

## TEA-TABLE DELICACIES FOR THE SUMMER SEASON.

BY P. H. DAVIS, AUTHOR OF "THE PRESERVING OF WHOLE FRUITS," ETC.



SOME little time ago I contributed an article to the columns of CASSELL'S FAMILY MAGAZINE, explaining how fruit could be put to its best use during the time that it was plentiful.\* It is an easy step from fruit, which frequently appears upon the tea-table, to some of the many other things which might well accompany it. In summer one's appetite is likely to be jaded, and therefore something is required to coax it. This then must be my excuse for the present series of recipes.

Every one knows how fittingly blancmange and fruit combine, and as a rule it is taken for granted that cornflour is, or should be, the proper ingredient to make a blancmange. Cornflour will certainly produce a very excellent article, but I think that if a blancmange is required which will keep firm for a day or two, isinglass, or finely shredded gelatine, would be welcomed as a pleasing change. I therefore give such for my first recipe.

## ISINGLASS BLANCMANGE.

Soak 2 oz. of isinglass in  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint of new milk, or if gelatine should be preferred, get that kind which is cut as finely as silken thread, and is nearly as colourless as water. If it should be considered desirable to add solid flavourings, such as spices or fresh lemon-peel, these must be added to the other  $1\frac{1}{2}$  pints of milk which will be required to complete the blancmange. Boil up the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  pints of milk which contain the flavouring, and whilst still scalding hot, pour it upon the first  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint of milk containing the gelatine. If essences are selected for flavouring they should now be added with 4 oz. of castor sugar, and the whole well stirred together; but if solid flavourings have been introduced, the whole of the mixture should now be strained through either a bag or a colander directly into a wetted mould of some pretty shape. Allow the contents of the mould to set, and if it is requisite to have the blancmange ready for the table in a very short time, stand the mould in a vessel of cold water in which a handful of rough salt has been thrown.

When the blancmange is required, dip the mould into hot water for a second or so, turn its contents out upon a glass dish, and decorate, according to taste, with fresh or preserved fruit.

*Note.*—Be perfectly sure that the interior of the mould is quite wet with cold water before attempting to pour the blancmange into it, but be equally careful that no quantity of water is left at the bottom of the mould, or it will form into small rivulets in the pattern and cause the resulting blancmange to have a "cockled" appearance when turned out.

\* "The Preserving of Whole Fruits"—CASSELL'S MAGAZINE, August, 1887, page 538.

## ALMOND SHORTBREAD

is a very nice thing indeed for the tea-table in summer, and can be made quite simply. It is only requisite to use ordinary care in the manipulation of the ingredients, and to be watchful that the resulting cakes are not burnt or, in fact, baked to too deep a colour when in the oven. Allow these delicacies to come to the table of a fine golden-yellow colour, and as a *bonne-bouche* they will stand considerable criticism. Here then are the ingredients:—

1 lb. Ground sweet almonds,  
8 oz. Castor sugar,  
8 ,, Sifted flour,  
8 ,, Good butter,  
The yolks of eight eggs,  
About eight drops of essence of ratafia.†

In the first place, see that the ground almonds are nice and fresh, for if they have the slightest taint or rancidity about them they are not at all suitable for the purpose. Having procured the almonds, mix them with the sifted flour and castor sugar, and then very, very carefully indeed, add a few drops of the ratafia, because too much of it would be positively obnoxious. Mix everything thoroughly and perfectly, so that the flavouring may be carried through and through the other dry ingredients. Make a space in the centre, and in this drop the yolks of the eggs, which have been examined as broken, one at a time, into a vessel. Then melt the butter, add that, and mix up the whole together until it is a nice, firm, stiff paste. This should now be rolled a great many times—in fact it cannot be rolled too frequently. When sufficiently rolled to appear like a strip of cream-coloured satin about a quarter of an inch thick, cut it into small squares with a sharp knife. Pinch up all the edges of each square, and in the centre of every cake lay the split half of a blanched almond. Now butter some baking-tins, lay the cakes upon them, and bake in a moderate oven to a fine pale yellow tint.

It will be found that this almond shortbread is a most delicious thing at all times, but more particularly when eaten in conjunction with fruit, because almonds and fruit always go well together, for the reason that the kernel of a fruit-stone is in nature something like an almond itself.

## A DELICATE SPONGE CAKE.

Separate the yolks from the whites of ten eggs, and whisk the former to a light froth. Then gradually add to them 1 lb. of castor sugar, taking care to beat it up well until all the added sugar has been thoroughly mixed with the other ingredients. Now whisk the egg-whites to a very light but firm snow, and stir that into the batter and mix all thoroughly. Drop in a *small* teaspoonful † of essence of lemon, stir again and then sift in 1 lb. 2 oz. of nice, sweet, dry pastry flour, and

† These are open questions which must be left to (1) the taste of the person, and (2) the strength of the essence. No definite rule can be given.

whisk all up until perfectly blended. Now take some tins of any shape or size desired, wipe the insides out very carefully, and then grease them lightly with butter which has been previously creamed. Freely dust fine sugar over the butter, fill the tins three-parts full of the sponge cake; dust the tops rather heavily with sugar, and bake in a warm oven until the cakes are of a delicate yellow colour.

*A Word of Caution.*—As a rule, the housewife is so anxious to have her cake done before it *really* is baked, that by frequent opening and closing of the oven door she lowers the temperature of the oven, and causes the cake to fall in its tin, and thus become "sad." Here then is a word of advice:—First be certain that the oven is of the desired temperature, and supplied with sufficient fuel to maintain that temperature for the time it is expected the cake will require for baking. When the time has elapsed and it is thought the cake is ready, look at it and judge somewhat by its colour, but at the same time push well into the middle of the cake through one of the cracks in the top of it a good stiff straw. Remove the straw immediately, and if anything sticks to it, the cake is not yet done, but if the straw comes away quite clean the cake is finished.

#### ROSE BISCOTTINES.

These are indeed a novelty, and if properly made, are far superior to the world-famous Shrewsbury cakes. For five o'clock tea they are a decided innovation, and

I claim for them the credit of being unique in every way because they are entirely of my own invention; and I sincerely hope those who would make these lovely little morsels to perfection will do me the credit of keeping exclusively to the proportions of the different ingredients I have given, and likewise will be careful that the biscottines are not over-baked, nor burnt in any way. Take—

1 lb. Fine dry pastry flour,  
8 oz. Castor sugar,  
8 " Butter (fresh),  
½ " Finely sifted biscuit powder,  
A hock-glass-full of rose water,  
Two eggs.

The flour and biscuit powder should be sifted together, and then the other ingredients well rubbed into them. The sugar should now be mixed thoroughly, and a space made in the centre of the lot, in which the eggs and rose water should be poured. Stir everything well together and produce a nice, firm, *stiff* paste. Roll this out into a sheet rather less than one-eighth of an inch thick, and then stamp the biscottines out of it with a small fluted-edged oval hand-cutter. Now lay these cakes on buttered baking-tins, put them in a warm oven, and keep them there till quite done.

By rolling the above dough out to only the thickness of stout note-paper, and baking the biscottines very lightly indeed—only about twenty seconds in a good hot oven—the result will be beautiful wafers to take with ices.

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#### THE GARDEN IN AUGUST.



HE rapidly advancing summer makes us the more careful to pay attention to those flowers that will, either by the gaiety of their colour or the persistency of their bloom, help us to preserve the idea that

it still is summer. Not that we are foolish enough to dispute the claim of August to be one of our most glorious summer months, but still, as August advances we find certain gay colouring in our beds which we look upon not with unmixed pleasure, simply because it is the herald of approaching autumn. Notably in this class is the dahlia, and something must be said about it; for not only is it gay in the month of August, but as late as October even, when our first frost has come, the dahlia, side by side with the chrysanthemum, not infrequently helps to keep up the idea, as we have just said, that it is summer still.

Now, to speak of the soil first, we note that the dahlia is what is called a coarse feeder, and to succeed we must have, therefore, a well-manured soil. A good trenching, then, on any bed in which we intend to grow a collection of dahlias would be advisable, so as to render the soil friable and easy of management. And next, as to the situation of our dahlia-bed: the flower-heads being of a brittle character and easily broken off, choose as far as possible some more sheltered spot for your plants. Why it was that our grandfathers despised the *single* dahlia we cannot tell. At all events, in the present day not a garden would be considered complete without plenty of specimens of the single kind, to which perhaps even more attention is now paid than to the double that fifty years ago was thought so much of. And then as to the propagation of the dahlia: this can be carried out, as in most other cases, either by seed or by cuttings. Your seed will, of course, have been taken from the pods of the best specimens of previous bloom, and for this purpose you should, when your dahlias were in flower, have marked those that you considered as the most perfect. This course is really the wisest, for much time and labour is often lost by taking seed