

that something is wrong. Wood is perhaps too plentiful, or the trees are interlacing their boughs in some places. There is, however, no necessity for pruning our orchard at this season of the year, though, at the same time, those trees may be marked that have failed in the quality or quantity of their fruit; many prefer waiting until the worst of the winter has passed, and about February attend to this orchard trimming. Here is a way in which a long-neglected pear-tree is recommended to be treated in the early spring. Cut every branch back to within about nine inches of the main stem from which it has grown, using a thin fine-toothed saw, and cutting in a sloping direction. Remove also from the remaining part of the tree every spur, no matter whether good or bad, and cut close and smooth, only avoid touching the ring of the bark at the base. This, however, would apply more to a standard pear-tree, or one grown against a wall, when the wounds you have made with your saw should be afterwards covered with a little grafting-clay. In the orchard itself, take out all thin and spindly wood, and, in the case of a decidedly old tree, it might be cut in more closely and robbed of much of its top. The next operation is on the ground. Taking up the turf from some four feet round the base of the tree, we then dig a small trench all round, and fill in with rich manure from the cow-house or elsewhere, putting some of our soil on afterwards and replacing our turf. We omitted, however, to say that in many cases a judicious root-pruning is also an advantage: this is certainly advisable with wall fruit-trees.

Something, however, must be said as to our flowers this month. Our beds, now cleared of their bedding-out stock, will leave us with many large gaps, even those of us who do not depend outside for flowers wholly and solely on bedding-out plants. Here, then, our beds being first of all turned and prepared, we put in now, though not during a frost, our bulbs for early spring show, hyacinths, tulips, and crocuses, taking care that the more delicate and somewhat later tulips are placed in the warmer and more sheltered situations. And then, in anticipation of some of the autumn gales, go over the standard roses; rub off finally all growth from the stocks; see that those

budded in July or in August last are well secured, and as to the old stagers, you will probably notice that the heads have made large growth, and that many shoots have become extravagantly long: where too many have grown, they should be thinned out, in which case cut away the weaker branches altogether, while probably the majority of those you allow to remain will bear shortening. Then secure all well and strongly to the stakes, and they will be in readiness to stand the first of the gales.

Our greenhouse is by this time beginning to be gay with chrysanthemums: plunge any of these, however, that you wish to take their chance in the open air, as by this means you will save the roots. And of these outside ones, cut down at once any that have declined flowering, and remove the blooms of any that may show damage by early frost. Those that are in pots in your greenhouse will need now a regular watering, the flower-heads, as they swell, very much drawing upon the moisture; absence of water, therefore, just now would very much check and stint your blooms. This month, again, is a good one for parting perennials: perhaps they have grown too large, or you have a little space elsewhere in which you would be glad to see some; simply then, with your spade, cut off from the side on which it can best be spared a portion of your plant, and plant the piece out where you most need it.

And, lastly, our kitchen-garden gives us in October plenty of heavy work, for first there will be the digging and dry housing of the main crop of our potatoes: a very important operation, and one that should be done before any frost is about; our savoys, too, most useful as winter greens, should be planted early in this month, and by Christmas-time we shall find them of great service for table.

Nor must we omit to remind our readers that this is the first month for heavy garden changes. Alterations of our shrubbery, or of the shape or extent of our lawn and flower-beds, may all be now made, as we can certainly better afford the time for work of this kind now, when the dormant season is commencing, than when, the sap being up, we run the risk of killing our trees and shrubs by removing them.

A CHAPTER ON CURRY.

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OW very seldom is it that we meet with really good curry, and yet perhaps few dishes are more popular. Many years back, housekeepers laboured under the impression that curry was a dish off which people could make their dinner, but the dish, as usually served, had no resemblance to a dish of curry properly so called. In fact the old-fashioned

method of making curry was simply this. The cook opened a bottle of curry powder, and then proceeded to make some hashed mutton from the remains of, say a cold leg of mutton; having boiled some rice—usually into a clammy and sticky mass—she placed a border of it round a large dish, and then moistened about a table-spoonful of curry powder in a little water and mixed it with the thin gravy of the hash; the whole of the hashed mutton, with the now yellow

gravy, was poured into the centre of the dish and was sent to table.

It was an awful mess. I remember in my earliest school days we had it served us once a week. It has made an impression upon me, just as we never forget our early days of castor oil. Fortunately society is getting more civilised. Curry is an Oriental dish, and those who have tasted it in its perfection, at the Oriental Club, or on board a P. and O. boat, will know how delicious an addition it makes to a little dinner, for it must be remembered that curry is not a dish that ought to make a dinner in itself. In speaking of curry Sir Henry Thompson observes: "The enjoyment of a curry—and when skilfully made it is almost universally admitted to be one of the most attractive combinations which can be offered to the senses of taste and smell—is only possible at a limited repast. When freely eaten, very little is acceptable to the palate afterwards, exhausted as it is by the pervading fragrance of the spice and other adjuncts. Hence a curry should form the climax of a short series of dishes leading up to it: when presented, as it sometimes is, among the entrées of a first course, it is wholly out of place."

Probably the majority of English cooks have no idea of the various kinds of curries that are served abroad. In a voyage from London to Calcutta and back, the following dishes of curry appeared in the bill of fare: Nabob, Bombay, Madras, Poonah, Nepaul, Surat, Bumlow, Cabul, Calcutta, Singapore, Bengal, Penang, Allahabad, Sykabob, Cingalese, and Goa.

It is needless to say that all of these are very similar in character. Some are drier, such as Madras, than others; some hotter; some, again, owe their name to the meat that is served in the curry sauce, for curry can be divided into two distinct headings, the curry sauce, and the meat that is served up in it. The chief characteristic point in which what is called real Indian curry differs from the curry obtainable in this country, is that abroad the curry paste is made fresh from the spice, while in England curry is made from curry powder or curry paste made previously.

As may naturally be supposed, the fresher the paste, the better the curry, and therefore if housekeepers have by them a bottle of curry powder that has been in their possession perhaps a year or more, it will make very indifferent curry indeed, especially if it has been insecurely corked.

I will first describe how to make ordinary curry sauce, which will serve as the basis of every kind of curry we can make. The first requisite is some really good brown gravy—gravy that when cold forms a firm jelly, and when hot looks a bright brown mahogany colour. It is perhaps needless to say that the gravy should be free from grease.

Take six good-sized onions and a small carrot; the carrot in bulk should be equal to about one onion, and a similar quantity of a head of celery. Cut these up and fry them, in an ordinary frying-pan, in a little butter, till they are tender. I may here add that they should be fried in curry fat. I will explain what I mean by this later on. The vegetables should be fried till they are tender, and of a light brown colour, but

should not be burnt. Now add to all these fried vegetables a pint of good gravy, let the vegetables boil in the gravy for a short time, then add a dessert-spoonful of curry powder and a brimming tea-spoonful of Captain White's curry paste. Let the whole boil together for some time, say half an hour, then strain off the liquor into a basin, and rub the onion, carrot, and celery through a wire sieve with a wooden spoon. This requires perseverance and patience, but without it the curry sauce will not be perfect. This forms what we may call the basis of all curries, and this curry sauce can be varied in many different ways.

One very great improvement is to introduce a good-sized dessert-spoonful of Indian chutney. This must be rubbed through the wire sieve with the sauce. It will be found also that if, as is very often the case, you have only curry powder and no paste, a spoonful of chutney will form an excellent substitute for the paste. Another very good substitute for curry paste is a sour apple, which should be peeled, the core cut out, and fried with the vegetables. When, however, you have the paste, the addition of apple is not necessary.

The curry sauce should be of a good consistency, and if the gravy is properly thickened at starting, the addition of the vegetable pulp will be sufficient to make it of a proper thickness. Should the curry be preferred still hotter, more curry powder, or cayenne pepper, can be added. This, however, is a matter of taste, and must be left to the discretion of the cook, who is supposed to know his master's taste. I may, however, observe in passing that the general fault of English curry is that it is too hot.

Next let the curry sauce be brought to a boil and the fat skimmed from the top. When all the fat has been removed by careful skimming, the sauce can be put by till wanted; but whatever you do, do not throw away the skimmings, for we have now obtained our curry fat, and this fat should be carefully preserved and used for frying the next dish of curry that we may make, and can be used instead of the little butter I mentioned previously. This is not only more economical, but is an absolute improvement to the curry itself; it is one of the many instances that prove that first-class cooking and economy go hand in hand.

Next we will consider the meat that is to be served in the curry, and here let me observe that as a rule every kind of curry should be eaten with a fork. I mean, no knife should be necessary. Suppose, for instance, as is very often the case, the dish of curry is made from the remains of a cold leg of mutton. The mutton should be cut from the bones and the meat shredded. To make really good curry, however, the meat should be expressly cooked for the purpose.

In our description of making curry sauce I may as well mention that there are two exceptions for which the sauce should be varied, and these are fish and vegetables.

When we have fish curry or a vegetable curry, the onions used for making the sauce should not be allowed to get brown at all, nor should they be rubbed through the wire sieve. Instead of brown gravy, a light-coloured gravy should be used, the onions should

be cut up small and mixed with the gravy, powder and paste added, and the fish, which has been previously cooked, should be shredded and made hot in the sauce.

Vegetable curry is exceedingly nice, and is not so often met with in this country as it deserves. Every kind of vegetable can be used mixed together, and a very nice simple dish can be made by merely opening a tin of macédoin. The curry sauce should be very pale, that is, every kind of colouring matter in making the gravy beforehand should be avoided. In making vegetable curry, you can use for it stalks of cabbages and lettuces, cauliflower, carrot, turnip, beans—in fact, every kind of vegetable may be added. It is a great improvement in making vegetable curry to add a little garlic, and half a dozen or more bay-leaves should be put in whole, and sent to table in the curry.

In making fish and vegetable curry it is a great improvement to fry the onion in curry fat, as the onion, not being rubbed through the sieve, is apt to have an all-predominant flavour of its own. This curry fat has the appearance of a yellowish-green oil.

One very favourite form of curry is known as Madras or dry curry. This is drier and darker than the others and is made simply by allowing the shredded meat to soak up the curry sauce. After the meat has soaked in the sauce so that no gravy runs from it, a little curry powder can be shaken over the meat. It is not a bad plan, if the curry powder you have used has been in hand a long time, to sprinkle over it a little powdered coriander seed. This will have the effect of making the curry a little more "spicy," and you will avoid the danger of making it too hot.

I cannot remember all the characteristics of the numerous curries I have mentioned, but I can call to mind a few. The feature of Nabob curry is that it consists of small pieces of minced meat, which are rolled into balls about the size of a marble. These marbles are then floured and fried (if possible in the curry fat) and sent to table with the curry sauce poured round them.

Syakabob curry consists of slices of meat, potato, onion, and green ginger, stuck on a skewer. These are served up in the curry, thus skewered together. This is a sort of dish that boys at school would be certain to nickname "cats'-meat."

One of the most delicious curries known is the Cingalese prawn curry. This dish can be made very nice in England from fresh prawns—which, however, are unfortunately very expensive—or from tinned or potted prawns, which are cheaper, but not so good.

In making curry from fresh prawns the white meat of the prawn is served up in the curry sauce, but be sure and take all the heads off the prawns and pound them in the curry sauce, so as to extract what may be called the goodness out of the head—the little lumps which correspond to the green part of a lobster.

There are, of course, several exceptions to the general rule that curry should always be taken with a fork. I will mention a few. Curried sausages form a very nice breakfast dish, which simply consists in pouring curry sauce over some fried sausages.

Curried sweetbread is a very nice dish, and I

think the sweetbread is best fried whole, but then again sweetbreads hardly require a knife. Curried eggs are made by boiling eggs till they are quite hard, cutting them into slices while hot, and pouring the curry sauce round them.

A very economical dish can be made by simply currying rice. The rice should be treated as a vegetable. The onion should not be burnt, but should be fried tender in the curry fat, cut up and mixed with the rice. The whole should be made into a sort of well, and the curried sauce poured in the middle. This is a very cheap and agreeable dish in hot weather.

Boiled rice should always be served with every kind of curry, and, as a rule, it should be served separate, and handed before the curry. The orthodox fashion of helping oneself to curry, is to take a spoonful of rice and place it on a plate, making a well in the centre. The curry itself should then be placed in the middle, and the whole eaten with a fork. The rice should be so boiled that every grain is not only tender, but separated from every other grain. To boil rice correctly is not so easy as some cooks imagine.

Like everything else, boiled rice to be served in perfection requires care. First of all the rice should be washed in several waters, and those cooks who have been accustomed to boil rice anyhow will be astonished to see what a quantity of dirt they have been in the habit of serving up with their dishes of rice for years past, by observing the colour of the water in which the rice has been washed. When the rice is thoroughly clean, sprinkle it gradually into a saucepan three-parts full of *boiling* water. The water should be slightly salted. Allow the rice to boil thoroughly for ten minutes, then strain it off through a colander, and put the rice back in the empty saucepan, and place the saucepan by the *side* of the fire, putting a cloth in at the top and leaving the lid half open, exactly as if you were straining off boiled potatoes. The rice should be allowed to remain in this state for twenty minutes or more. It will be found that the rice will gradually swell, and it is advisable now and then to mix it up gently with a fork, as the rice very often dries at the top and remains moist at the bottom of the saucepan. A wooden or silver fork is better than steel. Recollect, however, you must not put the saucepan on the fire, as in that case the rice would stick to the bottom and burn, and very likely the whole would be spoiled. As there always is a danger of it sticking, I would recommend cooks after they have strained off the rice to put a little piece of butter in the dry saucepan. As the saucepan is hot, the butter melts of itself and runs over the bottom of the saucepan. This will prevent the rice sticking.

Some persons like the rice a little hard. In fact, they like a grain of rice to correspond with an Irish potato, that is, to have a "bone" in it. This is purely a matter of taste. Probably rice is more nourishing rather under-cooked than over-cooked, for we must not forget the famous siege of Arcot, where the natives told Lord Clive that they were willing to live on the water in which the rice had been boiled, and let the Europeans eat the rice.