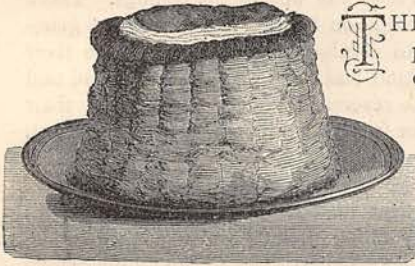


HOW TO MAKE PASTRY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "COMMON-SENSE HOUSEKEEPING."



THE making of pastry is one of the pleasantest parts of a cook's work. Young ladies, who would never dream perhaps of pre-

paring a stew or a soup, are delighted to go into the kitchen to make pies or tarts. The result of this amateur cookery is not always felicitous, though failure is scarcely ever the result of carelessness. And seeing that the work stands so high in popular favour, I hope a few hints as to the best way of setting about it will not be unwelcome.

There is one element of success in the production of good pastry that we must on no account imagine we can dispense with, and that is—practice. Close attention to the best written instructions that could be given, would not be certain to insure success to a novice in the art of pastry-making. It is quite possible that good pastry might be made on a first attempt, but it would by no means follow that the result of a second or third trial would be like unto it. We want to be able to make pastry so that we are sure of success every time, and need not regard the affair as a matter of chance, the pies sometimes "coming out" right, oftener wrong. For this we must "have our hands in" for the business; so only can we acquire the lightness and dexterity that is necessary to success.

There are two kinds of pastry used for making pies and tarts, namely, puff paste and short crust. Also, there is what is called hot-water paste, for raised pies, but into this I am afraid my space will not permit me to go.

Puff paste and short paste are entirely different from each other. In short paste the butter, lard, or dripping that is used for shortening is mixed with the flour, kneaded into it, and so made a part of it. In puff paste the butter and the flour (made into a paste to begin with) are kept separate, and laid one over the other in leaves or flakes, something like meat and bread is in sandwiches; the pastry is rolled again and again to make these flakes thinner and thinner, and the skill of the cook is directed towards their being kept quite apart.

Thus it will be seen that the processes of making these two varieties of paste are dissimilar, and therefore before we begin to make pies we must decide which kind we intend to patronise.

The choice made must depend upon our requirements and our tastes. I suppose few will agree with me when I say that for domestic use my own predilection is in favour of short crust. Puff paste is

much the more difficult to make of the two, it is also the more indigestible. It needs to be made with a large proportion of butter, a pound to a pound of flour, cooks say, while practical people seldom attempt to make it with less than twelve ounces of butter to a pound of flour. The consequence is, the pastry is rich, and likely to cause derangement of the stomach. We all know that if we have to consult a doctor upon any difficulties of digestion he is sure to say, first thing, "No pastry." It is puff paste that is thus objectionable. Good plain pastry, although not suited to the dyspeptic, constitutes very wholesome, appetising food for ordinary mortals.

The superiority of puff paste lies in its appearance. No one can deny that it *looks* most delicious. Pies or patties made of light puff pastry, brightly browned in baking, and filled with savoury or sweet preparations, are most tempting to the eye. But, like many other things of the same kind, their qualities are not equal to their charms.

Opinions differ, however, all the world over, and the majority of people will most likely decide that puff paste is to be preferred to any other kind, and especially for articles that seem properly to call for it, such as meat pies, vol-au-vents, patties, and tartlets. Let us, therefore, see how it is made.

We shall need for our purpose $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. of Vienna flour, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of sweet butter, and six or eight drops of lemon-juice; also a marble pastry slab. If this cannot be obtained, a good-sized slate may be used instead; what is wanted being something that will keep the pastry *cool* whilst it is being rolled. With the same object, coolness, the hands should be washed in hot water a minute or two before commencing operations, and the pastry should be made in a cold place.

If the weather be warm, a little ice will also be needed. Sometimes the yolk of an egg is used and it helps to make the paste elastic, but as it is much easier to make the paste in cold than in warm weather, we may well dispense with this in winter time. The ice will be used as a resting-place for the pastry between the turns.

The flour should be thoroughly dried, then sifted, in order to free it from lumps. It must not, however, be put to the fire just before being used. The butter, too, should be well pressed in a cloth to free it from moisture. If the weather be cold, and the butter be very hard, it should be worked a little, in order to make it of the consistency of paste.

All being now ready, we first put the flour on a slab; we then make a hole in the middle, and put into it a very small pinch of salt, and the lemon-juice. We then add water, a very little at a time, and mix flour, water, and lemon-juice together till we have a smooth but not stiff paste. The consistency of this paste has a great deal to do with the excellence of our pastry. It should be the same as that of the

butter, for we want to roll the two together, and if the butter be either harder or softer than the paste it cannot be rolled successfully.

We now sprinkle a very small quantity of flour on the slab (if much flour is taken the paste will be mottled) and roll and knead the paste with our hands, for ten minutes or more, till it feels something like dough. The kneading will make it workable, but we must remember that a few minutes after kneading must elapse before the butter is put with it, or the paste will not be cool.

Everything being now prepared, we roll the paste out quite straight, and one way, and lay the butter on one half of it, covering it over quite evenly with the other half, and pressing the edges of the paste together with the fingers, in order to enclose it securely. We now flatten the paste with the rolling pin, and *roll*, not *push* it, to a long straight piece. We must be careful to roll it straight, or the flakes will rise in a slanting direction, and we must not let the butter break through its envelope. If by any mischance it does break through, the place must be mended at once with a little piece of paste. If a crackling sound is heard during the rolling, or if air bubbles are found, the paste is likely to be light.

When the paste is rolled once, it must be folded in three and put upon ice, or aside in a cool place, for a quarter of an hour. The rolling and folding constitute what is called a *turn*. The pastry must have seven turns, with a quarter of an hour's rest between each two. It should always be laid on the board with the rough edges towards the cook, and it should be handled as little as possible. Pastry thus made will puff up to five, six, or even seven times its original height. A light, even, cool touch is required for making it, and it should be remembered that the paste is to be kept dry and the butter cold. Unless these points are attended to, the sandwiched flakes will intermingle, and the pastry be spoiled. If we wish to use the paste for fruit pies or tartlets, we might add a spoonful of sifted white sugar to the flour.

When the method described above is considered either too troublesome or too expensive, a simpler recipe for making puff paste may be followed with very satisfactory results. The pastry thus produced will not rise so high as true puff paste, but it will be very good. Put half a pound of flour on a board, and *break* (not rub) the butter into it with the fingers; or, if this cannot easily be done, chop the butter into the flour with a knife. Mix the pastry with water and a few drops of lemon-juice, and remember that it must not be too stiff, or it will not be light. Give it three good rolls, and after each roll double it in two, and turn the rough edges of the pastry to the front. It will be necessary to lightly flour both the rolling-pin and the board, or the pastry will stick. Pastry thus made is known among cooks as *Rough Puff*; but it is so good that, if it is *rough*, no one need desire to have it smooth. If preferred, good firm lard, or even home-made dripping, may be used instead of butter, the same method being followed in either case.

Flaky crust, too, is easily made, and is very good

for pies and tarts. For this put half a pound of flour into a bowl with a small pinch of salt, half a tea-spoonful of baking-powder, and half a tea-spoonful of fine white sugar. Mix these ingredients thoroughly, then make into a stiff paste by stirring in the white of one egg whisked to a stiff froth and mixed with a little cold water. Take now half the weight of flour in butter or clarified dripping, or a mixture of the two, and divide it into two portions. Roll the pastry out one way till it is a quarter of an inch thick, spread one portion of the butter upon it, dredge flour over, fold it in three, and turn it round with the rough edges to the front. Roll it out again, spread the rest of the butter on it, dredge flour over once more, and roll it again to the thickness required for use. Pastry thus made is excellent for meat pies.

Short crust, on the contrary, is specially suited for fruit pies. I have already said that in this kind of pastry the butter or dripping is kneaded into the flour, and so becomes a part of it. It should be rubbed in thoroughly, no lumps being left; indeed the rubbing should be continued till the flour looks like fine oatmeal all through. The pastry may be rich or plain. It may be made either of butter, lard, or good dripping. For my own part, for superior short crust I prefer equal parts of good lard and sweet butter to anything else, and for plain pastry good dripping will be found excellent: indeed, in every case good beef dripping is always to be preferred to inferior butter. A little baking-powder helps to make plain pastry light, and it also renders it more digestible.

This baking-powder may be bought ready-made of the grocer, but it is more satisfactorily made at home. To make it, take an equal *bulk* (not weight) of tartaric acid, carbonate of soda, and either ground rice or corn-flour: mix thoroughly, and rub the mixture through a wire sieve.

One secret of making short crust light is to roll it only once, and to handle it as little as possible. Superior pastry will be improved by the addition of the yolk of an egg and two or three drops of lemon-juice. It is generally understood that, for the best crust, equal quantities of butter and flour should be taken; but very excellent pastry indeed may be made with half the weight of butter to that of flour, and good plain pastry may be made with six ounces of butter or clarified dripping and a tea-spoonful of baking-powder to one pound of flour. For meat pies it is really undesirable that a large proportion of butter should be used.

The baking of pastry has a great deal to do with its excellence. The oven must be hot, but not fierce. If too hot, the pastry would stiffen before it had time to rise; if too cool, the fat in the pastry would melt before the starchy grains in the flour had burst, and this would make the pastry heavy. One way of testing the heat of an oven is to put a piece of stale crumb of bread in it: if in five minutes the bread has become a bright brown colour, the oven is hot enough for pastry.

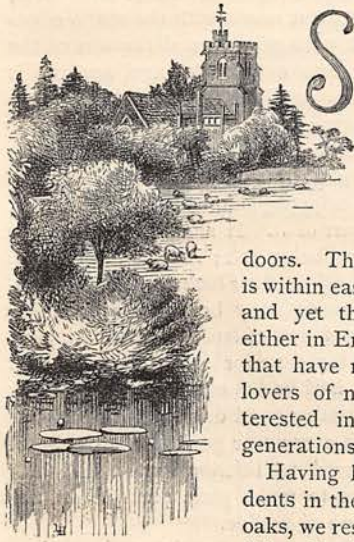
Small articles, such as tartlets and patties, may be put into the hotter part of the oven at once, and left

till they are sufficiently baked. Larger articles, such as pies, must be put in the hotter part till they have risen and the crust is light, then be removed into the cooler part, to allow the meat as well as the pastry to be cooked through. With pies of any size, it is always

well to lay a sheet of paper over the pastry as soon as it has risen, to keep it from scorching, and then to let it bake gently, that the contents of the pie may be tender. And above all things we must never forget that "the oven will not look after itself."

PHILLIS BROWNE.

A HOLIDAY VISIT TO IGHTHAM.



SOME people travel great distances to see beautiful scenes and places of interest, apparently oblivious of those which are not far from their own doors. The county of Kent is within easy reach of London, and yet there are few parts either in England or out of it that have more to attract the lovers of nature, or those interested in the life of past generations.

Having lately become residents in the vicinity of Sevenoaks, we resolved on exploring this classic neighbourhood,

and marked out Ightham as the place for our first visit.

It was a cold January day. The ground on the roadside was covered with a copper-coloured carpet of fallen leaves, and the woods and the copses were beautiful with hoar-frost. A keen air smote the face as the wheels of the carriage and the hoofs of the horse resounded on the frozen gravel, but there was ample compensation for the cold. Through innumerable gaps in the wayside thicket appeared the broad expanse of the Weald—a picturesque and richly cultivated country, with a shadowy margin of dense woods and low hills.

Passing through the pretty village of Seal, we were soon ascending the far-famed Oldbury Hill, and then to our left appeared the long regular embankment which marks the site of an ancient British oppidum (or town) of the larger class.

The number of British and Celtic oppida has not been calculated. They are to be found all over the country, and some of them cover a vast space, with a boundary so strongly fortified that they were evidently intended to serve the joint purpose of a fortress and a settled habitation.

Such is Oldbury. The area which was occupied by the British village is reckoned to be 137 acres, and the whole is defended according to the nature of the ground. Where the precipitous sandstone rock is absent a formidable rampart and fosse has been made, but the character of the intrenchment has been greatly

deteriorated by the removal of material for road-making purposes.

Leaving the carriage we climbed a portion of the embankment by a rugged modern road. The ancient roads are visible, but they are overgrown with trees. A profusion of wood also makes it difficult to trace the form of the area, but it is ascertained to be of an almost accurate oval. Hasted mentions the existence of a cave half filled by the sinking of the earth, but there is now no indication of its position. It has disappeared like the dwellings and store-houses of the people, which must have been numerous by the quantity of flint implements, drilled stones possibly designed for hammer-heads, knives and arrow-points, which are continually discovered upon the surface of the ground. The footsteps of our ancestors are hidden beneath the rare mosses, uncommon ferns, beautiful heaths and grasses which abound in the neighbourhood; but we realise their presence, we look upon the landscape which they saw—the same undulating fields and sunlit hills, in new garments perchance, but still the same—the same brook bursting forth from its sandy bed, unscathed by the finger of time, which mocks us with its melodious and sad refrain—

"Men may come, and men may go,
But I go on for ever."

The last habitation in this large British village could scarcely have disappeared before the Norman Conquerors began to build their moated houses and castles in the neighbourhood. There is a fine specimen of a fortified dwelling of this period in the hamlet of Ivy Hatch, about two miles from Oldbury.

In the first two centuries of the Norman government, the residences of the barons and the gentry presented a striking evidence of the military character of the tenure of lands under the crown.

Every great landholder by knight's service erected and resided in his castle; his retainers formed the garrison; he became a prince paramount in his own fee or lordship, and often exercised the highest judicial rights. His friendship and alliance was also of no small importance to the sovereign of the realm, for in cases of disputed title to the crown the lords of these domestic strongholds were frequently enabled to prolong the contest between the claimants, by opening their gates to the vanquished or retiring party. This was the case in the wars between Matilda and Stephen and the partisans of the Red and White Roses.

We reached Ightham Moat by a narrow winding road,