ahead and order one from the Steinway store in Beijing."

"Okay, President Yan, I'll have someone place the order right away."

Xiao Qing was just about to arrange for someone from the Yanjing branch to handle this when Yan Lin asked again, "What's been trending online these past few days?"

Trending? Xiao Qing wasn't sure which aspect President Yan wanted to hear about. Since the CEO seemed interested in Dundun, she said, "Today, Boss Lin of Lin Ji posted an update with a video of Dundun. It's said to be behind-the-scenes footage from a shoot, but there's some controversy online."

"Controversy? What controversy?"

At this moment, Yan Lin was in her Bentley Mulsanne, on her way to a client dinner. Originally, she had wanted to rest her eyes for a while, but hearing there was controversy surrounding Dundun's video, she became curious. Such a cute little guy, and people are doubting him?

Xiao Qing opened her phone again, launched the short video app, scrolled to Lin Xu's update, and handed it to Yan Lin. "Boss Lin posted a video of Dundun taking a selfie, mimicking how a person walks. Apparently, this was during a meeting where Lin Xu's fiancée and some friends were discussing how to shoot videos. Dundun wandered into the shot and took a selfie... Some netizens are questioning if the video is fake."

These words instantly piqued Yan Lin's interest. "Let me see how this little darling plays with selfies."

「In the store.」

Shu Yun scratched Dundun's chin and asked, "Are you not tired after your nap? I saw a video online of someone's cat playing with a tablet. Should I buy one for you too?"

Dundun stretched out his small, crimson tongue and licked the back of Shu Yun's hand a few times. The beautiful general manager was greatly moved. She hadn't expected that the little guy, who seemed grumpy with everyone else, would be so close to her.

That tablet, Godmom will buy it for you!

She picked up her phone, selected the latest model of tablet, and immediately placed the order.

Other people's kitties play with tablets, so my godson must have one too.

Such a well-behaved kitty. Never mind a tablet, even a Steinway piano... Ugh, this godmom really can't afford that. Entry Level pianos aren't very exciting, and anything decent starts at over five hundred thousand. As for performance and collector's editions, they start from one million upward. This isn't a piano; it's practically a pile of stacked-up Coins!

After ordering the tablet, Shu Yun opened WeChat and noticed that Xiao Qing hadn't replied to her messages. This secretary is always like this, sending vague messages. Last time she asked for some photos of Dundun, and this time she's asking what Dundun likes. Could it be that President Yan misses Dundun?

She rubbed her godson's round, rotund head. "Our Dundun is so popular. So many people like you, aren't you happy?"

Dundun had originally been lying beside her, rolling around and showing off his belly. But upon hearing this, he got up and started staring blankly out the window.

It wasn't until Shu Yun rubbed his head again that the little guy meowed affectionately. He then lay down on the service counter, exposing the primordial pouch between his hind legs and belly, as if inviting his godmom to pet him.

The so-called primordial pouch is a section of loose skin at the base of a cat's hind legs, a feature present in almost all felines. It helps reduce friction during running and stores fat. Cats that have a primordial pouch are considered healthy. If it's absent, nutritional supplementation is necessary.

Dundun was plump, so his primordial pouch was quite prominent, but he strictly forbade anyone from touching it. Once, Chen Yan tried to touch it and almost got scratched. She hadn't expected the little guy to voluntarily show this spot today. It seemed he had completely let his guard down.

Shu Yun raised her hand to touch Dundun's soft primordial pouch, then scratched his belly where his glossy, gray-blue fur shone.

After playing for a while, Shen Baobao brought over some steamed rabbit meat. After eating, Dundun went back into his little house and fell fast asleep.

「Upstairs.」

Xie Baomin, having eaten and drunk his fill, carefully moved his strained leg. Indeed, after some Rice Wine, the pain really has lessened quite a bit.

"National Day is coming up. Junior Brother, aren't you planning to introduce any new dishes?"

"I've added roasted chicken and braised chicken liver to the menu. Tomorrow, I'll introduce Dry Pot Cauliflower. Oh, and when you leave today, take a few roasted chickens back with you. Try my cooking."

At lunchtime, the roasted chicken wasn't ready yet, so they missed it fresh from the oven. And just now, they had crab, which doesn't pair well with roasted chicken, so it wasn't served. This meant Xie Baomin's family hadn't tasted the roasted chicken yet today.

Hearing about Dry Pot Cauliflower, both Xie Yufei and Xie Yuhang's eyes lit up. It seemed this was also a dish they had often eaten at school.

Dachun, on the other hand, seemed more interested in the roasted chicken.

Xie Baomin said, "We don't need the roasted chicken. Just pack one for Dachun; he's a big eater... My leg means I won't be able to cook for the next couple of days. I might as well come here to eat tomorrow. That way, I can also try your Dry Pot Cauliflower."

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With this arrangement, smiles appeared on the two children's faces, and Dachun was very satisfied.

Su Peipei felt that her husband had become more family-oriented recently, unlike before when he was entirely focused on Fishing Platform and his work.

Lin Xu said to the valet, "Go downstairs and pack a roast chicken, along with some marinated delicacies."

"Right away!"

After seeing off his fellow disciple and family, Lin Xu returned to the kitchen, planning to make some Dry Pot Sauce in the lull before the evening rush. Dry Pot dishes are inseparable from Dry Pot Sauce. Adding this special sauce not only makes Dry Pot dishes tastier but also gives them a very rich aroma.

Dry Pot is a cooking method popular in regions like Gan, Xiang, Gui, Sichuan, and Yunnan, originating from the fire pits of rural homes. A fire pit is a multi-functional stove unique to the south, used for cooking, heating, and boiling water. In the cold of winter, freshly stir-fried dishes cool quickly, so placing the food around the fire pit to eat keeps the dishes warm and the people cozy.

Although Dry Pot is popular in various places, it was Sichuan chefs—more precisely, those from Mianyang—who first brought this style of dish from rural fire pits to restaurant tables. They finished cooking the dishes on the stove and innovatively placed them in a small pot with a mild fire underneath to keep the pot constantly steaming. To differentiate it from hotpot, the chefs at the time coined the term "Dry Pot," based on the dish's characteristic lack of soup or water. Actually, Dry Pot isn't truly dry; there's a lot of Red Oil underneath. This is why these dishes become more flavorful the more you eat them—with so much Red Oil, how could they not be delicious?

Later, Dry Pot evolved by combining with hotpot, creating a dining style where Dry Pot dishes are eaten first, and then soup is added to cook other ingredients. Dishes such as Dry Pot Large Shrimp and Dry Pot Duck Heads developed in this way.

In the early stages of Dry Pot development, there was no Dry Pot Sauce. Chefs found that dishes simmered longer had stronger flavors. To make the dishes delicious from the start, they came up with the idea of Dry Pot Sauce. The sauce isn't complicated to make. It's just Red Oil Doubanjiang, Fermented Black Beans, Sticky Rice Cake chili, and spices simmered together for a long time. The resulting sauce is known as Dry Pot Sauce. Of course, this is just the most basic version. In more upscale restaurants,

additional ingredients are added according to the different dishes. For example, when making Dry Pot Shrimp, some seafood sauce is added to enhance the umami flavor. For Dry Pot Duck Heads, Peanut Butter and Chu Hou Paste are needed to increase the aroma and unique house flavor. As for Dry Pot Fatty Intestines, some chopped Pickled Peppers are required to add a tart and spicy counterpoint to the greasy fatty intestines. Although Dry Pot dishes often use a single base sauce, it's crucial to adjust it flexibly according to the specific ingredients of each dish. Otherwise, if all dishes taste the same, customers will quickly tire of them.

Lin Xu prepared about ten pounds of dried chili segments. After sifting out the seeds, he boiled a pot of water and poured in the dried chili segments to simmer on low heat. Once the chili segments had swelled, he scooped them out to drain. Next, he brought over the large food processor used for making sauces in the restaurant and poured in a whole five-pound canister of Doubanjiang. The biggest difference between Dry Pot Sauce and other sauces is that all ingredients need to be minced so that the flavors can be released better during the simmering process.

The Doubanjiang was originally supposed to be minced, but his master had said that a good chef should be adept at leveraging the power of technology.

After adding the Doubanjiang, Lin Xu brought over the bean sauce used for Pork Ribs and, using a strainer, scooped out a large spoonful of steamed, soft Fried Bean Curd from it. Fermented Black Beans give dishes a rich, savory aroma and are an indispensable ingredient in Dry Pot Sauce. After adding a spoonful of Fried Bean Curd, Lin Xu also put in a spoonful of Raw Fermented Black Beans.

He began to blend. Turning on the equipment, he pressed the button for three seconds, paused, pressed it again for three seconds, and continued this cycle. Using this rotate-pause method allowed the Doubanjiang to be minced without turning into mush, achieving the same effect as if it had been cut with a knife. Once the Doubanjiang mixture was properly blended, he poured it out. Then, he put the boiled chili segments into the processor and minced them as well.

Next, Lin Xu took out the spices needed for the Dry Pot Sauce. The spices weren't complicated, mainly including Sichuan peppercorns, star anise, cinnamon, bay leaves, Angelica dahurica, white cardamom, fennel, and Cumin Seeds. After preparing all these spices, Lin Xu also brought over a few monk fruits, the quantity based on the amount of Doubanjiang and Sticky Rice Cake chili. Monk fruit is an essential ingredient in Dry Pot Sauce. This ingredient, mostly used for making tea, adds a subtle sweetness to the Dry Pot Sauce. It not only neutralizes some of the spiciness but also enhances the overall flavor.

He placed a wok on the stove over low heat. Before the wok heated up, he added all the spices. The monk fruit, being rather large, needed to be crushed. He dry-roasted the spices over low heat to slowly

bring out their aroma. He then transferred these spices to a grinder and ground them into a coarse powder. Finally, he prepared some Ginger and Garlic Mince to enhance the flavor, completing the preparation of all the ingredients.

Lin Xu set up a large wok and began making the Dry Pot Sauce. Since he was making a sauce, he carefully swirled oil in the wok several times to ensure it was well-seasoned and to prevent sticking. After seasoning the wok, he added about half a small basin of Seasoning Oil and two large spoonfuls of lard. He was preparing a substantial amount of sauce today, enough for around two hundred servings of Dry Pot Cauliflower, so the quantity of oil used was also quite generous. When the oil was at low heat, he added the minced Doubanjiang in batches to the wok. There was so much Doubanjiang that adding it all at once would cause the oil to splatter or overflow. It had to be added gradually to ensure it fully integrated with the Seasoning Oil in the wok.

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After everything was added, he simmered it on low heat.

This step couldn't be rushed. It needed to be simmered slowly, ensuring that the Red Oil from the Doubanjiang and the aroma of the two types of fermented beans were fully extracted before proceeding to the next step.

This process was slow, taking about twenty minutes, until the Doubanjiang in the pot was thoroughly cooked, even achieving a dry, fragrant scent.

Once it reached this stage, he added the prepared Sticky Rice Cake chili and continued to simmer.

The Sticky Rice Cake chili was already saturated with water. As soon as it hit the pot, steam billowed up. The somewhat clashing aromas of the Doubanjiang and chili would then diffuse with the steam, making the sauce's fragrance even richer and more mellow.

Originally, the Dry Pot Sauce was designed based on the intense aroma that results from the long simmering times required by dry pot dishes, so it shouldn't have any overwhelmingly pungent smell.

He needed to draw out these flavors slowly, leaving only a rich and gentle fragrance.

When the Sticky Rice Cake chili was nearly done, he added the Ginger and Garlic Mince, followed by the ground spice powder.

After adding all these ingredients, Lin Xu poured in two whole bottles of oyster sauce, two large scoops of White Sugar, and one bottle of Steamed Fish Sauce.

He continued to stir and simmer it into a sauce, then turned off the heat and scooped it out.

By this point, it was already eight in the evening, and the dinner rush at the restaurant was almost over.

"Boss, can we eat this sauce now?"

Ma Zhiqiang, the chef from North China who was relatively unfamiliar with dry pot dishes, had been tantalized by the aroma, so he was eager to try it as soon as it was ready.

As Lin Xu scooped it into a bowl, he said, "Normally, it needs to sit for a day and a night before use to let the flavors meld. But since it's just for us, we don't need to be that particular. Let's eat it tomorrow at noon and try it out in the restaurant tonight."

"Alright! Oh, boss, the Doubanjiang and those seasonings are quite salty, isn't the sauce too salty?"

Ma Zhiqiang's question amused Lin Xu. "Not at all. A small spoonful is enough when cooking, and it also saves the hassle of seasoning, which is more efficient for restaurants."

Lin Xu placed the sauce in the cold storage to cool naturally, then washed the pot, preparing to leave work early.

He had been juggling cooking customer orders with the task of simmering the Dry Pot Sauce, leaving him utterly exhausted and wanting to rest early.

After informing Wei Qian, Lin Xu removed his apron and went downstairs.

First, he greeted the customers dining downstairs before returning to the service counter.

At that moment, Shen Baobao was clumsily performing the "Three Immortals Return to the Cave" trick for Dundun based on an online tutorial, using several disposable cups and a piece of dried fish.

Dundun had never seen such a performance and found it quite amusing.

He focused intently on Shen Baobao's hands, his little tail wagging gently, looking very pleased.

The mother-son relationship was fully mended.

Finally, after many mistakes, the "Three Immortals Return to the Cave" trick was completed.

"Alright, it's your turn to guess. If you guess right, you get to eat it."

Shen Baobao sighed as if a heavy burden had been lifted. In her relaxation, she raised her hand a bit too high, bumping the middle inverted cup and revealing the dried fish inside.

Dundun, pretending not to see, thoughtfully reached his paw towards the leftmost cup.

After hesitating, he then reached towards the right cup.

All the while, he glanced at Shu Yun nearby as if contemplating seeking help from the audience.

But in the end, he placed his paw on the center cup, gently pushed it, and the dried fish was revealed.

"Wow, my son is so smart! Come on, Mommy will give you two more pieces of dried fish."

Lin Xu: "..."

Let's not make it so hard for the kid to cooperate with you next time; it's heart-wrenching to watch.

Moreover, a cat's sense of smell is no less superior to that of a dog and many times more developed than a human's. Even with their eyes closed, they can accurately discern the location of dried fish. Playing the 'Three Immortals Return to the Cave' trick with a cat is futile, no matter how fancy your maneuvers.

As Dundun began eating the dried fish, Lin Xu came over and said, "Let's head back. I'm a bit tired today and plan to rest early."

"Okay, wait... I'll go upstairs and grab some chestnuts."

Once Shen Baobao left, Lin Xu rubbed Dundun's big head. "Thanks for working so hard to cheer up your mom... Tomorrow, I'll see what kind of meat you haven't tried before and get some for you to taste."

Upon hearing this, Dundun stretched out his fuzzy paw and slapped it into Lin Xu's hand.

A consensus was reached!

「The next morning」

After Lin Xu had marinated all the roasted chickens at the deli, he called Lao Huang. "Got any rare meats recently?"

"Yes, the pigeons are particularly plump right now. Want to try some?"

Pigeons?

Recalling that Dundun had never tried pigeon meat before, Lin Xu responded, "Then send some over. My senior brother and his family are coming for lunch. I need to figure out what's best to cook."

As soon as Lao Huang heard that Xie Baomin was coming to eat at the restaurant and that pigeon was on the menu, he said over the phone, "Then I might as well join you guys for lunch. The pigeon will cover my meal. Oh, and invite Professor Cui too. I had a great chat with him yesterday."

Hit it off?

Lin Xu didn't expect the delivery guy and the AI research mogul to get along so well.

He laughed and said, "Sure, I'll call Professor Cui in the morning to invite him over for pigeon and have my senior brother brainstorm a pigeon dish. If it works out, we can add it to the menu."

Lao Huang, who was enjoying a breakfast of dough rings and soybean juice at a street stall, immediately chuckled.

See, business is coming!

After hanging up, the restaurant's breakfast was also ready.

Zhuang Yizhou arrived early today and made Yangchun noodles, a trio of potstickers, and spring rolls.

As Lin Xu tasted a spring roll, Zhuang Yizhou said, "Boss, the video of Dundun's selfie has already hit over five hundred thousand likes and made it into the top three on the short video platform's trending list. When are you going to release the next episode?"

Over half a million likes so quickly?

Chewing on the spring roll in his mouth, Lin Xu said, "Today, I'll update after we're not so busy... This spring roll is well-made. Is it tough to do? If it's not too tough, I'd like to learn how to make it."

"Not tough at all. We can start right now if you'd like."

Lin Xu stuffed the remaining spring roll into his mouth. "Then let's start!"

Chapter 730: Old Huang pigeonholed the promised pigeon! The favorite of foodies—Dry Pot Cauliflower!

It was National Day, so Shen Baobao didn't have to work; Lin Xu decided to let her sleep in.

The young woman had brought back a large bag of sugar-roasted chestnuts last night. She'd settled in with her tablet and headphones, binge-watching her shows until well past two in the morning.

If I try to wake her now, she probably won't even be able to open her eyes.

The most crucial part of making spring rolls is the wrapper. It needs to be thin yet resilient, without any holes or gaps. When these wrappers are filled with the prepared three-shreds filling and fried in a wok, they become the beloved three-shreds spring rolls of the Jiangsu and Zhejiang region.

"The spring roll wrapper is essentially a well-beaten batter," Zhuang Yizhou explained, busily working as he detailed the key points. "Last night, just as we were about to leave, Lin Daiyu, who was here waiting for Zhu Yong to finish his shift, mentioned spring rolls. Coincidentally, I know how to make them, so I whipped up some batter. It's perfect to use today."

He added flour to a bowl with a pinch of salt, then poured in water, stirring it into a viscous batter. He continued to stir with chopsticks, always in the same direction, until the batter was smooth and free of lumps. By this point, the batter would have developed elasticity. After resting for over an hour, it would become soft and pliable, the kind that wouldn't drip even when held.

To give Lin Xu a more direct understanding, after frying the spring rolls in the wok, Zhuang Yizhou brought over the remaining batter he hadn't used for the wrappers to demonstrate.

Zhuang Yizhou plugged in the electric baking pan to reheat it. He then grabbed a handful of batter and swirled it quickly on the hot surface. A round, thin layer of batter immediately appeared.

After a few seconds, the heat solidified this layer of batter into a thin pancake. It was incredibly thin, almost translucent. This was the spring roll wrapper.

Watching Zhuang Yizhou handle the batter, Lin Xu finally understood the process of making spring rolls.

Lin Xu picked up a wrapper and placed it on the cutting board. Using chopsticks, he took some of the shredded pork, chives, and shredded wood ear mushrooms that Zhuang Yizhou had prepared. He then rolled it all up in the spring roll wrapper and folded in the ends. Finally, he dipped a brush into a starch-water mixture, spread it on the edge of the wrapper, and rolled it up tightly, sealing it. A spring roll was now complete.

It seemed quite simple.

The ingredients for three-shreds spring rolls weren't fixed. One could use shredded carrots, shredded winter bamboo shoots, shredded shiitake mushrooms, shredded wood ear mushrooms, shredded chicken breast, vermicelli, chives, chive sprouts, or yellow chives in various combinations.

Lin Xu enjoyed a large bowl of Yangchun noodles accompanied by spring rolls and potstickers.

To prepare it, a small spoonful of lard and a drizzle of soy sauce were placed in a bowl. Then, some of the hot broth from cooking the noodles was ladled in, and the lard was stirred until it melted. Finally, the cooked fine noodles were added and sprinkled with chopped green onions.

He took a deep breath; the rich aroma seemed to drill straight into his nostrils.

Yangchun noodles were considered the simplest type. For a more extravagant touch, one could add some fried shrimp roe, which would further enhance the noodles' savory and rich flavor.

After eating his fill, Lin Xu packed up some spring rolls and potstickers and carried them to the residential complex behind the shop.

To coax his Baobao out of bed, I'll have to lure her like a stray cat—start with food and establish trust with delicacies.

"Hmm... I'm so sleepy~~~~"

On the bed, Shen Baobao, still half-asleep, complained while instinctively reaching a hand towards the enticing aroma of food. This greedy-little-cat expression made Lin Xu chuckle helplessly.

"Why don't you eat and then go back to sleep? You can't be hungry anyway, after eating so many chestnuts last night..."

Before he could finish, Shen Baobao, who had seemed too drowsy to even open her eyes, suddenly sat bolt upright. "Who ate a lot?" she retorted, pouting. "I barely had any! Those chestnuts were impossible to peel once they cooled down. I had to bite them open with my teeth... I really didn't eat that many."

Hmph! I could tolerate you saying other things, but implying I ate a lot of chestnuts? That's absolutely unacceptable! Because I really didn't eat that many...

Lin Xu reached out and gently pinched Shen Baobao's smooth, delicate cheek. "Since you're awake, you might as well get up. We made Yangchun noodles, spring rolls, and potstickers at the shop. If you're still sleepy, you can always go back to bed after breakfast. It's not too late... What do you want to wear today? I'll get it for you."

"That Sakura Memory set from the closet... you know, the pink underwear, the red joggers, and that white hoodie. Your Baobao is going for a sporty-girl look today."

Lin Xu opened the wardrobe and began searching through the mass of clothes. The underwear was easy to find, neatly stacked in a drawer. The joggers and hoodie, however, took a bit more searching.

When they first moved in, the wardrobe had seemed enormous. But as Shen Baobao kept bringing more clothes over from her parents' place every few days, it had started to feel quite cramped.

As he searched, he remarked, "I didn't really notice it before, but with so many clothes, the wardrobe seems small now. Still, if we bought a bigger one, there wouldn't be any space for it in the bedroom..."

Just as he finished speaking, he found the joggers and hoodie.

Shen Baobao tossed her hair back and, reaching behind her, fastened her bra. Then, she offered a sincere suggestion, "Why don't we move to a bigger place? This apartment is a bit small, you know. It's not very convenient when my parents come to visit. And sometimes, they need to stay over at their daughter's place. Not having enough bedrooms just won't work."

Lin Xu wanted to move too. However, his current funds were limited, and he lacked the eligibility to purchase property in Beijing. Acquiring a house wasn't going to be easy.

There were only two options. The first was to obtain a Beijing residence permit through a talent recruitment program. The second was to acquire a company that already possessed purchasing eligibility and buy an apartment in the company's name. Once he became personally eligible later on, he could simply transfer the registration.

The talent recruitment program was a difficult path. Although Central Finance was a prestigious university, Lin Xu only held a bachelor's degree and wasn't employed in a high-tech or specialized field.