

ON MAKING ONE'S OWN CHEESE.



THE following paper does not aspire to be a treatise on cheese, but merely to give the necessary details and minutiae of the making of several kinds of cheese suited for home consumption. When the grass is plentiful in the summer months, there is mostly an abundant supply

of rich milk, so that one or other of the following cheeses may be found an agreeable addition to the summer menu:—

The easiest cheese to make, and one which is much appreciated with salad, is cream-cheese. The best time for them is when the grass is so rich in early summer. Let a tin or pan of milk stand thirty-six hours; take the cream off as thick as possible, and stir into it about a tea-spoonful of salt; have two saucers ready with any old dinner-napkin or linen cloth folded double over them; pour half the cream into each, and let them be twenty-four hours. By that time the water will have run away into the cloths, leaving the cream solid. If it is not quite firm, lay another linen cloth over them, and let them stand a few hours longer. Then take a saucer in each hand and put the two shapes of cream together; with the cloth mould the cheese into a round form, about an inch thick; wrap it up in a clean cloth, leave it for twenty-four hours, when if the cloth is very damp, put a fresh one. In four or five days it is ready. If attended to daily, and the cloths changed occasionally, they will keep good a fortnight or more, putting a wet one when the cheese is getting too dry.

Another kind of cream-cheese, and preferred by some as not being quite so rich, is to take about a pint of fresh rich cream, stand it in a warm place undisturbed for two or three days, until it becomes curdled; pour off the whey, salt the curd slightly, place a folded cloth in a soup-plate, pour in the curd; let it stand twenty-four hours, and then change it into a fresh cloth. If the linen becomes very wet the second or third day, change it again; in a week the cheese is ripe.

Flet milk makes very fair cheese. The following directions can be applied to new milk as well.—Take about two gallons of milk, if flet, heat part in a tin or pail stood in a boiler of hot water; add it to the rest so as to make it the heat of new milk just from the cow; or if convenient, warm it all to the desired heat, say about 86° Fahrenheit. This quantity of milk will take half a tea-cupful of rennet, pour it in and stir

it up. Put in the milk a wooden spoon, and cover the pan with a board or cloth. If the curd is set, which will be in about half an hour, or rather longer in cool weather (for the warmer the weather the sooner the curd sets firm), when the spoon is pressed, the whey will begin to rise clear round it. Break up the curd with the spoon, or with your hand; let it stand about a quarter of an hour, when it will have sunk to the bottom; pour off all the whey possible. Have ready a cheese-strainer (which is a coarse canvas), laid over an open basket; any roughly made one will do. Put this basket over a tub to catch the whey. Pour in the curd and let it drain about three-quarters of an hour. Now for the shape to put it in. The cheese moulds are made of wood, with small holes here and there in the bottom and sides, and with a round board which just fits in the top. The size for this quantity of curd is about eight and a half inches in diameter, and three inches in depth; but it is as well to have one or two different sizes, to suit the quantity of curd, which varies according to the goodness of the milk. Line the mould with a cheese-strainer, salt the curd lightly, and without breaking it up much, pack it in the shape, and fold the cloth over the top. Let it stand for a short time, then remove it to a cool place. If you do not care to buy a press, which is rather expensive, place on the cheese a heavy weight; for this size cheese a 14 lb. weight will do. Let it remain twenty-four hours under the press, then take it out of the mould and pin a strip of calico round to keep it firm; place it on any shelf or board where it can have air below. I use a hanging shelf made of narrow strips of wood having narrow spaces between them. The cheese should be turned daily.

Flet milk cheeses are generally liked best by young people when three weeks or a month old, as being small they get dry so quickly. The place where they are kept should be cool, dry, and airy, with no sun.

I have described the simplest way of draining, and with no expense. Trays or crates for draining the curd, with the corners of the cloth tied to the posts at the corners of the crate, can be made; but if cheeses are only wanted for home consumption, with a little ingenuity they can easily be made without much expense. The curd must be carefully watched when setting, as if stood too long it will crack across, and the whey will rise. Should this occur, the cheese will not be good, as the curd will be ropery and hard. As an old dairy-woman once said to me, "I always watch my curd as a cat watches a mouse." Experience must teach the exact moment to break up the curd. As a rule, it is ready when it does not adhere to the back of the finger when pressed on, and the whey is almost colourless. The wooden spoon is a good and simple test.

Any one first making a cheese will, I think, be disappointed at the very small one which so large

a quantity of milk yields. I mention this, as perhaps a tyro might think it was through mismanagement. Two tins of flet and one of new milk make an excellent cheese, but if butter is an object, ladies do not generally care to make new milk cheeses in a small dairy.

I will describe one more cheese suitable to a large dairy, which is equal to Stilton, and when some years ago I first tasted one, I thought it was a prime Stilton. The lady, who was celebrated for them, and herself superintended the making, was so kind as to give me full details, and the cheese will be found equal to any Stilton that can be purchased.

The best months for making these cheeses are July, August, and September. They are made the shape and size of Stilton, in a tin hoop 9 inches in height, 7 inches in diameter, with holes perforated at about 2 inches distance. The quantity of milk for this size is ten gallons of new milk, warm as it comes from the cow. It will take about half a pint of rennet if good; if not very strong, allow three-quarters of a pint. As soon as the curd is properly set, which will be in about half an hour, it should be gently broken with a cream-stick. Place a strainer of coarse cloth over a small keeler on three legs, sufficiently high for a pail to be placed under to catch the whey. The keeler should have a hole the size of a cork in the bottom on one side near the edge; over this the skimmer should be inverted, as otherwise the curd will press through and prevent the whey getting away freely. Raise one leg of the keeler on a brick so that the whey can drain out of the hole on the opposite side. After the curd is broken up in the tub, it ought to stand half an hour before putting it into "three-legs."

It will now take about three hours to drain, dividing the curd occasionally. The tin hoop must be lined with a cheese-strainer, and stood on a board with holes in it for drainage. The curd must then be gently handled and packed nicely in the hoop, with salt sprinkled between the layers. Take care the curd is tolerably dry before it is put in the hoop; then let the cheese stand half an hour before putting it under the press. When the cheese is taken out of the press, which should be in twenty-four hours, it must be sewn up in a strip of unbleached calico. Keep it as described for the flet milk cheeses, turning it daily.

As cheese cannot be made without rennet, it is necessary to be provided, therefore get a calf's bag from the butcher's—in some places they keep them all ready pickled for the purpose. If you can get one pickled, cut it in halves and put half in about a pint and a half of strong salt-and-water; let it stand a day or two, then use the rennet as required, taking care to add fresh salt and water in proportion as it is taken out, to keep up the supply. The other half of the calf's bag keep in reserve in the pickle as it comes from the butcher, and as the rennet from the first half becomes too weak, add a portion of the second half to keep up the strength.

When I began making cheeses, I found that in our part of the country the bags were sometimes sold fresh;

so I applied to a good dairy-woman of great experience, and was shown by her how to prepare it. The more curd in the bag with the rennet, the better and stronger the rennet will be; and I may here remark that the rennet prepared as follows will keep good more than one season:—The bag must be emptied of its contents into a colander stood over a basin; put aside the rennet which runs away, and wash the curd (which looks like old cheese) thoroughly as you would currants, in a colander in a basin of water. Use several waters, pick over the curd, but do not break the pieces; put them back in the bag, pour in carefully the rennet, leaving out the sediment, if any.

Make a quart or so of nice strong brine thus:—Boil some salt in little more than a quart of water, so that it will float an egg; put this aside till the next day.

Take half a pint of new milk and, opening the mouth of the bag, pour the milk in slowly, holding the jug high up. Fasten up the bag loosely with a wooden skewer, put it in an earthen jar, and pour over the cold brine; cover the jar with paper, and puncture here and there with a pin. As the brine decreases, make fresh and add when cold. The liquid is the rennet, to be used as directed; if too much is put in the milk, the cheese heaves up after being made and pressed, and when cut into falls to pieces.

When cheeses are being made, many young people enjoy a plate of curds and whey with a little sugar or with fruit; the time to take it out is just before breaking up the curd. Use a saucer to cut out a large slice, as it is so much nicer to break it up while eating it.

When curds are to be had, cheese-cakes are so easily made that I will add my receipt for them:—In making cheese, when the curd is well drained, before salting it, take two or three breakfast-cups of curd, and beat it through a colander or fine sieve. Add to it a slice of butter beaten smooth, two eggs well beaten, a dust of salt, a little nutmeg, three table-spoonfuls of cream, some finely-cut candied lemon-peel, a small tea-cup of currants, white moist sugar to taste; beat all up well and line some patty-pans with puff paste; put in the cheese-cake, but do not quite fill the tins.

The cheeses sold on straws, as new milk or cream cheeses, are made with very little trouble, but require time and some care. They are sold so cheaply in the country, yet some may like to know how to make them. They are in season from May to October. They are usually made for sale from milk which has stood twelve hours, and from which the cream is taken; but they are far superior from new milk. One cheese will take five or six pints of milk; it must be the warmth of new milk, and will take a table-spoonful of rennet. The boxes required for them are eight inches in length, five and a half inches in width, and five and a half in height, with no bottom, but pieces of wood about an inch wide nailed at each end, and one in the middle, to hold up the straw mat for drainage. Lay a mat in the bottom of the box; with a saucer or small tin skimmer, put in the curd in large slices, and so fill the box shape. Do not break up the curd at all; place the box on a basin or stand in a pan, and let the

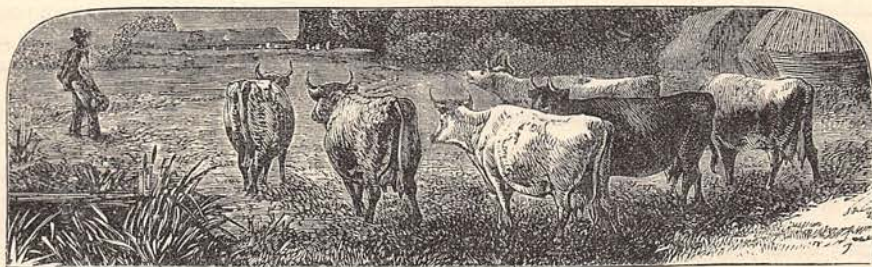
cheese be (for the whey to drain off) for two or three days. When firm, lay a straw mat *on* the top of the cheese, and turn it out on the fresh straws; keep it on the mat and put it on any shelf for cheeses, where it can have air and drainage; in a few days it is ready for table. The box shape must be very carefully cleaned and put out in the air to sweeten, or it gives a nasty taste. The straws must be washed and lightly brushed in warm soap and water, and stood on end in the air to dry.

In times gone by, the servant-girls used to get the straws during harvest-time, and cutting them to the right length, string them into mats in winter evenings for summer use. Now the straws for these cheeses are sold very cheaply.

It is a pleasure to some ladies to make the most of a dairy, and I shall be very glad if these hints should be of assistance. So few details are usually given, and

so much mystery attached to the making of cheese, that I have tried to give all the information I can.

There are preparations sold which by some are used in preference to rennet; but good old-fashioned housekeepers prefer the genuine article, which never fails to give good curd, and it must be admitted that our grandmothers and great-grandmothers were very clever in all housekeeping details, and excelled in cookery, which is often a mystery to young girls of the present day. The daughters of the most noble and gracious Lady in the land were clever in many a culinary art, as their birthday efforts used to testify. And would not the daughters of England find less trouble with their servants when they become wives and mothers, if they devoted some little time daily to acquiring that domestic knowledge which adds so greatly to the comfort and well-being of the happy homes of old England? LUCY E. BRACKENBURY.



HIDDEN GOLD.

By FRANK BARRETT, Author of "Maggie?" "Two Knaves and a Queen," &c.

CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH.



YES, I could see now the meaning of my dear daughter's words when she said, "We will never, never part; you shall not lose the child that has cost you so much;" they had a literal signification that I had not comprehended. She intended to devote her life

to me—to live for me alone. In the midst of her misery in relinquishing the idea of becoming the beloved wife of a good man, it was her solace to feel that she could be a loving daughter, a life-long companion to me.

Alas! how could her noble efforts succeed in giving happiness to me? Could I see this beautiful young

creature denying herself the supreme happiness of a woman's existence without feeling that I had robbed her?

Iris had doubtless said to herself, "Granny is sweet-tempered and happy, yet she has lived single all these years: why should not I also become a happy, kind old lady like her?"

But, old and happy as she is, I have seen the tears glitter in Granny's eyes when children climbed upon her knee; and could Iris take other people's babies to her young maiden bosom without yearning for a mother's joy—without feeling the awful pang of the Peri who looked through the gates into the Paradise she could never enter?

I knew she had resolved never to marry, a resolve from which no argument could swerve her; for her sense of honour would forbid her to accept a husband from whom she must hide her father's fault. She could have no secret from her husband, but rather than reveal her father's shame she would have no husband.

I thought at one moment I would tell Harold everything when we met, but remembering what old Adams had told me in our interview, I reflected that he would learn the facts from his solicitors, and that no good could be done by anticipating the result.