

THE ART OF COOKING AN OMELETTE.

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WHY is it that we so rarely get a good omelette? What are the reasons that make the majority of English women-cooks break down over this simple dish? These are easy questions to ask, but difficult to answer. Indeed, in London itself it would be hard to direct any one where to get a good omelette, at least in most neighbourhoods. Were I asked, I should direct a stranger as follows:—First ask the nearest way to Soho. On arriving there, or there-

abouts, you will very soon detect a strong smell of onions; now pause and listen at some swinging doorway: if the smell is accompanied by a rattling sound, you are safe. Enter, and order your omelette.

But why are omelettes inseparable from onions and dominoes? I will try and explain how to make an omelette without the assistance of either, though I must say that personally I think a little piece of onion is a great improvement to savoury omelettes.

We will first make an omelette *aux fines herbes*, as perhaps under this name some cooks will be more willing to learn; and I will go to the bottom of the secret at once. Would it surprise you to hear that you have nothing in the house that you can make an omelette in? This is probably a fact. An omelette should be made in an omelette-pan, and naturally the next question is, "What is an omelette-pan?" The most practical answer to this is, An omelette-pan is a small ordinary frying-pan that has never cooked anything but omelettes. This is what cooks won't believe. Their argument is, "Oh, parcel of stuff." But it is a fact for all that. If you doubt the fact, order an omelette to be made in the ordinary frying-pan—however well it be cleaned—and then notice its colour. Next buy a small new frying-pan. Boil a little water with a piece of soda in it to take away the taste of the tin, and make an omelette in this, and you will see, and taste too, the difference.

We will suppose this experiment has been tried. Next, we will start as follows—We have three eggs, some parsley, and some butter ready. First take enough parsley to make a small tea-spoonful when chopped fine, and if you have a bottle of "mixed sweet herbs" in the house take a good pinch—*i.e.*, as much as you can hold between your finger and thumb—and add to the parsley before you chop it. Chop up the parsley and herbs fine, and add to them a small salt-spoonful of salt and half a one of pepper.

Next break the three eggs separately to see if they are good, put all three into a basin and beat them up

with a fork till they froth, and when beaten add the chopped parsley, &c., and mix them thoroughly in.

Next take two ounces of good butter and melt it over the fire in the omelette-pan till it froths. Remember, the fire must be good and clear; in fact, an omelette wants a sharp fire. In the present day most stoves are shut-up ones, but if you try and make an omelette over an open fire you must take care there is no smoke.

Another point to remember is to have the beaten-up eggs and all ready, so as to add to the butter directly it froths in the omelette-pan. After a very little time over a good fire the butter will begin to turn colour, and at last will turn a rich brown. Now this is all very well if we want to make black butter for boiled skate, but it will spoil an omelette.

As soon as the butter begins to froth from the fire, pour quickly into the omelette-pan the beaten eggs, &c., which must also froth from the beating. These air-bubbles help to make the omelette light. Directly you pour in the egg take a table-spoon and stir it up quickly, scraping the bottom of the omelette-pan all over to prevent the mixture sticking, and consequently burning. You will now find that it all commences to turn lumpy. This is what it should do, and when it is nearly all lumpy scrape it on to one side of the omelette-pan—the side away from you—so as to make it a semicircular shape. You can now, if the fire is rather fierce, raise the pan so as to slacken the heat. When it is almost set, take the pan off the fire and slant it in front of the fire, if you have part of the front open, or, still better, hold a red-hot shovel over the omelette. This will help to make it light. Do not, however, brown it beyond a few brown specks.

Now take a slice and slide the omelette off the frying-pan on to a hot dish, and serve it quickly. This is a plain, savoury omelette.

I have before said that I think a little piece of onion chopped up with the parsley an improvement. If you like onion take care you don't put in too much. A piece of onion the size of the top of the finger would be ample, and be careful to chop it fine. It is not pleasant in an omelette to come across a piece which we have to crunch.

Another open point is whether it is best to serve gravy with a savoury omelette. Like adding onion, this is a matter of taste. I think that, if you add onion to an omelette, gravy is a decided improvement, and that if you don't intend serving gravy it is best to omit the onion. The gravy suitable to be served with omelettes is a good brown gravy, similar to that which would be handed round with a roast fowl or turkey.

Sometimes omelettes are served with some sort of rich meat with them. For instance, we can have omelette with kidney, oyster, ham, or Parmesan.

When you have the meat or rich ragout served with the omelette, but not *mixed* with it, you must somewhat vary your method of cooking the omelette. For instance, omelette with kidney is really a savoury omelette with a large ladleful of stewed kidneys; omelette with oysters is an omelette with a mixture similar to the inside of an oyster patty served with it.

When you have a meat or forcemeat of this description you should let your omelette set in the frying-pan in a circular shape instead of a semi-circular, and when it is almost set, place the spoonful or ladleful of meat, &c., on one half, and then turn the other half of the omelette over on to it. Leave a little of the omelette mixture sufficiently *unset* to scrape it quickly round, to fix together the edges when it has been turned over. This requires some little practice.

Sometimes additions are made to the omelette by mixing in other things *with* the beaten egg. For instance, you can add Parmesan cheese—grated, of course—or any kind of grated cheese.

I have mentioned that in making savoury omelettes three eggs are wanted for two ounces of butter; this, of course, is only sufficient to make a small omelette—enough for about two people or one hungry person. When you want to make a larger omelette, you can of course, increase the quantity; but when you do this you will find that you do not want quite so much butter in proportion—*i.e.*, although three eggs require two ounces of butter, six eggs would require rather less than four ounces of butter.

Sweet omelettes are made in exactly the same way as savoury, only, of course, instead of the chopped parsley, salt, and pepper, &c., you require powdered sugar. In making a sweet omelette from three eggs and two ounces of butter you should mix nearly a dessert-spoonful of powdered sugar with the beaten-up egg, and also have a little more powdered sugar ready to shake over the omelette directly it is done.

One very great improvement to sweet omelettes is

to mix in a little essence of vanilla. This essence varies in strength, but if it is good a salt-spoonful would be enough for an omelette made with three eggs.

In adding jam to sweet omelettes the jam must be added similarly to the kidney, &c.—*i.e.*, a spoonful must be placed on one half of the omelette in the pan just as it sets, and the other half must be wrapped over on to it, and the edges mended as before. Nearly every kind of jam can be added to sweet omelettes, but by far the best is apricot jam. When the omelette is just set it can be kept hot for a short time in the oven—just long enough to allow the jam to get hot.

Before concluding the subject of omelettes, I ought to mention the fact that very many cooks add a little milk, and that some—Mr. Francatelli for one—recommend a little cream.

In making sweet omelettes a little milk can be added, and the result is to make the omelette taste less like an omelette, and more like a very rich light pudding.

When you add milk I would strongly advise you to boil the milk first, and add a table-spoonful or more to the eggs, *hot*.

One word in conclusion. Good omelettes cannot be made from stale eggs. I don't mean bad ones, but stale. Some cooks are rather too apt to think that any eggs will do for "cooking." Good omelettes require eggs almost as fresh as those you would serve plain boiled for breakfast. So, too, with the butter. The adulterated rubbish too often sold as butter will spoil any omelette. Indeed, a capital omelette can be made by using *pure* olive oil. But, alas! how difficult it now is to get even oil pure. In fact, we live in an age of adulteration; and to get a first-class omelette I would suggest a country farmhouse, and a personal acquaintance with the fowls who laid the eggs, and the cow who originated the butter.

A SOCIAL REVOLUTION: THE MARRIED WOMEN'S PROPERTY ACT, 1882.

BY A LAWYER.



EW Acts of Parliament are of much immediate interest to the domestic circle, but the Married Women's Property Act of 1882, which came into force upon January 1st of the present year, is an exception to this general rule.

For the scope of this Act is wide enough to affect not only those who are already married or are contemplating matrimony, but also every one who has dealings with married couples. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that the Act has wrought a social revolution, by reversing the ancient principle of the Common Law,

through which, upon marriage, the husband and wife became one person (who, in practice, always turned out to be the husband), and by enabling a married woman to stand before the law, in all relations of private life, upon the same footing as, and apart from, her husband.

By the old Common Law the husband acquired by marriage an absolute right to all his wife's property except her lands, in which he had a qualified right of very large extent. He could also sue for any debts that might be owing to his wife; and if a wife owed money, she had not even a legal right to pay her debt without her husband's permission.

But perhaps the most scandalous provision of the old law had regard to the earnings and savings of a