

MY COOKERY CLASS, AND WHAT I TAUGHT IT.

BY A PROFESSIONAL INSTRUCTOR IN COOKERY.



IN the present paper it is not possible to give more than an outline of the work of my class ; it is intended rather to show what *may* be taught, theoretically and practically, by the teacher, and, under her supervision, carried out at succeeding "Practice Lessons" by her pupils.

The latter, as a rule, are anxious to begin at the wrong end : to dispense, that is, with the necessary preliminary part of the course of instruction, viz., the sitting to watch the preparation and cooking of the various dishes, and to take down the recipes ; although when they *do* start on the actual cooking, they will own that the time was not unprofitably spent.

Imagine a class of young women, of ages from fifteen to twenty, and of various occupations, assembled in the evening for a couple of hours' instruction ; the course to consist of twenty lessons, at ten of which everything will be cooked and fully explained by the instructor, and afterwards the pupils—twelve, or more, according to the accommodation available—will be busily engaged in cooking with "their own hands."

To begin at the beginning : the dishes may all be classed under the head of "Artisan Cookery," though much is taught that would be equally useful to the well-to-do ; and in looking through the programme, a little of everything—certainly every branch of cookery—seems to be included. There are all the principal ways of cooking meat, and the re-serving of any remnants to the best advantage ; vegetable cookery of all kinds, a special feature being made of the badly-treated potato and of the whole tribe of green vegetables ; dainties for the sick are conspicuous ; and the puddings, pies, and cakes would suit all palates ; there are a good number of nourishing and savoury dishes, composed chiefly of lentils and haricot beans ; gruels, porridge, and farinaceous foods generally are conspicuous ; and jam, stewed fruit, as well as bread, both brown and white, are not forgotten : indeed, it is not too much to say that the comprehensive character of the list would surprise the majority.

The Demonstration Lessons embrace such dishes as take the longest time to prepare and cook, and require most explanation ; indeed, it is then that the foundation-stone of future success is laid, and much questioning goes on, meanwhile, on both sides ; the instructor tests the knowledge of her listeners, while they are encouraged to ask questions freely rather than remain in doubt on any subject.

Be present with us in spirit at a lesson on cooking meat, and you will learn that the greatest heat must always be given at the commencement, and the joint finished at a lower temperature ; for instance, in roast-

ing, a coating of flour and dripping on the lean keeps in the gravy, while the pores are closed by fierce heat, for the first ten minutes, and tenderness is insured by the *gradual* cooking that follows. The same with



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boiling ; a few minutes in the *boiling* water, which is soon reduced to simmering point, insures meat full of flavour, and tender enough to contradict any rash assertion that boiling water produces hardness, while if further proof is wanting to convince any over-sceptical pupil that cold water will extract the juices of the meat, it is forthcoming at a lesson on sick-room cookery, when the meat for beef-tea is allowed to soak for an hour or more in the water, the change from red to nearly white in the colour of the meat, and *vice versa* in that of the water, being carefully noted.

Eggs, custards, &c., are cooked in the most digestible forms, and gruels of all kinds are very thoroughly cooked, oatmeal gruel being carefully strained. The use of spices in invalid cookery is prohibited at our classes, and the pupils are instructed never to use them save by the doctor's order, the injudicious spicing of food having caused many a night's coughing that could not be accounted for.

An *effervescent gruel* is a general favourite, and very useful in the case of a simple cold. It is made

thin enough to drink from the cup, and, at the last moment, after it is taken to the patient, enough carbonate of soda to cover a sixpence and the strained juice of a lemon stirred in, and it is drunk during effervescence. This will almost invariably induce warmth and sound sleep.

During the preparation and cooking of vegetables in the ordinary simple forms, many a hint might be gleaned at our lessons; the potatoes are brushed before peeling, the latter process being performed in such a way as to rob them of as little nutriment as possible, the best part being near the skin; you would see them "sized," that all may be equally cooked, as they are never cut, then slowly boiled in salted water until a skewer will pierce them easily; after straining they are left for ten minutes, covered with a soft cloth to absorb any remaining moisture, the result being a dish of floury tubers of good colour and appetising appearance, with not a couple of broken ones in half a dozen pounds—as different, in fact, from the ordinary boiled potato as can well be imagined.

In addition to boiled potatoes, we have them steamed and baked in their skins, and cold ones are re-served in a variety of tasty forms; one is a *fish-pie*, for which any scraps of cooked fish and a spoonful or two of sauce (parsley sauce is preferable) are used; the crust being formed of mashed potatoes, first broken up with a fork, then well beaten with a wooden spoon, after mixing with a little milk, until quite light. Another pie is similarly made with cold meat, finely minced, and moistened with stock made from bones; any herbs or scraps of cooked vegetables are added. Ten or fifteen minutes in a quick oven is sufficient to heat the pie through and brown the surface, the pupils being taught the importance of subjecting meat that has already been cooked to the action of heat for as short a time as possible; hence they are careful to *re-heat*, not to *re-cook*. So with hashes and minces: a gravy is first made, thickened, and allowed to boil up well, but the boiling ceases the instant the meat goes in, and as soon as that is heated through it is served, any stale bread at hand being toasted or fried for garnishing, for we attach importance to the appearance of food, however homely its character.

A word in connection with green vegetables. Nowhere are they to be found of a better colour than at our class, though salt and a morsel of sugar are the only ingredients ever added to the water in which they are boiled. These impart flavour, and insure good colour; and however firmly rooted may be the prejudice in favour of common washing soda, one trial is invariably followed by conviction that it is, to say the least, unnecessary. Want of space prevents further comment on this point; but I would urge housekeepers to dispense with it in all culinary operations, save for the removal of grease from utensils. It is certainly out of place in the human stomach, especially when, as I know to be true, some people's idea of "a bit" is a lump the size of an egg; like many other useful commodities, its low price leads to abuse.

What is more nourishing and economical when properly prepared than a *Stew*? and what so greasy,

indigestible, and distasteful when carelessly made? As to our stew recipes, if once the pupils master the fact that any lean meat will make a stew, and that almost all kinds of vegetables and herbs can be added, while nearly every sort of farinaceous grain will serve to thicken as well as give greater nutriment, the rest is easy, and variety in the recipes follows as a matter of course; and after one or two lessons, they quite understand that to stew means to cook at a much lower temperature than boiling point, although in this country the terms "boiling" and "stewing" are used almost synonymously; and they see that a shilling spent in ingredients for a stew is a very satisfactory outlay.

For soups, stews, and the like, we are careful to utilise all outer pieces of celery, such as are often thrown away, or, in place of that, a pinch of celery-seed, as much for its health-giving properties as for its delicious flavour; and much as we appreciate the addition of chopped parsley, we do not despise celery tops.

The mention of *French Soup* always arouses interest (there is a good deal in a name at our lessons). It is made simply of minced vegetables, the greater variety the better, cooked in a little *hot* fat and sugar for a few minutes; stock or water to cover these is added, with an ounce or so of barley or rice to each quart. This, when cooked sufficiently to pass through a sieve, is delicious; leeks and celery are always put in if obtainable, as well as turnips, carrots, and parsley.

Exact proportions of the various ingredients is not made a point of, either in this or many similar concoctions; rather is the fact impressed upon the learners that they may be varied indefinitely, and almost everything turned to account by the exercise of forethought and ingenuity. Indeed, if cut-and-dried recipes were the order of the day, our lessons would lose much of their interest and utility. Let me be understood. I do not assert that haphazard quantities can always be used, but that in flavouring, thickening, and so on, much must be left to individual taste, the best cooks being unquestionably not those who can carry out certain instructions, but those who, if *minus* one ingredient, find a substitute in another.

There are few lessons at which our steamer is not brought into requisition; it fits a large saucepan, and in it many puddings are cooked, the pupils being quick to note the superiority of a steamed pudding over a boiled one; besides being lighter, all trouble with pudding-cloths is avoided, a greased paper taking the place of the cloth.

In conclusion, I would say that much that might be of interest has been necessarily omitted from this sketch of my cookery class, as well as recipes I would like to give; but I trust that this outline of the instruction given may induce others to take up the work, for it is not too much to say that if in after-life the pupils carry out in their own homes the principles of economy, cleanliness, and forethought insisted upon and developed at the lessons I have referred to, their hours of attendance will not have been spent in vain.

MORE ABOUT MY COOKERY CLASS.

BY A PROFESSIONAL TEACHER OF COOKERY.



THE cordial reception of the first paper has induced the writer to give further details of her work, in the hope that they, and the recipes which follow, may prove useful to the readers of the Magazine.

At all times some dishes of a satisfying nature suggest themselves as most suitable, and all here enumerated can be recommended as the result of experience.

To commence with pulse, viz., haricot beans, lentils, and peas—the various kinds of dried ones, including split peas—all, to insure success, need the same preliminary treatment, viz., soaking in cold water for several hours, and long and slow boiling, with the addition of fat, any kind so that it is free from salt, as that condiment, if put in before they are soft, retards the cooking, especially in the case of haricot beans. It is difficult to convince the pupils, in the early stage of their lessons, that, in some cases, no definite time can be fixed for cooking, but one or two lessons in cooking pulse will prove the truth of the statement. Unfortunately they are often prejudiced against soup and stew *minus* meat, and although they acknowledge the excellence of a dish of well-boiled beans with parsley or onion sauce, or, by way of variety, white sauce, they would hardly make a meal of it without a slice of meat. This combination is, however, a mistake; to add nitrogenous matter to pulse is sheer waste; fat is the element which is lacking, hence bacon or butter is a sensible addition.

A very superior *Peas Pudding* is made by boiling the peas in a cloth as usual, and, when nearly done, adding to them in a basin the seasoning, a slice of butter, and a beaten egg; the mixture is then transferred to a greased basin, covered with a cloth, boiled for half an hour, then turned out on to a hot dish.

With reference to lentils, although the whole ones contain the greatest amount of nutriment, they disagree with many people unless they are passed through a sieve, and the skins left behind; even then, as a rule, they are not so easily digested as the split lentils; the latter are also much cleaner and less trouble to prepare, hence we always use them. In making soup of either of the above, it is a decided improvement to add to it a little rice, pearl barley, semolina, or anything of a similar kind; it gives softness, and “binds” the ingredients, which may consist of any kind of vegetables, such as onions, celery, &c., in addition to the pulse. When water only is used to make the soup, a little milk should be put in just before serving; but if

bone stock, or water in which meat has been boiled, is used, the milk is not added; generally speaking, milk in soup is something new to the pupils.

Milk Soup, or *White Soup*, as it is sometimes called, is one of the best and cheapest, and, like most other purées, is not the same thing at all if the passing through a sieve is omitted. Exception is sometimes taken to the use of sieves at artisan classes, but it is surely wise to show what *should* be used, then to point out what *may* be substituted when the requisite article is lacking, as a cullender might nearly always take the place of a sieve; and in many cases it is very encouraging to note that the girls have bought steamers, sieves, and other utensils in order the better to carry out at home what they have practised at the classes. To return to the soup—it is a combination of potatoes, onions, and celery, all cut small, and cooked for ten minutes in a little hot fat; the water is then added, and the whole boiled until soft enough to “sieve;” milk is then put in, the whole made hot, and served with sippets of fried bread.

When *Shin-of-Beef Soup* is on the list the girls are very busy: one binds the piece of meat with tape into a nice shape, and turns it over and over in a little hot dripping until the surface is well browned; another prepares the vegetables—carrots, turnips, leeks, and celery—and ties up a bunch of sweet herbs; a third pours off the fat from the beef, and adds cold water, a pint for each pound of meat, taking care to add salt, and remove the scum just before it boils. In an hour or so the vegetables are put in, and the whole simmered until tender, when the meat is placed on a hot dish, and the vegetables neatly arranged round it; this, with some of the soup served as gravy, makes a good dinner.

Previous to dishing up, however, the bone is carefully removed from the meat, and returned to the pot for a few hours' further cooking; the liquor is then strained off, and left to cool until next day, when it is skimmed and re-heated; the remaining vegetables are sometimes cut into dice and served in the soup, and sometimes passed through a sieve. Semolina or small sago is often used for thickening this, and sippets of fried bread are voted an improvement.

Brazilian Stew is appreciated by all who like a piquant flavour, the pupils finding out very readily that however coarse and tough the meat may be, it can be made tender by this method. A brown jar is filled with pieces of meat—beef as a rule—and sliced vegetables, with a gill of vinegar to each pound of meat—no water; this is cooked in a moderate oven for three hours or more, according to the quantity. Sheep's, pigs', or cows' feet are excellent so cooked, the best result being obtained when the ordinary meat and the feet are in equal weights.

Sea Pie is a homely dish; it is simply a stew made in a saucepan, over which, as soon as it reaches boil-

ing point, a suet crust is laid; this has to be an inch smaller all round than the saucepan to allow room to swell, and the lid must be kept on during the cooking. For this reason there must be a good supply of gravy to start with, as this is really a steamed crust, and is made thin that it may be well done in the time at our disposal. Many things, such as the chopping of suet, are done a lesson in advance, and it will be noted that some of our dishes are not finished the same day; this we consider preferable to omitting them from our programme altogether.

Most of the puddings into which suet enters owe their excellence mainly to the careful manner in which the suet is shredded and chopped, and the length of time given to the cooking.

Ginger, Lemon, Treacle, Fig, and Date puddings are the greatest favourites, and they are all wholesome and economical. Ginger pudding is more especially suitable for cold weather; it is made by mixing four ounces each of flour, bread-crumbs, and suet, eight ounces of brown sugar, and half an ounce each of grated ginger and baking powder, with an egg, and a quarter-pint of milk.

The Treacle Pudding is made with dry materials as above, except the sugar. No milk is required, but in its stead sufficient treacle to make the whole into a stiff mass.

The Fig Pudding is rather more trouble to prepare, but is so nourishing that it deserves notice; the basis is composed of flour, bread, and suet in equal proportions, with which figs, the weight of the three combined, are mixed; the figs being first sliced, then chopped. A spoonful or two of treacle, and one or two eggs, according to the size of the pudding, are added; this, like a Christmas Pudding, can scarcely be boiled too much.

Almost needless to remark, the palates of our pupils vary greatly, but they soon learn that an excess of sugar is a mistake, as it tends to make puddings heavy; and in many cases they are instructed that where bread-crumbs are not available flour may take its place, although the puddings will be less light and not so easily digested.

With bread and some other cheap puddings it may be a new departure to many to use a table-spoonful of fine sago in place of an egg; it binds the mass quite as effectually, and is far nicer than an increased quantity of flour would be.

Let no one suppose that the crusts from our bread are wasted; sometimes they are dried in a slow oven, crushed fine with a rolling-pin, and bottled for use; they are useful for "crumbing" baked fish, baked onions, &c.; or they are soaked in cold water and converted into *Bread Puddings*; these latter, although cheap, are very different from the heavy mess often served as bread pudding, the crusts being carefully freed from the moisture by squeezing them well, and beaten until not a lump remains; indeed, the mixture looks much like a thick batter with fruit in it.

A *Savoury Groat Pudding* is liked by most of the pupils; the groats are soaked for a few hours in just

enough milk to cover them; a table-spoonful of flour, a large onion minced, and a slice or two of bacon cut small, are mixed with every quarter-pound, also salt, pepper, and a little dried sage; this is boiled in a cloth, with room left for swelling, for two or three hours very gently.

A pupil once suggested that the pudding should be "browned," so it was transferred from a cloth to a dish, and put in the oven for a short time.

Only occasionally do pupils venture on a suggestion, though, whenever they do, they are acted upon if practicable, the inventive faculty being just the one the lessons aid in developing.

The use of whole meal is encouraged as much as possible; the pupils use it in *Ginger Cake, Gingerbread Loaf, Digestive Biscuits, Scones, &c.*, as well as in *Bread*. It is noticeable that, if any express a dislike to brown bread, it is because the only kind with which they are familiar is nothing more than that made with bran, and white flour of an inferior quality; this, in most towns, is sold as "brown bread," though it is nothing like that made with genuine whole meal, viz., the whole of the grain ground finely; this is improved by the addition of a little butter, and needs less salt than white flour; the dough should be softer, and longer time allowed for baking it. The Gingerbread Loaf is a useful thing where there are children. A slice is not only nourishing and satisfying, but beneficial in other respects. To make it, brown flour and fine oatmeal are mixed in a bowl; into each pound two or three ounces of good dripping are rubbed; a quarter-ounce each of grated ginger and baking powder, one egg, and enough treacle to make the mixture of the right consistency, are then added, and the whole poured into a thoroughly greased tin and baked in a gentle oven; a fierce oven spoils anything containing treacle, as it readily burns.

This is better when well beaten before the baking powder is put in, *that* being lightly added at the last moment; and, to impress on the workers the absurdity of beating anything *after* baking powder is put in, a glass of water is held up, and some powder sprinkled gradually into it, when effervescence (if the powder be good and freshly made) commences; this soon subsides, however, and, as it will not again effervesce unless more powder is put in, this makes it quite clear that everything containing baking powder should be cooked at once, so that the effervescence may not be over before the heat is applied.

It is seldom that lard has to be bought for any purpose; all scraps of fat, from meat both fresh and cooked, are cut up and melted with a little water in the oven or on the stove, until the fat itself is brown and shrivelled, then the clear liquid fat is strained off for use.

Dripping is clarified by pouring it from the tin, while hot, into a bowl of cold water, with a good pinch of carbonate of soda; the whole is stirred up and left to cool until the fat settles in a cake on the water; any impurities from the bottom of the cake of fat are scraped off, and it is then ready for use.