

SOMETHING FOR BREAKFAST.

BY LIZZIE HERITAGE.



“WHAT shall we have for breakfast?” This apparently trifling question is in reality an important one, for is not the old adage, “No breakfast, no man,” as true to-day as ever? Yes, depend upon it there is something radically wrong when the members of a family

are disinclined for a substantial morning meal.

Assuming, for our present purpose, fairly good appetites on the part of our readers, then come the questions of variety, nutrition, and suitability.

In England, in thousands of homes, bacon, with or without eggs, is the staple breakfast dish, often served daily for weeks or months without intermission; and while admitting that few delicacies can beat good home-cured bacon and new-laid eggs, it is a grave mistake not to vary one's food to a greater extent than is customary—at breakfast especially.

We must remark that we are not referring to homes where there are staffs of servants, but rather to those where a general servant shares the work in all its branches with the mistress or her daughters.

Most foreigners, particularly Americans, are struck with our lack of bread—not quantity, but variety. It is fortunate for our digestive organs, however, that so many hot cakes, rolls, and biscuits, always present at their own tables, are absent from ours. Still, the reproach is to some extent deserved, and it would be easy to introduce light, wholesome bread of several kinds at little cost or trouble.

One American custom we might follow with advantage is the introduction of fresh ripe fruit at breakfast. In that country it is eaten at the beginning and end of the meal. Morning is unquestionably the time *par excellence* for fruit, but only a small quantity of fluid should be drunk, otherwise it is injurious, simply because the fruit itself conveys so large a quantity of water into the system, and a superabundance of liquid is at the root of many troubles of a dyspeptic nature.

Salad plants are admittedly cooling and wholesome, but, on the whole, they are not easy of digestion, owing to the large percentage of water they contain.

Let the chief breakfast dishes be of a kind, and cooked in such a manner, as to be readily digested. We remember hearing a famous scientist lecture on waste of food. He spoke of that absolutely thrown away; of food burnt, or otherwise spoiled, in the cooking; lastly—and upon this he laid greatest stress—of edibles of every description cooked in such ways as deprived them of their nourishment and rendered them indigestible.

When eggs are plentiful, *Omelets* afford a pleasant

change, and are, when properly made, easily digested; but we incline to the opinion that the making of an omelet is just one of those things that can only be learned by experience, and a badly-made omelet is an abomination.

Those who *have* grasped the method may find the following two recipes of service:—

Italian Omelet.—Mix a table-spoonful of cooked macaroni, cut into half-inch lengths, with an equal bulk of grated cheese—Parmesan is the nicest—and a dessert-spoonful or so of tomato conserve; add a grate of nutmeg and a suspicion of cayenne, then stir the whole in a stewpan until hot. Put the mixture into the centre of a medium-sized omelet, just before folding, and serve at once.

Indian Omelet.—A table-spoonful of rice, previously boiled and drained, is to be added to a tea-spoonful or less of curry paste that has been liquefied by a small quantity of cream. Heat as above directed, and serve in the omelet in the same way.

Watercress and other herbs are in France frequently put into the omelet mixture before cooking.

Kedgerree is tasty and easily made. Put into a saucepan an ounce of butter, four or five ounces of cold fish—any kind—flaked, and half the weight, or more if liked, of boiled rice. Season with salt, pepper, and a few drops of white vinegar or lemon-juice. Pile lightly on a hot dish. When appearance is an object, the whites of two hard-boiled eggs may be cut into rings for garnish, and the yolks rubbed through a sieve and sprinkled over the whole. Although *fresh* fish is most suitable, the remains of a dried haddock will do for this.

Savory Pyramid is a mixture of cooked rice and any white meat minced, and made hot in a small quantity of white sauce or tomato sauce; or tomatoes may be sliced and grilled, and served round it. As its name implies, it should be served pyramid shape. Boiled or roasted fowl is delicious in this way; the bones should then be stewed for the sauce. A small quantity of ham will improve it, together with some savoury herbs.

Brown Macaroni is excellent. The common pipe macaroni is used for it. It is first boiled, then cut up and stewed in brown stock until it has absorbed the whole, when it should be spread on a flat dish and a little more stock poured over; the dish should be garnished with fried or toasted bread in nice shapes.

Cooked Vegetables, so little prized in England, furnish foreign breakfast-tables with many a dainty. Cauliflowers, divided into sprigs, dipped in batter, and fried crisp, are good, either as a separate course, or with kidneys, cutlets, &c. Celery, asparagus, and many others can be so treated, or they may be cut up and mixed with the batter, and fried a table-spoonful at a time.

Any flat fish may be filleted and baked, the fillets

first rolled up and skewered in a straight row. Butter a baking-sheet, lay them on, and cover with a buttered paper. In a good oven they will be done in ten or fifteen minutes, when the paper should be removed and each little roll covered with chopped parsley mixed with cream. Let this get hot, then serve them at the last moment, squeezing some lemon-juice over, or any flavoured vinegar. People who like hot dishes may substitute chopped Indian pickle, or a dash of chutney, for the parsley and cream.

For *Fish Cutlets* few modes equal that of wrapping them in buttered paper and cooking on a gridiron, or in a hot oven, as the paper keeps in the flavour and goodness; but the time of cooking must be a little longer than for cutlets cooked minus the paper.

A word now about twice-cooked meats. It is not advisable to serve them too often, but as they are so convenient where cold meat is disliked, and form the base of such a variety of snacks, we think a recipe may not be unwelcome. There is a golden rule to be remembered: let the time of exposure to the action of heat be as short as possible to prevent undue hardening, and in the case of hash or mince and all similar dishes, take care that the gravy does not reach boiling point after the meat is put in.

Gâteau of Cold Meat.—For this the meat *must* be underdone. Mince four ounces, add some chopped thyme and parsley, and a shalot chopped and fried brown. Season nicely, and mix with a table-spoonful of bread-crumbs, and one of stock or thick gravy. Lastly, add one whole egg. Grease a small cake tin, sprinkle all over with bread-crumbs, press the mixture in firmly, and cover with more crumbs, then bake in a brisk oven about twenty minutes, and turn out. If more convenient, this can be shaped with the hand into a roll, and baked; in a Dutch oven will do. The bread-crumbs should be of the kind called "browned crumbs."

A good breakfast dainty may be made as follows; if tried it is sure of a repetition:—

Australian Salad.—Take from the tin a pound of boiled or corned mutton (that imported by any good well-known firm), cut it into pieces the size of a walnut, put aside the fat, and melt any jelly there may be; if insufficient add a little stock. Arrange the meat in a dish with a few slices of boiled beetroot, and some celery and tomatoes, raw, and sliced thinly. Put into a basin the yolks of two raw eggs; then add, drop by drop, a quarter of a pint of salad oil; when thick, stir in the liquid jelly, after it has cooled, a table-spoonful of strong vinegar and one of onion, shalot, or any other pickle vinegar that may be handy. Season with salt, pepper, and a pinch of white sugar. Pour this over the whole, and it will be relished at any meal. When time permits, the whites of the eggs may be put in a cup and steamed until set, then cut up and used for garnishing the salad. Those who object to oil may use a little thick cream.

Another way, and a more economical one, of making the dressing is to use the yolk of one hard-boiled egg and a cooked potato pounded with the yolk, then less cream or oil is needed.

A very delicious salad can be obtained by using tinned salmon or lobster with lettuce, cress, &c., adding to the dressing a small quantity of anchovy essence.

Very good *Lobster Cutlets*—a most appetising dish—are made in the following manner:—Cut up small the white meat of a tinned lobster and pound the coral with a couple of ounces of butter; then mix the whole well together in the mortar, adding cayenne and a few drops of the essence of anchovies. Shape them as nearly as possible like mutton cutlets, only much smaller; egg and bread-crumbs them in the usual way. They take but half a minute or so to fry.

We recommend the best brands which bear the names of leading English firms, as, so far as we know, they are the only tins of lobster that contain any coral. We have found them equal to fresh lobster for many purposes.

Fish Cakes are very easily made, and excellent when salmon is used. If tinned, the oil must be all drained off, and the fish cut up, mixed with an equal weight of mashed potatoes, and seasoned nicely. No butter will be needed. Egg, crumb, and fry as above directed, or, if more convenient, bake them in a Dutch oven.

Many of the preceding recipes, we are well aware, can only be carried out where there is a gas or an oil-stove at hand, and where many little preparations are made overnight.

In conclusion, we have a word to say about cereals. Where they form the staple breakfast dish of the juveniles, it is well to remember that variety will be appreciated.

Oatmeal porridge is good, but it is too heating for some constitutions, and it may be supplanted with advantage by hominy in the spring. This, if well made, is simply delicious, and in the States is enjoyed by old and young alike; but it must be well cooked. A good plan is to soak it all night—two ounces of hominy in half a pint of cold water. In the morning put it in a saucepan, and cook for an hour, stirring often, adding more water as it thickens until another half-pint has been added. Serve with sugar and cream, or good milk. Some prefer less water, and milk to make the quantity, in which case the hominy and water must be cooked thoroughly first, and the milk added just before serving. Lined saucepans or those of fire-proof china are the most suitable for making porridge; better still the double saucepans—then burning is impossible. Never omit a little salt.

A last word about bread-and-milk. We saw a statement lately, by a medical man, to the effect that he should like to see the eating of whole-meal bread made compulsory by Act of Parliament. We do not go so far as this, but we do most strongly advise the adoption of whole-meal bread for growing children. Let it be a day or two old, sliced, and cut into dice, the milk just brought to boiling point, not actually boiled, and there is something wrong if they do not enjoy it—at any rate, for a change, *not* morning after morning the year round.