

Essay III | Cooking Without Optimization

第三篇 | 烹饪非量化：当厨房不再是效率实验室

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Abstract

The HanFlow Food Culture Series presents cooking as a non-instrumental practice. This essay critiques the optimization mindset that turns kitchens into efficiency laboratories. Treating meals as metabolic problems leads to “optimization fatigue,” diminishing the intrinsic aliveness of cooking. Drawing on Chinese food philosophy, cooking is reframed as rhythmic, attentive, and caring: chopping for flow, stirring to witness transformation. Simple practices, like washing one vegetable with full attention, offer entry into mindful cooking. Ordinary culinary activities become renewable sources of well-being, fostering participation in life rather than producing outcomes.

摘要

HanFlow 美食系列将烹饪视为非工具性练习。本文批判将厨房变为效率实验室的优化思维，将餐食视为代谢问题会产生“优化疲劳”，削弱烹饪的内在生命力。借鉴中华饮食哲学，烹饪被重新定义为有节奏、专注、关怀的练习：为节奏而切，为见证而搅拌。简单练习，如带着全然注意力清洗一颗蔬菜，提供进入正念烹饪的入口。普通烹饪活动因此成为可再生福祉来源，培养参与生命而非追求产出的方式。

Introduction

引言

We have optimized everything.

我们已经优化了一切。

Our workouts are timed to the second. Our sleep is tracked to the minute. Our meals are calibrated to the gram. We have apps for macros, devices for steps, spreadsheets for calories. We have turned eating into a metabolic equation and cooking into a performance metric.

我们的锻炼精确到秒。我们的睡眠追踪到分钟。我们的餐食精确到克。我们有计算各类营养素的应用程序，有记录步数的设备，有统计卡路里的表格。我们把吃饭变成了代谢方程，把烹饪变成了绩效指标。

This is not wrong, exactly. Optimization has its place. It has helped us understand our bodies in new ways, prevented deficiencies, extended lives.

这并非错误，确切地说。优化有其位置。它帮助我们以新的方式理解身体，预防营养缺乏，延长寿命。

But it has also exacted a cost — one we are only beginning to name.

但它也付出了代价——一个我们才刚刚开始命名的代价。

Modern wellness culture asks: How can I make this meal more efficient? More nutritious? More optimized?

现代健康文化问：我如何能让这餐饭更高效？更有营养？更优化？

Chinese food philosophy asks a quieter question: What is lost when cooking becomes just another task to optimize? And what might be found if we cooked without optimization — even just sometimes?

中华饮食哲学问的是一个更安静的问题：当烹饪变成另一个需要优化的任务时，我们失去了什么？如果我们不优化地烹饪——哪怕只是有时候——我们可能会发现什么？

Section I | Optimization Fatigue — When Efficiency Exhausts Us

第一节 | 优化疲劳——当效率耗尽我们

There is a specific kind of exhaustion that comes from constant optimization. It is not the fatigue of hard work. It is the fatigue of never enough.

有一种特定的疲惫来自持续的优化。它不是辛苦工作后的疲劳。它是永远不够的疲惫。

The optimized meal must be perfectly balanced — the right protein, the right fat, the right carbs, the right micronutrients. The optimized cook must be perfectly efficient — minimal time, minimal waste, maximal output. The optimized eater must be perfectly disciplined — no mindless snacking, no emotional eating, no deviation from the plan.

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被优化的餐食必须完美平衡——正确的蛋白质、正确的脂肪、正确的碳水、正确的微量营养素。被优化的厨师必须完美高效——最少的时间、最少的浪费、最大的产出。被优化的食客必须完美自律——没有无意识的零食、没有情绪化进食、没有偏离计划。

This is not wellness. This is **optimization fatigue** — a low-grade, chronic depletion that comes from treating every meal as a metabolic problem to be solved.

这不是健康。这是**优化疲劳**——一种低度、慢性的耗竭，源于把每一餐都当作一个需要解决的代谢问题。

The symptoms are familiar: guilt after eating something “unoptimized.” Anxiety about meal prep. Exhaustion at the thought of planning one more perfectly balanced plate. A nagging sense that you could always be doing better, eating better, optimizing better.

这些症状我们都很熟悉：吃了“未优化”的食物后的愧疚感。对备餐的焦虑。想到要再计划一次完美平衡的一餐时的疲惫。一种挥之不去的感觉：你总是可以做得更好、吃得更优化、优化得更好。

Modern productivity asks: How can I get more out of every meal?

现代效率文化问：我如何能从每一餐中获得更多？

Chinese food philosophy asks: What if a meal's value isn't measured by what you get out of it, but by what you bring to it — attention, presence, care?

中华饮食哲学问：如果一餐的价值不是由你从中获得什么来衡量，而是由你带入什么——注意力、临在、关怀——来衡量呢？

Section II | The Problem with Optimization — When Means Become Ends

第二节 | 优化的问题——当手段变成目的

Optimization has a hidden logic. It treats every action as a means to an end. You cook to get nutrients. You eat to fuel performance. You track to optimize future meals. The activity itself — the chopping, the stirring, the tasting — becomes merely instrumental, valuable only for what it produces.

优化有一个隐藏的逻辑。它把每个行动都当作达到目的的手段。你烹饪是为了获取营养。你吃饭是为了给表现提供燃料。你记录是为了优化未来的餐食。活动本身——切菜、搅拌、品尝——变得仅仅是工具性的，只有在其产出的东西上有价值。

This is fine, until it isn't. When means become ends — when cooking becomes only about the finished dish, eating only about the nutrients, tracking only about the data — something essential drains away. The present moment disappears. The activity loses its intrinsic aliveness.

这没问题，直到它成为问题。当手段变成目的——当烹饪只关乎完成的菜肴，吃饭只关乎营养，记录只关乎数据——某种本质的东西流失了。当下时刻消失了。活动失去了其内在的生命力。

In **Chinese food philosophy**, cooking has never been just about the finished dish. The process matters. The rhythm of chopping matters. The sound of the wok matters. The steam rising from the pot matters.

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These are not means to an end. They are the end itself — the experience of being alive, present, engaged in an act of care.

在**中华饮食哲学**中，烹饪从来不只是关乎完成的菜肴。过程重要。切菜的节奏重要。锅的声音重要。锅中升起的蒸汽重要。这些不是达到目的的手段。它们本身就是目的——活着、临在、投入关怀行为的体验。

This is what **non-instrumental care** looks like: doing something not because of what it produces, but because of what it is — an act of attention, a moment of presence, a small offering of kindness to yourself or others.

这就是**非工具性关怀**的样子：做某事不是因为它的产出，而是因为它本身是什么——一个注意力的行为，一个临在的时刻，一个对自己或他人的小小的善意奉献。

Just as painting is not about reaching the final brushstroke, but about the quality of attention in each moment the brush meets the canvas — cooking, too, can be practiced as its own end, not just a means to a meal.

正如绘画不在于完成最后一笔，而在于画笔触碰画布时每一刻的注意力品质——烹饪，同样可以作为一种自身的目的来练习，而不仅仅是得到一餐饭的手段。

Section III | What Cooking Without Optimization Looks Like

第三节 | 不优化的烹饪是什么样子

What would it mean to cook without optimization? Not to abandon nutrition or efficiency, but to let them recede from the center. To let something else take their place.

不优化地烹饪意味着什么？不是放弃营养或效率，而是让它们从中心退后。让别的东西取代它们的位置。

It might look like this:

它可能看起来像这样：

You wash vegetables not to sanitize them, but to feel the water on your hands, the texture of leaves, the coolness of the tap.

你洗菜不是为了消毒它们，而是为了感受手上的水、叶子的质地、水龙头的凉意。

You chop not for uniformity, but for the rhythm — the repetitive motion, the sound of the knife, the satisfaction of a clean cut.

你切菜不是为了均匀，而是为了节奏——重复的动作、刀的声音、利落切开的满足感。

You stir not just to combine ingredients, but to watch them change — colors deepening, aromas releasing, textures softening.

你搅拌不只是为了混合食材，而是为了看着它们变化——颜色变深、香气释放、质地变软。

You taste not to check seasoning, but to participate in the food's becoming — to be present at

the moment flavor arrives.

你品尝不是为了检查调味，而是为了参与食物的生成——在味道到来的时刻临在。

This is not inefficient cooking. It is cooking that has been freed from the tyranny of efficiency. It is cooking that remembers its original purpose: not just to produce food, but to produce life — to be an activity through which we experience being alive.

这不是低效的烹饪。这是从效率的暴政中解放出来的烹饪。这是记起其原始目的的烹饪：不仅是为了生产食物，更是为了生产生命——成为一个我们通过它体验活着本身的活动。

Modern nutrition asks: Does this cooking method preserve nutrients?

现代营养学问：这种烹饪方法能保存营养吗？

Chinese food philosophy asks: Does this cooking method nourish something beyond the body — attention, patience, presence, care?

中华饮食哲学问：这种烹饪方法能滋养身体之外的东西吗——注意力、耐心、临在、关怀？

Section IV | Sustainable Well-Being — Not Performance, But Practice

第四节 | 可持续福祉——不是表现，而是练习

This brings us to a deeper question: What does **sustainable well-being** actually look like?

这把我们带到一个更深的问题：**可持续福祉**实际上是什么样子？

In the optimization paradigm, well-being is a performance. You achieve it. You maintain it. You risk losing it. It requires constant effort, constant vigilance, constant optimization.

在优化范式中，福祉是一种表现。你达成它。你维持它。你有失去它的风险。它需要持续的努力、持续的警觉、持续的优化。

This is exhausting. And it is not sustainable. The body rebels. The will flags. The system crashes. And then you start over, with renewed guilt and renewed resolve.

这令人疲惫。而且它不可持续。身体会反抗。意志会消退。系统会崩溃。然后你重新开始，带着更新的愧疚和更新的决心。

Chinese food philosophy offers a different model: well-being as practice. Not something you achieve, but something you inhabit. Not a performance to be maintained, but a quality of attention you bring to ordinary activities — including cooking.

中华饮食哲学提供了另一种模式：福祉作为练习。不是你达成的东西，而是你栖居的东西。不是需要维持的表现，而是你带入日常活动——包括烹饪——的一种注意力品质。

When you cook without optimization, you are not performing wellness. You are practicing it. You are training the capacities that make well-being possible: patience, presence, the ability to

find satisfaction in process rather than just outcome.

当你不优化地烹饪时，你并不是在表演健康。你是在练习它。你是在训练那些让福祉成为可能的能力：耐心、临在、在过程中而非仅仅在结果中找到满足的能力。

This is sustainable not because it is easy, but because it is renewable. It doesn't deplete you. It returns you to yourself.

这是可持续的，不是因为它容易，而是因为它是可再生的。它不会耗尽你。它让你回归自身。

Just as learning to play a musical instrument can be practiced for a lifetime without reaching "perfection" — because the practice itself is the reward — cooking, too, can become a lifelong practice of sustainable well-being.

正如学习演奏一种乐器可以练习一生而无需达到“完美”——因为练习本身就是回报——烹饪，同样可以成为可持续福祉的终身练习。

Section V | A Simple Practice: Cooking One Thing with Full Attention

第五节 | 一个简单的练习：用全然的注意力烹饪一样东西

Here is a practice. It takes ten minutes. It requires one vegetable, one knife, one cutting board — and the willingness to slow down.

这是一个练习。需要十分钟。需要一样蔬菜、一把刀、一个砧板——以及慢下来的意愿。

The One-Vegetable Meditation

一样蔬菜的冥想

Step 1 — Choose one vegetable

Pick something simple — a carrot, a potato, a pepper, a mushroom. One vegetable. That's all.

第一步——选择一样蔬菜

选择一样简单的东西——一根胡萝卜、一个土豆、一个青椒、一个蘑菇。一样蔬菜。仅此而已。

Step 2 — Wash with attention

Hold it under running water. Feel the temperature. Watch the water bead on its surface. Notice its color, its texture, its weight in your hand. This is not preparation. This is presence.

第二步——带着注意力清洗

把它放在流动的水下。感受温度。看着水珠在它的表面形成。注意它的颜色、质地、在手中的重量。这不是准备。这是临在。

Step 3 — Chop slowly

Take your knife. Make one cut. Pause. Notice the sound, the resistance, the reveal of the interior.

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Make another cut. Pause again. There is no hurry. There is only this vegetable, this knife, this moment.

第三步——慢慢切

拿起你的刀。切一刀。停顿。注意声音、阻力、内部的显现。再切一刀。再次停顿。没有匆忙。只有这个蔬菜、这把刀、这一刻。

Step 4 — Cook simply

However you choose to cook it — steam, sauté, roast — do it with the same attention. Watch it change. Smell it transform. Tend to it as if it matters — because in this moment, it does.

第四步——简单地烹饪

无论你选择如何烹饪——蒸、炒、烤——都用同样的注意力去做。看着它变化。闻着它转变。照料它，仿佛它很重要——因为在这一刻，它确实重要。

Step 5 — Taste mindfully

When it's done, take one bite. Just one. Let it rest on your tongue. Notice everything. This is not the end of the practice. This is the continuation.

第五步——正念品尝

当它做好时，吃一口。就一口。让它停在舌头上。注意一切。这不是练习的结束。这是延续。

That's it. One vegetable. Ten minutes. No goal. No judgment. Just attention.

就是这样。一样蔬菜。十分钟。没有目标。没有评判。只有注意力。

This is not a recipe. It is a practice — a way of cooking without optimization, of finding sustainable well-being in the simplest of acts.

这不是一个食谱。它是一种练习——一种不优化地烹饪的方式，在最简单的行为中找到可持续福祉的方式。

Conclusion | The Kitchen as Sanctuary

结语 | 厨房作为庇护所

We have turned the kitchen into a laboratory — a place of measurement, optimization, performance. But the kitchen was never meant to be a laboratory. It was meant to be a sanctuary.

我们把厨房变成了实验室——一个测量、优化、表现的地方。但厨房从来不应该是一个实验室。它应该是一个庇护所。

A place where we nourish not just bodies, but relationships — with food, with ourselves, with those we cook for.

一个我们不仅滋养身体，也滋养关系的地方——与食物的关系、与自己的关系、与我们为之烹饪的人的关系。

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系。

A place where we practice patience, attention, care — not as means to an end, but as ends in themselves.

一个我们练习耐心、注意力、关怀的地方——不是作为达到目的的手段，而是作为它们自身的目的。

A place where we remember that well-being is not a performance to be optimized, but a practice to be inhabited — slowly, gently, sustainably.

一个我们记起福祉不是需要优化的表现，而是需要栖居的练习——缓慢地、温和地、可持续地。

Just as attentive breathing grounds us in the body, and mindful listening opens us to the world, cooking refines the capacity for non-instrumental care — the ability to do something not for what it produces, but for what it is.

正如专注的呼吸让我们扎根于身体，用心的聆听让我们向世界敞开，烹饪也精炼着非工具性关怀的能力——做某事不是因为它的产出，而是因为它本身是什么。

This is cooking without optimization. This is sustainable well-being. This is the kitchen as practice.

这就是不优化的烹饪。这就是可持续福祉。这就是作为练习的厨房。

The next time you cook, try this: leave the metrics aside. Leave the optimization for later. Just cook. Just be here. Just attend.

下次你烹饪时，试试这个：把指标放在一边。把优化留到以后。只是烹饪。只是在这里。只是关注。

Not for the meal — though the meal will be better.

不是为了餐食——尽管餐食会更好。

For the practice.

为了练习。

For the return to a way of being that efficiency forgot.

为了回归一种被效率遗忘的存在方式。

For the quiet, sustainable well-being of a life fully inhabited — one vegetable, one cut, one bite at a time.

为了一个被全然栖居的生命那安静的、可持续的福祉——一样蔬菜、一刀、一口，一次一步。