

HOW TO COOK SUCKING-PIG.

BY A. G. PAYNE, AUTHOR OF "COMMON-SENSE COOKERY."



SUCKING-PIG is one of the oldest of good old English dishes, and, as far as my own taste goes, I know of few modern inventions in cooking to equal it. In Goldsmith's famous play of "She Stoops to Conquer," it will be remembered that "pig and prune sauce" formed one of the numerous dishes that had been prepared by Mr. Hard-

castle for Marlow and Hastings, in the scene in which the latter visits the hospitable old gentleman's house under the impression that it is an inn.

Oliver Goldsmith died in 1774, and the following recipe in an old cookery book called "The Experienced English Housekeeper," by Elizabeth Raffald, published in London, 1775, shows how little real alteration has taken place in cooking sucking-pig during the last hundred years:—

"To roast a pig, stick your pig just above the breast-bone, run your knife to the heart; when it is dead put it in cold water for a few minutes, then rub it over with a little rosin beat exceedingly fine, or its own blood; put your pig into a pail of scalding water half a minute, take it out, lay it on a clean table, pull off the hair as quick as possible; if it does not come clean off, put it in again; when you have got it all clean off, wash it in warm water, then in two or three cold waters for fear the rosin should taste; take off the four feet at the first joint, make a slit down the belly, take out all the entrails, put the liver, heart, and lights to the pettitoes; wash it well out of cold water, dry it exceedingly well with a cloth, hang it up, and when you roast it put in a little shred sage, a tea-spoonful of black pepper, two of salt, and a crust of brown bread; spit your pig and sew it up, lay it down to a brisk, clear fire, with a pig-plate hung in the middle of the fire. When your pig is warm put a lump of butter in a cloth, rub your pig often with it while it is roasting; a large one will take an hour and a half. When your pig is a fine brown, and the steam draws near the fire, take a clean cloth, rub your pig quite dry, then rub it well with a little cold butter—it will help to crisp it—then take a sharp knife, cut off the head, and take off the collar, then take off the ears and jaw-bone. Split the jaw in two, when you have cut the pig down the back, which must be done before you draw the spit out, then lay your pig back to back on your dish, and the jaw on each side, the ears on each shoulder, and the collar at the shoulder, and pour in your sauce and serve it up; garnish with a crust of brown bread grated."

The old-fashioned sauce with pig was currant sauce, and the same authority I have just quoted adds to the recipe for sauce for a pig:—"Some like currants; boil a few, and send them in a tea-saucer with a glass of currant jelly in the middle of it."

Our forefathers, at any rate, had fully grasped the chief difficulty in cooking sucking-pig—viz., that the ends require more cooking than the middle—and consequently recommend the pig-plate, or as it has since been called, a pig-iron, to slacken the heat while roasting. In an old-fashioned wide grate where a spit is used, and the pig roasted in a horizontal position, it is easy enough to use a pig-iron, but in an ordinary open fire-place where a roasting-jack is used, and the pig hangs perpendicularly, to roast a good-sized sucking-pig at all is a difficult matter, and consequently sucking-pig is usually baked. I would, however, explain how to cook the ends, if the pig hangs in front of a fair-sized open range.

If the pig is not longer than the length of the fire no great difficulty will be experienced.

The pig should be first well oiled, and several sheets of well-oiled paper should be wrapped round the centre of the pig during the first hour, or rather more, of its roasting. This, as a rule, will generally be found to slacken the heat sufficiently; and when the paper is removed, the centre part being opposite the fiercest part of the fire—the centre—will soon attain that nice rich brown colour which a sucking-pig should always possess.

If, however, the pig is longer than the front of the grate, the following plan will generally be found successful:—

First, the sucking-pig should be so trussed up that it can easily be hung on the hook either head, or tail uppermost. After the pig has been roasted slowly a short time, and as soon as it is hot and begins to turn colour, place the top of the dripping-pan on the ground, keeping it steady each side by means of bricks. Next lower the chain by which the pig hangs (cross-hooks will do if the chain is not long enough) till the centre part of the pig is lower than the bottom bar of the fire. By this means one end will be nearly roasted while the other end is nearly raw. Now reverse the pig—keeping basting all the while. The hot fat will keep the cooked end, or nearly cooked end, all right, while the raw end in its turn will soon get done. Next raise the pig again, and as soon as the centre acquires its right colour the pig will be done. This way of managing a good-sized sucking-pig over an ordinary-sized fire requires some tact and common-sense.

Next with regard to the best age at which to kill sucking-pigs: opinion seems almost universally to be in favour of three weeks. I have, however, assisted at the birth, death, and burial—if such a term may be used for the delicious act of swallowing the pig when roasted—of many young pigs, and my experience is that a pig is far nicer five, or even six weeks old, than under.

With regard to the best kind of stuffing for sucking-pigs opinion seems divided, many keeping to the

original sage and bread only; on the other hand, many recommend sage and onion. There can be no doubt, however, that sucking-pig requires a milder sage and onion than would be served with more advanced pork. The following stuffing I have found excellent:—Parboil a Spanish onion, and chop it with about ten or twelve sage-leaves, also slightly boiled, or rather more than scalded; this can be all chopped up fine and pounded with some of the liver which has been scalded and some bread-crumbs, the whole being seasoned with black pepper and salt. This stuffing should be put inside the pig, which should be carefully sewn up. Some add a yolk, or two yolks, of egg and a little butter. However, sucking-pig is a very rich dish, and I would recommend avoiding as much as possible anything that tends to increase this richness.

The best method, or rather by far the least troublesome way, of cooking a sucking-pig is to place some thin strips of fat bacon on it, and send it to the nearest baker's oven.

Sucking-pig requires some good, strong gravy, perfectly free from fat, and also avoid spicing the gravy, or adding flavouring herbs, which I think clash with the sage and onion.

All white meats, such as pork, veal, &c., seem to require something to be eaten with them. Veal asks for veal stuffing and bacon, boiled pork asks for pease-pudding. In Germany, preserved currants, or gooseberries, are always handed with veal; indeed these fruits make their appearance at most unexpected moments during dinner.

Now, though prune sauce is never seen, and currant sauce hardly ever, still sucking-pig requires apple sauce; and here again, in making it, keep it as simple as possible, and do not dose it with lemon-peel, cloves, cinnamon, &c.; if any of these be added, pray use a sparing hand.

Recollect sucking-pig is a very rich dish; in cooking, therefore, the endeavour should be to tone down this richness, consequently the only vegetable I would recommend is a few nice, floury, hot potatoes, sent up half at a time, so that a steaming hot potato will make its appearance with the second help. The gravy, too, should be handed in a tureen, and some fresh hot gravy kept in reserve.

There are several fancy methods of cooking sucking-pig—for instance, sucking-pig *à la* Perigord, in which the pig is stuffed with a couple of pounds of truffles mixed with scraped bacon, sweet basil, garlic, and the pounded livers of fowls. Chestnuts are also used to stuff sucking-pig. I have never tasted one treated in this way, but should imagine it would be very nice, as it would tend to tone down the richness.

Sucking-pig, as well as pork, has the reputation of being indigestible, and, like it, should be only eaten in cold weather. With regard to cooking pork, one chief reason of its being found fault with is that cooks will not sufficiently recognise the fact that it requires a far longer time than is generally supposed, and, I fear, longer time than is usually recommended.

It should be remembered that directions that are

applicable to a splendid fireplace such as the one at the Freemasons' Tavern, under the superintendance of one of the most skilled cooks of modern times, are not applicable to a little kitchen grate that will roast a leg, but break down over a haunch.

I am not writing for large hotels, or even for those who are accustomed to send up dinners for twenty daily, but for ordinary small families, and I would impress upon cooks the fact that a leg of pork weighing eight pounds will take four hours to roast properly. It requires patience in basting, and should not be browned too early.

The stuffing for roast pork should be inserted under the skin near the knuckle, the skin being raised with a knife, and some string should be wound round it afterwards, in order to keep it in while roasting. Ordinary onions are best, parboiled with sage-leaves (two leaves to each onion), and chopped fine, and mixed with a very little butter and some pepper and salt. Bread-crumbs need not be added. Apple sauce and good brown gravy should be served with it, the same as for sucking-pig.

A leg of pork requires as long a time to boil as it does to roast. Just as in boiling a ham, it will be found a great improvement to add a couple of carrots, a couple of turnips, a head of celery, and an onion in which a few cloves have been stuck. If the liquor is used afterwards, as it should be, for the purpose of making pea-soup, all these vegetables can be rubbed through the wire sieve with the peas when tender.

Pease-pudding seems an indispensable adjunct to boiled leg of pork. The best way to make good pease-pudding is to boil the peas in a cloth, taking care not to tie them up too tightly. When tender, rub the peas through a wire sieve, after pounding them in a mortar with a little butter; add a couple of yolks of egg, a little pepper, salt, and nutmeg; mix it all thoroughly together, and put it into a well-buttered cloth, tie it up and boil it a short time and turn it out like a Christmas pudding, cannon-ball shape, and hand it round with the pork.

In boiling a ham, if the ham is not required hot, let it get cold in the liquor in which it has been boiled. If you place a boiled ham on a dish to get cold, you will find a quantity of jelly has run out of it and has got cold on the dish. If you let the ham get cold in its liquor, this jelly will settle in the ham, which will consequently be juicy instead of dry, as is too often the case with cold ham. Let the vessel in which it gets cold be uncovered, and it is as well to take off the scum when it is hot.

The trimmings of fresh pork can always be used to mix with other meat to make force-meat for rissoles, kromeskies, &c. In boiling pickled pork, do not let it get cold in its liquor, as the flavour when cold is not improved thereby.

One economical point that should not be lost sight of is the best method of using up the remains of cold pork left from a joint. One excellent method is to curry it, and pork will bear a hotter curry than most meats.

Another good plan is to warm it up with a sauce made as follows:—Cut up and fry a few onions till they are of a nice brown colour; drain them, and add a little white wine vinegar—about a dessert-spoonful to each onion. Be careful to simmer this in the frying-pan till the vinegar is nearly all evaporated, just as in making *sauce piquante*. Add a little good gravy, and put it in a saucepan and let it boil gently, and skim it in order to get rid of the remains of the butter in which the onions were fried, as otherwise the sauce will be greasy. Let it boil away till it gets a little thick, and then add some French mustard (about a tea-spoonful to each onion) and black pepper.

This sauce makes, with some small pork chops done on the gridiron, an excellent entrée. Remember, however, that grilling pork chops is very different from grilling mutton chops. Cook them thoroughly, and get them of a rich mahogany colour without burning

them. Drain them on a hot cloth to get rid of the grease. Pile them up, if sufficient in number, in a round on a dish, and pour the sauce in between them. A little paper frill can be placed on each bone.

An improvement to the chops or cutlets is to glaze them after taking them off the gridiron.

The sauce I have mentioned is slightly sharp when properly made; but if great care is not taken in properly evaporating the vinegar, it will taste quite acid.

These methods of warming up the remains of cold pork where the time can be spared are far preferable to hashing it. Hashed pork is not nice. One rough way of warming it up is: cut off a little of the fat, slice up an onion or two, and fry it in the fat till the onions brown; then throw in the meat, and toss it about till it is very hot, and serve up quickly. A spoonful of ordinary sauce may be added.

A STRANGE FELLOW-VOYAGER.



I'VE had many a queer voyage in my time (said Captain M—), but the queerest I ever had was one that I made (somewhat unexpectedly, as you will see) upon the Great Fish River in South Africa, on my way back from a hunting excursion.

As I neared the bank, I saw that the river was in full flood, more than twice its usual breadth, and running like a mill-race. I knew at once that I should have a very tough job to get across—for a flooded African river is no joke, I can tell you. But I knew also that my wife would be terribly anxious if I didn't come back on the day I had fixed—South Africa being a place where a good many things may happen to a man—and so I determined to chance it.

Just at the water's edge I found an old Bushman that I knew well, who had a boat of his own, so I hailed him at once—

"Well, Kaloomi, what will you take to put me across the river?"

"No go fifty dollar this time, baas" (master), said the old fellow, in his half-Dutch, half-English jargon. "Boat no get 'cross to-day; water groed!" (great).

And never a bit could I persuade him, although I offered him money enough to make any ordinary Bushman jump head-first down a precipice. Money was good, he said, but it would be no use to him when he was drowned, and in short he wouldn't budge.

"Well, if you won't put me across," said I at last, "I lend me your boat, and I'll just do the job for myself; I can't very well take my horse with me, so I'll just leave him here in pledge that I'll pay for the boat when I come back."

"Keep horse for you, master, quite willing; but 'spose you try cross to-day you never come back to ask for him."

He spoke so positively that, although I'm not easily frightened, I certainly did feel rather uncomfortable. However, when you've got to do a thing of that sort, the less you think of it the better, so I jumped into the boat and shoved off.

I had barely got clear of the shore when I found that the old fellow was right, for the boat shot down the stream like an arrow. I saw in a moment that there was no hope of paddling her across, and that all I could do was just to keep her head straight. But I hadn't the chance of doing even that very long, for just then a big tree came driving along, and hitting my boat full on the quarter, smashed her like an egg-shell. I had just time to clutch the projecting roots and whisk myself up on to them, and then tree and I went away down-stream together, at I don't know how many miles an hour.

At first I was so rejoiced at escaping just when all seemed over with me, that I didn't think much of what was to come next; but before long I got something to think about with a vengeance. The tree, as I've said, was a large one, and the branch end (the opposite one to where I sat) was all one mass of green leaves. All at once, just as I was shifting myself to a safer place among the roots, the leaves suddenly shook and parted, and out popped the great yellow head and fierce eyes of an enormous lion!

I don't think I ever got such a fright in my life. My gun had gone to the bottom along with the boat, and the only weapon I had left was a short hunting-knife, which against such a beast as that would be no more use than a bodkin. I fairly gave myself up