

custom was in force as regards the lands of Bradbrugge, in Sussex; while certain lands at Midlovent, in the same county, made a like payment yearly.

The most practical service which has as yet come under notice is, however, that done for the manor of Chettington, in Shropshire, for which Roger Corbet was bound to find "one footman in the time of war, in the king's army in Wales, with one bow and three arrows, and one pale, and carrying with him one bacon or salted hog, and when he comes to the army, delivering to the king's marshal a moiety of the bacon; and thence the marshal is to deliver to him daily some of that moiety for his dinner so long as he stays in the army, and he is to follow the army so long as the half of that bacon shall last"—from which it may be judged that the diet of the unfortunate "footman" was not of the most sumptuous or plentiful character. Another practical service was that of paying for the bailiwick of Exmore, in Somerset, "fourteen little heifers and a young

bull;" and yet another was that of rendering two oxen yearly for the manor of Gargawall, in Cornwall. Honey was a not uncommon payment, a gallon of honey having been rendered to the king for lands at the well-known Newington Butts, in Surrey; and ale is frequently met with, as where half a hide of land at Apse, in the same county, was held by the "service of distributing and giving one cask of ale on the day of All Saints, for the soul of our lord the king and his ancestors."

Similar examples might be multiplied indefinitely, but enough has been said to prove that, though the great Crown fiefs were undoubtedly held by the tenure of military service, yet, as time went on, lands of greater or less extent were granted upon rents which can only be regarded as nominal, and which are frequently so trifling, as in the case of roses and pepper-corns, that they might be looked upon as practical jokes were they not of such common occurrence.

SAVOURY DISHES: HOW TO IMPROVE THEM.



NEGLECT of appearances is a very common failing even in many well-to-do households, especially as regards edibles generally; though, to take for instance so homely and unattractive a dish as boiled beef or mutton, how much more appetising it becomes

when some of the vegetables usually served with it are cut into various shapes with fancy cutters, and placed round the meat! These cutters may be bought for very little in most large towns, at shops that deal in novelties, and may be had to imitate all kinds of fruit, besides stars, leaves, curls, and so on. They will be found equally handy for use in many other ways, as I will endeavour to point out. As regards the appearance of fish, few things blend more harmoniously than a delicately-boiled white fish sprinkled with lobster coral, surrounded by slices of lemon and sprigs of fennel or parsley.

However, it is to cold savouries that the greater share of attention must be given, for it is in the preparation of dainty dishes for festive occasions that one feels most inclined to give extra time and trouble to their ornamentation. Here, again, parsley and fennel—most homely, yet most graceful and beautiful of garnitures—will render good service. Indeed, quite artistic results may be obtained if lemon, hard eggs, butter, raw potatoes, carrots, and turnips, with some *boiled* beetroot, are handy, as well as *aspic jelly*, if possible, as it is difficult to dispense with it sometimes. It must be borne in mind that there are two kinds of "savory jelly," one which is merely the gravy in which something has been cooked—say veal, chicken, or rabbit for filling a mould, to be served as *moulded meat*; the said gravy, being reduced and mixed with dissolved gelatine, is then simply strained through

a sieve or cloth, and poured into the mould with the meat. In this case it is only moderately clear, but "aspic jelly" is the same thing put through a jelly-bag and cleared with eggs, just as sweet jelly is; and this trouble *must* be taken when the jelly is required to form a glistening heap round a glazed fowl, and many other similar things. But as often not more than a pint is needed, and as that quantity may be bought from the grocer for fifteenpence or eighteenpence, it is cheaper to buy than to make it.

The same thing may be said of glaze—an ounce of which, costing about threepence, will ornament several dishes, such as a tongue and a couple of fowls, or their equal. The glaze should be cut up into a cup or jar, and a table-spoonful of water added. It should then be set into a saucepan of boiling water, and allowed to melt gradually until quite liquid; and after it is brushed over the meat, it must be left to set before any other decoration, such as butter, is dotted about it, as the warm glaze would run into, and spoil the appearance of, the butter.

With reference to the latter, there are two ways of using it for decorative purposes. One is to melt it, and pour it into a small cone made of writing-paper, which should be held in the left hand, the thumb and finger of the right hand regulating the stream of butter through the small hole in the point of the cone. In this way many devices may be made, or mottoes suited to the occasion written upon the article under treatment. Some one with a talent for drawing, or who writes a good bold hand, will best succeed in this task. Lard may be used instead of butter in this case, but not in the following form of decoration, as it would be too soft. Rub with a wooden spoon through a coarse hair sieve (a wire one would turn the butter green) some *firm* butter, cut into slices; reverse the sieve, and you will find the butter in little curly tufts;

take them up carefully on the point of a penknife or wooden skewer, and dot about the meat according to fancy. This is far easier than the "melting" process, which requires practice to obtain good results. Where a turkey or large piece of pressed beef has been glazed, this "sieved" butter may be formed into monograms, initials, or words, the small letters of which should be the size of the large hand of our "first copy-book" days. A ham, for instance, glazed, and then finished off in this way, with plenty of parsley on the dish, is rendered quite attractive. I may mention in passing that, when parsley is scarce, carrot-tops, if young and green, will answer very well.

To finish the butter part of the business, however: another way to introduce it in a really artistic form is in combination with potted meats. Many people put several kinds upon their table in oval or round moulds, and never give a thought to serve it *out* of the mould in pretty shapes; yet it is very easy to imitate almost anything, animate or inanimate, after a little practice. I have seen various kinds of fish and birds copied in this way—wonderfully true to nature, so far as their shape went; but I would advise amateurs to commence with two of the most simple shapes—*viz.*, *baskets* and *Cleopatra's needle*. The first may be round, oval, or square, the meat being pressed into a basin, pie-dish, or cake-tin—in fact, anything at liberty for the purpose. It must then be turned out on to a dish, and ornamented with the butter, first all round the top and bottom edges in little curly knobs close together, to form the rim, or framework, then all over the sides in thinner streaks to represent the wicker-work; but if trouble is an object, this may be dispensed with, and only the top and bottom edges covered. The top of the basket must next receive attention. The butter should be dotted about to imitate the lid as much as possible; and hard-boiled eggs, cut into slices, arranged in a pattern in the centre, with here and there a dot of parsley, will have a nice effect. For the handle, bend a piece of cap-wire—of the kind used by milliners—and insert each end into the meat to make it firm, then lay the butter on so as to cover the wire. A border of parsley, with a few quarter-slices of lemon and fancy shapes of beetroot to garnish the dish, finish off this inexpensive dainty.

The kinds of meat usually preferred are beef, tongue, ham and chicken, or ham and veal. Lobster and salmon, too, may be used in the same way, and then lobster coral may be sprinkled over the butter, to its great improvement, and shrimps or prawns, or the small claws of a lobster, used as garnish with the parsley.

For a Cleopatra's needle, the meat must be moulded by hand into the shape. The size, of course, must be regulated by choice and requirement; but even if the party is a large one, half a dozen needles six or eight inches in height will look prettier than one or two larger ones. Set each on a small plate—of glass, if you can—and cover the four sides of the "needle" with the butter, laid on in little irregular lines, as much like a page of shorthand-writing as anything I can

compare it with; garnish the base of the needle with parsley.

A word now about aspic jelly, a little of which goes a long way. Supposing you have three or four dishes in which you purpose introducing it, a portion should be poured upon a dish or plate in a thin layer, which, when set, can be cut into strips, diamonds, triangles, or according to fancy. Another portion can be poured into a plate or saucer to set, then roughly chopped. Alternate heaps of this and parsley, with here and there a dash of beetroot, round a dish of chicken cutlets, for example, is a very pretty though inexpensive decoration. The strips of jelly look pretty laid in a pattern over the breast of a turkey or chicken previously glazed, while the fancy shapes are suitable for laying on or placing among dishes of cutlets. When poultry or white meats are served with a coating of "white sauce," aspic jelly need be but sparingly used, hard eggs and lemons, with plenty of beetroot and carrots, being more suitable, as a good supply of colour is necessary.

Fish in jelly look very nice—filleted soles being, perhaps, the most popular. White game and poultry of all kinds may be served in the same way. A pretty device should first be made in the top of the mould. For fish, pour in a little jelly—say a quarter of an inch deep—and when it is almost set, lay in small pieces of beetroot and the outside of a pickled walnut, also cut very small, with some leaves of parsley, forming a pretty pattern; or the skin of a chili may take the place of beetroot. Next pour in a little more jelly, which must be left to set; after that, the fish, filling up with jelly. In moulded meats, the pattern on the top may be formed of slices of boiled tongue cut into leaves or cockscomb shapes, with hard-boiled eggs and parsley. Tiny leaves cut from pickled gherkins may also be effectively introduced.

Watercress, perhaps, is among the least used of our salads for the purpose of garnishing, though it might often take the place of endive at far less cost. It is especially useful for garnishing cold fowl, being so often eaten with it; and small bunches of it, with grated horseradish, round a piece of cold beef, improve its appearance considerably.

Truly the ways of decorating salads are manifold, the chief thing to bear in mind being a judicious arrangement of colour and of suitable ingredients. I mean that each salad should have a distinctive embellishment, such as prawns or shrimps on a fish salad, and aspic jelly, slices of tongue, eggs, &c., for one of meat or poultry.

In conclusion, I would remind my readers that my remarks in a previous paper as to the unsuitability of a dinner-service with much blue in the pattern for sweet dishes requiring garnishing, apply with equal or even greater force to those enumerated in the present paper; and I would advise those who are about to purchase a new service, that the less colour there is in it, and the neater the pattern, the greater will be their chance of making attractive anything placed upon it.