

SAUCES FOR FISH, FLESH, AND FOWL.



O English people deserve the reproach of their French neighbours—viz., that, though they have many religions, they have only one sauce? We are compelled, however reluctantly, to believe that there is sufficient truth in the statement to prevent the boldest cook from contradicting it entirely. "It is very easy," says some reader perhaps, "for skilled cooks, with an unlimited quantity of butter and eggs at their command, such as they have in France, to turn out rich sauces, and so might we if we had the run of such good things." True, we reply, up to a point, and only to a point, for given the best of materials, it needs a careful hand to concoct good sauces. All praise, at any rate, to Continental housewives generally—we are not applauding professed cooks—for the pains which they will take, by judicious blending of flavours and seasoning, to obtain the delicious stock or gravy required as the basis for many kinds of sauce. If, therefore, any reader of the Magazine will, through these pages, take from them, here a hint, and there a wrinkle, we venture to believe that in the end they will feel grateful to their sisters across the Channel.

Melted Butter first—the *one* sauce which we are supposed to make, and that not well! How often is it to be met with on the one hand like bill-sticker's paste, on the other a slop which swims the plate, and looks like thin gruel! And as this is the foundation of so many sauces, sweet and savoury, it is certainly worth while to know the correct way to make it. We are nothing if not practical, so it will not serve our purpose to enlighten our readers as to the method adopted when the *richest* melted butter is required; we may say that it is almost all butter, and those who can afford it will no doubt have cooks competent to produce it. Unquestionably the surest way to avoid lumps is to first melt the butter in a small stewpan, then to add the flour very gradually, next the water or milk, also little by little, stirring unceasingly until it boils, and for one minute afterwards, when it is ready to serve. As to quantities, the happy medium is hit, and a nice smooth sauce the result, by using an ounce of butter and half an ounce of flour to each half-pint of water or milk. When the latter is used, add the salt last; it is apt to curdle new milk if put in with it. When a richer sauce is desired, allow an extra ounce of butter, and reduce the water a little. Many of the best cooks approve of the addition of a slice of butter stirred in after the sauce is taken from the fire; a spoonful of cream is another improvement. This, as most of our readers are presumably aware, forms the basis of an almost endless variety of sauces, such as parsley, egg, onion, and fish sauces innumerable.

In some cases it is an improvement to use veal stock or gravy, instead of water, and fish sauce—when the fish is filleted—should receive all the goodness and

flavour of the bones, which need slow stewing in the water used for making the sauce. We want chiefly to impress the correct *proportions* of flour, butter, and liquid upon our readers' minds; they can then alter, or deviate from, any recipes they may meet with.

We know to what an extent tastes differ; we once partook of some onion sauce, our host remarking, "You may not like it; it is made *my* way; I always like the onions to 'crunch.'" And "crunch" they did in a most unpleasant manner, and our host certainly could not complain that he was robbed of *his* share. How different this from a smooth, delicate, fine-flavoured onion sauce, made by boiling the onions—Spanish, if to be had—in two waters, then chopping them, and adding milk, flour, and butter sufficient to make a nice thick sauce, seasoning with salt, pepper, and white sugar, and rubbing through a hair sieve. Give a final boil up, and the sauce is ready. The addition of an egg or a little cream will enrich it to a great extent. Those who will *not* take the trouble to sieve the sauce—and we know the number is not small—must chop the onions exceedingly fine.

Brown Onion Sauce—very nice with roasted goose or pork—should be made as follows:—Fry the onions in butter and a dash of sugar to a nice brown; thicken a little with "brown roux" or flour, and add enough strong beef gravy to make a thick sauce. Season with cayenne or black pepper, and rub through a sieve.

Apple Sauce is, in other countries, made by mixing gravy with the apples, which are stewed until tender; sweetened, and spiced, according to English custom, receiving in addition a high seasoning of pepper or curry powder. This is a very palatable compound.

Dutch Sauce is in high repute in France and America; it is served with various kinds of fish and vegetables, especially *artichokes*. It sounds extravagant, but no one needs much of it, and it is very delicious. To make it, put the yolks only of two eggs into a jar or jug, and two ounces of fresh butter, with a wine-glass of water and a little salt and grated nutmeg; set this in a saucepan of boiling water over the fire, and stir until it is thick, but do not let it boil. Add, off the fire, a dessert-spoonful of lemon-juice. When for serving with calf's head, with which it is very nice, substitute veal gravy for the water. A few drops of strong white vinegar may be used instead of lemon-juice.

We tasted recently a very delicious *Egg Sauce*, in which the yolks were pounded, the whites chopped as usual. A little parsley, finely chopped, had been added, and it looked, as well as tasted, very good. The lady who made it sometimes uses fennel instead of parsley.

In New York, where salmon is dressed to perfection, *Crèam Sauce* is a frequent accompaniment. The cream is made very hot, but not brought quite to the boil, seasoned to taste, sometimes with shrimp or anchovy essence, sometimes with chopped parsley. If for baked salmon, the liquor from the tin is strained

and stirred into it ; it requires no thickening. It will be found an admirable sauce for fish of almost any kind ; capers chopped and added will be excellent with cod-fish—a thoroughly French combination.

What a popular dainty is a tureen of *Oyster Sauce*, and how often is it spoiled by the common practice of letting the oysters boil in it ! The proper way is to strain the liquor and boil that with the flour and butter, adding a dash of cayenne, lemon-juice, nutmeg, and anchovy essence, and the oysters last thing, long enough for them to become hot through, removing the sauce from the fire so that it shall not boil after they are put in. Follow this plan either for tinned or fresh oysters ; when the last-named are used, the beards should be stewed in the oyster-liquor until *their* flavour is fully extracted. Many cooks recommend mace for almost all white sauces, but one fears to mention it, for it is a spice that is so overpowering in flavour that a trifle too much renders anything uneatable. In the hands of a skilful cook it is certainly valuable, though nutmeg can, in almost every case, be used as a substitute.

Bechamel, that popular French white sauce, is very easy to make in even ordinary households, where economy is practised. For instance, in making this on a large scale, a whole fowl would probably be boiled down for it, together with a knuckle of veal and a piece of lean ham. Proceed, however, as follows :—Put into a saucepan the bones of a boiled or roasted fowl, broken small, with any scraps of *fresh* veal, and a bit of raw lean ham, or the bones from a piece of boiled bacon ; add a bit of carrot, a slice of onion, a *tiny* bit of mace, a few white peppercorns, and, if at hand, a few button mushrooms, with a pint of cold water, not forgetting a sprig of thyme and parsley. Simmer until there is only half a pint of liquid, or even less, and if it does not taste rich put in a tea-spoonful of gelatine. Stir until that is dissolved, then strain the sauce. In a separate saucepan bring to the boil half the measure of cream, mixed with a small tea-spoonful of arrowroot ; mix the white stock gradually with this, let the whole boil for a few minutes, then serve, adding, off the fire, a few drops of lemon-juice or white vinegar and a little salt. If the stock can be allowed to cool before mixing with the cream, the fat will be more effectually removed. We have dwelt at some length on this recipe, by way of illustrating the fact that people often deprive themselves of nice dishes, simply because the quantities given in recipes are too great for their needs, and they are not sufficiently practical to reduce or alter them to meet their modest requirements. We may mention that if the meat and vegetables are allowed to stew first in a little butter the sauce will taste much better.

White Chestnut Sauce is a most excellent accompaniment to boiled fowl, and would form a pleasant change from parsley sauce, usually served with it. Boil or bake a score of chestnuts until tender, then pound the white part in a mortar to a smooth paste with a couple of ounces of butter, a pinch of white sugar, and half a tea-spoonful of salt. Mix slowly with

it half a pint of cream and milk mixed ; stir the liquid over the fire until it boils.

Brown Chestnut Sauce is made in the same way, but brown gravy is used instead of milk ; this is usually served with *roasted* fowl, and seasoned rather more highly than the white sauce.

Lobster Sauce ought to have some “lobster butter” added to give good flavour and colour, but as this cannot always be obtained, it is well to put into the sauce, besides the flesh of the lobster, a spoonful of “lobster essence,” now sold in bottles like shrimp and anchovy essences. A remarkably fine flavour will thus be given at a very trifling additional cost.

The two sauces which follow will be acceptable with a chop or steak ; or any kind of meat, game, or poultry may be warmed up *in* them. In either case the sauce must not boil after the meat—which must be previously cooked, as a matter of course—is put in, and allowed to remain long enough to become hot through. The first given is a very favourite sauce among Frenchmen in which to serve pigs’ or calves’ feet, ears, or the remains of a calf’s head.

Devil Sauce.—Four table-spoonfuls of cold gravy—that from a joint, or, if not to be had, use brown stock—a tea-spoonful of loaf-sugar, a quarter as much mustard, a dessert-spoonful of good mushroom ketchup, the juice of half a lemon, an ounce of fresh butter, a little salt, and pepper to suit the palate. It should be added cautiously at first ; it varies so much in strength, it is almost impossible to state the exact quantity. This may be varied considerably ; Worcester, or any other good sauce, can take the place of the ketchup, and vinegar, plain, or flavoured with herbs, may be used instead of the lemon-juice.

Curry Sauce.—To half a pint of nice brown stock add about a dessert-spoonful of good curry paste and the same of fried onions, together with a small apple, fried *with* the onions. Simmer until the whole can be rubbed through a sieve, after which it should be again simmered for a few minutes.

A few general remarks must close our hints on hot sauces. First, we would impress upon every one the importance of having at hand a good supply of roux, both brown and white ; full directions will be found for making it in any good cookery book. It is as superior in flavour to a thickening of raw flour only, as baked pastry is to raw. Equally important is freedom from fat ; it is a good plan, after skimming, to place a piece of blotting-paper on the surface of the sauce, or a thick slice of stale bread will answer. Colouring is often used in so great a quantity as to seriously mar the original flavour ; many kinds, both liquid and in small balls, are very good where cautiously used. “Browning Salt” is also safe, but the salt in the sauce must be reduced when it is added. Scrupulous cleanliness is necessary in the matter of spoons and saucepans ; let the first be wooden ones only, and the latter—for delicate white preparations—of enamelled iron. Tinned iron is soon affected by acids, so should not be used for sauces.