

## Culinary 741

Chapter 741: Fat and Juicy Wild Carp, Of Course We'll Dry Burn It! [Extra for Mr. Cat cerys]\_3

At 5:30 PM, Lin Xu went downstairs to see off his satiated senior brother and his family, Old Master Zhou and his wife, along with Cui Qingyuan and Old Huang.

"Dad, tomorrow I want to eat grilled fish, the kind where you can cook vegetables in the broth after finishing the fish. Can you make it?"

When Xie Baomin heard Xie Yufei ask this while he was feeling down, he immediately said, "Of course I can make it. Do you want to eat it? If so, I'll buy a Qingjiang fish tomorrow, and we can make it at home."

Upon hearing they could make it at home, Xie Yufei's face lit up with joy as he exchanged a glance with Xie Yuhang.

Xie Yuhang, the second son, chimed in, "Then can I have that fish where you pour hot oil into the pan and it sizzles?"

Xie Baomin was momentarily puzzled and turned to Lin Xu, "Junior Brother, what dish is Yu Hang talking about?"

"Boiling Fish, it's a variation of Boiled Fish. Chef Dai taught me at Tower Ten, and that day he almost got hit by Chef Guo..."

"Got it, it's even simpler than grilled fish... Let's go home, and Old Huang, don't forget to bring me two fish tomorrow, one Qingjiang and one blackfish. My son wants to eat fish, and I need to prepare it well at home."

Old Huang, who was waiting for his ride, waved his hand and said, "No problem, just tell me whatever else you two want to eat."

The brothers exchanged glances. This holiday, they just wanted to eat some spicy and richly flavored dishes, but they had no specific ideas about what.

Once they got into the car, Su Peipei started the engine and took her husband and son home.

As the car was leaving Yingchun Street, Xie Baomin pointed to the restaurants on both sides of the road and said, "In Yanjing, as long as it's a dish available in the restaurants, just tell me. There's nothing I can't make!"

This was the first time the brothers heard their dad boast like this, and they were somewhat unaccustomed to it.

Before long, Old Xie, sitting in the front passenger seat, had fallen into a deep sleep. Xie Yufei quietly asked Su Peipei, who was driving, "Mom, what's wrong with Dad today?"

"He's heartbroken..."

"Heartbroken?"

Su Peipei sighed and said, "Your dad is the executive chef at the Fishing Platform State Guesthouse. He's hosted countless foreign guests, and many state leaders are his fans who absolutely love his cooking. Yet, in your eyes, you two think he's not even better than the school cafeteria chef. Can you imagine how heartbroken he must be?"

The brothers opened their mouths, shocked to realize their dad was so impressive.

As Su Peipei became more upset, she declared, "When we get home, each of you write a reflection paper, no less than a thousand words, or else next month's allowance is cut in half!"

"Yes..."

"Got it, Mom!"

「After October 5th, the National Day holiday was coming to an end.」

On the afternoon of the 6th, Lin Xu stood at the door, bidding farewell to Liang Hanwen and others who were ending their trip to Beijing.

Everyone, carrying roast chicken and other marinated delicacies, took the subway to the train station.

After boarding their train, laden with large and small bags, they couldn't wait to open the delicacies from Lin Ji, eating while admiring the view outside the train window.

"Young man, which Beijing shop's marinated delicacies are these? Eight Great Towers?"

"No, this is Lin Ji's Food from Lin Ji on Yingchun Street off North Fourth Ring."

"Lin Ji's Food? I've never heard of it. Is it a well-established brand?"

"It's not a well-established brand, it's a new one, but the taste is even better than the well-established ones. Try this chicken leg and see if it's not better than the older ones?"

"Hey, it really is! Next time I come to Beijing, I have to try it. This flavor is really good."

"..."

On their way back, Lin Ji's loyal fans inadvertently helped promote it further.

At the entrance of the store, Lin Xu bid farewell to everyone one by one.

When most people had left, he tugged at the long-sleeved undershirt sleeve under his chef's uniform.

The weather had turned cool, and the chef's uniform could no longer be worn alone; it had to be layered over a long-sleeved undershirt, otherwise, stepping outside would be unbearably cold.

After sending off the out-of-town customers, he was just about to enter the store when he saw Old Man Sun, the fisherman, hurriedly coming from his home with seven or eight carp in tow.

The carp seemed to be strung together with a rope, all weighing around two pounds each, looking quite plump.

Upon seeing Lin Xu, Old Man Sun shouted, "Boss Lin, do you want any fish? This morning I had an amazing haul! I caught more than a dozen carp in one go. We can't finish them all at home and was planning to sell them off here. If you want them, I'll give them all to you."

An amazing haul?

Impressive, very impressive.

Lin Xu walked over. He saw that the fish were still alive. Autumn was the season when fish were at their fattest and juiciest, and these carp were shining golden, clearly wild.

He said with a smile, "Old Man Sun is really impressive. I've tried fishing before too, but every time, I end up not catching anything and instead just feed the fish well."

As soon as they talked about fishing, Old Man Sun got excited, "It's all about experience. If you feel like fishing sometime, I'll take you to the suburbs. I guarantee you'll quickly get the hang of it."

Lin Xu took all the fish.

He initially wanted to pay Old Man Sun, but the old man absolutely refused to take any money, so Lin Xu packed two roasted chickens for him instead.

He brought the fish into the store and directly placed them into the aquarium.

"Wow, these fish look so plump and juicy! Where did you get them, Xu Bao?"

"I traded Old Man Sun some roasted chickens for them."

Traded?

"In the age of digital payments, you're actually still bartering like that?"

Looking at the carp swimming leisurely in the aquarium, Shen Baobao asked curiously, "How should we prepare these fish to make them taste the best? We haven't really eaten fish recently, maybe..."

She didn't continue, but her intention was very clear.

I really want some fish!~

Lin Xu said, "Let's get two out this afternoon and make Dry-Burning Fish. We haven't tried that before, let's try it together."

"Dry-Burning Fish?"

Sounds delicious!

"How is Dry-Burning Fish made? No oil? No water?"

Lin Xu smiled while holding her delicate palm, "This dish uses both oil and water. The only requirement is to let the water dry out to achieve the appearance of seeing oil but no juice. I'll make it this afternoon. You try it then; it seems to taste quite good."

"Alrighty... Oh right, Xu Bao, the front desk just received a call from the Steinway exclusive store, asking about the dimensions of our living room."

While Lin Xu was thinking about making the Dry-Burning Fish, he casually asked, "Why are they asking that? Are they planning to send us a piano or something?"

"You actually guessed it right. They really are planning to send a piano over."

Lin Xu: ?????

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"What do you mean?"

Lin Xu was somewhat baffled. Why would Steinway send him a piano all of a sudden? Even if they couldn't sell it, it wouldn't make sense to just give them away everywhere.

"President Yan's secretary asked Dundun a few days ago what he liked, and Shu Yun casually mentioned a Steinway grand piano. As a result, President Yan actually placed an order for one—a limited edition commemorative model, no less. It's really expensive."

This...

Do wealthy people give gifts so casually? A gift worth millions, just given away without a second thought. If things keep going like this, Dundun, this well-behaved and sensible little fellow, will sooner or later fall into the dyeing vat of capitalism.

Lin Xu said, "We can't accept this; it's too expensive... Can you talk to President Yan, thank her kindly for the gesture, and ask her to send the piano back?"

Shen Baobao looked troubled. "After I received the call from the Steinway store at the front desk, I contacted President Yan immediately, intending to return it. But she said that in her entire life, she has never accepted a returned gift. She even said if we don't like it, we could just throw it out or smash it—she won't take it back."

Lin Xu: "..."

President Yan's temperament really was something. No wonder she was still at odds with Professor Cui at forty. With such a stubborn nature, she must have caused Professor Cui plenty of headaches in her younger years.

"What do we do now, Xu-bao? Our living room is too small to fit it, and that type of old building can't accommodate a grand piano..."

What else can we do? We surely can't just sell it on Idle Fish, right?

Lin Xu sighed. The only solution now was to move.

Just a couple of mornings ago, he'd said they wouldn't be adding any large items for now, as the house could definitely accommodate them. He hadn't bought anything himself, but his cat had ended up acquiring a grand piano.

\*About the Small Matter of My Cat Receiving a Gift and Me Being Forced to Move Houses.\*

Lin Xu muttered inwardly, then said, "While it's not yet dinner time, I'll go consult with Sister Wenjing first to find the best solution for moving. I also need to keep an eye on available properties to see if there's a suitable place nearby."

The house couldn't be too far from Lin Ji's shop. Within five kilometers would be fine. Anything farther would make commuting as tiresome as migrating, a waste of precious time. But the vicinity was mostly school district housing, like Haidian Middle School, Tsinghua High School, and the like. Though mostly comprised of second-hand houses, they were priced significantly higher than new houses in other districts.

With this on his mind, Lin Xu was in no mood to appreciate the fish he had just exchanged for a roast chicken.

Heading upstairs, Dou Wenjing was enjoying freshly baked dried fish with Zeng Xiaoqi and others at the table. Shen Baobao had been eating there too; she had only gone downstairs to answer the phone when the Steinway store called. Now, upon returning upstairs, the amount of dried fish was substantially less.

She hurriedly sat down and started eating. If she didn't eat now, there'd be none left!

Lin Xu said to Dou Wenjing, "Sister Wenjing, I'm thinking of getting a new place, but I currently don't have the eligibility to buy a house. What's the best way to go about it now?"

Dou Wenjing listened and, her curiosity piqued, asked, "Are you preparing to have a wedding with the boss lady?"

Suddenly wanting to move usually implied marriage. And a couple deciding to marry without any prior signs usually meant—pregnancy.

Instantly, Dou Wenjing's eyes lit up with blazing gossip. She even glanced surreptitiously at Shen Baobao, who was snacking on spicy dried fish.

Her tummy was still flat; looks like it hasn't been long.

Lin Xu took a sip of tea from the table and said with a smile, "No, the wedding would be at the end of this year at the earliest, or maybe next May Day. That's not urgent. President Yan gifted Dundun a grand piano, and it won't fit in our current place, so we need to find somewhere bigger."

Other people move because of marriage, children, or having plenty of cash on hand. Only he was being forced to do so by his own cat. What a good cat, constantly pushing its owner to work hard and earn money!

"A grand piano?"

Everyone present looked surprised, especially Zeng Xiaoqi, who asked curiously, "Is it the kind of piano you have at the boss lady's house? President Yan is really generous!"

Dou Wenjing agreed with a sigh of emotion, "Yeah, it's unbelievable."

After a moment's thought, she said, "You could start by renting. If you find it troublesome, the company can help rent it for you. Just tell us your requirements, and we'll have someone start looking during work hours."

Lin Xu gently shook his head.

If he was going to rent, he might as well move directly into the villa on West Fourth Ring. The villa there is spacious, and there's even a housekeeper. He wouldn't have to endure neighbors who randomly sing karaoke at home or get sudden urges to jump rope for fitness. More importantly, he wouldn't have to worry about landlords letting themselves in with their keys whenever they pleased. That was too unsafe. What if they installed cameras in places like the bathroom...? The mere thought was terrifying.

Lin Xu said, "Let's forget about renting. I just want to buy a house now."

"Buy a house?"

But the money in the company's accounts was hardly sufficient for that.

As a professional manager, Dou Wenjing immediately adjusted her thinking. Since her boss mentioned buying a house, she started thinking of ways to make it happen. "The car company we acquired last time has housing purchase eligibility. We can just register the house under that company's name for now, and transfer it to your name once you have the eligibility."

Just as he'd anticipated.

Lin Xu asked, "Will the funds be enough?"

"The business volume of our shop is pretty stable now, and the expansion of Ziqiang Shengjian is also progressing steadily. We can definitely take out a loan to buy the house. Just before the holiday, a bank manager was asking if we wanted to take out a loan."

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[Vote for Monthly Ticket]\_2

Banks are under pressure to lend. This pressure intensified after the central bank cut reserve requirements. Banks are quite eager to collaborate with restaurants like Lin Ji's Food, which boast monthly revenues in the millions. After all, a steady cash flow indicates the ability to repay loans.

"Then let's get a loan, as long as it doesn't affect the company's operations. Additionally, we can slow down the expansion of Ziqiang Shengjian to solidify our customer base. We shouldn't overextend ourselves."

He'd wanted to mimic Grandpa Ge's tone and say, "Taking too big a step can lead to a strain," but he thought better of it. In front of several ladies, it was better to be more reserved.

"We've already slowed down. After opening the branch near Teacher Su's school, we'll have eight branches in total. We won't consider expanding any further before the end of the year."

Eight branches? If one store makes a hundred thousand a month, that's eight hundred thousand a month in revenue. That casual decision has unexpectedly turned into a golden goose.

"Boss, what are your requirements for a house? Xiaoqi and I are free anyway; we can help you look around."

Requirements?

Lin Xu and Shen Baobao exchanged a glance and stated their preferences, "The bigger, the better—preferably a large flat over 200 square meters. A similar duplex would also work, but the living room must be spacious. Ideally, it's a new property that hasn't been lived in, and it should be close to Lin Ji."

Not many requirements. But each one costs a pretty penny.

Dou Wenjing was secretly astonished. The boss is really leaning more and more towards President Shen's ways. Everything has to be big—the restaurant, the car, and now even the house has to be a large one.

She said, "There don't seem to be many homes available nearby. We'll start searching for you. Director Zeng, Lele, don't just play around; help with the search too."

Zeng Xiaoqi put a piece of dried fish in her mouth and chewed as she said, "No problem at all! I love browsing real estate platforms for houses; the pricier they are, the more exciting I find browsing."

Lin Xu paused, stunned. "Are you setting goals for yourself?"

"No, it's to extinguish any unrealistic notions I might have about buying a house."

That... works?

With that, Zeng Xiaoqi opened her phone and began searching for nearby properties according to Lin Xu's criteria. As she busied herself, she said, "Let's filter the options first, and then visit them in person. It'll also be good exercise. I gained nearly two pounds over the holiday! I really need to exercise."

Lately, they'd been coming to the restaurant to eat and drink all day, often taking snacks with them when they left. The pleasure of eating was directly proportional to the pain of stepping on the electronic scale. What made Director Zeng even more uncomfortable was that all the weight she gained settled on her belly, while the areas she actually wanted to enhance remained stubbornly flat.

Speaking of gaining weight, Dou Wenjing also rubbed her own belly. "I've gained a pound and a half. This eating well and being lazy really isn't good. Let's find a house today, and hopefully, we can go see some tomorrow. We can count it as exercise."

Shu Yun said, "I'm doing okay; I've only gained a little over a pound... I need to start dieting today, or else what will I do if my custom work uniform doesn't fit?"

Listening to these women, who fretted about their figures yet couldn't control their appetites, Geng Lele finally understood why so many people experienced such internal conflict.

With a mischievous smile, she asked Lin Xu, "Xu, what are we eating later?"

"I just traded some roasted chicken with Old Sun for a few wild carp. We'll have Dry Burning Carp for dinner."

Upon hearing this dish, the members of the self-proclaimed 'fat-loss squad' lit up. Just moments ago, they were lamenting the 'three pounds gained per holiday' curse, but now their eyes sparkled as if they hadn't eaten in days.

Zeng Xiaoqi said expectantly, "Then I must try it! The Dry Burning Carp I've had before was always pretty average. But with Boss Lin cooking, the taste is bound to be extraordinary. I bet I could eat two bowls of rice with it! Right, Doudou?"

"Oh, yes! I love fish when it's packed with flavor."

Shu Yun, also filled with anticipation, said, "I've heard that a properly made Dry Burning Carp has no sauce left because the fish absorbs it all. I'll definitely have to eat a few extra pieces later."

Lin Xu had originally planned to mention that Dry Burning Carp is cooked with diced pork belly, making it quite high in calories, and that they should probably eat a bit less. But seeing their eager anticipation... Never mind, I'd better not remind them. It might spoil their appetite.

"By the way, Xubao," Shen Baobao interjected once the serious discussion wound down, "I asked the Steinway store to deliver the piano to the restaurant for now. We can have it moved to the new house once we find one. Moving it around too much isn't good for the instrument."

"Alright."

If Lin Ji's Food were a hotel or an innovative cuisine restaurant, having the piano delivered directly there would be fine. But Lin Ji is a traditional restaurant, and having a piano there would be rather out of place.

Lin Xu picked up a piece of dried fish. Today's batch seems a bit overdone, probably because the fire was too high. By tomorrow, after it's softened a bit, the texture and taste should improve considerably. But watching Shen Baobao, Zeng Xiaoqi, Geng Lele, and the others wolfing them down with their drinks, it was hard to say if any would last until tomorrow.

Dried fish wasn't an everyday item. It was only made using the residual heat in the oven after a customer ordered a whole roasted sheep. This way, Dundun got some treats, and everyone else could try them too.

After tasting the dried fish, he stood up, intending to head back to the kitchen, when a system notification suddenly chimed in his mind:

"Lin Ji's Food topic has broken into the top fifteen of the national trending topics chart! Hidden task [Top Fifteen on the Overall List] completed. Reward: Perfect Level Hubei cuisine dish—Lotus Root Stewed with Pork Ribs. Congratulations, Host!"

Chapter 744: What's It Like to Be Forced to Change Houses by a Cat? Super Delicious Dry Burning Fish! [Vote for Monthly Ticket]\_3

What's happening? The buzz about Dundun had already passed, so how did it suddenly break into the fifteenth spot on the overall leaderboard? He remembered that even after the release of the second half of the behind-the-scenes footage, the topic of Lin Ji's Food had still been hovering around seventeenth or eighteenth place, a considerable distance from fifteenth. Two days had passed; logically, it should have fallen beyond twentieth rank by now. Yet, unexpectedly, it had surged back into the top fifteen and, in doing so, completed a hidden task.

He took out his phone and glanced at the trending topics list. Sure enough, Lin Ji's Food was at fifteenth place, and next to it, a "boom" icon indicated its rapidly rising popularity.

Clicking on it, he browsed through the topic's activity and finally understood what had happened.

Last night, an extra who frequently took on bit parts in Hengdian had creatively reinterpreted Dundun's video. He portrayed Zeng Xiaoqi and the others at the head of the conference table as film industry professionals like directors, screenwriters, producers, and executive producers.

In the video, these professionals sat in their high chairs, sighing and lamenting the declining acting skills of contemporary actors, which, they argued, made filmmaking increasingly challenging.

However, they were completely oblivious to the dedicated performances of some lesser-known actors.

The lesser-known actors could perform all the actions and expressions the directors discussed, but because the directors failed to notice them, Dundun (representing these actors) could only perform a monologue.

In the end, Dundun lay down on the conference table. This symbolized these lesser-known actors resigning themselves to their fate, transitioning to other careers, or sadly withdrawing from the industry altogether.

Meanwhile, the directors continued to bemoan the lack of good actors.

The satirical undertones were potent.

The Voiceover and subtitles perfectly matched Dundun's performance.

Consequently, it sparked a tremendous response as soon as it was released.

Many video creators began to produce their own reinterpretations of Dundun's video, expressing the sorrow of talent being overlooked.

And just like that, Dundun's video went viral once again.

As a result, Lin Ji's Food also experienced a resurgence in popularity, shooting up to fifteenth place on the overall topic leaderboard.

After seeing this, Lin Xu glanced at Zhu Yong, who was busy in the kitchen. He had initially planned to ask Zhu Yong to cook Lotus Root Stewed with Pork Ribs so everyone could try something new.

But now, it seemed there was no need to wait for Zhu Yong.

He could easily make it himself.

Around four in the afternoon, Lin Xu went downstairs, caught several Carp from the aquarium, and began to prepare Dry Burning Fish.

The dish Dry Burning Fish, it is said, was either created by the famous painter Zhang Daqian or was the accidental invention of a chef. Legend has it this chef, engrossed in watching a card game, forgot about the fish simmering in the pot, allowing the broth to cook down completely.

Regardless, it's a dish with an uncomplicated preparation method, yet its flavor is extraordinarily delicious.

He tapped the Carp's head with a kitchen knife, then made an incision near the tail to bleed it, followed by scraping off the Fish Scales.

For a fish weighing around two jin, the Fish Scales aren't very large, so I won't bother keeping them this time.

Fish Scales are present not only on the body but also on the fish's belly, where they are even harder. To avoid affecting the texture, I need to scrape and wash them thoroughly from head to tail.

After scraping, he gutted the Carp.

He removed all the internal organs, but kept the Fish Roe, Fish Bladder, and fish oil aside to make a dish of fish offal later.

Once the innards were cleared, he washed away the black membrane lining the abdominal cavity, removed the gills and fish teeth. Finally, he trimmed the Fish Tail into a standard "V" shape. This cut, known as a "swallowtail," symbolizes spreading one's wings and soaring after enjoying the meal.

With that step done, the cleaning of the Carp was finished.

He rinsed the Carp's body again, then patted the surface and abdominal cavity completely dry with paper towels before starting to score it.

There are various ways to score a Carp.

There are many ways, such as the straight score, willow leaf score, peony score, and so on.

Today's Dry Burning Fish requires a cross-score.

He laid the fish flat on the cutting board. Then, in the thickest part of its back, along the spine, he made incisions at a 45-degree angle, using the tip of the knife to cut down to the bone before stopping.

He repeated this every few centimeters.

For Dry Burning Fish, the scores must be deep, reaching the bone. This allows the flavors to penetrate the fish meat more thoroughly, making it even more delicious.

He scored it from head to tail, then changed the angle and scored it again, creating a crisscross pattern.

After scoring both sides, he placed the fish in a basin and rubbed a layer of salt all over it. He then crushed some Scallion and Ginger and rubbed it thoroughly over the fish and inside its cavity. Finally, he stuffed the remaining Scallion and Ginger into the cavity to marinate.

This step is to give the fish a foundational flavor, enhancing the deliciousness of the Carp.

Next, he covered the basin and let the fish marinate for ten minutes.

While the fish was marinating, he prepared all the other necessary ingredients.

He cut some fattier pork belly into pieces the size of pomegranate seeds, prepared Ginger and Garlic Mince, mashed Doubanjiang into a paste, washed and chopped the Bean Sprouts, and diced bamboo shoots, Pickled Peppers, and Scallion segments, along with other seasonings.

Traditionally, salt is not added when making Dry Burning Fish; its saltiness comes primarily from the Doubanjiang and Bean Sprouts.

The so-called "Bean Sprouts" (Yacai) are a type of green vegetable pickled with salt, similar to items like preserved snow cabbage, meicai, or radish tops. They are an indispensable pickled vegetable in the Sichuan and Chongqing regions, available year-round.

Classic Sichuan delicacies like Yibin "Burning Noodles," and Salted Roast Pork (a dish with a taste and texture rivaling Pickled Pork), all rely on the addition of these Bean Sprouts.

With all preparations complete, the fish was also perfectly marinated.

Time to start cooking.

Lin Xu removed all the Scallion and Ginger from the fish. He then heated a generous amount of oil in the wok.

When the oil was about 70 to 80 percent hot, he carefully placed the Carp into it.

Once the Carp was in the wok, he didn't move it. Frying it in high-temperature oil ensured the surface would quickly crisp up without the skin breaking.

Conversely, if he moved the fish too soon after placing it in the wok, it would definitely stick.

After frying for a while, he gently shook the wok. When the fish slid easily with the movement, it indicated that the bottom was fried crisp and it was time to flip it.

Once both sides were nicely fried, he removed the fish and set it aside to drain excess oil.

He placed the wok back on the stove and added a ladleful of cooking oil. When the oil was hot, he added the diced pork belly and stir-fried it over low heat, rendering out its fat and releasing its aroma.

Next, he added the Doubanjiang, stir-frying until it was fragrant and its Red Oil was released.

When that was almost ready, he added the Ginger and Garlic Mince, diced Pickled Peppers, and chopped Bean Sprouts, continuing to stir-fry, creating a flavorful base for the fish.

Once all the aromas had mingled, he stirred in a small spoonful of ground pepper, then poured in Light Soy Sauce and Dark Soy Sauce to give the simmering sauce a rich base color.

He increased the heat to bring the sauce to a vigorous boil, then carefully placed the fried fish into the wok. He poured in enough Pork Bone Broth to submerge about half the fish and began the braising process.

As it cooked, he continuously spooned the simmering sauce from the wok over the exposed part of the fish, ensuring the flavors fully penetrated the meat.

"Wow, it smells so good!"

"Exactly! I can't believe we can smell the Dry Burning Fish all the way out here at the kitchen door. It's making my mouth water!"

"I'm definitely having extra later. Whoever tries to fight me for it, may their cup size shrink!"

"..."

At the doorway, Zeng Xiaoqi and the others, enticed by the aroma wafting from the kitchen, had completely forgotten about the dried fish snacks they were holding. They were worried they wouldn't have enough room for the Dry Burning Fish later.

While browsing nearby real estate listings on their phones, they suddenly spotted a top-floor duplex apartment listed for urgent sale.

"Hey, this place looks pretty good..."

Chapter 745: This Fish Can Be Saved, Bring Me a Bowl of Rice So I Can Rescue It! How to Cook Surimi!

At the kitchen doorway, Shen Jiayue was seriously flipping through the photos of the house on the cell phone Zeng Xiaoqi had handed her. The house was fully furnished and had never been inhabited. It was originally intended as a marital home, but since their child went abroad for studies and wouldn't be returning, the parents had decided to sell the property and live abroad with their child.

Overall, the house was impressive and spacious enough, spanning two and a half levels, with the uppermost part being a heat-insulated loft and an oversized terrace. There were no tall buildings nearby, offering a broad, unobstructed view. In all aspects, it was extremely ideal.

"How about it, boss lady? It's good, isn't it?" Zeng Xiaoqi asked.

"Pretty good," Shen Jiayue replied. "I'll call and ask now. If it's okay, we'll go have a look tomorrow."

After she finished speaking, Shen Baobao took the phone and started contacting the homeowner.

Meanwhile, Dou Wenjing sent a message to the legal advisor of the Shen Group on WeChat:

"Brother Feng, what should we pay attention to when buying a second-hand house? Our boss and boss lady are planning to buy a house, and we'd like to hear the opinion of a legal professional."

This Brother Feng was the lawyer who had helped handle the Ziqiang Shengjian glass-smashing incident. He was in his thirties and in a rising phase of his career.

He was at home, making Dough for dumplings at this time.

Upon seeing the message, he quickly washed his hands and replied, "First, look at the property's qualifications—that is, whether the so-called 'five certificates' are complete. When looking at the property deed, remember the name, code, and building number. Then, go to the property transaction hall to check its authenticity. After that, check with the bank if the property is under a mortgage loan. Finally, check with the court if there's a risk of the property entering foreclosure proceedings."

Brother Feng knew exactly who Dou Wenjing's "boss and boss lady" were, so he replied with great care.

Dou Wenjing was somewhat dazed looking at the long message.

Is buying a second-hand house always this complicated? she wondered.

Brother Feng replied, "It has always been this complicated. However, give me a heads-up when you're viewing the house, and I'll come along to help check things out. If Mr. Shen's daughter and son-in-law get cheated while buying a house, then we legal advisors might as well resign."

"Thanks, Brother Feng. We're currently scheduling with the homeowner. We'll notify you once it's arranged, and we'll treat you to a meal then."

"Haha, that would be great! I've been craving food from Lin Ji recently."

Just as Dou Wenjing finished chatting, Shen Baobao also finished scheduling a time with the homeowner to view the house: ten o'clock tomorrow morning, meeting outside the residential community where the house was located.

In the kitchen, Lin Xu was still ladling broth from the pot over the fish. This cooking method was quite similar to that of braised fish, but the sauce for braised fish is thick and rich in soy flavor. For Dry Burning fish, however, the pot eventually contains only oil, as the broth is cooked down completely, allowing its flavor to fully infuse into the Fish. Although the methods are similar, they are distinct. Hence, the resulting taste and texture were also significantly different.

Soon, the broth in the pot reduced further, and the Red Oil gradually separated out. It was then time to add Crystal Sugar. Crystal Sugar shouldn't be added too early, as it could cause the broth to stick to the pot. When added later, by the time the Crystal Sugar fully dissolves, the dish is almost ready to be removed from the heat. The Crystal Sugar counteracts the spiciness and the sourness of the Pickled Peppers while also enhancing the umami of the Fish.

The flesh of Carp is somewhat tough and has a strong fishy taste; to give this dish a rich texture and savory flavor, the Dry Burning method was developed. This method utilizes minced pork to enhance the aroma, diced bamboo shoots to boost the freshness, and the sour-spiciness of Pickled Peppers to

remove the earthy taste from the Fish. The final sauce reduction allows the rich aroma of the Pork Bone Broth to replace the Fish's natural moisture, significantly improving the texture of the Fish.

This Dry Burning method could cook not just Carp, but also Grass Carp, Bian fish, and Butterfish, which are leaner types of fish. However, if used to cook richer fish like catfish or Qingjiang fish, the flavor wouldn't be as perfect because they are too fatty and rich, making the dish feel a bit like overdoing it.

Finally, almost no broth remained in the pot, and the Crystal Sugar had fully dissolved. Lin Xu placed a fish platter on the worktable. He then carefully scooped the now thoroughly tender Carp from the pot and gently placed it on the platter. After arranging it, he used a skimmer to scoop out the accompanying ingredients from the pot, spreading them evenly over the fish. He then returned the wok to the stove, turned the heat to high, and constantly stirred the remaining sauce with a spoon to quicken its evaporation. When only Red Oil was left in the wok, he turned off the heat and scooped the thick, fragrant oil to drizzle over the fish.

The glistening Red Oil, emitting a strong spicy aroma, coated the fish, instantly making the whole thing look shiny and succulent. After drizzling enough over the fish, Lin Xu poured some more of the oil onto the base of the platter around the fish. This not only enhanced its presentation but also provided a spicy, flavorful oil to dip the fish in while eating. It could even be used to mix with rice. In essence, this oil, infused with the aroma of the stock, was rich and intensely flavorful; it was delicious no matter how it was eaten.

With the Dry Burning fish ready, it was almost time for dinner.

As they began to eat, exclamations filled the air.

"Wow, this Dry Burning fish looks absolutely delicious!"

"What are those golden granules inside? Diced pork fat?"

"Just this Red Oil alone, I could eat a huge bowl of rice with it!"

"And there are Bean Sprouts and diced bamboo shoots too! All perfect with rice."

"..."

As soon as the dish was brought out from the kitchen, everyone who had been busy looking at house listings on their phones put them down. They stared intently at the Dry Burning fish, surprised by its appetizing appearance. They had initially thought it would be similar to Braised carp, but this shiny, oily presentation was far more tempting than the typical braised fish.

"Quick, quick, get me a bowl of rice! I think this fish can still be saved!" Shen Baobao exclaimed playfully, nudging Lin Xu before she began to report on her earlier findings regarding the house:

Chapter 746: This Fish Can Be Saved, Bring Me a Bowl of Rice So I Can Rescue It! How to Cook Surimi! \_2

"We've selected four properties: two large flats and two duplexes, each starting at 20 million."

Lin Xu squeezed her hand. "Money isn't an issue. As long as you like it, I can just work harder."

A prince needs a castle to marry a princess. Compared to the sweet, adorable, and beautiful Shen Baobao, a house costing over twenty million didn't seem expensive; it might even seem a bit modest.

"I'm so touched! Thank you, Xu Darling, but I won't let you pay for it all by yourself. It's our home, so naturally, we should share the expenses."

Hmph, it's time to see how much pocket money my little piggy bank has.

The rice was served, and everyone began to eat.

The fish was cooked until it was as tender as tofu, trembling when picked up with chopsticks.

He placed a piece of fish on his rice, carefully removed the tiny bones, then mixed it with the rice using his spoon, coating the grains with a thin layer of Red Oil. He spooned a bite into his mouth.

WOW! It was fragrant, savory, and spicy, and the oil made the rice incredibly rich and moist.

"Amazing! This Dry Burning Fish is absolutely exceptional."

"Exactly! The meat is so tender, and the sauce it's cooked in is especially fragrant. I propose..."

"That we make this dish next time we record a video for the TV station, right? No need to propose it; those who know, know."

Zeng Xiaoqi: "..."

Just because my Xiongxiong are a little smaller, you're disrespecting me like this, huh? You just wait, Shu Yun! When I get home, I'll make a little effigy of you and curse you! I'll make your Xiongxiong shrink, your butt go flat, your thighs get fat, your calves get bowed, your skin turn dark, and you get shorter...

While Zeng Xiaoqi was mentally plotting Shu Yun's 'makeover,' Shu Yun scooped up a piece of Fish Belly, as tender as tofu, and placed it in Zeng Xiaoqi's bowl. "Director Zeng, try this Fish Belly. It's absolutely beyond your imagination."

Zeng Xiaoqi's heart warmed, and she immediately dismissed her thoughts of giving Shu Yun a 'makeover.'

She tasted it, and it was indeed delicious. The fish was so tender it practically melted in her mouth; she barely needed to chew, as a gentle press of her tongue was enough for it to dissolve.

"It's really tasty. Thank you, Shu Baobao."

"No need for thanks. That's what best friends are for!"

Geng Lele, who was patiently removing bones from her fish, said, "Sister Yun probably thought the Fish Belly was too fatty and that eating it might make her gain weight, so she gave it to Sister Xiaoqi, right?"

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

Where was I with that curse? Let's continue, continue! Let's make sure to arrange everything possible for our dear 36C 'best friend'!

Nearby, Lin Xu, eating the delicious Dry Burning Fish, was somewhat surprised that fish could be this tasty.

The recipe for this dish was actually quite simple: first, deep-fry the fish, then simmer it in a pot over low heat until the sauce completely reduced.

If this were made in a restaurant, the fish could be deep-fried in advance, and the simmering sauce could also be prepared ahead of time.

When a customer ordered it, one would just ladle some sauce into a pot, add the fish, and simmer until the sauce reduced completely.

As for accompaniments like diced meat and bamboo shoots, they could all be prepared beforehand and added to the pot as needed.

This way, the dish could be ready to serve in about ten minutes.

The cost of the entire dish wasn't high; it was something to consider adding to the menu.

If it worked out, this preparation method would be standardized.

But for now, this dish would have to wait. The steamer cabinet for the Steam Pot Squab had just been delivered. He planned to start installing it after work that evening. If the testing went well, they would start a trial run at lunchtime the next day.

Compared to the Dry Burning Fish, the Steam Pot Squab was the priority for new dishes in the near future.

"Xu Darling, can I have Dry Burning Fish again tomorrow?"

"Of course, but let's use a different fish tomorrow. Carp has too many fine, scattered bones; it's not as satisfying to eat."

Shen Baobao asked curiously, "Then what are you planning to do with these Carp? You're not going to throw them away, are you?"

Throw them away? How could I?

Lin Xu said, "I'm planning to make a different kind of delicacy... Chezi, later, steam a large bowl of Glutinous Rice for me. Use a little more water than usual."

"Sure thing!"

"Also, go find me some dry straw. I have a use for it."

Straw?

This piqued everyone's curiosity.

"Xu Darling, what are you planning to make?"

"I'm planning to use Glutinous Rice to preserve the fish. We'll use it to make soup later on."

The preserved ingredient for Silver Shrimp Soup is made by encasing fish in salt and Glutinous Rice, then wrapping it all in dry straw for full fermentation. During this process, moisture is expelled from the fish, making its flesh firmer.

Although Lin Xu had acquired the complete knowledge and methodology, he had never actually made it before, so he wanted to try it out.

He wanted to see just how delicious this soup, lauded in poems by countless ancient celebrities, truly was.

"Straw can be hard to find. I'll go check the wet market; I should be able to find some there. I've seen some vegetable and apple vendors use straw on their carts as padding to prevent bruising."

After speaking, Chezi picked up a couple of mouthfuls of Qin Wei's minced meat eggplant with his chopsticks, quickly finished his rice, and then, after setting the Glutinous Rice to steam in the kitchen, he headed out.

Not long after, just as Lin Xu finished his rice and was slowly sipping a bowl of egg drop soup, Chezi returned carrying a bundle of straw.

Since everything was ready, it was time to begin.

He set down his bowl and retrieved all the remaining Carp from the fish tank.

He removed the scales, gills, and guts from the fish, carefully setting aside all the edible offal. He planned to make a satisfying dish of Stewed Fish Entrails with it the next day.

Next, he took some salt and thinly coated each fish with it.

He placed the fish in a basin to marinate briefly, allowing the salt to draw out excess moisture from the flesh.

Once the Glutinous Rice was steamed, he spread it out on a tray and immediately took it to the cold storage to cool rapidly.

When the rice had cooled until it was just slightly warm to the touch, he brought it out and began to prepare the fish.

By this time, the salt had drawn a considerable amount of water from the fish in the basin. He drained off this liquid, then took handfuls of the Glutinous Rice and began to thoroughly coat the fish with it.

Chapter 747: This fish can still be saved, hurry up with a bowl of rice for me to rescue! The method to cook bream! \_3

After applying a layer to the surface, he also stuffed some into the Fish Belly. The Glutinous Rice was highly sticky. After spreading it evenly, he laid out dry straw neatly on the workbench, placed the fish on top, and wrapped it with the straw.

The preserved fish was thus prepared. Next, it would be left in a warm place to marinate for a few days.

"This marinating method looks quite traditional." Even with his extensive experience in aquatic products, Zhu Yong couldn't guess what delicacy this might be.

Although the method was similar to that of traditional stinky Gu fish, which is fermented in wooden barrels, this was wrapped with straw instead.

Lin Xu said, "This is a lost dish that I'm trying to restore."

During the Song Dynasty, this type of preserved fish was considered a delicacy. Lu You had written several poems praising its exquisite taste.

But by the Ming Dynasty, this type of preserved fish had lost its prestigious status and no longer appeared at official banquets. Instead, it found its way into ordinary households, becoming a meal for destitute scholars.

In some Ming Dynasty storybooks and novels, references to this type of preserved fish occasionally appeared.

After the Qing Dynasty, however, the term for this type of preserved fish vanished, and Silver Shrimp Soup disappeared altogether.

The entire soup had been completely lost to history.

Though Lin Xu seemed nonchalant about this round of cooking, he was quite excited internally.

To recreate a dish from three hundred years ago is undoubtedly something to look forward to.

It has been said that a dish is lost for two reasons: either it tastes bad or it's difficult to make.

Hopefully, this Silver Shrimp Soup isn't the former, or it would have been a waste of effort.

After wrapping all the fish in straw, Lin Xu felt it wasn't appropriate to keep them in the kitchen. With people coming and going, if someone knocked them over or spilled water on them, he would have to start over.

Moreover, the kitchen's high humidity and greasy smoke weren't suitable for the fermentation and marination of the preserved fish.

After some thought, he decided to take them up to the apartment in the residential building behind the restaurant.

The temperature inside the rooms was still quite high during the day and suitable for fermentation and marination.

With this in mind, he packed the straw-wrapped fish into large plastic bags and carried them to the kitchen in the residential building behind his.

Upon his return, there were already customers in the shop.

They were currently standing in front of the service counter, taking photos of Dundun, who looked as smug as ever.

Seeing Lin Xu, the customers asked curiously, "Boss Lin, I heard that someone offered a high price to have Dundun do a live-stream and sell products. Why didn't you agree?"

"It's all over the internet, saying you're too proud and asking for too much money."

"So, did the deal fall through, or did you flat-out refuse?"

"Are those people just trying to cash in on Dundun's popularity?"

Lin Xu approached the service counter and extended his arms. Dundun immediately got up and jumped into his embrace.

The little fellow placed his front paws on Lin Xu's chef uniform, Lin Xu supporting his hind legs. Dundun's face gleamed with pride, and when he saw someone taking pictures, he even purposely pressed his head against Lin Xu's neck.

"I've always raised Dundun like my own child; I never intended to make money off him. As for live-streaming and selling products... You all know the relationship between Joyful Media, Xinda Commerce, and the Chubby Dundun Restaurant. Even if we were to sell products, it would be a collaboration between our three businesses. How could we possibly get involved with those people on the internet?"

No sooner had he finished speaking than Dundun affectionately rubbed his big head against Lin Xu's shoulder.

"He really does act like a child."

"So well-behaved! No wonder Boss Lin dotes on him so much."

"I wish I had a cat like that!"

"Even if you did, it wouldn't help. Do you have Boss Lin's culinary skills? Or the boss lady's 'money power'? Honestly, I've never eaten bluefin tuna in my life."

"Me neither, and things like salmon too. Every time the boss lady posts Dundun's meal plans online, I get the feeling that I'm worse off than a cat."

"Be confident; that's not a feeling, that's the truth!"

"..."

Listening to everyone's discussion, Lin Xu rubbed Dundun's head and then put him back on the roof of the cat house.

I can't always play with you; Daddy still needs to go make money.

His originally comfortable and carefree life was suddenly overshadowed by the prospect of millions, or even more, in debt because of a gift his cat received.

Indeed, one should never accept gifts recklessly!

「The next morning.」

As soon as Lin Xu arrived at the store, Che Zai, who was on the early shift, said, "Boss, the steam cabinet has been installed. Niu Chuan and I tried it last night; it works great, and it produces plenty of steam."

Looks like the steamed pigeon dish can be added to the menu.

Lin Xu said, "Then notify Lao Huang to get the pigeons ready. We'll start a trial run this morning."

"You got it!"

After setting the chicken to braise, Lin Xu went upstairs to check the steam cabinet. It looked like a normal steaming cabinet, but inside it was fitted with numerous protruding steam pipes.

The steam from the water tank below would enter the steam pot through these pipes.

He checked the water tank. It was quite large, and on all four sides, there were compartments where one could place Scallion and Ginger, spices, or even medicinal herbs, offering more options for flavoring the steam.

"What's for breakfast this morning?" he asked curiously after checking the steam cabinet.

"Mutton soup and crispy pancakes this morning. We cooked the mutton during our shift last night and just had to heat it up this morning, so it's pretty convenient."

The sharp drop in temperature indeed called for a bowl of mutton soup to warm up.

"Will you eat now, Boss?"

"Yes!"

Upon hearing this, the early-shift chef scooped up two large handfuls of sliced mutton and blanched them in boiling mutton broth for a minute to bring out their savory flavor.

Then he put the meat into a large bowl and ladled in the piping hot mutton broth.

"Do you want chopped green onions and cilantro, Boss?"

"I'll add them myself."

Lin Xu took the soup, added some chopped green onions and a bit of chopped cilantro, sprinkled in a small spoonful of salt, and finally, ladled a generous dollop of Chili Oil into it.

When he came outside, hot crispy pancakes had already been served.

Stirring the mutton in his bowl, Lin Xu couldn't help but chuckle bitterly.

There was so much mutton it felt like eating dry-tossed noodles. Helplessly, he tore open a crispy pancake, stuffed it with mutton—much like how one eats 'basin lamb'—and then drizzled more Chili Oil on top.

He clamped the stuffed pancake shut and took a big bite.

The crispness of the crispy pancake, the rich aroma of the Chili Oil, and the savory flavor of the mutton all mixed together—it was absolutely satisfying.

No matter when, taking big, hearty bites of meat always brings an immense sense of happiness.

A couple of bites of crispy pancake followed by a sip of the delicious mutton soup—so gratifying!

Enjoying the delectable mutton and the savory soup, Lin Xu said to Che Zai, "Later, go to the market and buy some Lotus Root for stewing, preferably the long and thin type from Hubei. I'm planning to make Lotus Root stewed with Pork Ribs for lunch today."

Not expecting another tasty dish so soon, Che Zai's face lit up with surprise as he said, "Right away, I'm on it!"

Chapter 748: The Pinker, The Harder the Beatdown! How about the pink lotus root stewed pork ribs?

Eating the hot, mutton-filled sesame bread, a sense of comfort spread through his entire body.

While reveling in that comfortable feeling, he picked up another sesame bread, broke it apart, and dipped it into the mutton broth. He waited until the bread's surface was coated in red mutton fat and chili oil, having absorbed the rich, aromatic broth, before taking a bite.

It was incredibly satisfying.

This method of soaking bread in soup has always been Lin Xu's favorite.

After finishing two sesame breads, he gulped down the still-steaming bowl of mutton broth.

Exhilarating!

The temperature had dropped sharply in the past two days, making the mornings quite cold. But a bowl of mutton broth not only chased away the chill from his body but even caused a slight sweat to break out on his forehead.

This was the power of delicious food.

"Boss, another bowl?"

"Not for now," Lin Xu replied. "I've got to hurry and wake up the missus. We're going to look at houses today; can't afford to delay things."

Saying this, he picked up a sesame bread and began tearing off pieces to eat as he headed downstairs.

Because these sesame breads were made for themselves, they had a generous amount of shortening for the flaky layers inside. Once baked, the outer crust was fragrant and crumbly, while the inside was incredibly soft and fluffy.

Even eaten plain, it was delicious.

Opening the door and returning home, just as he was about to head to the bedroom, he spotted Shen Baobao, clad in a fleece-lined robe, sneaking out of the kitchen.

"What were you doing in the kitchen?"

"Checking on that lost recipe you made," Shen Baobao explained. "Mom and Dad are coming back from Yinzhou today, and I thought I might let them have a taste."

One night definitely wasn't enough time.

Lin Xu said, "If it were summer, one or two days would be enough, but now that it's cool, I reckon it'll take about three to five days... However, the Drunken Crab should be about ready today; we can try it together."

After speaking, he brandished the more than half-eaten sesame bread in his hand.

"Hurry up and wash up, or I might finish it all."

"If you dare finish it, I, I, I... I will immediately cry for you to see!"

Lin Xu laughed and pinched her cheek, "Then why don't you hurry and get dressed and wash up? My hands are oily, so I can't help you with your clothes today."

"Hmph, I'll get them myself, put on my favorite pink tracksuit, and be a cute little dumpling."

The girl shuffled off to the bedroom in her slippers, while Lin Xu gazed around the small two-bedroom apartment.

Having lived here for a few months, the thought of moving made him somewhat reluctant.

But it was indeed a bit cramped, especially since all the delivery boxes were being saved for Dundun, leaving the living room feeling like there was nowhere to step.

When they moved, he would definitely set aside a room just for Dundun.

He'd install a floor-to-ceiling Cat Castle, add a few cat slides, and arrange boxes of all sizes.

The 'kid' was growing up; he couldn't keep sleeping in the living room forever. He needed his own room.

As he was pondering, Shen Baobao emerged from the room, changed.

She was wearing a pink hoodie and matching pants. Her hair wasn't tied up but hung loosely, adding a touch of sweet laziness to her appearance.

However, upon seeing Lin Xu, the lazy girl quickly sported a mischievous smile, "They say the pinker the color, the harder the punch. Want me to give you a beating to test that theory?"

Lin Xu: "..."

Why did her IQ seem to drop the more she hung out with Lele?

Seeing his usually well-behaved Baobao genuinely looking like she wanted to try, he had no choice but to deploy his trump card for handling this girl—taking a bite of the sesame bread.

"AH AH AH, you're the worst!"

Shen Baobao gave Lin Xu a light punch on the arm before dashing to the bathroom to hastily wash up.

Once done, she rushed back out, snatched the sesame bread, and took a big bite.

"Wow, delicious. I've been really craving sesame bread these past few days."

Lin Xu wiped the grease from his hands with a wet wipe from the coffee table, then opened the shoe cabinet by the door and turned to ask, "Which shoes for today?"

"Those white dad sneakers. Since we're going to see houses and will be walking a lot, wearing other shoes would make my feet uncomfortable."

He got the shoes and walked over to Shen Baobao, "You sit and eat; I'll put your shoes on for you."

Shen Baobao: "!!!!!!!!!"

Lin Xu, you'll spoil me so much I'll be climbing the roof and tearing off tiles!

She obediently sat down, extending her feet clad in pink athletic socks. While Lin Xu put on her shoes, she bit into her sesame bread and snapped a photo with her phone.

BOO HOO HOO... This is so touching!

Even if the Heavenly King himself showed up today, I still have to share this dog food!

After taking the photo, she couldn't even be bothered to finish her sesame bread. She immediately posted the photo to her Moments:

"No pristine white wedding dress, no freshly decorated bridal chamber, no cheering friends and family, but in that moment when Lin Xu helps me put on my shoes, I suddenly feel the bliss of being married. My advice to all sisters: if a guy ever volunteers to put shoes on for you, don't hesitate – marry him!"

After she posted it, Lin Xu finished tying her shoes. "Stand up and see if the laces are tight enough."

Shen Baobao put down her phone, placed the sesame bread aside on a napkin, and immediately lunged into Lin Xu's arms.

"They're not tight! If they were, it'd be because my feet are plump. The way you tie them is always just perfect for me."

Lin Xu was a bit surprised. "What's this? Why the sudden burst of affection?"

"I don't know, I just really want to hug you... Hubby, I love you."

"Coincidentally, I love you too."

"Can I just hold you like this forever then?"

"Sure, but may I first go wash my hands? In case you have athlete's foot..."

Shen Jiayue: ??????

Where's my knife?

My forty-meter-long machete, where is it?!

Nobody stop me today, I'm going to murder my dear husband!

「Hailar Airport.」

Chapter 749: The Pinker the Color, the Harder the Beat! What About Pink Lotus Root Stewed Pork Ribs?

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Chen Yan was in the airport departure lounge, chatting with Wu Kexin.

"The air here is really good. Even the air inside the airport is fresher than in Beijing. No wonder they actually sell canned air from here."

Wu Kexin smiled and asked, "Director Chen, didn't you buy a few cans of Hulun Great Prairie air?"

"No. Bringing a few empty cans back to Beijing just doesn't seem like something a sane person would do."

While they were chatting, Chen Yan suddenly noticed a small red dot on her social media app's moments feed. Her obsessive-compulsive tendency forced her to tap it open.

Then she got a taste of the 'dog food' her cousin was serving up.

Flaunting their romance first thing in the morning—they truly have no sense of public decency.

She quickly typed back a reply:

"Yueyue, don't let your foot odor suffocate your husband. If Daktarin is needed, it must be used."

After replying, she didn't achieve that peculiar kind of self-consoling victory, like Ah Q. Instead, she felt that the fresh Hulun Great Prairie air was now tinged with jealousy.

BOO HOO HOO HOO... I want that kind of sweet love too!

「On the other side, at the Longqi Mountain Scenic Area in Yinzhou City.」

Chen Yuanyuan drove a four-wheeled utility vehicle, carrying Shen Guofu, Han Shuzhen, and their luggage, bumping along all the way from the cliffside hotel to the farmhouse restaurant at the foot of the mountain.

"Uncle Shen, Auntie Han, shall I load this luggage straight into the car?"

The rear door of the nearby Toyota Prado SUV was open; Lin Hongqi would soon be driving it to take the couple to the high-speed rail station.

Shen Guofu snatched the suitcase from Chen Yuanyuan's hands, saying, "Yuanyuan, put that down and let me. While I'm here, how can I let a young lady like you do heavy work?"

The mountain morning was a bit chilly. Han Shuzhen clutched her shawl tighter and took Chen Yuanyuan's hand, asking, "Yuanyuan, are you really not coming with us today?"

"Not today. Perhaps in a few days, after the National Day holiday rush subsides, I'll head to Beijing. The scenic area is too busy right now; I can't get away."

Seeing Chen Yuanyuan reminded Han Shuzhen of her own daughter and niece. But Yuanyuan was far more sensible—not only efficient but also diligent.

"Old Shen," Han Shuzhen sighed to her husband, "if our daughter were like Yuanyuan, wouldn't that be wonderful?"

Whenever Han Shuzhen thought of her exasperating daughter, she felt a mix of amusement and annoyance.

Shen Guofu loaded the several suitcases into the vehicle, closed the door, and said to Chen Yuanyuan, "When you get to Beijing, you can pick either Lin Xu's company or Chen Yan's. If you want to experience the atmosphere of a publicly listed company, you can come to mine too."

The last time Lin Xu left, Chen Yuanyuan had thought about leaving Yinzhou to see the wider world. But back then, she was the only person at the ticket office and simply couldn't leave.

Now that the scenic area was expanding and several new people had joined the ticket office, Yuanyuan's desire to go to Beijing grew even stronger.

"Thank you, Uncle Shen."

"Thank me for what? We're family. Saying 'thank you' is too formal between us."

The three of them arrived at the restaurant, where breakfast was already prepared.

Chen Meijuan said with a smile, "The day Lin Xu and Yueyue went back, I made this same spread of dishes. It's the same again today. I hope it suits your tastes."

Shen Guofu smiled and greeted the elderly matriarchs of the Chen and Lin families before saying, "We absolutely will! Ever since we arrived, everything has felt so familiar and welcoming. It's as if I were a Yinzhou native in a past life, and this time I'm bringing my wife home to visit her folks."

Mrs. Lin chuckled. "Beijing folks certainly have a way with words! Shuzhen, when you get back, make sure Guofu eats less meat and more vegetables. As long as you're all doing well, we old folks can rest easy."

"I will, Auntie. You take good care of yourselves too. When we're not so busy, we'll come back to visit you."

In Yinzhou, the relatives were very cordial. Han Shuzhen felt that calling the two elderly women just 'Auntie' was a bit too formal given their kindness, so she adopted a more affectionate term of address, one that conveyed a deeper sense of family. This pleased the two elders greatly.

After they were seated, Chen Meiliang also arrived.

Shen Guofu took a sip of his wild vegetable congee. "Once I'm back, the first tranche of funds will arrive within a week—it should be no less than fifty million. Second Brother, you can go ahead and get started. If you need me to arrange for anything, just let me know."

Chen Meiliang took a bite of a fried spring roll and said seriously, "I don't need much before construction begins. Just have a good car with Beijing license plates shipped over."

Hearing the request for a good car, Chen Yuanyuan's mother started to grumble, "Why are you always asking for things? Guofu asked you to help manage matters, and things haven't even gotten off the ground yet you're already making demands... Even the local militias before Liberation weren't this grabby!"

Chen Meiliang chuckled. "There are quite a few people interested in that plot of land. A car with Beijing plates will make them unsure of our backing and discourage them from acting rashly..."

Before he could finish, Shen Guofu asked, "What about that G63 Lin Xu drove last time? He doesn't use it anymore; it's just sitting idle."

"That'll do. Let's go with that one."

The people here were busy. Plus, they subconsciously still saw Lin Xu and Shen Baobao as children, so no one brought up the matter of investing in the Horse Farm with them.

Naturally, Lin Xu and Shen Baobao didn't reveal they had bought a house either.

They were both afraid that if they mentioned it, they'd be ordered to move into the villa.

Living in the villa would be nice, sure, but how could it compare to their own cozy little nest!

The two of them and a cat, a happy little family of three—just thinking about it felt perfect.

When Lin Xu and Shen Baobao—she of the infamous (and failed) 'husband assassination attempt'—arrived at the restaurant, Dou Wenjing, Zeng Xiaoqi, and Brother Feng, the legal advisor they'd met before, were already there. They were all heartily tucking into mutton soup and crispy pancakes.

Chapter 750: The Pinker the Color, the Harder the Beat! What About Pink Lotus Root Stewed Pork Ribs?  
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Today, they had to view several houses. Dou Wenjing had even arranged them in order according to the agreed-upon times; they would be busy from 8:30 in the morning until noon.

So, early in the morning, the group went directly to the restaurant for breakfast.

"I'm not usually a fan of scallions and cilantro," Zeng Xiaoqi muttered while eating, "but when I'm having lamb soup, it just doesn't taste right without them. And the cilantro in this lamb soup even has a hint of sweetness..."

While speaking, she didn't forget to add another spoonful of lamb fat chili to her bowl.

When it came to drinking lamb soup, lamb fat chili was its soul.

She had just put down the spoon from the chili bowl when Feng grabbed it and scooped up half a spoonful.

"This lamb fat chili Boss Lin makes is really fragrant, and it isn't overpowering at all. It's delicious!"

Seeing Lin Xu and Shen Baobao arrive, everyone hurried to greet them.

"Xu Bao, I'd like a large bowl of lamb soup—extra cilantro, fewer scallions. And remember to add salt for me; I can never get the seasoning right..."

"Alright."

Lin Xu agreed and headed to the kitchen.

After Shen Baobao sat down, Zeng Xiaoqi leaned in mischievously and whispered, "Boss Lady, your Moments feed is so full of lovey-dovey posts! But if you already had your shoes on, why did it take you more than half an hour to get to the shop after posting?"

Shen Baobao's ears turned red. She retorted, "Why is a young, unmarried woman like you asking about this? Have you sorted out your single status? Aren't your parents pestering you to get married anymore? Have your relatives back home stopped trying to set you up on random dates?"

Hmph! I'm certainly not going to tell you I gave Xu Bao a good thrashing and made him say 'I love you' a hundred times.

Soon, the lamb soup was served, and Shen Baobao began to eat it with a baked flatbread.

Beating up Xu Bao was tiring. Food tastes so much better when you're exhausted!

Lin Xu returned to the kitchen. Chezai had already brought the Lotus Root they needed.

These Lotus Roots were slender and long, different from both the usual short, thick variety and the type used for cold dishes.

"Uncle Shen specifically picked them out for me," Chezai explained, "and even trimmed the ends. He said the ends wouldn't get tender and mealy when stewed."

"Wow, I didn't expect Uncle Shen to know all this," Lin Xu remarked.

"He said his wife is from Hubei, and ever since winter started, they've had Lotus Root stewed with Pork Ribs once or twice a week, so he's quite familiar with it."

For people from Hubei living away from home, no dish soothes homesickness better than a bowl of Lotus Root stewed with Pork Ribs.

Especially in winter, eating the tender, mealy stewed Lotus Root and the Pork Ribs that fall off the bone instantly soothes their longing for home.

In this dish, the aroma of the Pork Ribs and the fresh taste of the Lotus Root combine to create a unique savory flavor.

This flavor is very distinctive and can easily be overwhelmed by spices. That's why, when making Lotus Root stewed with Pork Ribs, no spices should be added. Even aromatics are kept to a minimum—only ginger is used, not even scallions.

The seasonings are also simple: just a bit of salt and pepper before serving.

Lin Xu took the Pork Ribs he'd bought fresh that morning and chopped them into large pieces with a cleaver. To ensure there was enough, he chopped two entire racks.

After chopping, he washed the Pork Ribs twice in a basin, then placed them under a running tap to rinse out any remaining blood.

Rinsing the Pork Ribs like this for over half an hour before cooking can significantly reduce any gamey taste.

"Boss, when should we peel the Lotus Root?" Chezai asked.

"We'll peel it right before stewing," Lin Xu replied. "If we peel it too early, it will oxidize and turn black."

After dealing with the Pork Ribs, Lin Xu went to the cold storage to check on the Drunken Crab that had been marinating for several days.

Sure enough, it was ready.

He took a photo with his phone and sent it to Cui Qingyuan, writing, "Professor Cui, the flavor has developed perfectly. Remember to come and try it when you have time. Just let me know beforehand, and I'll warm up the Rice Wine."

Cui Qingyuan, who was in a meeting, saw the picture and couldn't help but swallow.

He quickly typed his reply: "I have teaching meetings all day today. I'll head over when they finish this evening. Oh, and let's invite Boss Huang and Chef Xie Baomin too. We can have a small get-together before the holiday ends."

Lin Xu was too busy, and besides, he couldn't really handle Rice Wine.

Comparatively, it was Xie Baomin and Old Huang, both from an older generation, who truly appreciated the subtleties of Rice Wine.

After replying, Cui Qingyuan saved the photo of the Drunken Crab and posted it to his Moments with the caption: "The flavor is perfect. Time for a couple of drinks tonight."

The crabs you gave me have been made into Drunken Crab, and they turned out wonderfully. Tonight, I'll enjoy them with a drink. Perhaps the glass will hold memories of the past, or maybe regrets. I don't know. I only know that when I pair this wine with the crabs you gave, I feel intoxicated from the first sip.

He sighed with a touch of melancholy, then pocketed his phone and continued with the meeting.

In Shanghai, Yan Lin saw the Moments post and immediately asked her secretary, Xiao Qing, "What time are we going to Beijing?"

"There are two flights available," Xiao Qing replied. "One departs at 2:30 p.m. The other is earlier, but you'd have to have lunch on the plane, and Ms. Yan, you always dislike..."

"Book the earlier one!" Yan Lin interjected.

"Understood, Ms. Yan. I'll arrange it immediately."

Back at the shop, after finishing their lamb soup, the group headed outside.

Dou Wenjing drove, with Feng in the passenger seat. Shen Baobao and Zeng Xiaoqi sat in the back. The group set off on their house-hunting expedition.

Lin Xu took out the Pork Ribs that had been soaking and began to prepare the Lotus Root and Pork Ribs soup.

The method for this dish was quite simple: blanch the Pork Ribs to remove any scum, then transfer them to a large clay pot, add water and a few slices of ginger, and begin to stew.

While the ribs simmered, he peeled the Lotus Roots, cut them into rolling chunks, and then added them to the pot once the water was boiling.

Then, he just needed to let it simmer over low heat.

The whole process was very straightforward.

Zhuang Yizhou watched Lin Xu and asked curiously, "Why do some people stir-fry the Pork Ribs in oil when making this dish?"

Zhu Yong chuckled. "If you blanch them, there's no need to stir-fry. If you stir-fry, don't blanch. Just do one or the other. Otherwise, the Pork Ribs will be tough and won't taste good."

As someone from Hubei, Chef Zhu spoke with authority on this dish.

He looked at Lin Xu and asked, "Boss, do you know the secret ingredient Hubei restaurants use for this dish?"

"Yes," Lin Xu said. "Sprinkle in some Milk Powder just before serving. It enhances the texture of the Lotus Root and gives the soup a subtle milky fragrance."

Zhu Yong had intended to show off a little.

But he hadn't expected the boss to know this, revealing the 'trade secret' so easily.

Zhuang Yizhou and Wei Qian listened with some surprise.

They had never imagined there was such a trick to making Lotus Root and Pork Ribs soup.

"Impressive, Boss!" Zhu Yong exclaimed. "That secret cost me a bottle of Wuliangye, and you just revealed it in one sentence."

Speaking of Lotus Root and Pork Ribs soup, Zhu Yong became quite animated: "This soup is a classic example of a dish that defies typical chef fussiness. The method isn't complex, and the seasoning is unbelievably simple, yet the flavor is outstanding. And that pinkish hue of the broth—I could drink it for a lifetime and never get tired of it..."

Pink?

Hearing that word, Lin Xu couldn't help but recall Shen Baobao's comment from the morning: "The pinker it is, the harder it hits."

It seemed this Lotus Root and Pork Ribs soup was quite the formidable character itself!