

VEGETABLE COOKERY—ENGLISH AND FOREIGN.



T must, we think, be granted that the English are sadly behind other nations in the preparation of vegetable dishes, especially when it is remembered that thousands, every year, when touring abroad, partake of them served as separate courses. It is certainly strange

that they fail to introduce them in the same way at their own tables on their return home. Without desiring to preach vegetarianism, we must own that vegetarians of the well-to-do class do set upon their tables very daintily-cooked products of the vegetable kingdom, though it must be added that their consumption of eggs and butter is by no means limited. It needs but a passing thought of the truly delightful delicacies which are served daily by American hostesses; of the savoury stews, fragrant with herbs, made in such perfection by even the humblest French peasant; and of German cookery, with its long list of soups, in which milk plays so prominent a part, to assure English housewives that they may, if they will, gain many hints which, if put into practice, cannot fail to materially reduce that bugbear—the weekly meat bill.

Many of the most popular American vegetables, including green corn, and several kinds of beans, may, fortunately, be bought in tins, thus enabling all to enjoy a real treat, as all good grocers keep or will get them for their customers. New York is the place for tomatoes; wonderful concoctions owe their basis to this health-giving vegetable (fruit, some call it), a favourite recipe being *Tomatoes and Cheese*, the former cut into halves and seasoned highly, then spread with grated cheese, covered with bread-crumbs, sprinkled with salad oil, and baked in a hot oven.

A hot-weather refresher is a dish of thinly-sliced tomatoes, seasoned with pepper, salt, and sugar; crushed ice being laid over it just before serving. A tasty morsel is frequently concocted from minced game, a little good gravy, and sliced tomatoes, baked in a pie-dish. Sometimes macaroni is added to the rest.

Tomato Salad must not be overlooked; as served in the States it is a real luxury. The dressing of hard-boiled eggs, vinegar, oil, and the usual condiments, made thick, receives the addition of a lump of ice, stirred in long enough to make it very cold. The thinner the tomatoes are sliced, the better the salad will be. The dish is then set upon ice until required.

Celery Salad is made in the same way; the choicest and crispest morsels being chosen. It should be prepared just before it is eaten, or the vinegar will detract from the crispness.

Tomatoes, as well as many other vegetables, are very delicious fried in batter. A true French method of cooking cauliflowers is to divide them into pieces of an equal size; parboiling, then dipping them, when cold, into thick batter, and frying them to a

delicate brown. Celery and asparagus are particularly good this way. A reliable recipe for French batter, for vegetables, is as follows:—Dissolve two ounces of butter in a quarter-pint of hot water; add the same quantity of cold water to make it lukewarm, then mix it with half a pound of fine flour, seasoned with salt and pepper. Lastly, add the white of one egg, beaten to a stiff froth.

Cauliflower à la Française is very nice; the vegetable is divided before boiling, then arranged in the dish to resemble one large one. It is covered with good melted butter, with which a little lemon-juice has been mixed. The same dish makes its frequent appearance in France with a thick layer of grated cheese—Parmesan as a rule—over the melted butter. A coating of bread-crumbs covers it, with liquefied butter poured over. A few minutes in the oven completes it.

Vegetable marrows do duty on the Continent as cases for vegetables of many kinds. For instance, small marrows are boiled as usual, then cut in half lengthwise, a slice being taken from each to make it stand even in the dish. The seeds and soft part are removed, and the inside filled with a rich mince of vegetables: turnips, carrots, celery, or cauliflowers; or a mixture of any kinds in season, which may be stewed in gravy or white sauce, or, as is often the case, curried. The top should be garnished with parsley and boiled beetroot, when the effect is very pretty.

We would urge on our readers the great advantage they would derive by cooking vegetables (the cabbage family excluded) in butter, instead of water, thus retaining, instead of throwing away, the greater part of the flavour and nutriment. The cost and trouble are not great, and the result—well, we ask any house-keeper to try the plan and judge for herself. Turnips, or parsnips, should be peeled, and thinly sliced, and to each pound add about three ounces of butter; set on the range where they will cook thoroughly and gradually, and, when nearly done, season nicely, adding, if liked, chopped parsley. The French put in a few drops of lemon-juice as well. Carrots, unless very young, had better be parboiled; but quite small ones may be cooked in this way. The same process—it goes without saying—may be adopted for green peas; they require three or four ounces of butter to a quart of peas, measured after shelling. The addition of a tea-spoonful of white sugar, a quarter ditto of salt, and a sprig of mint, completes this dish, a truly delicious one if the peas are young.

A nice way to cook French or kidney beans, is to boil them in water in the usual way for about five minutes, then to finish the cooking as above, adding a spoonful of lemon-juice and a sprinkling of white pepper just before serving. Some cooks like the addition of minced parsley, and either the peas or beans may be moistened with gravy or stock thickened a little.

An American mode of cooking white cabbage (and

it answers equally well for brocoli) is to boil it, then to chop it up, adding an egg and a little milk, with seasoning to taste. Spinach may be served as above; another nice way is to boil it, drain, chop fine, and return it to the saucepan with a spoonful or two of cream or butter, and a bit of salt and sugar; turn into a dish, press the top flat, and serve with poached or fried eggs.

Asparagus and *Sea-Kale*, very nice plainly boiled, and served with melted butter or white sauce, are suited to great variety in their treatment. One good way is to mince the best parts and cook them in a little milk; when done, thicken with flour and butter, and fill *pâté* cases with the mixture; they may be of pastry, or fried bread, hollowed before frying, by scooping out the middle, so as to hold the mince. *Asparagus Omelettes* are delicious; only the points should be used, previously boiled of course.

Salsafy, or *Oyster Plant*, deserves to become better known, especially by lovers of the oyster, the flavour of which it much resembles. It is particularly nice parboiled, then dipped in batter, or egg and bread-crumbs, and fried crisp; or it may be scalloped in the same way that oysters are. Our remarks on the cooking of vegetables in butter apply with force to *Artichokes*. When they are required for soup it will be found a vast improvement to stew them until tender, in a small quantity of butter, before adding them to the stock.

Though we may not stay to speak of soups in detail, we should like to give a Continental hint about *Green Pea Soup*. Always cook the shells in the stock, and extract all the flavour; then, when the peas are put in, add also a little well-washed spinach, rubbing it through the sieve with the peas. Some of the latter should be boiled separately, and put in whole just before the soup is served. Some like a lettuce added with the spinach.

Very few people, maybe, however much they have relished watercress in its natural state, have made trial of it cooked; yet it will be found very delicate—especially nice with a roasted chicken—and only requires a few minutes' boiling in water slightly salted. It should be drained and pressed just as cabbage is. *Sorrel-leaves*, equally good in the same way, are a valuable addition to salads; so is borage. *Nasturtium-leaves*, too, will render almost any salad appetising; they may be mixed in a plain lettuce salad, or in one composed of boiled vegetables. One of cauliflower, beans, peas, and chopped nasturtium-leaves is excellent.

It may be news to some people that in Germany caraway-seeds and other spices are frequently added to onion sauce. Another delicious dish in that country is prepared as follows:—Moderate-sized onions are peeled and boiled until half done; then some of the inside is taken out, and a stuffing composed of bread-crumbs, grated cheese, herbs, &c., to season, hard-

boiled eggs, and a little milk, is inserted. The onions are then stewed in nice gravy, or fried brown in a mixture of butter, three ounces, and sugar one ounce. The sugar gives a glazed appearance, and improves the flavour considerably.

A *Carrot Purée*, served with mutton cutlets, is very good; the outer part only of the carrot should be used for it. It requires to be grated while raw, and put into a stew-pan, with enough water to cover it. A good lump of butter, a pinch each of sugar, salt, and pepper should be added. When done, rub through a hair sieve, add milk and a little flour, and boil up; it ought to be a thick pulp. When milk is not liked, let stock take the place of the water at first, and thicken with brown roux or flour. In boiling carrots (unless meat is cooked with them) a lump of butter or dripping should always be put into the water, as it mellows them very much. Parsnips may be mixed with carrots in a purée when liked, and cold parsnips fried are very nice. Abroad, chopped parsley is frequently stirred into a dish of mashed parsnips, which also receives the addition of a little hot milk or cream, as well as salt and pepper.

Beetroot, except as pickle, is not much used, though it is very good baked or stewed. For stewing, young ones should be boiled until nearly cooked, then peeled and sliced into a stew-pan with a little vinegar, minced shalot, and gravy, and simmered until tender; they require to be rather highly seasoned. To bake them, wash, but do not peel, cook in a gentle oven, then peel, and serve with gravy or melted butter.

Mushrooms need but little mention, as the chief point to remember in cooking them is not to overpower their natural flavour. Just a dash of lemon-juice develops it, and is therefore an improvement.

Italians, famed the world over for their skill in cooking *Macaroni*, serve delicious purées of tomatoes mixed with macaroni; or the latter may be boiled in milk, then piled in the centre of a dish, and tomato sauce poured round. Grate cheese over the macaroni, cover with bread-crumbs and oiled butter, and make hot in the oven. Onion sauce, either brown or white, may be substituted for the tomato sauce.

Haricot Beans, so valuable a substitute for meat, must close our paper. We have often noticed recipes for boiling them, in which directions for straining were given; this is the one thing that should *not* be done; they should never be cooked, whether boiled or stewed, in more water than they will absorb; neither should salt, which has a hardening tendency, be put in until they are almost done. The water should be added to them cold, and the slower they are cooked the better they will be. If mashed while warm, and mixed with herbs, a beaten egg, and milk to a thick batter, *Haricot Fritters* may be easily made from it, and will form a welcome dish in cold weather. They should be small, and fried on both sides.

