

Culinary 81

Chapter 81: Exploiting the System! Triggering the Main Mission Again!

The all-purpose cold salad dressing and the all-purpose mixed noodle sauce are quite similar.

Both are based on Chili Vinegar, with various seasonings added during preparation.

However, compared to the mixed noodle sauce, the cold salad dressing has a higher proportion of vinegar and also includes minced garlic and small chili pepper rings.

Cold dishes made this way have a more pronounced sour taste and a spicy kick, making them very refreshing and appetizing.

"Master, the Onion and Black Fungus is ready. Please taste it and let me know if it needs any improvement..."

Lin Xu placed the freshly mixed Onion and Black Fungus on the dining table.

He hadn't originally planned to make this dish, but the thought of receiving system upgrades every time his master offered suggestions made him want to "shear some wool" from the system. This counted as making reasonable use of the rules, right?

Grandpa Gao picked up a mouthful with his chopsticks, a look of interest on his face, and gave it a taste.

Then he said, "It needs more vinegar; a stronger vinegar flavor would be better. Also, use a bit less onion. Although the dish is called Onion and Black Fungus, it would taste better with slightly more black fungus."

Grandpa Gao had barely finished speaking when the system notification arrived as expected:

"Host has listened to the guidance of the State Banquet master. The Excellent Level cold dish, Onion and Black Fungus, has automatically upgraded to Superior Level. Congratulations to the Host."

Shearing the wool was a success!

A single dish of Onion and Black Fungus wasn't enough to make Lin Xu overly excited.

But this method of "shearing wool" gave him hope for upgrading more dishes.

His earlier arrangement with Old Hu for a box of pig's ears was also made with this intention.

Of course, it would be even better if his senior brother were here. With two State Banquet masters discussing things, he could potentially gain two levels at once. Pure joy doubled!

Lin Xu served himself a bowl of rice and sat down.

He first tried the Alcoholic Peanuts prepared that morning.

Mhm, crispy, fragrant, numbing, and spicy. Even the dried chilies were fried to a delightful crispness, providing a mouthful of fragrant, spicy satisfaction. Even someone who didn't usually drink might be tempted to have a small tipple with these peanuts.

After eating several, he decided he should promote the new dishes available today.

So, he took a photo of the Alcoholic Peanuts and another of the sweet and sour pork loin, posting them to the Lin Ji's Food topic:

"Our new 'perfect companions for drinks' and 'essential sidekicks for meals' launched this morning! Friends who are interested can come and try them. If you can't make it for lunch, feel free to come by in the afternoon. Rain or shine, Lin Ji's Food is always waiting for you!"

"Alcoholic Peanuts, my absolute favorite!"

"Sweet and sour pork loin is the GOAT! I absolutely have to try it after work today!"

"Boss Lin casually unleashed his ultimate move, sneakily introducing two new dishes."

"What's in the bowl next to the sweet and sour pork loin? Is it Mao Xue Wang again? Good heavens, the staff meals are more lavish than what they sell to customers! Where's the justice in that?"

"I zoomed in. There's no duck blood or tripe, but there are a few slices of lean meat. It should be boiled pork slices, right?"

"Last time it was Mao Xue Wang, this time it's boiled pork slices. Are these staff meals part of a series or something?"

"Does Boss Lin's shop hire part-timers? The kind who help wipe tables and wash dishes on weekends. I don't mean anything by it, I just think you all work so hard and I'd like to lend a hand!"

The netizens' replies were enthusiastic. Lin Xu read for a while and was just about to turn off his phone when a system notification suddenly sounded in his mind:

"Host has actively promoted dishes, increasing topic popularity, thereby triggering the main mission: [Rise to Fame]. Within one month, the Host must elevate the Lin Ji's Food topic to number one in the Yanjing Region food category rankings and break into the top ten of the overall Yanjing Region topic rankings. Upon completion, rewards include: three Perfect Level dish draws, one Perfect Level dish study card, and one cuisine upgrade card."

(Cuisine Upgrade Card: A special item that allows the Host's mastered cuisines to advance by one level.)

A Cuisine Upgrade Card? A Perfect Level Dish Study Card? Lin Xu was overjoyed.

The prizes are getting more and more lavish! But the mission's difficulty is also pretty high.

Currently, the Lin Ji's Food topic popularity hovered around twentieth place in the Yanjing Region food category rankings, which wasn't particularly high.

The top-ranked topic, #Yanjing Food Sharing#, was a food feature jointly created by the travel channel and several major platforms. It held significant influence nationwide, and many netizens in the Yanjing Region had even developed the habit of photographing and sharing every meal.

Moreover, this mission also required breaking into the overall top ten.

Lin Xu opened the topic rankings and saw the popularity of the top ten topics in the Yanjing Region overall rankings:

1. #Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Responds to Reporters' Questions#
2. #National Development and Reform Commission's Opinions on Oil Price Regulation#
3. #Ministry of Public Security Issues A-Level Wanted Criminal Reward Notice#
4. #Ministry of Education Introduces Series of "Double Reduction" Policies#

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All of the top ten were social or political topics. The highest-ranked food-related topic, #Yanjing Food Sharing#, was only in seventeenth place and was about to be overtaken by the eighteenth topic, #Headline Snatched Away by Leather Pants Wang#.

As expected, main missions are always incredibly difficult.

Comparatively, Lin Xu preferred doing side missions. Although the rewards seemed a bit less impressive, the lower difficulty meant they could be completed with ease.

Just as he was mulling this over, customers came in.

Lin Xu put these thoughts aside, hurriedly finished the rice in his bowl, and returned to the kitchen to work.

Ou Hua's prediction was spot on. The appearance of the Alcoholic Peanuts triggered a drinking craze.

The bestsellers were the 100ml bottles of Er Guo Tou liquor.

Enjoying a couple of liang of liquor with peanuts, followed by a large bowl of Tomato Cubes Noodles or braised pork rice—the taste was simply sublime.

"Damn, our shop's business is really booming!"

Earlier that morning, while cutting meat, Niu Chuan had muttered about how good business must be to warrant cutting meat by the basinful—what would they do if it didn't sell out?

And now... Have we prepared too little meat? It feels like it'll all be sold out by one-thirty.

The restaurant's bustling business was redefining his understanding of the food industry.

He had never imagined a restaurant could be this popular. Even with no seats available, many people were still queuing, just to get a taste of their boss's cooking.

I've really come to the right place!

By two o'clock in the afternoon, the main dishes and other food items in the shop had sold out again, leaving only some Chicken Feet and Sour Plum Soup.

Lin Xu prepared a new batch of spicy brine and cooked twice the amount of peanuts as in the morning, intending to increase the production of Alcoholic Peanuts.

He also asked Xu Xinhua to clean and braise the pig ears that Boss Hu had sent over earlier.

"I'm planning to make a cold salad with these pig ears, so don't add too much salt when you braise them."

Xu Xinhua acknowledged with a "Got it!" and began scorching the pig ears with a blowtorch.

Once the peanuts were cooked, they were peeled, their moisture blown dry, then bagged and placed in the freezer to chill.

Taking advantage of this lull, Lin Xu started to ponder how to increase the topic's popularity.

He remembered that the topic had broken into the top fifty last time thanks to Wu Kexin's live stream. Maybe I should try live streaming too?

If I don't find a way to boost the topic's engagement, relying solely on the restaurant's customers to generate buzz will take a hundred years to break into the overall top ten.

Thinking of this, he made a phone call to Wu Kexin.

As soon as the call connected, Streamer Wu's surprised voice came through:

"Ah, Boss Lin! I'm live-streaming how to make Crispy Meat right now, but I think I messed up... Why doesn't the batter stick to the meat I marinated?"

Lin Xu said, "You probably have too much moisture in your marinade. Sprinkle some dry flour on the meat slices first to increase their stickiness, and then try coating them again—that might work better."

After giving his advice, he asked, "Streamer Wu, I'm looking to increase my online popularity. Would live streaming or something else be better?"

Wu Kexin thought for a moment and sincerely suggested, "Live streaming is too time-consuming; you need to be online for several hours every day. I think you're more suited to making food vlogs. Just set

aside some time each day to film yourself preparing a dish. That's much more suitable for you than live streaming."

Make vlogs? Become a video blogger?

Just as this thought crossed Lin Xu's mind, the system's notification sounded in his head...