我们家的盐水试过了所有食材

盐水浮鸡蛋做完那天，杯子里那杯咸得发苦的盐水我没舍得倒。我盯着它想：鸡蛋能浮，那别的东西呢？厨房里的食材排成一队，我挨个问它们：你想不想试试浮起来？我妈在旁边择菜，说你把我家厨房当什么了。我说当实验室，就一晚。

我的办法是笨办法：一杯浓盐水打底，谁扔进去沉底，就兑清水调淡一档；谁浮着，就加盐调浓一档。每样东西单独试，试完在纸上记一行。土豆切了一小块丢进去，沉了——加盐，它比鸡蛋难请，吃到第七勺才摇摇晃晃浮起来。胡萝卜片沉得干脆，加到第八勺才肯露头。葡萄最怪，在淡盐水里就浮，我以为是它轻，捞出来一称，它比同体积的清水重得多，原来是盐水太浓。橡皮擦一小角，沉到死，加到盐都化不动了也不浮，我在它后面画了个叉，写：请不动。

试到第七样，我那张纸已经排成一列：葡萄最娇气，淡盐水就浮；鸡蛋居中；土豆其次；胡萝卜最难伺候；橡皮出局。我把这列东西从左到右摆在桌上，像一排领奖台。我忽然看懂了：浮不浮不是东西单方面的脾气，也不是水单方面的脾气，是两边比重量。每种东西身上都藏着一个数，科学课上叫密度；盐水能调，调过它藏的那个数，它就浮。

最有意思的是鸡蛋和土豆比邻而居那一行。我把浮着的鸡蛋和浮着的土豆放进同一杯，调浓淡，看谁先沉。鸡蛋先沉，土豆后沉——土豆比鸡蛋还难对付。我把这个写进周记，科学老师批注：会控制变量。其实我就是没换杯子，一杯水从头用到尾，盐一勺一勺加，谁先撑不住谁先沉，一目了然。

那杯盐水最后被我妈命令倒掉了，倒之前我尝了一口，咸到皱眉，它已经为科学服务到极限。食材们各回各的冰箱，橡皮回到文具盒。可我家厨房从此在我眼里不一样了：每样东西都揣着自己的数，等着有人调一杯水来问它。我打算攒一个学期，把冰箱里的东西全测一遍，排一张我们家的密度表。

Our Salt Water Tested Every Food in the House

The day I finished the floating-egg experiment, I could not bring myself to pour out that glass of salt water, bitter-salty as it was. I stared at it and thought: if the egg can float, what about other things? The kitchen foods lined up in a queue, and I asked them one by one: would you like to try floating? My mother sat nearby snapping green beans, asking what I thought I was turning her kitchen into. I said a laboratory, for one evening only.

My method was the clumsy kind: one base glass of strong salt water; anything that sinks when dropped in gets diluted one notch with plain water; anything that floats gets salted one notch stronger. Each item tested alone, each result written on paper. I cut a cube of potato and dropped it in — it sank. Add salt. The potato is harder to invite than the egg; it took seven spoonfuls before it wobbled up. The carrot slice sank decisively and only surfaced at the eighth spoonful. The grape was the strangest: it floated in weak salt water. I assumed it was light, then fished it out

and weighed it — far heavier than the same volume of plain water. The salt water had simply been too strong. A corner of an eraser sank to death; even when no more salt would dissolve, it refused to float. I drew a cross after it and wrote: unmovable.

By the seventh item my paper had become a column: grape, the most delicate, floats in weak brine; egg, in the middle; potato, next; carrot, the hardest to please; eraser, eliminated. I lined these up on the table from left to right like a row of winners' podiums. Suddenly I understood: floating is not one food's temperament alone, nor the water's alone — it is the two of them comparing weights. Every thing hides a number inside it; science class calls it density. Salt water can be tuned, and once you tune past the number a thing hides, that thing floats.

The most interesting row was where the egg and the potato lived next to each other. I put the floating egg and the floating potato into the same glass and adjusted the strength to see which would sink first. The egg sank first, the potato after — the potato is even tougher than the egg. I wrote this into my weekly journal, and the science teacher commented: knows how to control variables. Really I just never switched glasses — one glass of water from start to finish, salt spoonful by spoonful, whoever gives out first sinks first, plain to see.

My mother finally ordered that salt water poured down the drain. Before it went, I tasted it and winced at the saltiness — it had served science to its limit. The foods went back to their shelves in the fridge, the eraser back to my pencil case. But our kitchen looks different to me now: every item carries its own number, waiting for someone to mix a glass of water and ask it. I plan to spend a whole semester testing everything in the fridge and publishing our family's density chart.

www.vv99.net