

## Culinary 761

Chapter 761: Geng Lele: From today on, call me the Assist King! [Extra for Mr. Cat cerys]\_2

But Yan Lin had come to the restaurant to arrange a chance encounter with Cui Qingyuan. Taking the elevator wasn't going to help her run into anyone significant.

She said with a smile, "After sitting in the car for so long, I feel like stretching my legs. If President Shen doesn't mind, shall we take the stairs?"

"Sure," Shen Guofu replied. "I was thinking of getting some exercise too."

They were going to enjoy a delicious meal soon, and a little exercise would help him eat more.

Hmm, I'll officially start my diet tomorrow, so today is for indulging, Yan Lin thought.

Following the stairs, they ascended to the upper floor.

Yan Lin scanned the area, but the figure who had appeared countless times in her dreams was nowhere to be seen. Huh? Where did he go?

Seeing her clearly looking for someone, Shen Guofu didn't disturb her, quietly waiting at the top of the second-floor staircase.

Just then, footsteps could be heard from the third-floor stairwell.

Cui Qingyuan, who had just been wandering around the upstairs private rooms with nothing better to do, stared blankly at the still lovely figure at the stairway entrance. A trace of surprise flickered across his face before he hurriedly walked down the stairs, stood by Yan Lin, and asked, "What are you looking for? I'll help you!"

"Looking for you... Oh! Professor Cui, what a coincidence!"

Cui Qingyuan looked at Yan Lin and pursed his lips slightly before a warm smile spread across his face. "It is a coincidence. Are you in Beijing for business again?"

"Ah, oh, yes. I'm visiting the branch office. I heard President Shen is planning to invest in a Horse Farm, so I came to inquire about it. I didn't expect to run into you so coincidentally."

「Around the corner on the third floor.」

Several pretty heads peeked out one after another.

At the very top, Shen Baobao muttered softly, "Lele was right. Professor Cui and President Yan definitely have something going on."

Shu Yun remarked, "Their combined age must be close to eighty, right? They like each other but won't admit it. Their hearts are burning like embers, yet their faces are as calm as still water..."

Chen Yan summed it up incisively, "Pretentious, so pretentious!"

Zeng Xiaoqi chuckled. "A certain long-term couple whose combined age is nearing retirement is also pretty pretentious... Ahem, I just made that up. If it sounds like anyone you know, feel free to hit me!"

Manager Chen clenched her fists and ground her teeth. That's three times! This is the third time today I've been the target of such veiled insults, and me, a beautiful young woman at that! Yueyue was right; people with small chests are indeed petty!

Dou Wenjing, getting into the spirit of things, murmured softly, "What BGM do you think would fit this scene?"

Geng Lele, squatting in the corner at the bottom, sang cheerily, "Ever since I met you at Lin Ji's Food, cha-cha-cha! Like a spring breeze blowing into my heart, cha-cha-cha! I want to gently tell you, cha-cha-cha! Don't you forget me, cha-cha-cha!"

"They're childhood sweethearts; it's not like this is the first time they've met here. The lyrics should be 'Ever since I met you at the alleyway entrance back then,' that would be more fitting."

As everyone chattered excitedly, they suddenly noticed Yan Lin and Shen Guofu coming up the stairs, one after the other, and quickly dispersed.

On the stairs, Shen Guofu recalled the recent scene. Finding the dynamic between President Yan and Professor Cui rather intriguing, he smiled at Yan Lin and said, "President Yan, it seems Professor Cui is also quite knowledgeable about investments. Why don't we invite him to join our discussion?"

Yan Lin immediately replied, "He's just an academic... but he might be able to offer some opinions. If President Shen is willing, then please do invite him to participate."

Just for that suggestion, whether the Horse Farm gets off the ground or not, I'll invest twenty million, Yan Lin thought to herself.

After this silent vow, Yan Lin and Xiao Qing stood waiting at the bend in the staircase.

Before long, Shen Guofu came up with Cui Qingyuan in tow. Everyone entered the private room and began to formally discuss the Horse Farm investment.

No sooner had they entered than the door of the adjacent private room opened. The group hiding inside tiptoed out and settled into the booth by the kitchen entrance to wait for dinner.

「Inside the kitchen.」

The clay pot with the "wet duck" was still simmering gently over low heat, while the one with the "dry duck" was emitting sizzling and sputtering sounds.

This was a sign that the moisture had evaporated.

Xie Baomin picked up a pair of kitchen shears used for cooked food and lifted the lid of the "dry duck" clay pot.

The moment he opened it, an enticing aroma wafted up. The duck skin had been stained a rich, ruddy color by the Dark Soy Sauce, only a little liquid remained at the bottom of the pot, and the distinctive, pungent aroma of ginger assailed his nostrils. It was a very pleasant smell.

Xie Baomin explained, "When there's no more moisture at the bottom of the clay pot, it means the duck is cooked through. However, since it's a whole duck, the lower half is flavorful, but the upper half isn't quite there yet. That's why we need to cut the duck open, allowing the meat to thoroughly mix with the seasonings and fats at the bottom. This makes the duck even more delicious."

While speaking, he deftly cut the duck open with the shears. And indeed, the duck was thoroughly cooked; even at the thickest part of the thigh, no bloody juices emerged.

Once it was completely cut open, he used a bamboo spatula to turn the pieces in the pot, ensuring the fats and sauce from the bottom coated the duck meat evenly.

Then, he replaced the lid, turned the heat down a little more, and switched from stewing to a dry braise.

"First pan-frying, then simmering, and finally dry-braising—these are the keys to a delicious Ginger Duck. The dry-braising allows the duck meat to become thoroughly infused with flavor, and the aroma of the ginger to penetrate deep within."

Xie Baomin held nothing back from his junior brother, as their master had instructed him to quickly improve Lin Xu's culinary skills. This way, Lin Xu could learn more advanced dishes and Cooking Techniques.

Most of these techniques were either on the verge of being lost or had already been lost and then painstakingly revived. Therefore, someone needed to carry on the tradition.

Because there was a gap between Xie Baomin's skills in pastry and savory cooking, he couldn't learn them. Thus, all the hopes of their school rested on his junior brother, Lin Xu.

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"Okay, Junior Brother, everything is ready. Bring over the Drunken Crab, and I'll heat up the wine."

Lin Xu responded, pushed open the door of the cold storage, and carried a whole large jar of Drunken Crab into the kitchen.

Once he twisted off the sealed lid, a fragrance of alcohol mixed with an indescribable freshness instantly filled the air.

"Wow, this aroma is really spot on!"

Just as he started heating the water for the wine, Xie Baomin came over. Seeing the large crabs inside, he immediately felt the urge to drink.

With a pair of clean bamboo chopsticks, he fetched half of the crabs out.

Well, Drunken Crab is good, but one shouldn't eat too much, or else there would be protests from the stomach.

As for the other half, it could be eaten another time; as long as it's soaked in the drunken brine, the crab won't go bad for a short while.

He brought over a clean chopping board, placed the crabs on it, and cut them open from the middle.

The crab roe, yellow mixed with red, was exposed, along with a rich and delicious flavor.

He cut open a third, left a third whole for those who knew how to eat to enjoy the pleasure of cracking and eating the whole crab.

Those not adept at cracking crabs could opt for the sliced ones, simply sucking the roe from the cut—easy and straightforward.

The remaining third was placed on a steaming tray and put into the steamer.

If your gut is weak but you still want to taste the Drunken Crab, this is the compromise to go for.

Before long, the crabs were cut, and the wine was heated. Time to start!

"Come on, let's start drinking! Huh? Where's Professor Cui?"

As Lin Xu came out of the kitchen with a full tray of Drunken Crab, he realized that Cui Qingyuan, who was originally waiting outside, had disappeared, leaving only Old Huang looking melancholic out the window.

Shen Baobao and the others were there, but facing the raw Drunken Crab, they felt somewhat timid.

Chen Yan wanted to try, but with her uncle and aunt there, she decided to act prudently as a junior.

"Upstairs. President Yan wants to invest in the Horse Farm, and Dad invited Professor Cui to give his advice."

President Yan came?

Lin Xu felt like he had missed countless juicy stories.

He hadn't expected that while he was in the kitchen learning to make Ginger Duck, so much had happened outside.

He said with a smile, "Then please let President Yan also try my Drunken Crab to see if it's the authentic Old Shanghai taste."

Shu Yun clacked upstairs in her high heels.

Soon, Shen Guofu and a few others came downstairs, everyone's face filled with smiles; obviously, the investment talk went well.

His senior brother also came out of the kitchen with the heated Rice Wine.

"Not one of President Yan's crabs was wasted; we made all the leftovers into Drunken Crab. Since you're here today, you can do the quality check."

Cui Qingyuan pushed his glasses up and volunteered to pour drinks for everyone.

Yan Lin said with a smile on her face, "Oh my, I don't understand gourmet food like you do. I just eat to fill my stomach. Unlike you, who've been picky since you were young. The first time you freeloaded at my place, you complained that the Braised Pork Belly was too sweet. You almost got kicked out by my grandma..."

At this moment, President Yan seemed like a young girl, speaking quickly and excitedly, with a lot of Shanghai dialect mixed in—a complete contrast to the stern, no-nonsense image of the corporate female CEO she usually projected.

Geng Lele, holding half a sliced Drunken Crab with her chopsticks, took a taste of the crab roe and asked in surprise, "Wow, President Yan, you and my teacher are childhood friends? No wonder Teacher was upset last time I said Xu Bro's lotus cake was sweeter than a first love; he must have thought it wasn't as sweet as you."

Humph, play coy with me, will you? Then I'll deliberately steer the conversation toward romance.

After all, I'm just a kid; any slip of the tongue is blameless.

Teacher, wait for my assist, okay!

With Yan Lin present, Cui Qingyuan's tone also became more lively. "Don't talk nonsense, Lele," he said. "President Yan isn't sweet, she's spicy. You have no idea; the first time I met her, she called me a little rascal and was really fierce!"

Seeing everyone's curious faces, the Tsinghua University professor hurriedly covered for his sweetheart. "Of course, that was when we were kids; she hasn't been like that since growing up..."

Yan Lin, holding a whole Drunken Crab, lifted the lid to give it a taste. "Wow, this flavor is magical..."

After taking a couple of bites of Drunken Crab, President Yan looked at her childhood friend with a teasing smile. "Really? Never been like that?"

Cui Qingyuan's face immediately turned red as he was reminded of the past.

It was in the early 2000s when QQ was just becoming popular. He was studying for his Ph.D. at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, while Yan Lin, then in her twenties, already had a net worth of several million.

One day, Yan Lin updated her QQ status: "My boyfriend sent me an email!"

Upon seeing the status, Cui Qingyuan immediately wanted to see the contents of the email. He easily cracked Yan Lin's email password, only to find it filled with spam.

There was only one saved email in the draft box.

After opening it, it read in bold letters: "Little punk, if you snoop through my emails again, I'll chop off your dog head!!!!!"

This was the first time he'd seen this nickname again since becoming an adult.

From that day on, he never again cracked Yan Lin's email password to pry into the private life of his childhood friend.

Instead, he devoted himself entirely to the sea of knowledge, gradually moving into the field of artificial intelligence and becoming an authority in this area step by step.

When Cui Qingyuan returned to China with numerous honors, he found that his childhood friend was already worth over a hundred million—a true wealthy lady. At that time, he hadn't even secured a job, so romantic pursuits had to be put on hold.

As time passed, President Yan's business went smoothly, and her net worth approached ten billion.

After several failed entrepreneurial attempts, Cui Qingyuan resigned himself to accepting an invitation from Tsinghua University, becoming the head teacher of a talented class, a position he held up to the present.

Lin Xu tasted the Drunken Crab, feeling that the taste of freshness had been completely replaced by the flavor of watermelon.

Everyone's eyes were ablaze with the fire of gossip.

Clearly, they all wanted to know the love-hate saga of this lovelorn couple.

But neither of them brought up the matter; instead, they began to look forward to the Horse Farm in Yinzhou.

"I want to visit Yinzhou when I get the chance. Lin, your culinary skills are so impressive; Yinzhou's land and water must have nurtured you well. Professor Cui, you should come too. You're always cooped up in the city teaching. Don't wear yourself out."

Yan Lin skillfully ate the crab, occasionally taking a sip of the warm Rice Wine.

But in her words, there was concern for her childhood friend.

Cui Qingyuan nodded. "I'll go, take in the scenery there, and if I get the chance, I'll gallop on a horse... You shouldn't just focus on making money either; you need to relax sometimes too."

Only when you're well can I be at ease in Beijing.

Yan Lin pouted like a little woman. "You should worry about yourself more. I'm doing great, with fitness trainers and nutritionists abound... But I will take care of myself; it's all about balancing work and rest."

And now you know to care for someone. Too late.

She wanted to retort but, fearing her tone would be too harsh, quickly softened her speech. By the end, it even sounded a bit coquettish.

Old Huang took a sip of his Huadiao wine, his eyes filled with regret.

Did I come all this way by taxi just to eat this crab-flavored public display of affection?

Xie Baomin also felt some regret. If he had known, he would have dragged Teacher Su, who was preparing lessons at home, to come along. This scene of unspoken mutual affection, where both parties held back, was something even TV dramas couldn't replicate.

Chen Yan quietly sent a message to Shen Baobao from her phone: "Am I usually this melodramatic?"

"Your condition isn't that severe; there's still hope for you."

While everyone was getting impatient with these two melodramatic souls, the Breaker, Geng Lele, appeared. "President Yan, I have an awkward request. I don't know if I may speak."

Knowing that Geng Lele was Cui Qingyuan's most prized student, Yan Lin asked with affection-by-association, "What is it, Lele? Do you need funding or something? Just say it; I fully support you."

"It's not about money, it's something else..."

Little Mushroom Head said earnestly, "A fortune teller said I would face a hurdle when I turn eighteen. It would require the help of an outsider, someone I'd call with a title containing the word 'mother' for a month. I thought I could just call my professor's wife 'Madam' in college, but he turned out to be single..."

The girl rambled on and on until finally getting to the point. "President Yan, may I call you 'Madam'? It's not like I'm trying to play matchmaker or anything, I swear. I'm purely trying to avert disaster... Can I, President Yan?"

Chapter 763: The Watermelon Content in This Drunken Crab is Really High! Ginger Duck is Ready, Technique Acquired!

Everyone was stunned. They even forgot to eat the delicious Drunken Crab. No one had expected that student Geng Lele could deliver such a clever and tricky assist. It was like a combination of a Magician, Stockton, a smiling assassin, Nash, Curry, and Brother Pao!

If it weren't for this occasion, Zeng Xiaoqi would have really wanted to shout, "Brother Lele is awesome!"

Sure enough, when Director Chen plays the role of a scheming advisor, it's all for laughs. For real tactics and assists, you have to rely on our Brother Lele!

Zeng Xiaoqi, Shu Yun, and Dou Wenjing watched Geng Lele with rapt attention. My future happiness depends on you!

Yan Lin, the target of this ploy, was also somewhat bewildered. Has the teacher-student relationship really become this harmonious? This couldn't be that little rascal's idea, could it?

Thinking this, she glared at Cui Qingyuan, who was equally bewildered, then looked at Geng Lele and smiled. "We'll talk about being a 'teacher's wife' later. How about this, Lele? I don't have a daughter either. How about I adopt you as my goddaughter? That way, you'll overcome this eighteenth-birthday hurdle, right?"

Yan Lin had become a billionaire for a reason; her mind was still very sharp. She smoothly changed 'teacher's wife' to 'godmother,' easily neutralizing Geng Lele's assist and even gaining an extremely intelligent daughter in the process. She'd managed to turn a potential loss into a gain.

Everyone else wore surprised expressions. Wow, our Lele pushed the assist that far, and CEO Yan still managed to block it! No wonder she's been single all this time. This offense and defense are incredible! It's truly a clash of titans, where every move is critical!

Geng Lele hadn't expected Yan Lin to respond that way. She stood up, took two clean teacups, filled them eighty percent with tea, and, holding one with both hands, presented it to Yan Lin. "Godmother, please accept this tea from your daughter!"

Since you want to adopt me as your goddaughter, why wait? Let's confirm the relationship right now! From today onward, I, Geng Lele, am Teacher Cui's secret agent planted by Godmother's side!

This move caught Yan Lin slightly off guard. However, having such a clever and quirky daughter will probably make life much more interesting.

Yan Lin accepted the teacup with both hands, turned to Xiao Qing, and said, "Cancel my itinerary for the next three days. I'm staying in Beijing to spend time with my goddaughter and hold a formal adoption ceremony."

Now that she had accepted this goddaughter, she had to follow proper etiquette. First, she would visit Geng Lele's family to discuss the matter and get their consent before holding a ceremony. Relatively speaking, it was complicated, but many things gain a sense of formality precisely because they involve ceremonies and procedures.

After speaking, Yan Lin blew on the tea in her cup and downed it in one gulp.

Geng Lele said cheerfully, "Godmother, drink slowly. It's just tea, not alcohol to be downed in one gulp."

Hearing Geng Lele call her 'Godmother' warmed Yan Lin's heart. She was always being called 'Director this' or 'CEO that'; this was the first time someone had addressed her this way. She put down the teacup and took Geng Lele's hand. "From now on, you are my, Yan Lin's, daughter. If anyone bullies you, tell your godmother. Mom will stand up for you."

Nearby, Cui Qingyuan, who was sipping Rice Wine, felt his hand tremble. Is she talking about me?

"Thank you, Godmother!"

Geng Lele returned to her seat, then picked up the other teacup and presented it to Cui Qingyuan. "Godfather, please have some tea!"

Yan Lin was dumbfounded. After all those twists and turns, this girl still managed to rope me in! What a cunning little imp!

Cui Qingyuan had initially wanted to refuse, as it would complicate their teacher-student relationship. However, he considered that rejecting her now would not only hurt Lele's feelings but also likely result in Yan Lin calling him a 'little rascal' again. So, he accepted it with both hands and smiled as he drank the tea.

Who would have thought that coming out for Drunken Crab would lead to not only meeting an old flame but also adopting a goddaughter with her?

The others also hadn't expected today's Drunken Crab feast to be so packed with drama. Geng Lele's maneuver was truly masterful.

"Come on, come on, let's continue eating."

"Right, right, keep eating! The Rice Wine is getting cold."

Seeing that Cui Qingyuan showed no signs of communicating with Geng Lele's godmother after finishing his tea, the others, fearing an awkward silence, quickly chimed in, and the lively atmosphere at the table returned.

Shen Guofu, holding his wine glass, clinked it against Xie Baomin's and laughed. "This crab is really sweet today... Oh, no, I mean, today's drama is really fresh... Ah, let's drink, drink!"

"Exactly, let's drink! It's all in the wine."

Lin Xu had initially thought Professor Cui would seize the opportunity to confess his feelings or something. But after Professor Cui finished his tea, nothing more happened. So, Lin Xu gave up on watching the drama and returned to eating Drunken Crab.

After soaking in the drunken marinade, the crab roe took on the texture of a soft-boiled egg yolk, yet in the mouth, it felt like an oily salted duck egg yolk. Sucking on the cut surface of the halved crab, the roe slid right into one's mouth. That flavor, mingled with the scent of wine, felt like tasting the essence of autumn in a single bite. Sipping the fragrant, warm Rice Wine along with this delicacy brought an immediate sense of contentment that warmed the heart. If an old-fashioned record player were playing some vintage records now, that would be the ultimate enjoyment.

"A Drunken Crab and a glass of aged wine are enough to content one for a lifetime," Cui Qingyuan exclaimed, feeling that Lin Xu had taken the Drunken Crab to the peak of perfection.

Yan Lin also found it delicious. "There are fewer than five places in Shanghai that can make Drunken Crab like this. Mr. Lin, would you be interested in opening a branch there? With your skill in Shanghai cuisine, your business would definitely boom."

At that moment, Lin Xu was carefully peeling the meat from a crab leg to eat.

Chapter 764: The Drunken Crab Really Has a High Melon Content! Ginger Duck is Ready, Technique Acquired! \_2

He said with a smile, "I don't have plans to open a branch just yet. Let's wait until our reputation has grown a bit more. There's no rush."

Ziqiang Shengjian requires a small investment and has low costs, allowing rapid expansion to eight stores in a short period of time.

But Lin Ji couldn't be so reckless.

It's the core of my entire business, so I can't act rashly.

Once we have a strong reputation, enough staff, and sufficient funds, it won't be too late to consider opening a branch.

The meat on the crab legs becomes tender and smooth after soaking in the drunken marinade. It's not only delicious but also has a slightly sweet aftertaste, making the umami flavor even more lingering.

There isn't a lot of meat on the crab legs, but there is a thrill of exploration in eating it.

Like enjoying delicacies such as rabbit heads or duck heads, the pleasure of prying out just a little bit of tasty crab meat after some fiddling and popping it into your mouth is truly intoxicating.

Old Huang said, "While the female crabs are still in season, I'll have someone send over more crabs later so Brother Lin can prepare more. Let's get together again for a drink once they're marinated."

"No problem!"

"Boss Huang is so generous!"

While they were talking, Wei Qian brought over the cooked Drunken Crab from the steamer.

Raw Drunken Crab is fresh; cooked Drunken Crab is rich in flavor.

As soon as it was served, Yan Lin's eyes lit up, "The cooked Drunken Crab has to be marinated before steaming, that's what makes it even more delicious."

She was a crab-eating expert. Not needing any tools, she directly picked up one and skillfully began to dismantle it, eating and praising Lin Xu's skills all the while.

Lin Xu held a cooked Drunken Crab and expertly took out the crab meat, placing it in front of Shen Baobao.

This girl, having had an allergic reaction to eating silkworm pupae before, was wary of raw Drunken Crab, but the cooked version posed no problem.

As she savored the flavorful and strong taste of the crab, she suddenly thought of Ginger Duck, which can neutralize the cold nature of crabs, "Xu Bao, when will those Ginger Ducks be ready? I really want to try them..."

Lin Xu looked towards his senior.

Xie Baomin stood up and said, "It should be almost ready. I'll go check. If it's good, we can start eating."

As good as Drunken Crab is, it can only be eaten in moderation. Too much of it can upset the stomach.

Compared to that, Ginger Duck is much better, perfect with both rice and alcohol, and it even has the benefit of warming the stomach and dispelling cold. It's something even girls on their period should eat more of.

Apart from those who don't eat ginger, this dish can satisfy everyone's taste buds.

Seeing his senior head to the kitchen, Lin Xu also got up and followed.

With a Cooking Learning Card in hand, I should quickly learn this dish so I can make it in the restaurant whenever I want.

「Arriving in the kitchen.」

SZZZ... A continuous sizzling sound came from the clay pot, the sound of oil frying the duck meat.

Xie Baomin lifted the lid, and a rich aroma wafted out from inside.

The color of the duck meat turned a deeper red, glistening with oil, making one want to pick up a piece and taste it straight away.

A bamboo spatula stirred the pot twice, turning up pieces of duck meat and ginger, fried golden brown, from the bottom. Along with them came the intensely fragrant rendered fat.

"Senior, how come there seems to be more oil at the bottom of the pot?"

Lin Xu was curious. Earlier, when they were cutting the meat with scissors, the oil in the pot seemed almost dry, but now there was noticeably more.

"That's because the oil inside the duck meat has been baked out. Dry duck tastes crispy and aromatic because the oil has been rendered out, making the meat firmer and chewier."

After flipping the meat over, Xie Baomin covered the pot again, picked it up off the stove with a cloth, and set it down.

Lin Xu took the moment to mentally activate, Use Cooking Learning Card!

Soon, the system's prompt sounded in his mind, "Learning target: Xie Baomin. Today's skill: cooking technique for Ginger Duck. Would you like to learn it?"

"Learn it!"

After using a Perfect Level Cooking Learning Card, the technique was automatically learned by Lin Xu.

Once he finished acquiring the experience, Lin Xu found that he had learned both the dry and wet methods for Ginger Duck.

This gave him a pleasant surprise of gaining a double reward with a single investment.

This Cooking Learning Card was well spent!

"If it's cold when serving, you can place the clay pot on a dry pot stand with a small flame underneath to keep the duck meat warm. It will taste even better," said Xie Baomin as he began to tidy up the other clay pots.

Once all four portions of the dry duck were ready, he took the bubbling wet duck off the stove and started plating.

He brought one portion of the dry duck and one of the wet duck to the table, while the other three portions of dry duck were served to the staff for tasting.

「At the dining table.」

When the lids were lifted from the two Ginger Ducks, the appealing scent immediately captured everyone's attention.

"Wow, that smells so good."

"I didn't expect the fragrance of ginger to be so intense."

"This duck meat looks so juicy and oily."

"Is the wet duck stewed? It feels similar to freshly cooked rotisserie chicken."

"Both types of duck look tantalizing. The soup mixed with rice must be delicious."

...

Everyone was chattering excitedly, full of curiosity about the Ginger Duck.

"Come on, let's eat."

Shen Guofu was the first to pick a duck foot from the dry duck and place it into his bowl.

The surface of the duck foot glistened with oil, and it looked reddish and shiny.

When he tasted it, the first flavor that hit his palate was that of sesame oil, followed by a subtle heat from the oils.

Unlike the spiciness of chili, the heat from ginger comes on gradually, strengthening slowly until one realizes its dominant presence.

This instinctively makes one reach for a couple of scoops of rice.

The duck foot was delicious, with a slightly charred exterior. The ginger had thoroughly infused the meat, resulting in a fragrant bite that was spicy and refreshingly piquant.

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Shen Guofu took a couple of bites and then gulped down the wine in his glass.

"This stuff is spicy; it's really good with alcohol."

Beside him, Han Shuzhen said, "Not only is it good with alcohol, but it also goes well with rice."

She finished the duck leg she had placed in her bowl and then reached with her chopsticks for the clay pot of Ginger Duck.

This version of the Ginger Duck was still whole, looking much like a large, freshly cooked roast chicken, albeit lighter in color.

With a gentle prod of her chopsticks, the duck meat proved tender and fell right off the bone.

Lifting a duck leg gently, the entire leg, along with the adjoining meat, detached automatically.

She placed a piece in her bowl. With one bite, the duck meat revealed its filling of spicy ginger flavor. Yet, this spiciness was milder compared to the "dry" version, which was both fragrant and intensely spicy.

Paired with the tender, juicy duck meat, it was a true delight.

Both types of Ginger Duck had their own unique characteristics, and everyone ate until their mouths were glistening, thoroughly enjoying the meal.

Shu Yun looked at Lin Xu and asked, "Boss, shall we add this dish to the menu?"

Lin Xu mused aloud, "The 'dry' version or the 'wet' version?" He then decided, "Let's go with the 'dry' duck. It's more distinctive. We'll also need Manager Huang's help to procure some high-quality Muscovy ducks. They say the uglier the Muscovy duck, the tastier it is."

The faces of Muscovy ducks have many reddish, tumor-like protrusions, making them look as if they're covered in tumors. The fatter the duck, the more prominent these growths. Hence, the saying that the uglier, the tastier.

Old Huang said, "No problem, I'll definitely get you good-quality and affordable Muscovy ducks. Oh, Old Xie, send me the address where you buy your ducks so I can make a comparison."

Today, since it was just a meal for themselves, Old Xie hadn't asked for the price when buying the Muscovy ducks; he just bought a few, thinking them suitable. But when adding a new dish to the restaurant's menu, cost considerations were essential. They couldn't afford to pour immense effort into a dish only to make a tiny profit.

Lin Ji was past the stage of selling at a loss just to attract customers and build its reputation. Every new dish required a clear calculation of cost and profit. If profits dipped too low, they would either have to raise the price or remove the dish from the menu. In short, the goal was to maximize profit while maintaining their excellent reputation.

The Ginger Duck was delicious, boasting a strong aroma and spiciness. However, it was different from other spicy dishes at the restaurant, like the dry-fried chicken pieces. The Ginger Duck's fragrance came from sesame oil, and its heat from ginger. In Chinese cooking, these two ingredients are typically used as flavorings or garnishes. They are rarely featured as main components. Therefore, this dish offered a novel experience. Its unique, spicy flavor unconsciously stimulated the appetite and whetted cravings.

Initially, it didn't feel spicy. But after a while, one would realize that fine beads of sweat had formed on their forehead.

After eating a few pieces of duck meat, Lin Xu picked up some ginger slices that had been fried to a golden brown at the bottom of the clay pot. He took a small bite, and his eyes lit up. "This ginger is surprisingly delicious! You all should try it."

The duck meat and broth were incredibly spicy, yet the ginger slices themselves were full of aroma. No wonder people online say that when you eat Ginger Duck, you don't even spare the ginger slices. They taste so good, how could you possibly pass them up?

Lin Xu thought that just the ginger slices from the pot would be enough to go with several bowls of rice.

"Really? Tricking kids into eating ginger is supposed to give them nightmares, you know!" Shen Baobao adopted an "I'm not a three-year-old, don't try to fool me" stance. Yet, as others also praised how tasty the ginger slices were, her curiosity got the better of her.

She could handle the flavor of ginger but not eating the actual pieces, as it would make her gag. That's why, when the restaurant kitchen prepared dishes for her, they either cut the ginger into large, easily

identifiable pieces or used ginger juice instead. Now, seeing everyone else enjoying it so much, she felt an urge to challenge herself.

If I'm being tricked, then so be it, she thought. The worst that can happen is I'll make Xubao tell me 'I love you' a hundred times tonight!

With that thought, she popped a slice of ginger into her mouth. The expected spiciness didn't come; instead, it was surprisingly fragrant. She chewed gently, and the ginger even had a slightly chewy, fibrous texture.

Is this really ginger?

She grabbed another piece and put it in her mouth, only to find it was indeed delicious.

"Mom, Dad, I can eat ginger now! Look, I'm not even gagging!"

Han Shuzhen, who was about to gnaw on a duck wing, glanced at her daughter dismissively and said, "That ginger was fried in duck fat; of course, it's delicious. You've eaten plenty of ginger candy since you were little, and you turned out just fine, didn't you?"

Speaking of ginger candy, Han Shuzhen said to Lin Xu, "Lin Xu, find some time to make some ginger candy. It's getting cold. Yueyue's grandmothers both like a bit of ginger to warm their stomachs. If you know how to make it, make plenty and send some to Yinzhou too. Your own grandmothers should also have some; ginger is good for the elderly."

Ginger candy? The food lovers' eyes lit up. There was something tasty on the horizon again.

Lin Xu had been wondering what snacks to offer at the restaurant as the weather turned cold. Upon hearing his mother-in-law mention ginger candy, he immediately decided to add this treat to the menu. This sweet and spicy treat would not only warm the stomach but also help soothe coughs. With the sudden cold snap this year, many people's respiratory systems were struggling. They could indeed use some ginger candy to help them adjust.

Yan Lin, who hadn't experienced a meal like this at the restaurant before, found it amazing how they could decide on adding a new dish so quickly. She remarked, "Remember to send me some to try when it's done. The winters in Shanghai are damp and cold, and there's no central heating, so I'll need some ginger to stay warm."

Geng Lele said cheerily, "Don't worry, Godmom! Once it's made, I'll have Goddad send you some."

Yan Lin opened her mouth, feeling somewhat awkward at the suddenness of becoming co-godparents with Lin Xu, her childhood friend, for Lele. But eventually, she nodded. "Okay!"

Not wanting to dwell on the topic, she turned the conversation to Geng Lele, asking, "Lele, do you have many relatives? If I visit your home tomorrow, would they mind me becoming your godmother?"

"Not at all! They'd love for someone to keep an eye on me."

Upon hearing this, Yan Lin was relieved. However, she soon began to think about gifts for all of Geng Lele's relatives. "I'll have Xiao Qing prepare some later," she said to Lele. "Could you tell me a bit about your family members? It would help me choose appropriate gifts."

"One of them is right here," Geng Lele replied.

Curious, Yan Lin looked around and asked, "Who is it?"

With just these few people here, could one of my goddaughter's relatives really be among them? What a strange coincidence! It's a good thing I didn't say anything out of line just now, or I might have caused offense.

She looked around but couldn't tell which one might be her goddaughter's relative.

Geng Lele pointed cheerfully at Lin Xu and said, "It's Lin Xu! He's my grandpa's sworn brother!"

Chapter 766: A gust of autumn wind brings a chill; it's time to eat some warming ginger candy!

Yan Lin had a string of question marks above her head.

So, by acknowledging a goddaughter, I inadvertently demoted myself? This deal... feels a bit like a loss.

"Lele, if you keep being naughty, you won't get any ginger slice candy."

"I was wrong, Lin Xu," Geng Lele said. "Really, from the bottom of my heart, I was wrong. How about I write a thousand-word self-criticism? I have a lot of experience in this—I helped more than twenty classmates with theirs in high school..."

Chen Yan asked curiously, "How did you help people with that? By doing good deeds?"

"No, it was for money. I charged a minimum of two hundred yuan per paper, and the more heartfelt and profound the content, the higher the price. The most I made for one was two thousand yuan."

This time, it was the adults present who were stunned.

"Do kids these days have that much pocket money?"

"The social climate really has a significant impact on children, exposing them to the power of money at such a young age."

"Families with children really need to manage their allowances carefully. They can't be allowed to use it for things like this."

"..."

Everyone discussed the social climate's effects on middle school students; only Lin Xu was marveling at Geng Lele's earning ability.

Two thousand yuan for a thousand words—a rate of two thousand per thousand words! When you thought about those web novel writers, they'd be over the moon to get a minimum contract of thirty yuan per thousand words. There was truly no comparison. And contracts for over a thousand yuan per thousand words? Usually, only top-tier authors could enjoy those. Tsk, tsk, tsk... Back when I was in high school and there were so many self-criticisms to be written in my class, why didn't I think of this business? I felt like I'd missed out on so much easy money!

After dinner, Yan Lin left with Geng Lele under the pretense of preparing gifts.

Not long after they left, Cui Qingyuan received a message from Little Mushroom Head: "I've successfully infiltrated the enemy~~~"

Tsk, this girl, is she playing at being a spy?

Having eaten and drunk his fill, and also having encountered his green plum there, he decided to leave to prevent further gossip about the matter.

Once the main topic of today's conversations had departed, everyone finally felt like they could breathe again.

Xie Baomin said regretfully, "If our Ms. Su were here, she'd be moved to tears. She absolutely loves this kind of TV drama. It's such a pity."

Old Huang muttered, "I wonder when those two will finally make things official. I'm still waiting to give my congratulatory gift."

After a customer entered the shop, everyone dispersed to prepare for officially starting work the next day.

「The following days were relatively calm.」

The loan application was being processed. Chen Yan had a lawyer transfer ownership of the two-bedroom, one-living room apartment on the top floor of the residential complex out back to Dundun's

company. Lin Xu didn't have a Beijing residence permit, so he couldn't transfer it directly to his name; for now, it had to be registered under the company. He would handle the transfer once he officially obtained residency and completed the necessary registration.

As for the top-floor duplex they had looked at earlier, Feng Ge also investigated it. He found it to be a property with all its paperwork in order, with no issues regarding its legal status.

Consequently, Dou Wenjing withdrew five hundred thousand yuan from the company account to make the down payment on the house. She also commissioned a third-party company to conduct a comprehensive assessment and inspection of the property.

Meanwhile, Geng Lele's family held a very ceremonial recognition ceremony in Lin Ji's banquet hall, with the same guests who had recently given gifts for her school promotion celebration attending to give gifts once more.

Shen Baobao's replacement Bentley Continental GT had been delivered. She tried it out and was quite satisfied. Compared to professional sports cars, this type of coupe-sedan had a higher chassis, better road clearance, and was more comfortable to drive. It was also slightly more low-key than a pure sports car.

As the weather turned colder, hot soup dishes became popular in the restaurant. Dishes like steam-pot pigeon, Jade Soup, and stewed lotus root with pork ribs were often fully booked before mealtimes. Sales of hot and sour soup also saw a steady increase. Even customers ordering hand-pulled noodles would ask for them to be served in soup. The colder the temperature, the more everyone craved something warm.

"Boss, aren't we going to introduce Ginger Duck yet?"

In the kitchen, Che Zai watched Lin Xu methodically slicing the recently available fresh ginger, feeling a bit anxious. Since the weather had grown cooler, customers couldn't get enough of dishes that warmed them from the inside out, but the boss wasn't in any rush and hadn't even mentioned adding Ginger Duck to the menu.

Lin Xu said with a smile, "Don't worry, it's not truly cold yet. If we introduce all the winter-appropriate dishes at once, what will we do later on? We can't just have no new dishes to release then, can we?"

Chinese restaurants make a point of regularly introducing new dishes. They had launched quite a few recently, so those needed to settle in with customers first. Moreover, there were quite a few people like Shen Baobao who could tolerate ginger flavoring but not actual pieces of ginger. They tended to instinctively reject a dish if they heard 'ginger' in its name, regardless of how it actually tasted.

To change people's perception of ginger, Lin Xu decided to make ginger slice candy first. He planned to sell it in the restaurant for a while before introducing Ginger Duck. He hoped that once customers re-evaluated ginger and came to accept it as an ingredient, launching Ginger Duck later might produce surprisingly positive results.

The fresh ginger he was currently slicing was for the ginger slice candy.

Ginger slice candy is renowned as an essential winter snack for warming the stomach. It's recommended for everyone: middle-aged and elderly people who are susceptible to the cold and have weaker constitutions, girls during their menstrual period, or anyone who frequently suffers from cold hands and feet. They should all eat it regularly. Ginger helps to expel cold from the body, bringing a touch of warmth to the chilly winter days.

Seeing that Che Zai wasn't busy at the moment, Lin Xu pointed to the basket of washed but unpeeled ginger beside him and said, "You can cut some too. Cut all this ginger. Since we're firing up the wok anyway, let's make a large batch today."

"Alright!"

Chapter 767: A gust of autumn wind brings a chill; it's time to eat some warming ginger candy! \_2

Panda washed his hands and then picked up a kitchen knife to chop ginger next to Lin Xu.

"Boss, can ginger candy only be made with fresh ginger?"

"Not necessarily. Old ginger works too, but it needs to be boiled first. Otherwise, the spiciness is too strong, and you can't taste the sweetness. Plus, the fibers in old ginger won't be easy to bite through without boiling."

Lin Xu, while chopping the ginger, answered Panda's question.

Fresh ginger doesn't need to be cut too thick; about three millimeters is fine. This thickness allows the fresh ginger to be quickly marinated during the candying process and to dehydrate quickly when being stir-fried. Moreover, the finished ginger candy doesn't easily become damp again. If it's too thick, it can be somewhat troublesome to make because both the marinating and subsequent processing steps will take significantly more time.

The method for making ginger candy isn't complicated. Just pickle it with sugar, then pour it into a pot and continuously stir-fry and boil it, much like making Winter Melon candy, until the water evaporates and the sugar crystallizes. If you want it crispy, just add some food-grade lime. Spending several days changing the water for soaking, like with Winter Melon candy, will produce ginger candy with a crispy and refreshing texture, following the same steps.

However, Lin Xu didn't plan to make it crispy. For one thing, it takes too long and isn't cost-effective. Moreover, even if it's food-grade lime, that only means the heavy metals have been removed; it still requires repeated soaking to eliminate the lime itself completely. For just a little gastronomic pleasure, it's not worth taking the risk.

After the ginger slices were ready, he brought a large stainless steel bowl. He placed a layer of ginger slices at the bottom, sprinkled a layer of White Sugar, then added another layer of ginger slices, and sprinkled another layer of sugar. He continued layering like this until all the ginger slices were in, then carried the bowl to the cold storage for sugaring. The so-called sugaring is essentially pickling with sugar. White Sugar, like salt, in granular form can draw out the moisture from ingredients. By sugaring it this way, the moisture from the ginger slices would be drawn out, making them soft yet resilient and not easily prone to becoming damp again.

Coming out of the cold storage, Lin Xu checked the time; it was already two in the afternoon. According to the progress of the sugaring, they could start cooking it between four and five o'clock. Of course, the time could be extended a bit longer, but that would make the texture of the ginger slices harder and not as soft.

After washing his hands, Lin Xu returned to the kitchen and started marinating some lamb chops. Tonight was the night he was hosting dinner for Liu Zhengyu, president of the National Tourism Association. They were supposed to have dined two days ago, but President Liu had gone to Rong City to inspect tourism projects and wasn't in Beijing. As soon as Liu Zhengyu returned yesterday, Lin Xu had urgently arranged tonight's dinner. He also notified a circle of people to help act as hosts.

After marinating the lamb chops, he took out his phone, just about to rest for a while, when his senior, Xie Baomin, suddenly sent a message: "Junior brother, I just heard from Building Ten that you have an important dinner tonight, and they've specially sponsored two star groupers. I'll come over around four or five with Director Liao and let everyone taste this top-notch delicacy."

"Star grouper?!" Lin Xu was taken aback. That's truly premium seafood. But Building Ten doesn't even have enough star groupers for themselves to eat freely, so why would they sponsor me?

A possibility suddenly flashed through Lin Xu's mind. Could it be that my senior brother secretly took them from Building Ten? He has a long rap sheet for this kind of thing, from roasted suckling pig to Big Red Tangerines, and all sorts of other expensive ingredients. He's caused Chef Guo no end of trouble.

Thinking of this, Lin Xu couldn't help but inwardly shed a tear of sympathy for Chef Guo. When you run into someone like my senior brother, you chefs can only count yourselves unlucky.

After replying to Xie Baomin's message, Lin Xu browsed through other group messages. As someone with OCD, he felt an irresistible urge to open and see whenever he saw unread message notifications. After checking several other miscellaneous groups, Lin Xu opened the "Lin Ji's Food Premium VIP Customer Group." As soon as the page popped up, he saw a series of messages from Li Qiang:

"Damn it, we got a new manager in our department, and he keeps picking on me every day. It feels like he's trying to force me to quit. I've always heard about internet companies nitpicking to force people out, and now it's happening to me... Anyone free tonight for a drink? I'm really fed up."

Li Qiang's department didn't have a manager before; he, the technical supervisor, had been in charge. Now that there was a manager, instead of strengthening the team, internal strife seemed to be brewing.

After Li Qiang sent his message, Shen Baobao, being a capitalist, was the first to send a sticker that read, "Struggle against the bourgeoisie to the end."

Good thing her father-in-law isn't in the group, or his blood pressure would probably shoot right up.

Panda said, "Since you're the technical supervisor, it shouldn't be hard for you to switch jobs, right?"

"Not hard," Li Qiang replied. "Several companies were headhunting me before National Day, and they all offered higher pay than my current job. But the boss of this company is really good to me, and I'm a bit reluctant to leave."

When he said that, his sister-in-law chimed in, "That's your own delusion. If he really cared, he would have raised your salary directly, at least matching whatever the headhunters offered. Otherwise, it's all pie in the sky."

Yue Liyue sent a "hard to disagree" sticker, then added: "If they really cared, they would have raised your pay to the highest in the industry, like Lin Xu does for his employees at Lin Ji. Otherwise, it's all talk."

"Go for it, Li Qiang! Your current company will be the one crying if you leave."

"Good luck! Don't cling to the past; there's something better waiting for you ahead."

"Jump, jump, jump! Don't hesitate. You can't talk terms with capitalists; money does all the talking!"

Chapter 768: A gust of autumn wind brings another layer of cold; it's time to eat some warming ginger candy! \_3

"..."

As everyone was chatting back and forth, Geng Lele, who was sneakily taking a break to browse the group chat, was stunned by the messages:

"Are you guys trying to rush Brother Qiang to jump off a building?"

"Geng—Lele—are you actually looking forward to me jumping off a building?"

"No, no, no! If you jump, who's going to do your programming for you in the future? Didn't the program I remotely helped you write last time work without any errors? You're welcome; I always enjoy helping others!"

Li Qiang: ???

"So, you were the one who wrote that bug-ridden program last time? When did you connect to my computer? I didn't turn on remote access."

"Ahem, that's not important. I was still practicing back then, but I've gotten much better now."

Geng Lele dropped an "I'm outta here!" emoji and scrambled, not daring to pop up in the group chat again.

Brother Qiang: "..."

He had originally come to the group chat seeking comfort, but now he felt even more depressed.

Everyone's so good at comforting; maybe they shouldn't comfort me next time.

After reading everyone's messages, Lin Xu tagged Brother Qiang in the group:

"I don't know how to comfort you either. This afternoon, I'm planning to make ginger slice candy. I'll send you a jar later. You can take it to the office to eat. It's good for the stomach, and it seems like it might also promote hair growth."

He didn't actually know if eating ginger could promote hair growth; he just mentioned it because it seemed like something Brother Qiang would appreciate. Consider it psychological comfort for Brother Qiang.

Who knew this would hit Brother Qiang's sweet spot:

"This is great! This is great! Make a lot for me. I'll go find Tiantian to help me swipe my card. I topped up ten thousand yuan when I got paid last, and I haven't spent it all yet."

"No need for money. This stuff isn't expensive. Just help me promote it at your company when you have a moment."

One of Brother Qiang's colleagues had been among the store's first employees. So, whenever Lin Xu made something delicious, he'd ask Brother Qiang to spread the word at his company. It wasn't crucial whether people came to eat or not; the important thing was that these were loyal customers, and they shouldn't be forgotten.

「After four in the afternoon.」

Lin Xu went into the cold storage. He saw that the large basin once full of ginger had noticeably reduced in volume, and the White Sugar in it had mostly dissolved, leaving a considerable amount of liquid at the bottom.

This was the dehydrating effect of the sugar. Although not as powerful as salt, it was still quite potent.

He carried the basin outside and switched to the largest wok. He first heated the wok and seasoned it with oil to prevent the sugared ginger from sticking. After seasoning it this way three times, he poured out all the excess oil from the wok.

Next, he dumped all the ginger slices, along with the sugary liquid extracted from them, into the wok and began to cook over high heat. This liquid was all ginger juice extracted by the sugar, full of nutrients. As it boiled, the aroma of ginger immediately filled the air.

Once it started boiling, he stirred continuously with a spoon to accelerate the evaporation of the liquid. Soon, the liquid in the wok began to thicken.

This indicated that the water content was reducing. Once all the water had evaporated, the syrup would begin to crystallize, and the ginger slice candy would be almost ready. But it wasn't ready yet; he had to keep stirring to allow more liquid to evaporate.

About ten minutes later, when the liquid in the wok had thickened so much it was almost impossible to stir with a spoon, he reduced the heat to low and began to toss the mixture with a spatula. The syrup in the wok grew increasingly thick, the liquid continued to reduce, and the ginger slices became drier.

He removed the wok from the direct flame, setting it on the edge of the stove where the bottom would still receive a little heat. Continuing to stir-fry for a while longer, the syrup began to crystallize. At first, only a few ginger slices were coated with white, sandy-textured frosting. But as the stir-frying continued, more and more slices became coated with frosting, while the sticky syrup in the wok rapidly diminished.

When only a little semi-solid syrup remained at the bottom of the wok, he turned off the heat and continued to stir. At this point, the frosting wasn't distributed evenly enough, and the syrup could still re-melt. So, he had to keep stirring, using the residual heat to completely evaporate any remaining moisture in the wok. Moreover, as he stirred, the friction between the ginger slices made the surface frosting more uniform and created a pleasant, granular texture.

This was the secret to achieving that perfect sandy crystallization. The method his senior brother had taught him for making sugar-coated pumpkin was exactly the same. Besides this, there were techniques for sugar-coated sweet potatoes, sugar-coated taro, and candied Hawthorn, among others—all employing similar principles to achieve the effect.

Once all the ginger slices had transformed into thin, white pieces coated in sugary frost, Lin Xu brought over a large tray, poured the ginger slices from the wok into it, and spread them out to cool. Once cooled, they could be packed directly into airtight snack containers for sale.

However, this batch wouldn't be sold. It was all to be given away as a promotion and to let friends and family try it. The following batch would be officially for sale.

While he was busy, Wei Qian leaned over, saw a layer of white frosting stuck to the bottom of the wok, and curiously asked, "That frosting on the bottom is useless now, right? Do you need me to help you wash the wok?"

"That's the good stuff. It would be a waste to wash it away."

Zhu Yong came over for a look, then immediately began to carefully scrape the frosting from the bottom of the wok with a bamboo spatula, collecting it into a small bowl. "This frosting is the essence, perfect for making the Brown Sugar ginger tea that girls love."

When Wei Qian heard this, he perked up: "Really? Then give me some."

"Why would you need it? Your Tiantian is as strong as a young bull. It's our Yuyu who cries in agony every month during her period. I'm taking all of this. Last time, I just told her to drink hot water, and she got so annoyed she almost put on boxing gloves to punch me, despite the pain! This time, I'm going to keep her warm all day long!"

"Just don't overdo the warming, or she might melt," Wei Qian muttered sourly, then said to Lin Xu, "How about not seasoning the wok so thoroughly next time? That way, more ginger-flavored frosting will stick to the bottom. I might as well try making Brown Sugar ginger tea myself."

Lin Xu: "..."

Have these two lost their minds from being in love? Why not just extract some ginger juice, mix it with Brown Sugar, boil it, pour it out, and once it solidifies, cut it into small pieces? Isn't that far more convenient than scraping the bottom of the wok? Tsk, I'll have to teach them later. Who would have thought that I, a straight man suddenly blessed with a girlfriend, could become the shop's romance advisor?

He picked up a piece of ginger candy and tasted it. The frosting had a wonderful, granular texture. The sweetness of the ginger was very mellow, mingled with subtle strands of spiciness that made it incredibly satisfying to eat.

While he was savoring it, Xie Baomin walked into the kitchen carrying two Qilin East Starfish, and said confidently, "Junior Brother, come, come! I'll teach you a classic Qilin East Starfish dish—the Qilin East Starfish!"

Chapter 769: President Chen's Future... Mother-in-law! Fancy Ways to Eat Grouper!

"What is 'Qilin East Starfish'?"

Lin Xu looked at the Grouper still twitching in the bag and thought that after his senior brother had stolen it, he must have moved it to a place with seawater to keep it alive for a while.

Otherwise, since the message was sent hours ago, the Grouper would have been cold by now.

Xie Baomin tasted the ginger candy lying on the worktable and said with a hint of surprise, "Tastes good. Pack some for me later; I'll take it home for your sister-in-law to try."

"Sure."

After talking about the ginger candy, Xie Baomin continued, "This is a dish from Building 10. I just took it and used it. The method is to fillet the Grouper's Fish, then layer it with Ham and mushrooms and steam it. Once steamed, drizzle it with oil... It's actually just steamed fish but dressed up in a fancier way."

He thought there might have been a cellphone processor hidden inside.

"And the other one?"

Two fish. One made into the Qilin Grouper without any Qilin, the other should also have something special, right?

Then Xie Baomin said, "Just throw the other one in your water tank at home to keep for eating. In a formal banquet, one ingredient should only be used for one dish. It's rude to repeat an ingredient in different dishes."

Since that was the case, I might as well make the remaining one into Qilin East Starfish too. It would be a nice fresh treat for Shen Baobao.

And the bones of both fish could be used together to make a tofu soup or something.

Using the bones of the East Starfish for soup, the taste must be pretty good.

"What time does the banquet start?"

"Six o'clock."

"Then I'll first prepare this smaller one for you all to try, and you can also learn in the process. Once you master this technique, you can make classic Cantonese dishes—Wenchang Chicken or Baihua Chicken."

The engagement day at Building 10 featured Baihua Chicken, which was essentially Plain Chicken chopped into pieces, then arranged next to slices of Ham and mushrooms. When eating, you pick up the chicken, Ham, and mushroom together, using the flavors of the Ham and mushrooms to enhance the deliciousness of the chicken.

Having said that, Xie Baomin didn't immediately start butchering the fish; instead, he first prepared the ingredients: soaked mushrooms, pure lean Jinhua Ham, a loofah for the base, and a few choi sum stalks in the middle for decoration.

After arranging everything, he boiled a pot of water, ready to blanch the mushrooms and cook the Jinhua Ham for a while. Since Jinhua Ham is quite salty, it's best to cook it first to extract the excess salt and activate the savory components inside with hot water, making the Ham more delicious.

While cooking the Ham, Lin Xu, seeing that Shen Baobao had finished work, grabbed a handful of ginger candies, put them on a plate, and took them outside.

"Try these, freshly made ginger candies this afternoon."

"Wow, I've been wanting to eat them since you mentioned them in the group chat! Thank you, Xu Bao! MWAH!"

Sitting down at the booth with the plate, Shen Baobao didn't eat immediately but instead took a photo of the ginger candies on the table with her phone and casually uploaded it to the "Good Sister's Cup Size Doesn't Shrink" group chat:

"Essential winter snack for girls, have you tried them?"

After posting, she picked up a piece and popped it into her mouth. No sooner had it entered her mouth than she was captivated by the sweet and spicy flavor and the sandy sugar on the outside.

"Wow, this tastes so good! Xu Bao, can I eat more of this?"

"No, eat too much and it'll burn your stomach."

"Well, then... I still wanted to eat more sweets."

Lin Xu pinched Shen Baobao's adorable face. "Later, I'll buy some Hawthorn and make you some candied Hawthorn; you can eat a lot of those, and they also have that crystallized sugar coating."

Hearing this, the formerly downcast Shen Baobao immediately burst into smiles. "Yes, please, thank you, Xu Bao! Oh, by the way, I was planning to replace all the appliances in the new house with the latest models. Is that okay?"

"Sure, once we get the house, you can arrange it however you like."

In the group chat, Chen Yan criticized this pre-meal food taunting: "Showing off eating ginger candies just because you have a boyfriend, huh?"

Zeng Xiaoqi, however, really liked ginger candies, so instead of agreeing with the condemnation of the boss lady, she turned and retorted at President Chen, "You've also been strutting around in those Crystal Shoes for the last few days, haven't you? The temperature in Beijing has dropped below ten degrees Celsius, yet you deliberately roll up your pant legs, unafraid of freezing your ankles."

Chen Yan was dumbfounded.

Weren't we supposed to unanimously condemn the act of tempting people with food before meals?

I can't believe you, Director Zeng, with your thick eyebrows and large eyes, would betray the organization!

Indeed, you can't rely on those with smaller chests!

But seeing the ginger candies, President Chen genuinely felt a bit hungry. She tagged Shen Baobao and asked, "What's for dinner? If it's good, I'll come eat; if not, I'm going home. My parents haven't gone out on business these past two days, so it's a rare chance for us to gather at home."

Saying it was a gathering was just an excuse; mainly, this time President Chen felt confident facing her parents' nagging about marriage.

See these shoes I'm wearing?

They were a gift!

Shen Baobao replied, "You better eat at home. Today my dad is hosting a banquet for President Liu at the restaurant. Xu Bao won't have time to make anything fancy, just simple home-cooked meals."

Seeing this message, Chen Yan immediately packed up and prepared to head home. Shutting down her computer, she grabbed her bag and left.

In the past, she used to wear high heels. Although they admittedly looked very sexy and beautiful, walking a lot was indeed tiring for her feet. These past few days, having switched to the casual shoes bought by the little policeman, she realized just how comfortable it was to wear flat shoes for long durations.

Upon reaching the elevator, she saw an update in the VIP customer group and clicked to check it, only to find that Lin Xu had posted two bright red East Starfish in the group.

Chapter 770: President Chen's Future... Mother-in-law! Fancy Ways to Eat Grouper! \_2

"Today, my senior brother brought two groupers, and I'm preparing to learn how to cook them. Once I've mastered it, the restaurant will also offer this dish. Friends who love fish, stay tuned!"

Chen Yan frowned. That darn Yueyue, you've actually learned to lie!

Talking about a simple home-style meal, and it's grouper? How is that considered home cooking?

She planned to drive to the restaurant to confront her cousin in person and ask her why she had to lie.

Hmph, it's not like I wanted to eat grouper anyway.

Meanwhile, as evening fell, the queue for ready-to-eat braised dishes at Lin Ji's Food's window started to grow.

A woman in her fifties with slightly graying hair, carrying a handbag, was walking towards the entrance while on the phone. "Old Ren," she said, "dinner will be a bit late. I gave a lecture at Tsinghua University today and it went on a bit too long; I just finished. The other day, when Xiaojie was away on a business trip, wasn't he praising Lin Ji's roast chicken on social media? I looked up the address; it's quite close to Tsinghua University, so I thought I'd stop by and buy a couple to try..."

That little rascal has been disobedient since he was a child, she thought. I told him not to join the military, but he insisted on going. I told him not to become a police officer, but he went ahead and applied anyway. The more I forbade him from doing something, the more he'd go against my wishes. He's just infuriating!

Approaching the entrance, she saw a group of people queuing. She was about to see what was going on when she bumped into Geng Lishan, who was coming to support Lin Xu at the restaurant.

"Hey? Mr. Lishan? What are you up to?"

Geng Lishan was carrying two bottles of his family's aged liquor, mulling over how to help Brother Lin liven things up. When he heard someone call his name, he turned his head curiously, and his expression immediately froze. "You are... Professor Tian from the Institute of Chinese Languages Studies?"

"Yes, yes, that's me, Tian Qinglan," she replied. "We attended an ancient Chinese seminar together the year before last. You even copied 'Qinyuan Chun - Snow' in seal script on the spot."

"What a pleasure to meet you here, Professor Tian! What brings you here?" Geng Lishan asked.

Tian Qinglan adjusted the glasses on her nose bridge and said, "My son said the roast chicken here is delicious, so I'm stopping by to pick up a couple to try... Are you here to dine, Mr. Lishan?"

Geng Lishan said with pride, "The owner and I are good friends despite our age difference. He's hosting a meal for members of the Travel Association today, and I came to join in and show support. Since you're here, there's no need to buy them; I'll just give them to you."

He then pushed open the door, saw Shu Yun standing at the service counter, and waved his hand.

Shu Yun immediately trotted over and asked, "What's up, Mr. Lishan?"

"This is Professor Tian from the Institute of Chinese Languages Studies," Geng Lishan explained. "She's heard good things and wants to try our restaurant's roast chicken. Please pack up two chickens quickly, and add some other braised items too, so Professor Tian can have a good taste."

Tian Qinglan took out her phone from her bag and asked, "How much is it? I can't accept this for free."

Geng Lishan laughed and said, "Professor Tian, you've made such great contributions to the field of ancient Chinese studies. What are two roast chickens compared to that? Please, you must take them. This is a small token of my, Geng Lishan's, respect."

"Mr. Lishan, you're too kind."

"It's just some food, not worth mentioning... By the way, Professor Tian, is your husband, Mr. Ren, still teaching Chinese at Beijing University?"

"Yes, he's still at Beijing University teaching Chinese," Tian Qinglan confirmed. "This year he was given the somewhat nominal title of Chief Professor, which has unfortunately prevented him from giving lectures at other schools. He's been quite frustrated about it every day."

Her son was a handful, her husband's work wasn't going smoothly, and she had specially come to buy roast chicken today, partly to improve his appetite and lift his spirits.

Geng Lishan chuckled. "One shouldn't be too hasty with academic pursuits, nor should one keep bottling up frustrations. I was idle at home for two years, refusing visitors, and I almost developed health problems... How about this: I'll organize a gathering later on. Those of us in textual studies can all get together. Young people's trends are all online these days; we also need to find ways to develop our presence on the internet..."

As they were talking, Shu Yun came out of the restaurant carrying a large bag of packed braised dishes. "Professor Tian," she said, "these braised dishes are for you. If you find them tasty, please come back and visit us again."

"Wonderful, wonderful, thank you so much!" Tian Qinglan exclaimed. "No wonder my son posted on his social media praising how delicious your food is here. Even the service alone is so considerate."

After exchanging a few more pleasantries, Tian Qinglan headed towards the subway station, planning to take the subway home.

Passing through Lin Ji's Food's parking lot, Chen Yan's Porsche 911 drove up.

Seeing someone crossing, Chen Yan quickly stopped the car to yield to the pedestrian.

Tian Qinglan waved her hand in thanks. This girl is truly beautiful and kind-hearted, she thought. No wonder she drives such a nice car at such a young age.

After Tian Qinglan passed, Chen Yan drove her car into a parking spot. Seeing Shu Yun and Geng Lishan waving goodbye to the middle-aged woman, she curiously asked, "Who was that?"

Geng Lishan answered, "That's Professor Tian from the Institute of Chinese Languages Studies, an authority on Chinese, especially ancient Chinese. It's quite something that she came all this way to the restaurant just to buy roast chicken today. Lin Ji's Food's reputation is truly growing!"

Upon hearing this, Chen Yan immediately said, "What a coincidence! I majored in Chinese Language and Linguistics at Fudan University. Perhaps the textbooks I used during my studies were even written by Professor Tian."

Curious, Shu Yun asked, "Ms. Chen, weren't you supposed to go home for dinner? Why did you come to the restaurant again?"

"Your lady boss lied!" Chen Yan declared. "She said in the group chat that tonight was just a simple home-style meal. But when I checked the main group chat, whoa, my brother-in-law had already posted about the groupers—two of them, no less! How dare she call that a simple home-style meal?"

Shu Yun covered her mouth and chuckled. She loved watching this pair of cousins bicker.

After Chen Yan grumbled, she looked at Geng Lishan and asked, "Mr. Lishan, are you here to accompany guests today?"

"Yes, I'm here to help host," Geng Lishan replied. "My young friend Lin is starting a Horse Farm, so naturally, I have to show my support. When I received the invitation yesterday, I even wrote a calligraphy piece with the idiom 'Swift Success,' intending to bring good fortune to the Horse Farm."