

flowers on evening dresses as this season. One or two of the Parisian belles have been wearing narrow coronets of white feathers, with an aigrette at the side, and diamond stars at intervals; but small wreaths of artificial flowers, to match fringes, and garlands plentifully introduced upon the dresses, are the rule.

However much Paris may have suffered in the few past years, it shows but little sign of it as far as the *élite* are concerned. Never was there such a blaze of diamonds to be seen at the opera. Not content with necklaces, bracelets, brooches, and earrings, diamonds are now introduced as fringes on the short sleeves.

The form of mantle which seems to find most favour in England is the semi-fitting jacket, the basque cut straight across the back, and describing points in front. In Paris, jackets and mantelets alike have collars, or small capes, like the old coachman's cape, or a lace hood. Even in mantles, as generally in dresses, polonaises, &c., the curious fashion holds good of trimming the two sides entirely different, having a basque on the left and none on the right.

For evening dresses many are made *en Princesse*, that is, skirt and bodice in one, fastening diagonally across the front, from the neck to nearly the hem of the dress.

Coarse straws, both in white and black, vie with Leghorn bonnets in favour; a great deal of trimming being introduced beneath either the brim or curtain at the back.

England is more famous for her hats than Paris, and the shapes revived from old portraits are the fashion of the hour, the newest being the so-called Crushed Rubens, with a square crown and rather narrow brim. The Lady Dorothy, copied from the portrait of that lady at Haddon Hall, is also much worn, and many other similar shapes turned up in front, or at the back, or at the side, as most becoming to the wearers.

Hats and bonnets are difficult to distinguish, differing often only in name, and caps and bonnets are running each other closely, especially the now fashionable Paris Chapeau, composed of a mere garland of flowers and a ruche of lace, with no crown.



HOW TO COOK A FISH DINNER.



WE have discussed the subject of wedding breakfasts, which are so similar to nice little suppers that we were unable, when so doing, to give many practical receipts; but we will endeavour to make amends on the present occasion, and will commence by blowing our own national trumpet, by maintaining that we English, in cooking fish, beat the French as completely as they beat us in the making of entrées. There is oftentimes a connection between wedding breakfasts and fish dinners.

It has often happened that a little party of four or more have taken a run down the river to Gravesend or North Woolwich; the fish dinner has been enjoyed, the discussion on "What are whitebait?" concluded in the usual manner, viz., that no one knows; the well-iced cup has washed down the devilled bait; the stroll on the balcony, the cigar, the water—perhaps the moon—the heavy shipping dropping slowly down the river, &c., have followed in due course.

We cannot always be running down the river, but the happy little wife is suddenly seized with the following happy thought—"Suppose we have a fish dinner at home!" I will tell you how to do it, right away from the flounders souchet down to the devilled whitebait at the finish, and if you exercise a little judgment, I can assure you that it is by no means so expensive or extravagant an affair as many think.

It must, however, be carefully borne in mind that the one secret of success in the management of a little dinner consisting of a variety of dishes is—forethought. The cook should consequently divide the dinner into

two distinct classes, viz., those dishes which can be cooked beforehand—*i.e.*, in the morning of the day—and those which require cooking at the last moment. To illustrate what I mean, I would mention stewed eels and whitebait. It is obvious that the first can be prepared hours beforehand, and will simply require warming up, but that the latter cannot be cooked till within a minute of its being sent to table.

I will now give a list of fish, from which the dinner can be chosen, but at the same time would strongly recommend, where possible, some common-sense person to go early in the morning to Billingsgate market and pick out, say half a dozen different kinds of fish, of course choosing those that are in season, and therefore cheapest:—Flounders, souchet and fried; eels, souchet, fried, and stewed; salmon, plain boiled and with piccalilly sauce; red mullet, *en papillote*; soles, filleted and fried; whiting; turbot, boiled; smelts; lobster cutlets; whitebait, ordinary and devilled; shrimps, curried.

Of course I do not mean that you are to have all these at once, but as under ordinary circumstances it is almost impossible to get just what fish you may ask for, I give a variety, so that if one is not to be obtained, you may have some others to fall back upon. I would however, at starting, remind you that *the* dish in a fish dinner is the whitebait.

We will first start in the dining-room, and suppose the time to be the hour of dinner. The table is laid for four; a green glass is placed, in addition to an ordinary sherry one, by the right-hand side of each person. The sherry is tapped, and let us trust it is dry, and free from fire, as sweet sherry is quite out of

the question at a fish dinner. We will also suppose a bottle of chablis or sauterne to be on the sideboard, with a cork-screw run into the cork, ready for drawing. On the side-board, also, are two plates, containing plenty of thin brown bread and butter, with not too much butter on the bread, and that really fresh, and without a turnip flavour.

If you possess that comfort, fish-knives, all the better, but dessert-knives do very well as a substitute. We will suppose, then, two silver forks placed to each person, and the remainder on the sideboard ready for use, for recollect a series of fishes will soon exhaust even a large establishment of forks; have ready therefore, outside the door, a large jug containing hot water and soda, and a jug of ordinary water by its side. As the forks are taken out of the room, wipe them on a cloth, plunge them into the hot soda and water, and then into the ordinary water, wipe them on a clean cloth, and they are ready again for use. Half a dozen forks or more can be washed this way in half a minute.

We will next descend to the kitchen, and we there find everything neatly arranged. In the sink is already placed a large tub of boiling water and soda, and by its side another tub or basin of cold water. You will probably run short of plates, and certainly will of vegetable dishes, and consequently I would recommend you, if possible, to borrow of a friend a couple of these latter dishes. In front of the fire, or on the hot-plate, is a pile of plates.

The stewed eels are in a small stew-pan on the side of the fire; the salmon and pickle sauce, in another stew-pan, ready; the curry sauce likewise, say in a little egg saucepan, and a small basin on the dresser contains the shrimps ready picked. The red mullet, *en papillote*, is ready in the tin in the oven, and the lobster cutlets are also arranged to be what the cook calls "popped in the oven" at the proper moment. But before going any farther I will run as briefly as possible through the methods of preparing these dishes, some of which have been described before, but may have been forgotten. First, the stewed eels. Some good stock has been placed on the fire early in the morning, and into it have been put some button mushrooms out of a tin, and if possible a few very small spring onions; the stock has been thickened with some brown thickening—*i.e.*, butter and flour fried a brown colour; to this have been added about a dessert-spoonful of mushroom ketchup and another dessert-spoonful of port wine, and a little cayenne pepper. The eels have been cut into pieces about two inches long, and placed in this and allowed to simmer slowly for an hour, or longer; the cook has then taken each piece of eel out very carefully so as not to break them, and allowed the stock to boil up and settle; this has been skimmed once or twice, for a good deal of fat, or what looks like it, will be found on the top. The eels have then been put back in the stew-pan and the whole allowed to simmer till the eels are as soft as possible, when the dish is finished, care being taken not to break the pieces when turned out.

Next, the salmon and pickle sauce. This can be made

from fish left the day before. Cut the cold salmon into pieces three or four inches long and one and a half inch square, and simply warm these pieces up in some good strong brown gravy, to which have been added about half a tea-spoonful of Worcester sauce, and about half a tea-cupful of mixed hot pickles in which cucumber slightly preponderates—as indeed it generally does; take care also to have three or four chillies with it. Have the gravy a dark colour and well thickened, so that the pieces of salmon may be covered with it; a little arrowroot mixed with cold water may be added to the sauce in order to obtain the necessary thickness.

Next, the curry sauce in the little saucepan. This may have been, and should be, made long before; some curried mutton the day before for dinner will be found an advisable dish, as the sauce left will do for the shrimps, and very little is necessary. Curry sauce is made by frying, say, six large onions in a stew-pan with butter till they are browned; three large apples being added, and some brown gravy dissolved in it, the whole being rubbed through a tanning or sieve, taking care that all the onion *is* rubbed through; then a table-spoonful of curry paste and a dessert-spoonful of curry powder are added, and the whole thickened with brown thickening to its proper consistency. Have ready, hot, about half a tea-cupful of this sauce, add to it about half a salt-spoonful of anchovy sauce, put the shrimps in it for one minute only, turn them out, and serve some plain boiled rice with them on a separate plate.

Next, the red mullet. First take a piece of white foolscap paper and oil it all over, next chop up a tea-spoonful of capers fine, then cut up into slices about three ounces of butter; lay the slices on the paper, sprinkle half the chopped capers on it, pepper and salt it, and lay the mullet on the butter, on its side; put the rest of the butter on the top, with the capers and a little more pepper and salt; fold the paper over and fold the edges over and over, so as to make the foolscap sheet of paper into the shape of those old-fashioned apple turnovers, a fat semi-circle; put this into a tin greased at the bottom to prevent the paper sticking, and put it in the oven. A small mullet will bake in half an hour; a very large one, nearly an hour. Send the fish up to table in its paper. If the butter or some of it has run out into the tin, pour it into the dish on which you place the paper.

Next, the lobster cutlets. These have, of course, been prepared before, and only require making hot in the oven. A lobster has been bought containing coral, which coral has been pounded in a mortar with about the same quantity of butter and a pinch of cayenne, and some of this has been added to the meat of the lobster, pounded with some more butter and very finely-chopped onion and parsley, a piece of the former about as big as the top of the thumb and a tea-spoonful of the latter being the proper quantities; a little ordinary pepper and a tea-spoonful of anchovy sauce have been added, and the mass shaped into little pats about as large as oval picnic biscuits; these have been egged over and covered with very fine bread-crumbs, then fried in hot fat for about a couple of

minutes, and a little piece of red claw stuck into each at the finish by way of garnish.

Now these five nice things are all ready, and we presume the dishes have also been got ready to put them in. First of all we will take flounders souchet. Pick out the smallest flounders you can, boil them in some water with a little salt, when tender take them out with a slice, keeping the white side uppermost, and place them in a vegetable dish of boiling water, drop into this water two or three little sprigs of clean double parsley, and serve quickly, handing round the brown bread and butter. Eels souchet can be done in exactly a similar manner. The cook must now have ready two frying-pans, one filled with hot boiling fat and the other with fresh lard for the whitebait, to which we shall come by-and-by. We shall suppose the fish for frying ready on a dish on the dresser, and we will take eels, filleted sole, flounders, whittings, smelts, &c.; now these must be all treated alike, first they must be dried, then floured, then dipped in well beaten-up egg, then in *fine dry* bread-crumbs, and lastly sprinkled over with *fine bright golden* bread-raspings, in order to insure the colour being right. Suppose the cook has just sent up the flounders souchet; let the next course be fried eels and salmon and pickle sauce. Take the eels ready prepared and throw them into the boiling fat; if the fat boil, four or five minutes is ample time, provided the fat is deep enough to cover the fish. Take a hot vegetable dish, turn out the salmon and sauce into it, and put on the cover; next take a clean napkin, warm it, fold it up, and put it on a hot dish; hold a dish-cover to the fire for a minute, and cover over the napkin; take the eels out of the fat and put them for half a minute on to a hot coarse cloth to drain, put them on the clean napkin with a few pieces of green parsley round, and send them up with the salmon. Let us say the next course is turbot, smelts, and red mullet: the turbot, or rather a slice of one, is supposed to be boiling in a saucepan; take it out and put it on a cloth to drain; take first half a dozen smelts and pop them into the fat you have just taken the eels out of; a very short time will cook them. Place the turbot on a fish napkin, put a piece of parsley on the top of it, and the fried smelts round the edge. The red mullet simply wants slipping off the tin on to an ordinary dish just as it is, and the next course is done. The lobster cutlets might be sent up with some fried fish instead, as we presume no one would think of having all this fish at one dinner. We, therefore, now come to the whitebait, and will attempt to describe the secret of having this really delicious and delicate fish well cooked. Of course, in the first place, it is absolutely indispensable to have the fish perfectly fresh, and in an unbroken state, and it is on this account that whitebait is always had in the greatest perfection at the various hotels which overlook the river where it is caught. We will suppose, therefore, the whitebait is ready. Now everything depends upon expedition. The whitebait must be first dried and then plunged as speedily as possible into boiling fat. First we will suppose ready on the fire a deep frying-pan full of *boiling* lard; in

order to insure the lard being sufficiently hot, let a drop of water fall into it and see if it hisses; next have ready a wire whitebait basket, then throw the whitebait into some fine dry flour on a cloth; don't be afraid of having too much flour, as in the water-side hotels the flour used is an inch thick; next shake the whitebait free of the flour in a wide sieve, something like what is used for sifting oats; this is for the purpose of getting rid as much as possible of the flour, to avoid the whitebait being pasty and clammy. Next, having put this floured whitebait into the wire basket, plunge it in the boiling fat—one minute will more than suffice to cook it—throw it on to a hot cloth for a few seconds to drain, and serve *very* quickly. Whitebait sent to table properly should burn the mouth with fire-heat. Do not try and cook too many at a time, as they are liable to stick together. Also shake the wire basket a little in cooking them, for the purpose of avoiding this sticking process; and when they are thrown on to the cloth, if you see one or two sticking together, separate them. Properly cooked whitebait should be crisp, but at the same time slightly soft in the middle, when eaten. There are two kinds of devilled whitebait—black devil and red devil: the former prepared by adding black pepper in the middle of cooking; and the latter, black and cayenne mixed. Have the pepper, whichever is fancied, ready in a pepper-box, lift the wire basket out of the boiling fat, shake it and pepper the whitebait at the same time, put the basket back into the fat for a few seconds, and then turn the whitebait out on to the cloth. It will be found best to send it up in two dishes—first the ordinary, secondly the devilled; thin brown bread and butter should be handed round with it, besides some lemon cut into quarters.

It will sometimes be found that with whitebait are mixed a few shrimps or very small eels; these should properly be removed before sending to table, as they have the effect of destroying the appearance.

It may perhaps seem superfluous to add that whitebait require no sauce, yet the following conversation actually occurred at North Woolwich, where they are caught and cooked in the greatest perfection:—

Visitor.—"Waiter, these whitebait are not so nice as they were last time."

Waiter.—"Perhaps, ma'am, you would like them better if you did not take anchovy sauce."

On one occasion some persons demanded melted butter with their whitebait. Whitebait in perfection should be small, but near the end of the season are, of course, far larger and by no means so delicate as in early spring. Waiters are proverbial for presence of mind, and one member of the fraternity, on an occasion when the whitebait was brought up about the size of sprats, quietly answered the intended complaint of "Waiter, these whitebait are very large," by saying, "Yes, sir, very fine, sir."

The curried shrimps are generally served last of all, and then some meat, usually a roast fowl or duck; but no one eats much after all this fish. In a private house it would be better to have a little cold roast beef and salad to finish up with, as in ordinary kitchens a roast duck or fowl would be a terrible hindrance.