

Eric Wu - 12 years old

A while back we went to my dad's friend's house, when time came for dinner, I saw what the homeowners had made and it instantly made my mouth water. The seafood platter looked sumptuous, and the plating on top of the wooden platform made it seem like the king of all dishes. I then remembered what my dad had brought over, it was a big pot full of pig intestines. It looked like otherworldly tubes all flowing out of a giant pit; with some flowing out, dripping the sauce all over the table. This terrified me as I was nervous how my friends and the homeowners would react to the food. I looked down at my feet as people as the homeowner talked about how he learned this dish from a Michelin-starred restaurant, and about his experience in eating Michelin-starred meals. When people were trying the pig intestines, I closed my eyes from embarrassment. Immediately, I heard people murmur, "Wow, this sure tastes amazing!" over and over again. I thought they were talking about the seafood platter positioned at the center of the table, but I looked onto their plates and there were the pig intestines. I realized that they must be talking about the intestines! I was extremely confused until I tried one myself.

What the flavor was is difficult to put into words, it was truly incredible. The mixture of textures wrapped the flavors together, and the savory and umami flavors balanced each other; it was a delicate balance, yet a balance nonetheless. The pig intestines were the first plate to be completely empty. The homeowners quickly asked my dad for the recipe, but my dad refused to oblige. I thought of this meal over and over again, about how a man that got tired of Michelin-starred restaurants enjoyed eating a sloppy pot of pig intestines; as well as how many times my dad had failed trying to make the perfect pot of intestines. I remembered watching him make the dish. In order to make intestines without the odor, my dad had to repeatedly

wash it and rinse it. After he places the intestines in the cook pot, he doesn't just leave it there to rest. He has to constantly check the flavor, just to make sure it is right. That night, I asked my dad why he didn't want to share the recipe and he replied, "There is none."

From pig intestines to food shows, the topic of food never gets old to me. Food influences my life immensely, which is unusual for a kid my age. I think the mixture of flavors is similar to the mixture of emotions in my life. By putting those emotions and flavors together, you never know what the outcome might be; you might just have created something spectacular. While watching my dad cook his signature pot of pig intestines, I saw what he was doing. I knew he wasn't following a rigid set of instructions; he added different spices and sauce, but each time I watched him, it was different. Sometimes the intestines fail miserably and end up in the trash without a single bite taken out of it, other times, it is the first plate on the table that becomes empty. The inconsistency makes the success more rewarding. Just from watching my dad cook a regular pot of pig intestines, I was able to learn that experimenting with new things is the best way to grow and learn!

After watching my dad cook his pig intestines a lot of times, I realized that I had never understood the complexity of food and how it ties in with my life. The trying and testing my dad keeps doing on his pig intestines is similar to how I grow. Instead of doing the same thing every time, my dad tries to improve his recipe. This is also how people grow. Without taking risks and experimenting with new things, we can never learn anything new. I think having a set recipe every single time for a dish, even if it is Michelin-starred, including all of the most expensive ingredients; the recipe can never improve. The reason my dad's pig intestines are so successful

doesn't lie in the ingredients, it is because my dad was willing to take risks, make mistakes, and constantly trying to find better options.