

Culinary 87

Chapter 87: To make fish offal delicious, this step is a must!

Lin Xu certainly wanted life skills.

But securing a group meal for more than 200 people was not so easy.

Ou Hua had signed such a group meal, firstly, because the employees liked it, and secondly, to boost morale. Most importantly, however, Lin Ji's Food had high sales of alcohol and beverages.

Now, the store had to restock almost every day.

If other beverage merchants intercepted this business, it would definitely cause Ou Hua significant losses.

Therefore, he used this method to solidify their relationship.

This was actually the same reason Boss Hu had come to help deliver vegetables in the morning.

It was all about maintaining good customer relationships.

However, other group meals were not so easy to secure. Lin Ji's Food lacked a proper venue and a wide variety of dishes. Relying solely on good taste made it tough to succeed.

"Whatever, let's focus on preparing tonight's group meal first!"

Lin Xu tidied up the kitchen, went back to his apartment to change clothes, and rode a shared bike to the market to buy nine Grass Carp.

Eight were for the group meal, while the remaining one was for the staff's afternoon meal.

Well, since they were going to have fish, their own people should also get a taste.

The fish were a good size, each weighing about three pounds.

Fish of this size had tender and tasty flesh, ideal for Boiled Fish.

If they were a bit larger, their age would exceed one year, and the flesh would gradually become tougher. If smaller, there would hardly be any meat, leaving one to just suck on fish bones.

"Buying so much fish? Is the shop going to introduce new fish dishes?"

Seeing Lin Xu return with the fish, Chezi asked curiously.

"Tonight, we need Boiled Fish for Boss Ou's group meal, and we'll also have one ourselves."

Wow, we get to eat fish? The food in our shop is getting better and better!

Niu Chuan eagerly took the fish, ready to prepare them.

"Remember to remove the fish teeth and clean the black membrane inside the Fish Belly."

"Don't worry, Boss. My parents sold fish in my hometown, and I started gutting fish before I was ten. I can clean them with my eyes closed," Niu Chuan said, then asked, "Boss, do you want the fish entrails as well?"

"Yes, the fish oil, Fish Roe, fish maw—all of it. If there's a lot, we'll make a special dish of Stewed Fish Entrails, and everyone can enjoy it to their heart's content."

"Alright!"

Besides the tasty flesh, Fish Roe, fish oil, fish maw, and Fish Intestines are also edible parts, collectively referred to as fish entrails.

Fish entrails are an ingredient that requires some skill to prepare.

If prepared well, they are fragrant and delicious; if not, they can be fishy and bitter.

Today's fish weren't too big, so they skipped the Fish Intestines, but the Fish Roe, oil, and maw were still worth trying.

As Niu Chuan began preparing the fish, Lin Xu was soaking wood ear mushrooms, boiling preserved eggs, frying peanuts, and marinating meat strips, getting started on the evening's group meal.

It was almost five o'clock. The cold dishes were already prepared. The steamed Pork Ribs in black bean sauce and Tiger Skin Chicken Feet were also packed up.

Lin Xu ladled several scoops of the simmered Red Oil Soup into the pot to start making the Boiled Fish.

Beside him were eight large takeaway containers, already lined with a base of previously stir-fried vegetables. On the workbench next to him lay the marinated fish slices.

These fish slices, marinated with Scallion and Ginger, had been coated with a thin layer of starch using egg white and then sealed with a layer of cooked oil.

Almost all meat slices that require pre-marination need to be sealed with a thin layer of oil to help them separate quickly in the pot.

The starch coating also made the fish slices smoother.

Additionally, the starch helped lock in moisture within the fish, making its texture more tender and succulent.

After adding the Doubanjiang-infused Red Oil Soup to the pot, he added the head, bones, and tail of one fish.

To ensure they cooked thoroughly, the fish head was cut into four pieces, and the bones were chopped into segments.

Although most of the flesh had already been sliced off, a good amount still clung to the head and bones. These needed to be boiled first to cook the remaining meat and to infuse their savory flavor into the soup. This would make the fish slices added later even more flavorful and delicious.

The fish bones simmered for three to four minutes until cooked through. Then, they were removed with a slotted spoon and placed into the prepared large takeaway containers.

Next, keeping the liquid at a gentle simmer, just below a boil, he scattered the fish slices into the pot.

Once their surface changed color, they were poured, soup and all, into the takeaway containers.

After all the Boiled Fish portions were prepared, they would be topped with a sprinkle of knife-cut chilies and a drizzle of hot Seasoning Oil. That would complete the Boiled Fish.

"I'm off work! Dundun, did you miss me?!"

Shen Jiayue pushed open the door and entered the store.

She immediately began to playfully roughhouse Dundun, who was taking a long nap on the cash register.

This left the little cat feeling utterly aggrieved.

But he couldn't resist.

After all, even his owner was subject to the Yueyue Demon King's roughhousing!

Song Tiantian, who was tallying the accounts, said, "Dundun is so interesting. He just loves to wander around the cash register. Earlier, when Niu Chuan was in there gutting fish, Dundun stood on a chair, stretching his neck to look inside, but he ultimately didn't step a single paw into the kitchen. It's simply miraculous."

I remember the cats at home always used to make a ruckus in the kitchen. There are also plenty of stories online about cats tearing apart kitchens or even mistaking rice for cat litter. I didn't expect the boss's rescued cat to be so well-behaved. He hasn't set foot in the kitchen all day.

"Our Dundun is a little beckoning cat! And beckoning cats naturally belong on the cash register!"

While Shen Jiayue was teasing Dundun, something suddenly clicked.

Gutting fish? Are we having fish today?

She immediately headed towards the kitchen, wanting to see what kind of fish Lin Xu was preparing.

Dundun seized the opportunity to escape the "devil's" claws, leaping into Song Tiantian's arms with a face full of grievance, seeking comfort.

I was sleeping so peacefully, not bothering anyone, and suddenly I get mauled like this! MEOW! This poor kitty is suffering!

"What's for dinner today? Boiled Fish?"

Shen Jiayue stood at the kitchen door but didn't go inside.

Dundun is sensible enough not to enter the kitchen. I certainly can't be outdone by a cat, can I?

Lin Xu hadn't managed to speak yet when Chezi, who was nearby, said, "The boss is planning to make Boiled Fish and Stewed Fish Entrails."

Stewed Fish Entrails?

Shen Jiayue immediately remembered last year when her dad, Shen Guofu, had suddenly gotten the whim to cook. He'd tried making the famous Stewed Fish Entrails from their hometown, only to end up with a dish that was fishy, bitter, and simply inedible—a culinary nightmare.

Now, just hearing the words "fish entrails"... she couldn't help but recall the fear of being subjected to her father's disastrous cooking attempts.

"Fish entrails... Are they actually tasty?"

Lin Xu said, "Delicious. I guarantee you'll be wanting more after you try them."

Hearing Lin Xu's assurance, Shen Jiayue started to feel a flicker of anticipation.

Hmph! Next time I get the chance, I'll pack some for Comrade Shen Guofu to try. That way, he won't be tempted to whip up fish entrails on a whim again!

After Lin Xu finished preparing all the Boiled Fish, he brought over the soaked fish entrails.

First, he carefully scored each piece of fish maw with a knife to release any trapped air, preventing them from exploding when cooked.

Then, he removed the membranes and blood vessels from the Fish Roe and fish oil, and cut any large pieces into smaller chunks.

After dicing, he rinsed away any blood and set them aside in a basket.

Unlike other boiled dishes, fish entrails shouldn't be cooked directly in the Red Oil Soup. They needed to be blanched first.

So-called "blanching" meant quickly passing them through boiling water.

This would help remove any off-flavors and also firm up their texture.

He heated water in a pot and added two small spoons of salt.

Salt would help make the fish entrails more tender and smooth.

When the water in the pot boiled, he added half a ladleful of high-proof Liquor. The evaporating alcohol would carry away any off-flavors from the ingredients, effectively removing the fishy smell.

After pouring in the Liquor, Lin Xu added the prepared fish entrails to the pot.

Once the water returned to a boil, he promptly removed the ingredients and drained them.

Then, he officially began to make the Stewed Fish Entrails!
