

## NOVEL NUT CONFECTIONS,

AND HOW TO MAKE THEM.



ALMONDS are very moderate in price just now, and the desiccated cocoa-nut, which plays so prominent a part in hosts of dainties, is lower than ever. Those recipes enumerated below are therefore within the reach of almost everyone. Their digestibility is another matter;

though it is certain that many who find nuts indigestible when only half masticated may partake of them without fear when finely ground; and as this is the condition to which they are brought before they enter into the composition of the dishes, my qualms of conscience are somewhat quieted. Some of these sweets are quite simple, and not very costly when prepared at home, though expensive to buy; and so I feel sure that when a dainty out of the common is wanted, they will be appreciated.

Almost everybody knows and likes the almond paste, which forms all too small a part of bride cake, and nearly all like good chocolate; these combined, produce a real delicacy, that may crop up in all sorts of dishes. The combination is a very agreeable one, but careful mixing must be insisted on. Don't spoil the ship for the proverbial "ha'porth o' tar," but get the best chocolate your means allow.

*Almond and Chocolate Paste.*

Take half a pound of almonds; the Valencias answer for all cooking purposes as well as the more costly Jordans; they should be blanched by bringing them to the boil over the fire in a little pan of water, then rubbing the skins off in a clean cloth. Here are two useful hints in this connection: always put the almonds on in cold water, and always rinse them in cold water before rubbing them in the cloth. Then chop them very small on a clean board; any "foreign flavour" would ruin the delicacy of your dishes. The finer the better. Have ready in a basin an ounce and a half of fresh butter: the freshest of fresh, I should have said; the same weight of pounded sugar and a few drops of vanilla essence; the amount to use depends on the goodness of the chocolate: the more highly flavoured it is with the ever popular vanilla, the greater the chances of success. These are now to be worked to a smooth paste with the back of a wooden spoon; the almonds and the yolk of a large egg being added, a little at a time. Just a shake of grated chocolate must go in from time to time; an ounce will do, but some will like nearly double the quantity, then a little more egg yolk and butter will be wanted. Nothing short of a very velvet-like paste should satisfy you, and it cannot be prepared in five

minutes. The best possible results are obtained when the almonds are pounded with a few drops of rose or orange-flower water instead of being chopped. I would also call the attention of busy people to the ground almonds sold in tins; these are, however, mixed with sugar, which must be borne in mind, or the dish may turn out too sweet to be pleasant.

The uses of this? They are many; here are just a few. Imagine a cake of any light kind, such as Madeira; place a layer of the paste on the top, making it level with a rolling-pin and rounding the sides neatly: points too seldom borne in mind, and which in themselves, if omitted, are enough to stamp the cake as the work of a novice. Then, if an expert in the use of an icing-bag and pipe, take a little coloured icing, and form any design; or finish off simply by sifting coloured sugar over the top. Would you attain still higher success? Then get some good chocolate fondants, and put them over in a pattern, sticking them on with a morsel of icing sugar, and raw white of egg beaten to a paste. Cream fondants are used in just the same way. A delightful addition to the "cake basket" is made by slicing a cake, and "sandwiching" some of the above paste in between the slices, and then cutting it up after pressing well together again.

Then all sorts of fancy shapes may be produced if some cutters are handy, and the cake trimmings will come in for biscuits if stamped with yet smaller cutters. I ought to say that there are lots of people who would like the paste better minus butter, and there is no reason whatever why their whim should not be indulged. Tastes vary, too, much as to sugar; it might be doubled in the foregoing recipe before the mixture would satisfy some; the thing to bear in mind in adding extra sugar is that less moisture in the shape of egg and butter is necessary.

*Almond Aigrettes.*

These are sure to enhance one's reputation, for they are of such all-round utility that they can be as well served for tea as luncheon or dinner, and hot as well as cold. They are made by blending a gill of tepid water, a tablespoonful of salad oil, an egg, a teaspoonful of castor sugar, three ounces and a half of flour, an ounce of ground or chopped almonds, and a few drops of essence of almonds. There is a right way, and the mixing is troublesome if it is not followed. The flour, oil, yolk of egg, and water are to be beaten to a smooth batter; the almonds and sugar follow, and the mass must be beaten for a few minutes, or the puffiness that should belong to the aigrettes will be lacking. The stiffly-beaten white of the egg goes in lightly at the end, and the mixture is put in well-greased patty-pans in little heaps, two forks being used; they should be half-filled only, and the oven must be hot. They are soon baked, and must be

served in a light pile, with plenty of sugar over, for it will be noticed that but little goes in the batter. These may be fried, but there must be lots of fat of good heat, and from the pan to the table is the motto; more flour will be wanted, about half as much again but the batter should be tested; it is stiff enough when it retains its shape in the fat and emerges brown and puffy. Drain on a hot cloth or paper. Almond essence is condemned wholesale by some people, but it is to be had free from poisonous properties and of guaranteed wholesomeness by the makers.

#### *Almond Orange Cake.*

This is simply delicious, as a trial will prove. The materials should be all in readiness, and here they are. Seven ounces each of chopped sweet almonds and fine castor sugar, an ounce of candied orange-peel chopped small, the grated peel of half a fresh orange, a quarter of a pound of butter, the same of fine flour, the same weight of rice-flour or potato-flour (but not *ground rice*), some orange marmalade, and yolks of eggs. The almonds and sugar are first to be blended with the white of an egg, then added to the other materials: enough yolks of eggs being added, one at a time, to make paste that can be rolled out on a board. The mass should look like rich shortbread. It is cut in rounds of four inches in diameter and half an inch thick, and baked in a very slow oven. The marmalade is spread over before serving, and some chopped almonds, that have been baked to a golden brown in the oven, are shaken over. These *may* be dispensed with, but the cake suffers. If for storing for a time, one good-sized thick cake can be made. Now for some very dainty

#### *Dessert Biscuits.*

Some of the last mixture should be rolled out as thinly as it is possible to roll it without breaking; the addition of a few drops of yellow colouring does much to add to the rich appearance. Then cut in a number of fancy shapes, and bake as slowly and carefully as possible; do not remove from the tins until cold. They may be sugared over, or served as they are, or piped with coloured icing. To convert them into fruit biscuits, place on half a cherry, or raisin, or strips of candied citron-peel, or little squares of candied fruit, as pine-apple, or ginger, or anything to taste. In the latter two cases, the baking is finished, and the fruit stuck on with icing sugar; in the other cases the fruit may be baked. Other biscuits that mix well with these are prepared by taking portions of the "almond and chocolate paste," and moulding into tiny birds'-nests; the circumference of a florin is the maximum size, and they may be smaller. Put in some coloured or white comfits to imitate eggs, and dry them on the plate-rack; they should not be baked. Very pretty little cakes, which are really cakes or biscuits, according to size, are

#### *Dominoes.*

Again the "almond and chocolate paste" is brought into use, but it is so excellent that there is no fear of tiring of it readily. The paste must be rolled out in

a thin sheet; the size is a matter of taste; but the *proportions* of an ordinary domino should be observed. Then the decoration must be of a kind to imitate dominoes. The icing used may be white or coloured, and a very small pipe is essential. A more effective way is to go all over first with a pale-coloured icing, and put the dots on in white. These are extremely pretty for festive occasions, and really little trouble to those who have mastered the art of icing.

Here is a delicious dish that somewhat resembles the cakes of the same kind that are popular in Germany; and, by the way, it is a great deal less trouble than one would suppose after reading the directions.

The "filling" is the feature, and it should be prepared while the cake foundation is baking, that both may be ready together.

#### *Walnut Cake.*

Six ounces of flour, five of butter, a tablespoonful each of sugar and chopped almonds, the yolk of a hard boiled egg and that of a raw one, and two tablespoonfuls of skinned and chopped walnuts, form the materials for the cake; they are to be mixed with a light hand, just as for short pastry, and the less water used, the better. The dryness of the flour and the care exercised in the sifting, no less than the goodness of the butter, must receive attention. The tin for baking should be round, and the size of a dinner-plate, and *must* have a turned-up edge. These tins are called "sandwich pans," as a rule, and cost about sixpence each; they are useful for many purposes. After the paste is laid in, the bottom should be pricked, and the oven must be moderate, as the cake should not be dark in colour.

Now for the "filling." First put in a stewpan the yolks of three eggs, half a gill each of milk and cream, and three ounces of sugar, and stir over the fire until thick, but the boiling point is not to be reached. Then, off the fire, beat in the whites of the eggs and a quarter of a pound of chopped walnuts. This is to be put in the cake, the top made smooth and returned to the oven to set. All sorts of flavourings are added to nut cakes in the land where they are an institution. Spice is often used, but we advise that strict moderation be the motto; one does not want a nut cake to taste of spice and nothing more. If served hot, no garnish is needed; but in the cold condition, all sorts of dried fruits are suitable, or a dust of pink sugar is enough. A teaspoonful of chopped pistachios will give the dish a more highly finished appearance. Pistachios are expensive, but it is astonishing what a lot of ground a small quantity will cover in the chopped state, and how completely the dish is transformed.

Here are some biscuits that, for want of a better name, I call

#### *Tip-Tops.*

These are very good, and I assure you that they will keep any length of time, if allowed. Seven ounces of butter and five of golden syrup are first to be warmed together; five ounces of lump sugar to be

rasped on the rind of a fresh orange, crushed to powder, and added with half-a-teaspoonful of the best mixed spice that can be bought: that at two shillings a pound is really cheaper than spice at a shilling; nothing more certainly spoils anything than poor spice. Next put in a couple of ounces each of candied citron, lemon- and orange-peel, very finely chopped: trouble in this direction is well bestowed; finally, two ounces of grated cocoa-nut and the same weight of walnuts or almonds, as most convenient, go in, with half a

pound of pastry-flour and a quarter of a pound of corn-flour.

The mixture is then to be set aside to blend in a bowl, covered with a cloth, for a few hours; it will take no harm if left all night. When ready to bake, shake in as much more flour as will make it stiff enough to roll out and cut in shapes—fingers, or any other—then put it in a gentle oven, and remove when brown and crisp. Remember that everything containing treacle requires steady heat and watchfulness.

DEBORAH PLATTER.

### THE SOCIAL DUTY OF WOMAN.—III.

#### A VISIT OF SYMPATHY.



VISITS of sympathy may be roughly divided into two classes. To begin with, there are the formal calls of condolence, where all you desire is to leave your card silently, or, if needs must, get through a few well-bred commonplaces, and escape as quickly as you conveniently can. If you are only a slight acquaintance, you do not ask for the lady of the house; and it is unnecessary

to add that in any case you devoutly hope the card "with sympathy" may be all that duty requires of you. Either alternative is, at any rate, all that Society demands.

Real visits of sympathy, on the other hand, are like angels' visits: few and far between. It is a platitude to say that to be able to pay visits like these you must have a sympathetic, feeling heart. Unless you happen to be gifted with this "last best gift of Heaven," you will do more good by keeping away. It is a pity, I may here remark, that we do not know our own gifts and limitations better than we do. The poet was wise in his generation who wrote—

"The proper study of mankind is man."

And few accomplishments would be a better equipment for the journey of life than a thorough knowledge of ourselves.

To begin with mourning visits. None of our social duties demand so much from us as these. The really sympathetic visitor—whom we suppose in this case to be more or less intimate—must have sufficient tact

not to intrude where she is not wanted; for as often as not, people like to be alone with their grief. There is nothing in which people differ more than in their way of meeting trouble. One woman (we speak of women, because they are mostly concerned in visits of sympathy) on the loss of a beloved relative will be excitable, wild, nervously anxious to see friends to discuss details; another, not less devoted, but differently organised, mourns solitary, like David for Absalom, and will not be comforted. It is all a question of temperament. The human machine is so complex that one rule will not do for all. But the sympathetic woman will understand both types, and will know that the first does not imply callousness any more than the second implies loss of reason. Kindly, but not far-seeing, people are very likely to misunderstand the peculiarities of grief; indeed, in one case which I myself recollect a visitor was much shocked because a mother who had only the day before lost her only child was fretfully anxious that the cook should have a new kitchen poker. The kitchen poker and the fretfulness were only the outcome of a troubled mind; but the friend ever afterwards persisted in thinking the mother deficient in feeling. A person of a different temperament, but not necessarily more affectionate, would probably have sat down in the ruins of her home, and felt it hardly worth while even to dress in the face of such calamity. Either case proves nothing. But if people with excitable nerves did not in ties of affliction "take it out" by fretting over trifles, the mind might in some cases become absolutely unhinged. The fretting is the safety-valve.

Next among visits of sympathy we must class visits to the sick and the convalescent. These, which used to be called one of "the seven corporal works of charity," are often a source of untold good, both to the visitor and the visited. And this not only as regards the rich, but the poor also. How many a girl has enjoyed her evening's pleasure all the more for having spent a happy afternoon with the inmates of some hospital for incurables, where she has sung and played?