

## **Culinary 731**

Chapter 731: The pigeons that Old Huang promised to deliver! Favorite of food lovers - Dry Pot Cauliflower! \_2

The most important thing was that he had no experience studying abroad, which would be a significant disadvantage in talent evaluations. Therefore, if he wanted to move, he could only choose the second option.

"Let's wait a bit. When the opportunity arises, we'll switch to a more spacious house. For now, this place is still livable, and we don't need to buy any large items anytime soon."

The new house not only had to accommodate both sets of parents but also needed a spacious living room so that Dundun could play happily at home.

Naturally, the best choice would be a large apartment.

But the price of a large apartment was incomparable to ordinary houses, especially in Haidian, where schools were plentiful. Real estate prices were already high in Beijing, and large apartments were rare, making them a very scarce resource.

Scarcity, by definition, meant expensive.

"What if I don't keep the Europa? I can sell the other cars under my name, and with my spending money, I could almost buy a large apartment."

Listening to her tone, her spending money must be at least a few million.

Thinking back to when I was saving pocket money during school, I saved several hundred in junior high and several hundred more in high school. I always felt quite accomplished.

But compared to rich people, the difference wasn't just a little bit.

As Shen Baobao was pulling a hoodie over her head, Lin Xu reached out to tidy her messy hair:

"No need, I'm here. If we use your money to buy the house, wouldn't that make me a kept man?"

Hearing this, Shen Baobao immediately lifted Lin Xu's chin with her finger:

"What's wrong with being a kept man? Is it shameful? As long as you serve me well, forget an apartment, even if it's... MMMPH... I'm sorry, Hubby..."

Shen Baobao had intended to stage a scene of a rich woman teasing her "kept man."

But before the teasing could start, the "pretty boy" turned the tables on her.

After Lin Xu tackled her onto the bed and kissed her soundly several times, the girl finally surrendered.

However, as soon as Lin Xu sat up, she began to grumble again:

"You stinker, Xu! Always bullying me. My freshly changed clothes are all messed up..."

The instigator, completely forgetting she had started it, kept muttering.

"I ordered some pigeons. I plan to let my senior apprentice brother show off his skills at noon today, and we're introducing a new pigeon dish at the restaurant. Do you want to try it?"

When it came to food, Shen Baobao stopped grumbling and hurried to the bathroom to freshen up.

These were delicious-sounding pigeons, after all, definitely worth a taste!

Most importantly, pigeons were the symbol of uploaders on a certain website who often "go missing." Eating pigeons would be like getting revenge for all the times she'd been "stood up" by them!

After freshening up, she walked to the restaurant, holding Lin Xu's arm with one hand and munching on a spring roll with the other.

"Xu, what else can you make with the Dry Pot Sauce you made last night besides cauliflower?"

"I can make whatever you want to eat."

"Really? Then can I have Dry Pot Duck Head?"

"Whatever my Baobao wants to eat, it has to be possible, even if it isn't!"

Although the Dry Pot Sauce was just a basic version, its strength lay in its adaptability; it could be endlessly adjusted with additional seasonings and ingredients.

A mere Dry Pot Duck Head was certainly no challenge.

Back at the restaurant, after breakfast, everyone got busy with their tasks.

Zeng Xiaoqi didn't come in today. A colleague at the TV station was getting married, and not only did she have to give a gift, but she also had to be the emcee.

TSK! Doling out money, putting in effort, and being subjected to public displays of affection all day.

Truly a perfect day.

After finishing the tasks at hand, Lin Xu checked the time. It was nearly ten, and Old Huang still hadn't shown up. Is he planning to stand me up?

To avoid delaying the staff meal at noon, he took out the cauliflower the kitchen hand had bought, preparing to cook it.

Cauliflower came in two types.

One was the firm-budded type, with white, relatively short stems and florets pressed densely together. It had a harder texture and was more suitable for stews or hotpot.

The other was the loose-budded type, with long, green stems and loosely formed florets. It had a crisp texture, and restaurants often called it organic cauliflower.

Actually, this was just a matter of variety and had little to do with whether it was organic.

Loose-budded cauliflower was the best choice for dishes like large bowl cauliflower, Dry Pot Cauliflower, and dry-fried cauliflower. The one the kitchen hand had bought was precisely this type.

Using a kitchen knife, he cut the florets from the main stalk, ensuring the stems attached to them weren't too long, or they wouldn't cook easily. Larger florets were cut into smaller pieces.

The remaining main stalk wouldn't be wasted either.

Tossed into the pickling jar, it would soon turn into crisp and delicious pickled stalks.

He then soaked the cut florets in salted water. Soaking cauliflower in salted water effectively removed hidden dirt and also drew out any small insects lurking inside.

After setting them to soak, Old Huang was still nowhere in sight.

Lin Xu picked up the phone and called him. Soon, Old Huang's voice came through:

"I won't make it this morning. The couple at the pigeon farm had a fight, which delayed things. Several suppliers are queued up for their deliveries. You guys go ahead and eat first. I'll head over to the restaurant when I get the pigeons."

Well, this was really something...

The pigeon farm stood up Old Huang, Old Huang then stood me up, and now I have to break my promise to Dundun about the pigeon meat.

It was a classic case of infinite nesting dolls.

The cauliflower couldn't soak for too long, or it would absorb too much water, making it difficult to cook.

He drained the cauliflower and placed it in a basket. While it was draining, he prepared the other ingredients needed for the Dry Pot Cauliflower.

He diagonally sliced green and red Erjingtiao peppers, smashed garlic cloves, minced ginger, and cut a few bird's eye chilies into rings.

Chapter 732: Old Huang bailed on delivering the promised pigeon! The Dry Rice Man's Favorite—Dry Pot Cauliflower! \_3

Take a small piece of slightly fattier pork belly and slice it thin.

Though Dry Pot Cauliflower is primarily a vegetable dish, it requires a bit of pork belly to enhance the texture and make it more satisfying with rice.

After slicing the pork belly, slice some onions and place them at the bottom of the prepared dry pots.

Since the restaurant had several tables of diners, multiple dry pots were prepared.

In the restaurant, Dry Pot Cauliflower represents a dish with low cost but high profit. The cost of each serving of cauliflower is only about one to two yuan, plus a bit of pork belly; the total cost, even generously calculated, wouldn't exceed ten yuan.

But it can be sold for thirty to forty yuan, or even more.

This is why many restaurants heavily promote this dish.

With all the ingredients ready, Lin Xu placed the wok on the stove and began to cook.

He poured half a pot of cooking oil into the wok and heated it over high heat.

Whether it's big bowl cauliflower, stir-fried cauliflower, or today's Dry Pot Cauliflower, all require the cauliflower to be flash-fried in hot oil first.

The reason restaurant cauliflower has such a dry, fragrant, and crispy texture is because of this deep-frying step.

Besides deep-frying, cauliflower can also be blanched or steamed, but both methods yield textures and flavors far inferior to frying.

When the oil reached seventy percent heat, Lin Xu poured all the drained cauliflower in at once.

The oil in the wok immediately began to boil furiously.

The cauliflower didn't need much time in the oil—given the high power of restaurant stoves, it had to be removed in under ten seconds.

Otherwise, the cauliflower stems would absorb a large amount of oil like sponges, lose their crispy texture, and become soft and greasy.

After adding the cauliflower to the hot oil, he quickly fished it out. He held a large slotted spoon over a nearby oil drum and poured the wok's contents—oil and cauliflower—through it, draining the oil and catching the cauliflower.

He then placed the wok back on the stove and scooped in half a spoonful of lard.

When the fat melted, he added the pork belly slices to stir-fry.

Once translucent, he added minced ginger and garlic along with small chili peppers, stir-frying them before adding two small spoonfuls of Dry Pot Sauce.

Since there was a lot of cauliflower, a larger amount of Dry Pot Sauce was used. For a normal portion of Dry Pot Cauliflower, one small spoonful is enough. The spoon shouldn't be too big either, otherwise the dish would be too salty.

He stir-fried the Dry Pot Sauce until the Red Oil separated, then added the prepared Erjingtiao chili peppers, followed by the flash-fried cauliflower.

He quickly stir-fried for ten seconds using a flipping technique, ensuring the Dry Pot Sauce coated the cauliflower evenly. Then, he poured a bit of Light Soy Sauce along the edge of the wok to add umami flavor.

Continuing to stir-fry for thirty seconds, he allowed the aroma of the Dry Pot Sauce to develop further.

As he tossed and flipped the ingredients, a layer of Red Oil evenly coated the cauliflower in the wok, and the spicy fragrance grew increasingly intense.

At this point, it was almost time to take it out of the wok.

He moved the wok away from the stove, placed it on the workbench, and then evenly distributed the cauliflower among several dry pots.

After he finished serving, Cui Qingyuan and his senior brother's family arrived.

Time to eat!

"Eh, how come Chun isn't here today?"

Lin Xu noticed his senior brother, who was still limping slightly, arriving with his wife and child, but the famously ravenous Big Chun was conspicuously absent.

"He went to a dinner with his classmates from sports school. Every time they gather, they randomly pick a buffet restaurant and eat until their bellies are round before leaving."

Wow, they're giving the buffet owners a run for their money.

A dry pot stand was placed on the dining table. It had a base tray designed to hold a piece of solid alcohol. After lighting the alcohol, the dry pot was placed on top, and soon a SIZZLING sound came from it.

This was the SIZZLING sound of the onion strips frying in the heated oil at the bottom of the pot.

Placing onions at the bottom adds a pleasant onion fragrance to the dish.

Additionally, onions have a high water content, which makes them hold up well to frying compared to other vegetables.

Lifting a bowl of rice, Lin Xu picked up a piece of cauliflower coated in Red Oil and brought it to his lips. The taste was fragrant and spicy, the texture crisp and refreshing, even leaving a slightly sweet aftertaste.

Riding the wave of lingering spiciness, he shoveled a large mouthful of rice into his mouth.

This immediately awakened the hearty eater in him.

"Delicious, delicious! This Dry Pot Cauliflower is really tasty!"

"It's a new addition to the menu this afternoon, right? I'll post an update online."

"Spicy and delicious, it's perfect with rice."

"Yummy, yummy! I love this kind of flavor. I really like both Dry Pot Cauliflower and big bowl cauliflower."

"..."

Everyone ate heartily. Initially, they didn't think much of it, but as they continued eating, they began to suspect they hadn't taken enough rice. How else could their bowls be empty after just a few bites?

Hearing everyone discuss big bowl cauliflower, Shen Baobao turned to Lin Xu and asked, "Does big bowl cauliflower taste the same as Dry Pot Cauliflower?"

"No, they're different. The method for big bowl cauliflower is similar to hand-torn cabbage; fragrant vinegar is added before serving to enhance the sour aroma, resulting in a tart and refreshing taste."

"And what about dry-fried cauliflower?"

"That one is numbing, spicy, and dry-fragrant, with a crispy texture. It's different from the oily and spicy Dry Pot Cauliflower."

Dry-fried dishes use dried chili segments and Sichuan peppercorns for flavor, whereas Dry Pot Cauliflower doesn't include these, deriving its taste mainly from the Dry Pot Sauce.

Although these dishes might seem similar, the differences are quite significant.

"Bro, this is way tastier than the cauliflower in our school cafeteria."

"Of course! Uncle Lin made this himself. How could it not be good?"

"It's a pity Uncle Lin isn't our school's head chef; otherwise, we could eat delicious dishes like this every day."

"..."

Xie Baomin heard his sons' conversation and, for a moment, didn't know what to say.

At home, I prepare State Banquet dishes worth hundreds of yuan per serving for you, and you don't like them, yet you love these simple meals? Fine, I'll let you see what your old man can do before school starts!

Xie Baomin was annoyed.

In the past, his sons would compare him to the school chef, but now they didn't even mention him, instead constantly praising his junior brother.

This was simply unbearable.

To prove his skill, he planned to prepare a similar spread at home soon to open his sons' eyes.

As everyone was eating, Old Huang suddenly came upstairs carrying a bag full of squab.

"It wasn't easy to get these squabs; I even had to queue up... Brother Lin, I've got the squabs for you. How do you think we should cook them?"

Lin Xu immediately looked towards Xie Baomin, "Senior brother, what do you think would be the best way to cook them?"

After thinking for a moment, Xie Baomin smiled and said, "Junior brother, the steam pot chicken you made last time was good. This time, you could use that method to make steam pot squab."

Steam pot squab? Lin Xu's eyes suddenly lit up. That's a great suggestion!

Chapter 733: The Ultimate Pigeon Soup—Steamed Pigeon! Xie Baomin's Battle for Vindication!

Ever since the restaurant tried introducing steamed pot chicken, Lin Xu had been troubled by one thing.

That was the fact the steamed pot chicken wasn't refined enough. Plopping a big pot of it onto the table didn't at all fit the aesthetic of delicate, small portions that high-end dining demanded.

Switching to a smaller pot would mean it couldn't hold much chicken, and the steamed pot chicken produced wouldn't fetch a good price.

Now, if pigeon replaced chicken, a single pigeon could easily fit into the smallest steam pot, and one could even add various beauty-enhancing medicinal herbs.

There's an old saying that "one pigeon is better than nine chickens."

It's widely recognized that pigeon soup is more nutritious than chicken soup.

If they served it in small steam pots, one for each person, the steamed pot pigeon would definitely be very popular in the restaurant.

Which of the beauty-loving ladies wouldn't want a delicious soup made from pigeon, especially when it also contained blood-enriching and qi-boosting herbs like notoginseng, Astragalus, and Codonopsis?

This was simply irresistible.

Of course, if the herbs in the pot were changed to kidney-tonifying and strength-building ingredients like Antler, Cordyceps, and horny goat weed, then it would be the male customers who'd go crazy.

However, these were just thoughts. The Chinese herbs used in cooking should still mainly be neutral and mild.

One should try to use those powerful and aggressive herbs sparingly.

Lest the customers suffer from it after eating.

Lin Xu had Chezai bring the pigeons to the kitchen and then called out to Old Huang to wash up for the meal,

"Boss Huang, wash up and come eat. After dinner, I'm going to try out the steamed pot pigeon that my senior mentioned. You all just wait to be the first to try it."

If the steamed pot pigeon really was feasible, he'd immediately make space in the back kitchen and install a steaming cabinet specifically for steamed pot dishes.

This type of cabinet could freely adjust the steam's intensity and was capable of cooking dozens of pots of steamed pot chicken at once, absolutely satisfying the customers' demands.

Old Huang washed his hands, sat down with his bowl, and said while eating some cauliflower,

"When I went to buy the pigeons, that couple was fighting—yelling and cursing. It started because the husband had secretly sent 'Happy National Day' red envelopes via WeChat to another woman, and his wife found out."

He described the scene vividly, and Cui Qingyuan laughed and interrupted him,

"There are kids here. Let's not talk about that topic."

Old Huang said seriously,

"Young people especially need to learn from this. The people they chat with online might not even be who they claim to be, and you should never involve money transactions. You never know if the person on the other end is some slob controlling dozens of WeChat accounts while picking their feet."

After he finished, he turned to Xie Yufei and Xie Yuhang to say,

"Although Lele is only about two years older than you two, she was specially recruited by Tsinghua University, so ordinary people definitely can't fool her. The main concern is you two. Be careful when making friends online. Your father often deals with leaders from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and even international dignitaries, so you absolutely must not say anything reckless online."

Xie Yufei and Xie Yuhang exchanged looks. They'd never heard their dad talk about these things before.

They only knew he was a chef at Fishing Platform. Could it be he also held a significant position?

Seeing a flash of confusion in the brothers' eyes, Old Huang said with a smile,

"You don't believe me? One day I'll take you two to Fishing Platform, and then you can see for yourselves just how impressive your father's position there is."

He had just finished speaking when Baomin said,

"Forget it, forget it. That's not a place for kids to go."

He had to be joking. If he brought the kids to Fishing Platform, those head chefs would undoubtedly spill all his past misdeeds.

That sly dog Old Huang was truly devious. He was ostensibly speaking in my favor, but in reality, he was sneakily trying to lead me into a ditch.

To divert the topic, Baomin said,

"Won't some of these pigeons be left over after making the steamed pot pigeon? How about I make stir-fried pigeon tonight? Since the two kids both like such flavorful, spicy, and rich dishes, I'll showcase my Sichuan cuisine skills."

No more pretending. I'm a State Banquet master, and I'm laying all my cards on the table!

Xie Yufei and Xie Yuhang were stunned and then asked simultaneously,

"Dad, you know how to make this kind of dish too?"

"I'm very good at it. I usually assume you two eat a lot of greasy food at school, so I try to keep our home-cooked meals light and elegant. But since you like it, I'll let you taste my cooking skills."

Baomin was brimming with confidence, planning to showcase his culinary skills, when Xie Yuhang said expectantly,

"I hope it tastes better than what the chef at school canteen window three makes."

Xie Yufei picked up the conversation,

"Dad surpassing window three is no problem, but beating window five will be tough."

"That's true. Window five is widely acknowledged as the second-best, just slightly behind window seven."

Baomin was flabbergasted. Are you serious?!

So, in your eyes, I'm not even as good as your school's chefs?

Today, I'll show you culinary skills that those school chefs can't even dream of matching!

Lin Xu watched, trying to suppress a laugh.

The State Banquet head chef, a man who made the entire Fishing Platform kitchen staff tremble, was now inexplicably pitted against a boarding school canteen chef.

If the timing weren't so awkward, he really would have liked to call over the other head chefs from Fishing Platform to cheer Baomin on.

After the meal, everyone went about their own tasks. Baomin, however, followed Lin Xu, planning to go to the braised goods section on the first floor to see just how delicious the roasted chicken everyone raved about truly was.

Upon arriving, he sniffed the air and remarked,

"It doesn't smell much like roasted chicken in here."

Lin Xu lifted the pot lid and chuckled,

"The aroma is all sealed in by the oil. It's about time to take it out. Chef Xu, skim the oil from the pot, and let my senior brother take a look at our restaurant's roasted chicken."

"Certainly, Head Chef Xie. Just a moment, please."

Chapter 734: The Ultimate Pigeon Soup - Steamed Pigeon! Xie Baomin's Battle for Recognition! \_2

Xu Xinhua had been working at Building #2 of the Fishing Platform for over a month and was quite familiar with Xie Baomin.

He fetched a clean stainless steel basin and used a long-handled stainless steel ladle to carefully skim off the yellowish grease from the pot.

This grease was originally lard and the seasoning oil from the brine stock.

But with hundreds of chickens being stewed in it daily, the chicken fat had dyed it yellow.

As the grease was skimmed off, the aroma of the brine stock in the pot gradually wafted out.

Xie Baomin sniffed a few times and then gave Lin Xu a thumbs-up. "This brine stock is authentic and generously seasoned. Never mind chicken; anything cooked in this would taste amazing."

He had just eaten and initially didn't want any more. But now, smelling the aroma of the roasted chicken, he couldn't help but want to tear off a drumstick to taste it.

Once all the grease had been skimmed off, Lin Xu checked the color of the roasted chickens.

"They're ready. Start taking them out."

After speaking, he addressed the neighbors lining up outside the window, "The roasted chickens are coming out soon! Everyone, no need to rush."

After greeting everyone, Lin Xu saw Old Man Zhou, who often came to the restaurant to eat, lining up in the crowd and curiously asked, "Old Man Zhou, why are you in line too? Where's Mrs. Liang?"

"It's gotten cooler these past few days. She was trying to stay cool and caught a bit of a chill. I plan to buy some braised dishes to take home... By the way, Lin, do you have any soup that helps induce sweating?"

Soup?

Lin Xu replied, "Yes, yes, yes! Come inside and wait. I'll go upstairs and make a serving of hot and sour shredded tripe soup. I'll put it in an insulated container for Mrs. Liang to try."

"That would be great! Thank you, Lin."

Lin Xu waved his hand. "No need to be polite. Oh, and even with a chill, she should still get out a bit. She can't always be cooped up at home. We're making pigeon soup this afternoon, so bring Mrs. Liang over to have some. I'll add some Chinese herbal medicines to dispel the cold and induce sweating. If Mrs. Liang drinks it while it's nice and hot, she might feel better."

Usually, sweating helps one recover from a chill. This afternoon, when I test the small steam pot, I can try adding some herbs that dispel cold. Even if they don't have a major effect, just drinking that small pot of piping hot pigeon soup should help.

After Old Man Zhou went inside, Lin Xu went upstairs to make the soup.

Xu Xinhua began lifting the roasted chickens out of the pot one by one. He originally wanted to give one directly to Xie Baomin, but Xie Baomin declined, "Focus on selling them first. If there are any with a less appealing appearance, we can just tear one open to taste. No rush. This roasted chicken doesn't even need a taste test; the smell alone tells you it's good."

At the service counter, Old Man Zhou looked at the price of the tripe soup, took out his membership card, and handed it to Song Tiantian. "Tiantian, swipe the card and add an extra hundred. Include the cost of the tripe soup. It's not easy for you to run a business; I can't take advantage like that."

Song Tiantian said, "Please wait for the boss to come before you swipe it. I can't just take money recklessly."

"You're such an honest kid. Dundun, don't you think this manager here at the front desk deserves to be criticized?"

Old Man Zhou scratched Dundun's chin; he was one of the few customers who could touch Dundun.

In the past, he would always come over to interact with Dundun around mealtimes. Whenever he saw the envious gazes of others, Old Man Zhou always felt a sense of satisfaction.

If this little fellow were a cat at Beijing University, with his docile nature, he'd undoubtedly be a favorite among all the students.

After a while, Lin Xu came down holding a takeout bag. It contained a large serving of hot and sour shredded tripe soup prepared for Mrs. Liang, a small sesame flatbread with beef for Old Man Zhou to satisfy his craving, and a serving of tomato and egg over rice.

Together with the roasted chicken, this was more than enough for the elderly couple's hearty lunch.

"Thank you so much, Lin. Mrs. Liang will be so happy later! How much is it? Tiantian didn't want to swipe the card for it. I can't take this if you don't charge me."

Old Man Zhou had retired from a leadership position at Beijing University. While he wasn't wealthy, he wasn't short on spending money.

Lin Xu said, "Just charge me for two roasted chickens... Oh, by the way, Old Man Zhou, why haven't I seen Professor Xu and Auntie Xue around lately?"

"They went to look after their grandchild, but they'll be back soon. Old Xu is a classic scholar who knows nothing about housework, and his wife is an artist, even less likely to concern herself with such mundane things. Looking after their grandchild is quite a challenge for them."

Having paid, Old Man Zhou hurried out of the shop, carrying the packed food to go eat lunch with Mrs. Liang at home.

Just then, Xie Baomin finally spotted a roasted chicken that had been placed near the edge of the pot, its skin slightly imperfect. Xie Baomin saw it and immediately brought a plate over. "I'll take this one. It's trembling, so tender it looks like it's been deboned. Just by looking at it, you can tell it's fall-apart tender."

Xu Xinhua lifted the roasted chicken with a slotted spoon and carefully placed it onto the plate. "Chef Xie, be careful, it's hot."

"What chef is afraid of a little heat? Come on, put it in."

Carrying the plate upstairs, Xie Baomin said to his two sons, "Come, come, come! Taste the roasted chicken Uncle Lin made. It's fresh out of the pot. This roasted chicken is too hot; I'll break it apart for you two."

He grasped the joints of the two drumsticks and gave them a sharp shake. The already slightly imperfect roasted chicken immediately fell apart, causing Xie Yufei and Xie Yuhang to stare wide-eyed.

"That's amazing!"

"Dad, isn't that hot?"

Xie Baomin pinched off a piece of meat from a chicken leg, tasted it, and said with a smile, "It's definitely hot for you two, but for a chef, this is just basic skill. Junior Brother, this roasted chicken tastes fantastic. I thought it might be too salty, but the seasoning is just perfect."

Xie Yufei and Xie Yuhang took chopsticks from the sterilizer. Each of them picked up a piece of roasted chicken to try, and their eyes immediately lit up.

"This roasted chicken is so delicious! It's fragrant and packed with flavor."

Chapter 735: The Ultimate Pigeon Soup - Steamed Pigeon! Xie Baomin's Battle for Recognition! \_3

"Uncle Lin really knows how to make everything delicious. Dad, you should learn more from Uncle Lin when you have time."

Xie Baomin: "..."

Well, it seems my reputation is beyond salvaging.

In the kitchen, Lin Xu looked at the still-warm pigeon, ready to start cooking right away.

Pigeon soup should not be made with washed birds; even when slaughtering, the bird should ideally be smothered in hot water so the blood stays within the meat, thus preserving the nutritional value of the pigeon meat to the greatest extent. But now, in the urban districts of Beijing, live poultry slaughtering is prohibited, so it's impossible to retain the pigeon's blood. The only option is to avoid rinsing or soaking it, to preserve as much nutrition as possible. The shorter the time since slaughter, the tastier the resulting pigeon soup will be.

Thinking this, Lin Xu decided to give it a try right away.

Using a knife, he removed the pigeon's tail and head, as these parts tend to have a strong odor and needed to be discarded. He chopped off the tips of the claws and rubbed the bird with salt, trying to eliminate any off-flavor as much as possible.

After tidying it up, he placed the squab in a cleaned steam pot. The restaurant didn't have many high-pressure cookers or enough burners to make individual portions of squab in small steam pots. So, he first used a large steam pot to prepare the dish, and then planned to try out making a couple of batches in smaller steam pots.

He placed the cleaned whole squab into the steam pot without cutting it, to keep the squab as intact as possible. This way, after savoring the soup, each person could scoop out an entire squab into their bowl, making it a truly satisfying meal.

One by one, he added the squabs, along with some of the medicinal herbs used in the afternoon's steam pot chicken, and sliced a few pieces of Xuanwei Ham to enhance the flavor. The steam pot squab was thus ready.

After setting aside the large steam pot, Lin Xu took out a few small steam pots and started arranging the ingredients and medicinal herbs needed for them.

The small steam pot wasn't even as large as the bowls used in the restaurant for serving noodles; a single squab took up most of the space inside.

After placing the squab inside, he added a slice of Ham into each pot, followed by the medicinal herbs.

Aunt Liang was suffering from a cold, so a few sweat-inducing herbs were in order. Lin Xu added some Ephedra to one of the steam pots—a common ingredient in many cold remedies, which, when stewed in the soup, could promote sweating and have a beneficial effect.

With the lunch rush about to start, the stovetops in the main kitchen couldn't be tied up. So, Lin Xu moved several steam pots to the smaller kitchen and brought over all the restaurant's high-pressure cookers to begin preparing the steam pot squab, using the high-pressure cookers as a steam source.

The large steam pot required an iron rack, while the small steam pots weren't so troublesome; they could be placed directly on the steam vent of a high-pressure cooker.

The only thing to be cautious about was that the lid of the small steam pot was too light and could easily be lifted by the steam, so the best solution was to weigh it down with something heavy.

With everything set, the lunch rush hour was upon him.

Tourists from outside Beijing and local patrons arrived in a continuous stream, ordering their favorite dishes.

Xie Baomin, after having a few bites of Braised Chicken, came into the kitchen to soak the remaining squabs. Since he was going to stir-fry them, there weren't so many particulars to worry about. And besides, there were still several hours until dinner; without soaking, the squabs would develop an off-flavor.

After the lunch rush, Lin Xu took a quick break to head back to the residential complex, opened his computer, and selected the second half of the behind-the-scenes footage to upload.

After uploading, he checked yesterday's video, which had already surpassed three million views and over 600,000 likes, and the numbers were still climbing. Even the shares were approaching 100,000.

This showed that everyone was really interested in the cat's selfie antics.

As this video gained popularity, other cats also started to trend. For example, the "escape artist cat" that clandestinely opened the door, causing the robot vacuum to travel from the 27th floor down to the first, and the "Chaoshan wellness cat" that liked to lie in a bamboo chair and drink tea, all rode the wave of Dundun's popularity.

Netizens jokingly called them the vanguard from the distant Meow Star, sent to conquer Earth.

And Dundun, who could even take selfies, naturally became the commander of this vanguard.

Soon, the video passed review and appeared on Lin Xu's personal feed.

"Wow, the second half of the behind-the-scenes footage is out!"

"What behind-the-scenes? This is the main feature, okay?"

"Let me see what new tricks this little cutie has come up with!"

"Any cat owners out there want to weigh in? Are cats really this smart?"

"Not sure about smart, but they're definitely neurotic."

"My older cat has lured the younger one to the balcony with a toy several times, then sneakily shut the balcony door. The poor little thing nearly got heatstroke a few times..."

"So, think carefully before you get a second one!"

Netizens hadn't even started watching the video yet, but a lively discussion had already erupted in the comments section.

Lin Xu turned off the computer and went back to the restaurant, just in time to meet Zeng Xiaoqi, who had returned from attending a wedding. She was now at the service counter, munching on a small sesame flatbread.

He asked curiously, "You were busy with the gift money and emceeding, didn't they provide a meal?"

Zeng Xiaoqi spoke with her mouth full, "The banquet food wasn't good, and I was surrounded by colleagues from other departments at the TV station, so I couldn't relax. If I want to really enjoy my meal, it has to be food from Lin Ji."

Lin Xu pointed to the braised food section, "Whatever you want to eat, just ask for it from the braising department."

"No need, I'm still looking forward to tasting the steam pot squab tonight. I've heard that eating pigeon is very nourishing. I have to experience it."

Shu Yun, who was scratching Dundun's chin nearby, cast a glance at Director Zeng's Xiongxiang with a half-smile. She didn't speak, but her gaze—three parts sarcasm, three parts disdain, and four parts nonchalance—said it all.

Lin Xu said, "Tonight is going to be more than just steam pot squab. My senior apprentice-brother also plans to make stir-fried squab, probably using a similar method to Fried Chicken or braised chicken chunks. Just wait and see."

"Wow, Chef Xie himself is cooking! I must taste it properly."

At four-thirty in the afternoon, Xie Baomin, who had taken his wife and children for a tour around Tsinghua University, strode into the kitchen. He took the soaked squabs out of the water basin, drained them, and chopped them into large pieces with a cleaver.

He then prepared some dried chili, Sichuan peppercorns, green pepper segments, and chunks of ginger as aromatics.

After everything was ready, he set up the wok. He was ready to cook the stir-fried squab he intended to make, to impress his two children.

Hmm, starting today, I must outdo the school chefs and become the number one culinary hero in my kids' hearts!

Chapter 736: The Pigeon Is Really Delicious! Dad, You Qualify to Bid for a School Canteen Stall Now!

"Senior Brother, are we starting now?"

Lin Xu watched as Xie Baomin placed the wok on the stove and deliberately came closer to observe and learn.

The ingredients for this dish weren't complicated and were all common in the kitchen. The only one used in a larger quantity was fresh ginger. It was all cut into sieve-like pieces, roughly a small bowlful, resembling diced potatoes.

"Do we need this much ginger?"

Lin Xu was curious.

Xie Baomin poured a bit more vegetable oil into the wok than usual for stir-frying, then added some warm water to a bowl containing dry Sichuan peppercorns, completely soaking them.

He said with a smile, "Pigeon meat tends to have a gamey smell, so we use ginger to suppress the unusual odors in the meat. Moreover, despite the large amount of ginger, it isn't very noticeable when you eat it."

Whoa, is this some kind of advanced technique or hardcore method?

Lin Xu didn't ask any more questions but watched intently.

Once the oil in the wok was slightly hot, Xie Baomin added the whole bowl of chopped ginger directly into it and began to slow-fry the ginger pieces over low heat.

Isn't this supposed to be stir-fried squab?

Why fry the ginger first?

According to the usual methods for cooking such dishes, one should pour the squab into the wok and stir-fry repeatedly to render out the moisture from the meat, and then add ingredients like Scallion and Ginger.

But now Xie Baomin's approach had Lin Xu completely puzzled.

"Frying the ginger a bit gives the oil a light ginger flavor. This also draws out the ginger's spiciness, making its aroma smoother," Xie Baomin explained patiently, then stirred the contents of the wok with a ladle before adding, "When the kids go back to school and you're not busy here, buy a couple of ducks. I'll teach you how to make Ginger Duck. That dish really takes ginger to the extreme."

Ginger Duck?

Lin Xu had never actually tried this dish before.

He inquired curiously, "Does it have to be a female duck?"

Xie Baomin was taken aback for a moment, then said, "It doesn't really matter if it's a male or female duck, as long as it's a young, tender one. For Ginger Duck, the name emphasizes the 'Ginger Mother' part. 'Ginger Mother' refers to ginger that's more than three years old. This type of ginger is often kept as seed stock, so it's called 'ginger mother.'"

What?????

If you hadn't said so, I'd have really thought it was a duck dish made by a chef surnamed Ginger.

Ginger that's more than three years old... I'll have to make a point of telling the driver not to get the wrong kind later.

The ginger was fried until its surface was golden brown and then removed from the wok. Xie Baomin didn't discard it, presumably because it would be added back in to stew with the squab later.

Indeed, frying it like this significantly enhanced the ginger's aroma while reducing its spiciness. Another technique learned. I'll try this next time I make a similar dish.

After removing the ginger, Xie Baomin turned up the heat. He then used a fine-mesh strainer to scoop out the soaked Sichuan peppercorns, letting the excess water drip off just above the bowl before adding them to the wok.

Lin Xu noticed that Xie Baomin didn't discard the warm water used for soaking the Sichuan peppercorns. He even made sure that when he drained the peppercorns, the excess water dripped back into the bowl.

It seems this Sichuan peppercorn water is useful too.

The oil in the wok quickly heated up, and the moisture from the Sichuan peppercorns rapidly evaporated, releasing a strong, numbing fragrance.

This step reminded Lin Xu of the Sichuan peppercorn oil technique his senior brother had taught him before.

So the frying now is probably to infuse the oil with a pleasant Sichuan peppercorn aroma.

Under the heat of the hot oil, the moisture in the Sichuan peppercorns quickly sizzled away. Once the peppercorns in the wok stopped crackling and wisps of blue smoke began to drift from it, it meant the Sichuan peppercorns were perfectly fried.

He scooped them out with the strainer and discarded them.

Next, he poured in the chopped squab pieces and began to stir-fry.

「Downstairs, in front of the service desk.」

Shen Baobao held a steamed pigeon, tearing the meat from its bones with her hands and placing it onto a plate adorned with a cartoon cat design.

The plump Dundun was squatting in front of the plate, gobbling down the still-warm pigeon meat in big bites.

When the pigeon was delivered, Dundun had already eaten its lunch, so the promised pigeon meat had been postponed until now.

Dundun's meal was simple to prepare: just steam the pigeon in a steamer without adding any salt or oil, and serve it directly.

This low-sodium, low-fat diet kept Dundun's fur glossy and its body plump.

Beside the little cat, Zeng Xiaoqi, who was waiting to eat steam pot squab, was diligently filming the scene with a digital camera mounted on a handheld gimbal.

This clip of Dundun eating meat couldn't be used in the main feature but could serve as a behind-the-scenes outtake.

Hmm, a true outtake, not like those sensational video clips from the past few days.

"Can Dundun really type and play the piano?" As Zeng Xiaoqi paused filming to change angles, Shu Yun, who had watched the video several times, still couldn't figure it out.

Why did the little fellow start typing when Geng Lele mentioned programming, and then act as if possessed by Lang Lang when the boss lady talked about playing the piano?

Is it really possible for a cat to be this smart? It's a bit much, isn't it?

"What's so strange about that? We all struggled like crazy to pass the gaokao just to get into university, but isn't Lele already a top student at Tsinghua University? People have different levels of intelligence, and cats must too."

Zeng Xiaoqi stepped behind the service desk and gave Shu Yun's pert bottom a pat, "Worrying too much will make your Xiongxiong smaller, you know."

Shu Yun immediately retorted, "It seems you've been worrying quite a lot yourself then."

"You..."

Zeng Xiaoqi took a deep breath, silently cursed her 'bestie' a good deal in her heart, then adjusted the angle and focus, and continued filming.

Chapter 737: The Pigeon Is Really Delicious! Dad, You Qualify to Bid for a School Canteen Stall Now! \_2

In an office building at Xierqi, Li Qiang, who was working overtime, took a break from programming. He opened his browser, preparing to slack off for a bit and relax his mind.

He remembered a certain big shot saying that compensation earned from working doesn't count as making money. Only the pay received while not working truly counts.

To experience the joy of "making money," Li Qiang often slacked off, diligently fleecing the capitalists.

He clicked on a browser bookmark, and the page automatically redirected to the Lin Ji's Food discussion forum.

Just as he was about to check the day's topics, he noticed the @mention button on his page showed a 99+ notification.

What? What's going on? Why have so many people @mentioned me?

He clicked the button, and a barrage of mentions popped up:

"Brother Qiang, was that really you Lele mentioned, the one who fell asleep while coding?"

"Manually @mentioning Brother Qiang, did Dundun help you with your programming? I really want to know!"

"The man blessed by Dundun! You're trending today."

"Dundun is so good with the keyboard; did you teach it?"

"Having a cat keep you company during overtime? You must be the happiest programmer alive, right?"

"..."

Li Qiang was baffled. What is all this nonsense? How could Dundun possibly help me with programming? Every time I go to the store, it acts all snobby and ignores me. Has everyone lost their minds today?

He scrolled through the recent activity in the forum and finally understood. It turned out Boss Lin had posted the second half of the video of Dundun playing with the selfie camera.

Well then, I absolutely have to watch this.

With that thought, he minimized the browser, leaving the programming interface on the monitor. Phone in hand, he hurried towards the restroom.

Hmm, when going to the restroom during work hours, you have to look like you're in a desperate hurry, like you really can't hold it. That way, even if people want to ask you something, they'll wait until you're back. If you look too leisurely, not only will colleagues ask all sorts of questions, but even the boss will think, 'This slacker is at it again.'

Once inside the restroom, however, there was no need to rush.

He leisurely put on his Bluetooth earbuds and switched to transparency mode. This way, he wouldn't miss anything in the video while still being aware of his surroundings.

He entered a stall, closed the door, took a piece of toilet paper from the dispenser, placed it on the seat, and sat down slowly.

He opened the newly posted video and began to watch.

The video wasn't long, about ten minutes.

But the content was explosive.

Dundun reacted with various actions based on the conversation of the people in the meeting.

It made him laugh out loud several times.

After watching the video and reading the comments, he grew curious himself. Could a cat really be that smart?

He decided that when he went to Lin Ji's Food for dinner after work, he would observe that chubby little fellow up close to see if it was genuinely that intelligent.

He casually scrolled through the comments. After about fifteen minutes, he finally got up.

First, he made a show of flushing the toilet. Then, he took off his earbuds, pocketed his phone, opened the stall door, and walked out.

Exiting the restroom, he didn't return to his desk immediately. Instead, he washed his hands leisurely, trying to fleece the capitalists for every possible second.

As Li Qiang was fixing his sparse hair after washing up, he noticed the department's new manager, Qi Panpan, standing behind him. Her arms were crossed over her chest, and her eyes were fixed coldly on him.

This... This is the men's restroom entrance. What are you doing just standing here?

Trying to appear composed, Li Qiang coughed twice and turned to ask, "Is the women's restroom full again?"

"Next time, keep it down when you're watching videos. You were laughing so loudly I could hear you clearly from the women's restroom."

Brother Qiang suddenly felt as if his petty attempt at cunning had been completely exposed.

He gave an awkward laugh. "I'll be more careful in the future."

Qi Panpan's gaze hardened. "So, you *were* really slacking off in the toilet just now? Li Qiang, you're a technical supervisor now. You shouldn't be setting an example by leading others to slack off..."

What? You were actually trying to trick me?

Brother Qiang took a deep breath. Just as he was about to leave the restroom, Qi Panpan asked another question, "That error-ridden piece of code you submitted the other day—was it really Dundun who wrote it?"

Li Qiang was speechless.

In the restaurant, Xie Baomin stir-fried the pigeon meat until its outer skin was golden brown and slightly crisp. Then, he added a small bowl of prepared dried chili pieces and two spoonfuls of sugar, continuing to stir-fry.

Once the sugar caramelized, he drizzled a bit of Rice Wine along the edge of the wok.

As the aroma of the wine rose, he added the prepared garlic, followed by Light Soy Sauce and Dark Soy Sauce. He tossed everything to coat the pigeon meat in a glossy, reddish-brown hue.

Finally, he ladled in some Pork Bone Broth.

Pigeon meat is wonderfully flavorful but can lack richness. That's why stewing it with Pork Bone Broth is essential; it makes the pigeon meat exceptionally savory and delicious.

"If you don't have Pork Bone Broth," Xie Baomin explained, "you'd have to stir-fry the pigeon in lard. Otherwise, the aroma won't be sufficient, and it'll taste a bit lacking. Crispy Pigeon is so popular in the south precisely because the high-temperature deep-frying method enhances the pigeon's flavor."

After adding the Pork Bone Broth, Xie Baomin poured the water used for soaking Sichuan peppercorns into the wok. He then added the previously fried ginger pieces. Once the liquid came to a rolling boil, he reduced the heat to low, covered the wok, and let it simmer gently.

The initial high heat had seared the meat and driven out some of its moisture. Now, the low heat would allow the rich stock in the wok to slowly permeate the meat. This exchange of moisture is the process by which pigeon meat cooks from raw to done.

"Typically, this braising method is used for pigeon that isn't perfectly fresh," he continued. "For fresh pigeon, soup is always the first choice. Everyone knows pigeon soup is incredibly delicious. As for the meat itself, not many people pay it much mind."

Chapter 738: Pigeon Squab is Truly Delicious! Dad, You Qualify to Take Over a Stall at Our School! \_3

The more high-end the chef, the more they like to pursue the natural taste of the ingredients, striving for a light and fresh flavor.

That was the case with Xie Baomin.

But now, for the sake of his children, he had begun to make the heavy-tasting dishes that he had previously been reluctant to cook.

These spicy, fragrant, and rich-in-fat dishes were all characteristic of rustic, hearty cuisine—generous with ingredients and unconstrained in technique, every detail exuding a bold robustness.

"Wait till Yu Fei and Yu Hang try it, and they'll definitely change their opinion of you," Lin Xu offered a word of comfort to his senior brother. As a chef who had switched careers midway, he didn't have any particular taste prejudices.

As long as someone enjoyed eating it, then it was good food.

Otherwise, no matter what was said, dishes that were meant to be lost would still be lost.

Speaking of which, he himself still had mastery over a lost recipe for Silver Shrimp Soup.

Last night, after Lin Xu returned and finished his nightly routine, he lay in bed playing with his phone. He searched for Silver Shrimp Soup and discovered it was a rather famous ancient soup.

It appeared in many poems and vernacular novels.

The so-called Fish, as he now understood it, originally referred to preserved fish. However, it later came to encompass all kinds of pickled ingredients. Before the Song Dynasty, this Fish was actually a high-end dish. Even during the Song Dynasty, the word for Fish could be found in poems by the likes of Lu You, with many verses lavishing praise upon it. It wasn't until the Ming Dynasty that Fish became a common dish in ordinary people's homes.

Originally, he thought this Fish referred to what is now known as salted fish. But after accessing the system's experience, he realized that this item was actually made by wrapping a fish in glutinous rice and allowing it to ferment. It was somewhat like stinky Gu fish, but different. Stinky Gu fish smells bad, but this Fish is delicious. Moreover, after being cured, the Fish flesh becomes firm and dense. After removing the Fish skin and bones and slicing the flesh into thin shreds, it was cooked with stock to complete the Silver Shrimp Soup. In the past, soup made from this Fish had always played the role of a hangover cure because of its exceptional deliciousness. He decided that when he got the right kind of fish, he would wrap it in glutinous rice and try making some Fish to see if this fermented fish really tasted better than fresh fish.

As he was thinking, Old Master Zhou and Auntie Liang came into the shop.

"Xiao Lin, is it appropriate for us to come and eat like this?" Auntie Liang had always strictly adhered to the role of a customer, and now she felt somewhat embarrassed to suddenly eat the staff meal.

Lin Xu said with a smile, "Whenever you feel like eating, just come by. And in the morning, if you ever don't feel like preparing breakfast, just come by during your walk and eat here. Old Master Yu next door has gotten addicted to the breakfasts now."

"If you say that, your Uncle Zhou and I really should come and try it tomorrow morning."

When the children weren't at home, they were too lazy to cook in the morning, usually getting breakfast on the way during their morning walk. Now that Lin Ji's Food also offered breakfast, they might as well eat there. They would pay whatever it cost, not wanting to shortchange Xiao Lin, and they could also get a proper breakfast.

Auntie Liang planned to try it out the next morning.

In the kitchen, the pigeon meat had been simmering for fifteen minutes. The stock in the pot, which had initially been level with the meat, had vanished, leaving just a little broth at the bottom.

Xie Baomin poured the cut sections of green and red peppers into the pot. He turned up the heat to stir-fry them, allowing the peppers to disperse and the broth at the bottom to become even richer.

He sprinkled two small spoonfuls of salt into the pot, then added a bit of flavor-enhancing oyster sauce.

Next, he picked out the star anise and bay leaves that had been added when browning the meat chunks.

Waiting for the broth in the pot to reduce a bit more, he then drizzled in a little sesame oil to fully bring out the pigeon's aroma before dishing it out.

On the nearby workbench, several dry pots lined with shredded onions were already in place.

Since it was a rustic, hearty style of cooking, it was served directly in the dry pot, which also looked more impressive.

All the pigeon was served in the dry pots, and dinner began.

Tonight's meal was relatively lavish. There was pigeon steamed in a pot, stir-fried pigeon prepared by his senior brother, and Wei Qian's stir-fried cabbage with vermicelli and salt-fried pork.

After the dishes were brought to the table, Lin Xu carried over the small steam pot specially prepared for Auntie Liang. "Auntie, this is for you. It has some Ephedra in it, which is good for inducing sweat and alleviating surface syndromes. Please give it a try."

"Oh, thank you so much, Xiao Lin! Old Zhou, don't forget to pay downstairs on our way out, alright? It's already great that we get to taste Xiao Lin's cooking; we can't just eat and drink for free."

Old Master Zhou, holding a wine cup filled by Xie Baomin, said, "I know, I know, I've got it in mind. Come on, Professor Cui, even though we're not from the same school, everyone at Beijing University knows of your reputation. We were even thinking of convincing Beijing University to compete for Lele—such a talent—but since she's with you, I didn't mention it to the university."

These top-ranked domestic universities all had genius classes similar to 'Smart' and 'Yao' classes.

But in terms of achievements, Tsinghua University still led, with richer experience and a more established system.

Old Master Zhou believed that with Lele joining the Smart Class under Cui Qingyuan, the girl's talent wouldn't be wasted.

Cui Qingyuan replied with a smile, "Director Zhou, you're too kind. We didn't have a good chance to chat during Lele's school admission celebration dinner last time. Today, we must have a few more drinks."

For others, festivals meant reunion and relaxation, a time to play and unwind. But Cui Qingyuan was alone in Beijing. If it weren't for Lin Ji's Food, he would probably spend the entire week hunched over his computer, tinkering with artificial intelligence projects. Then, on the first day of the new term, he would come down hard on the students who had relaxed all week.

Now, feasting on meat and drinking with a few congenial people, casually chatting about everyday matters, this giant in the field of artificial intelligence was experiencing the joys of an ordinary person's life.

"Wow, this soup is really fresh and delicious!"

"It's so tasty! I feel like I could drink three big bowls in one go."

"When it comes to soup, the steam pot method is the best! This broth is just incredibly delicious."

"Xubao, are we going to add this soup to the menu at our restaurant?"

"Yes, we'll arrange it immediately! Sister Jing, did you place the order for that dedicated steam cabinet for the steam pots I sent you this morning? Have them deliver and install it as soon as possible. We'll start serving this pot-steamed pigeon as soon as it's installed!"

While they were discussing this, Xie Baomin watched his two sons devouring the stir-fried pigeon, their mouths glistening with oil. With a hopeful expression, he asked, "Well, sons, Dad's cooking is pretty good, right?"

The savory, spicy, and fragrant pigeon meat made Xie Yufei very happy. Spitting out a bone, he said, "Delicious, so delicious! Dad, your cooking skills are exceptional! I thought you only excelled at those light dishes; I didn't expect you to be so good at spicy ones too."

Xie Yuhang simply gave a thumbs-up. "It's amazing! I could eat this for a whole year and not get tired of it."

Upon hearing this, Xie Baomin momentarily forgot about his drink and eagerly asked, "So, how does it compare to the chefs at your school?"

"It's just a tiny bit worse than Window No. 7. Dad, you're qualified to contract a stall in our school cafeteria!"

Xie Baomin was left speechless.

Chapter 739: The Plump Wild Carp, Of Course, Should Be Dry Burned! [Extra for Mr. Cat cerys]

Listening to his two sons' "genuine" praise, Xie Baomin sighed softly.

They're a lost cause, both of them, he thought. Maybe I should answer the call and try for a third child? I really wish I could trade with the Geng family—two sons for one daughter. Look at Lele; not only was he specially recruited by Tsinghua University, but he also speaks with such tact. My own kids, on the other hand, always seem to be following in their uncle's footsteps.

Chef Xie lifted his glass and took a large gulp. A wave of bitterness washed over him as the wine went down, he mused.

After Lin Xu had a small bowl of the steam pot squab—so incredibly savory it was said to make one's eyebrows dance—he became even more determined to add this dish to his menu.

With this flavor and this texture, as long as it's new, it'll definitely be a massive hit!

After finishing, he didn't ladle more soup. Instead, he picked up his rice bowl and took a piece of stir-fried squab, prepared by his senior brother, placing it in his mouth.

The moment it entered his mouth, a spicy, numbing, and fresh aroma filled his palate: the pungency of ginger, the tingling of Sichuan peppercorns, the heat of chili peppers, and the fragrance of the squab meat all converged. As for the texture, the meat was enrobed in a viscous, almost gelatinous sauce, lending the squab a rich, luxurious quality. This was the benefit of using Pork Bone Broth; though no thickening agent was used, the sauce was quite viscous, making the entire dish exceptionally fragrant. In the sauce, the squab's skin was stewed until soft yet pleasantly chewy, while the delicate meat inside was tender with a satisfying firmness, bursting with flavor.

Delicious! Lin Xu thought. It truly lived up to the skill of a State Banquet chef; the squab was cooked to perfection. The most classic element was the subtle ginger flavor woven throughout the dish—not overly spicy, but the aroma was rich. This delectable dish made him instinctively reach for another mouthful of rice.

After finishing the meat, Lin Xu removed the small bone from his mouth and gave Xie Baomin a thumbs-up. "Senior Brother, your skills are incredible! You've made this squab so tasty; it seems one bowl of rice won't be enough today."

Shen Baobao chimed in, "Indeed, it's super delicious. The squab meat is firm but not tough, flavorful and not at all dry—absolutely perfect with rice."

Cui Qingyuan joined the conversation, "It's not just good with rice; it's fantastic with alcohol too! This squab meat is heavenly to chew; the more you chew, the more flavorful it gets. Director Zhou, Chef Xie, Boss Huang, come on, let's have another round!"

The group continued drinking, their glasses in hand.

Dou Wenjing, who was enjoying her rice nearby, asked, "Chef Wei, isn't the salt-fried pork you made almost identical to Fried Pork from Sichuan cuisine? Why does it have this name? Before it was served, I actually thought it might be salt-baked pork belly."

Zeng Xiaoqi, who was quite knowledgeable about food, explained, "Salt-fried pork and Fried Pork are essentially sister dishes. Fried Pork involves boiling the Belly Meat—typically from the pig's hindquarters—then slicing and stir-frying it. Salt-fried pork, however, skips the boiling step and is stir-fried directly from raw slices."

As the person in charge of a food column and having hosted the "Yanjing Food Sharing" program for two years, Zeng Xiaoqi's culinary knowledge was quite solid. After explaining, Director Zeng suddenly had an idea. "Lin Xu," she asked, "how about we record a segment on salt-fried pork when we're back at work?"

"Sure," Lin Xu replied. "Let Wei Qian do it. It's a good chance for him to get some screen time. After all, he's the head chef at Lin Ji's Food. The people of Beijing should get to know him. You'll need to give him plenty of guidance, Director Zeng."

Wei Qian had never recorded a TV program before and would inevitably be a bit nervous at first. He would need Director Zeng's full support; otherwise, they might not even manage to film one dish properly in an entire morning.

Whenever Zeng Xiaoqi suggested featuring a particular dish, it usually meant she was craving it. Hearing she could have salt-fried pork at the TV station, she readily agreed, "No problem at all! You know my on-set management skills; there won't be any slip-ups."

Haha, I can enjoy delicious food even at work! she thought happily. Even though it won't be Lin Xu cooking, the head chef from Lin Ji's Food will be making it, so the flavor will definitely be far superior to an average chef's. We can steam a pot of rice and eat it right there. Isn't that much better than queuing in the TV station cafeteria?

"Young Lin's skill really is amazing," Old Lady Liang exclaimed. "No way, I have to take a photo and post it on my Moments to make those old folks jealous!"

She scooped a small bowl of squab soup from the little steam pot in front of her and drank it while it was hot. She started to perspire lightly on her forehead, and the dizziness and nasal congestion from her cold began to ease considerably. She felt a sense of clarity wash over her. As her body felt better, her spirits lifted too.

She took a photo of the little steam pot with her phone and posted it to her Moments with the caption: "Knowing I'd caught a cold and wasn't feeling well, the young owner of Lin Ji's Food on Yingchun Street specially made this squab soup for me using a steam pot. The flavor is truly exquisite—even more delicious than the steam pot chicken I had while traveling in Southern Yunnan!"

Likes and comments flooded in almost immediately. Her social circle consisted mostly of retired seniors who spent their days thinking and talking about good food and drink. They were surprised that someone in Beijing could make squab soup with a steam pot. Moreover, it looked quite appealing: the broth was clear, glistening with golden droplets of fat, and looked incredibly appetizing.

Some asked for the restaurant's specific location, others were curious about the price of the steam pot squab, and still others wanted to know if the dish was currently available. In any case, everyone was quite intrigued.

Old Lady Liang ladled another half-bowl of soup, sipping it as she replied to the messages.

These are all potential customers for Lin Ji's Food, she thought. I definitely have to help young Lin win them over. Once they fall in love with the taste of Lin Ji's dishes, I can then persuade them to recommend the restaurant to new customers. Even with these old bones of mine, introducing a few customers is still no problem at all!

Chapter 740: Fat and Juicy Wild Carp, Of Course We'll Dry Burn It! [Extra for Mr. Cat cerys]\_2

After finishing the soup, she fished the pigeon out of the small steam pot. She picked a piece of meat from the pigeon's leg, dipped it into the ginger paste prepared nearby, and popped it into her mouth. Mmm, delicious.

The ginger paste had been fried in oil, which removed all its spiciness, leaving only a fragrant aroma.

It was a perfect match for the pigeon meat.

Lin Xu fished a squab out of the large steam pot, spooned some ginger paste onto his own plate, and said,

"I originally planned to make a Scallion Oil dip. However, considering that ginger paste promotes sweating and is more suitable for this cooling weather, I switched to ginger paste. How does it taste?"

Aunt Liang's heart warmed. What a good kid, she thought. No wonder the restaurant's business is so good.

She said to Lin Xu,

"I just posted about it on my social media feed, and my old colleagues and close friends are all asking when the steam pot squab will be available at the restaurant. They want to try it too..."

We already have potential customers? Lin Xu and Dou Wenjing exchanged glances before he replied,

"Probably in two or three days. The main thing is waiting for the supplier to deliver the equipment. Since it's a national holiday, deliveries might not be very prompt."

"Alright, no problem. Just give a shout on your social media feed when it's ready, and I'll let them know. There's no rush."

Lin Xu finished two bowls of rice and then headed to the kitchen to get started on dinner preparations.

Dry Pot Cauliflower was on the menu tonight, so he needed to prepare the woks and other necessary items to avoid a last-minute scramble.

Additionally, the stones used for the stone-cooked dishes needed to be cleaned and soaked. This was to prevent any vegetable scraps from sticking to their surfaces and burning in the hot oil.

With an expanding menu, every detail required careful attention.

Otherwise, a single oversight could lead to a culinary disaster or even a dangerous accident.

Outside, Zeng Xiaoqi, who had almost finished eating, took out her phone. She sent a photo she had taken at the start of the meal to the group chat and said, somewhat smugly,

"Boss Lin is truly amazing! Who would have thought of using a steam pot for pigeon? The flavor is simply divine, and I feel like my complexion improved the moment I drank the soup."

She had been too eager to eat earlier and hadn't gotten around to posting. But now, full and satisfied, it was the perfect time to share some photos and make others jealous. After all, they had a 'dear relative' out on the grasslands who hadn't tasted it yet. She had to describe the flavor, texture, and medicinal herbs in vivid detail so that 'relative' could experience it vicariously.

Sure enough, the moment the photo appeared, Chen Yan responded with a 'going crazy' emoji.

Everyone else was at the restaurant; she alone was vacationing on the Hulun Grassland. Director Zeng's intention was as clear as day—like a louse on a bald head.

"You guys secretly had pigeon! Soup! Without me!"

Chen was furious. She wasn't the type to suffer in silence. Since you're 'poisoning' me, don't blame me for fighting poison with poison!

Soon after, a short video of her eating lamb hot pot appeared in the group chat.

Lamb hot pot wasn't uncommon. However, having a waiter in a Mongolian robe right there, slicing fresh lamb from a hanging piece of meat and putting it directly into the pot—that was quite something.

What's more, the table also featured chive flower sauce, an excellent accompaniment to lamb.

"I was craving meat for lunch, so I got freshly slaughtered lamb, butchered on the spot. I mourned for the little lamb even as I ate. The meat wasn't gamey at all and really hit the spot!"

Seeing the video of the meat being cooked in the hot pot, Director Zeng felt like she'd taken a critical hit:

"You're actually eating freshly sliced lamb for hot pot?!"

Isn't that too cruel (tempting)? she thought. She felt like it was a Pyrrhic victory.

"When are you coming back, President Chen? Someone seems to be waiting for you to deliver her Crystal Shoes."

Since 'poisoning' with food pictures wasn't working, it was time to switch tactics.

Sure enough, as soon as this was brought up, President Chen immediately lost her confrontational edge:

"I have a whole closet full of shoes; why would I need anyone to give me some? The signal's a bit weak right now, so I'm not chatting anymore. I'm going for another horseback ride, then I'll get ready for dinner."

Zeng Xiaoqi said smugly to Shu Yun, who was sipping pigeon soup beside her,

"Humph, every woman has a weakness. I've finally grasped President Chen's Achilles' heel."

Shu Yun took another slurp of soup, then cast a meaningful glance at Zeng Xiaoqi's Xiongxiang.

Zeng Xiaoqi: "!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

AAAAH! Shu Yun is so mean, cursing her Xiongxiang to sag prematurely! Why do I always end up shooting myself in the foot? Being the underdog really sucks!

After five in the afternoon, customers began to trickle into the restaurant in twos and threes.

They didn't immediately order food but instead went straight to the front counter and surrounded Dundun.

"Is this the cat?"

"That's him. He's so chubby and adorable."

"The netizens weren't wrong; this little guy really does have a smug look, as if he disdains everyone."

"If I could code and play the piano, I'd look at you all like that too."

"To perform with such spirit and resemblance, he certainly has the right to be arrogant... Those celebrities with zero acting skills have far bigger tempers than Dundun."

"That's so true! Dundun, come on, give big sister a smile!"

"Me too, me too! I want to take a picture too!"

"..."

After taking their photos, everyone found seats and picked up the tablets handed to them by the staff to browse the menu.

When they saw that the homepage recommended Dry Pot Cauliflower as today's special, their spirits immediately lifted:

"Is this the Dry Pot Cauliflower that someone posted about in the Lin Ji discussion thread today? We'll take one!"

After ordering the Dry Pot Cauliflower, they selected a few other dishes. Their hearty meal for the day was about to begin.

Before long, the dishes arrived. The crisp texture and the savory, fragrant, spicy, and numbing flavor of the Dry Pot Cauliflower instantly awakened the customers' taste buds.