



IN many houses a fish pie is a dish unknown. Almost everybody who eats pastry at all enjoys a patty of oyster or lobster; but for these a rich puff paste is usually employed. I am referring just now to dishes of moderate

richness, which may form a welcome change from the family joint or piece of boiled fish; for very tasty snacks can be concocted, and, as "left overs" may be used to advantage, economy is the keynote of my subject.

At the moment of writing these lines, the oyster scare is rampant. This is not, however, the sole reason why these dainty shell-fish are not introduced into any of the following recipes. Many alternatives are suggested, and those who are used to oyster sauce, or a combination of oysters and beefsteak in the form of a pie, will know for a certainty that they will not go wrong in using oysters in fish pies, particularly with the white kinds. But a word may be said about the digestibility of the dish. It is well known that the oyster in its raw state is the best for the digestion, speaking broadly. Also, that when it is exposed to fierce heat it hardens, and the flavour also suffers.

Therefore, in pies it is a good plan to let the oysters, whether in the form of sauce or used whole, be in the centre, the fish enveloping them around. If they were put at the bottom of the dish, for example, the heat necessary to bring up the pie-crust to the proper standard of lightness would be very detrimental to the oysters. Here, as in all other blends of varying materials, common sense is wanted.

Halibut Pie.

This is worthy of praise; and there are hosts of other fish that are equally good thus treated. You may be rather generous with the butter, the depth of your pocket being a fair guide, for halibut is a fish which bears a good deal of enrichment in the form of butter or cream: should a spoonful of the latter be going begging (such things do happen), let the pie have the benefit.

After washing and drying the fish, cut it in thick slices, then in square lumps, season them with salt and pepper, a morsel of nutmeg, and a few drops of anchovy essence. Pack tightly in the dish, letting little lumps of butter find a place here and there, and half fill up with gravy; this should be made with stock from the cuttings and any inferior parts of the fish, strained, and thickened to the consistence of cream with a little flour. Or the flour can be left out, and the fish dredged with fine bread-crumbs, first browned a little in the oven—they must not be in the least burnt, or will spoil the flavour of the pie. The crust should be moderately rich only. If by chance your pie has been made of cooked fish (not to be despised, be it noted), a very thin crust should be used, and your pie should be ready for consumption after twenty minutes or so in a sharp oven.

Fresh Haddock Pie.

Take a fish of two to three pounds weight, and wash and dry it. Make a stuffing to fill it, with bread-crumbs, scraped bacon, salt and pepper, and powdered herbs, moistened with milk, and bound with a raw egg. The precise proportions of the several ingredients need not trouble you; the main thing is to get it well flavoured and rather moist. One warning:

do not add suet in place of the bacon. Sew up the fish after filling, and bake until three parts done, then let it rest until cold, when it should be cut up and packed in the pie-dish. The backbone must be removed and boiled down with the cuttings to make the gravy, a savoury kind being here called for, as the fish is both a trifle dry and insipid.

Break up and cover the bones, etc., with cold water, and simmer for an hour or two; a thickening of browned flour, a *soupeon* of onion, a pinch of herbs (or use a bay leaf), a dash of ketchup or store sauce, and the thing is done; remember the straining. One important point is to let the gravy get cold before the crust goes on, unless a potato covering be preferred, then the temperature of the added gravy makes very little difference.

This pie is quite deserving of a nice flaky crust, which should also be thin, because a short time in the oven is required; but if a thicker crust pleases you, or is from motives of economy desirable, then the moral is obvious: only half cook the fish in the first instance; in fact, it requires then but little more than thorough browning in hot fat. If the fish be too small, the flavour is not nearly so good: proper size in fresh haddock is a strong point.

Were some such treatment as this applied to homely kinds of fish, they would less often be condemned as dry, woolly, insipid, etc. The pity is that so many housekeepers regard only the expensive sorts of fish as worthy a little attention so far as variety of flavour and appearance are concerned.

As to the pies that may be made from cooked macaroni and fish mixed, there is no end to them. With a generous amount of seasoning and a sprinkling of grated cheese—Parmesan being here demanded—the pie becomes a dish for an epicure. The contents should be moistened with a good gravy or sauce—brown or white, mild or piquant, just according to the nature of the fish; with a good many sorts of fish a tomato sauce or purée will be as suitable as any. With almost all a few spoonfuls of hot cream poured into the pie at the moment of serving may well be borne in mind; for while not absolutely necessary, it makes such a difference, and adds to the cost by such a trifle that no apology is needed for naming it. A shilling goes a good way when fish is cheap, and the other adjuncts can be readily obtained.

Then there is a pie for which there is no particular name, but it is well worthy a trial. The bottom of the dish should be rubbed over with butter, and sprinkled with finely-minced ham—raw if your pie is likely to be long in

the oven; but for most sorts, cooked ham is to be preferred. Then dredge with a little parsley and thyme very finely chopped or powdered, but never use dried herbs if fresh can be got; the result will well repay the little extra trouble. Let the magic bay leaf find a place either under the crust, so that it can be removed when the pie is cut, or powder a morsel and mix with the other herbs; then add pepper and a dust of grated lemon peel and nutmeg.

The sides of the dish should then be treated in precisely the same manner. Now for the filling. Just for the moment I will suppose that you have some such fish as cod, brill, or any thick, white sort, ready flaked, left over from a previous meal, and enough sauce to moisten it. Plain white, parsley, or any other of the familiar sorts will serve. Boil down any bones and trimmings for stock to increase the amount of the sauce, then proceed to fill up your dish, and if you like to season the several layers of fish with the same materials used for the bottom and sides of the dish, very little is added to the cost; as to the difference to the pie, just try it. If you do, you will for ever agree with Dickens's pie-man.

Supposing you had no sauce left; with such a foundation as I have named, a very suitable one may be had from tomato juice. A good bunch of herbs and a chopped onion should be simmered with the tomatoes until done; they simply want sieving to keep out skin and pips, and there is your groundwork. You may make it piquant with a little flavoured vinegar or lemon juice, or add a suspicion of garlic, or mix in some curry paste or powder and stock or gravy, with or without a fried onion; and here is a chance to use up any remnants of boiled rice. In all these ways and hosts of others success should await you.

But in connection with the class of pies I am here detailing, I have in my mind a crust of the flakiest, though not of necessity of the richest, and its tint is the golden brown so many aim at but fail to attain.

Many are partial to a cold fish snack, so here I may remind you that by using a tin plate instead of a pie-dish, and putting an under as well as an upper crust, you may make very good fish pasties from these recipes, which should come in handy for travellers; they are convenient to carry, tasty, and will not get dry, as sandwiches are apt to do. Those who can digest hard-boiled eggs will appreciate the following:—

Fish and Egg Pasty.

Cover a plate thinly with flaky paste, and cover that with cooked plaice or sole in small

fillets, season to taste, and brush them over with enough white sauce or cream to moisten them, coat these with hard-boiled eggs in slices, and repeat the coating; herbs may be added at discretion. Instead of the white sauce or cream, a morsel of curry paste may be mixed with gravy or stock to a thinnish paste; this is admirable if the fillets have been fried or baked. Another method is to use raw fillets of fish, then the crust should be a trifle thicker both bottom and top. There is one point that should be borne in mind: there must be far less moisture added than in a pie with a top crust only, for the simple reason that an excess of the same liquid would make the under crust heavy.

A pie that comes last on my list for the present is an

Economical Shell-fish Pie.

It is so named because it may be varied to so great an extent. Pies of this sort are very common in many parts of France. Take a

small cooked lobster, cut it up and moisten it with butter, milk, cream, fish sauce, or fish stock, or either two mixed; take about the same bulk of bread-crumbs as you have fish, season and mix most thoroughly. "Season with what?" you ask naturally. There is a large choice. Salt and pepper you *must* have; lemon juice or vinegar, with chopped parsley or shredded anchovy, you *may* have; cayenne is optional, and so is a hint of onion. Scores of things occur to me as suitable. Many like the flavour modified with a dash of white fish, pounded and mixed with the rest; or, again, bring out the cheese, but don't overdo it.

The crab, when fresh and in prime condition, is often made into a pie of this sort, and shrimps or prawns may well be amalgamated. The combined materials should form a sort of moist forcemeat, and be piled high in the dish. Use a flaky covering and eat the pie hot, and unless you are exceptionally hard to please, you will vote the result worth the trouble.

DEBORAH PLATTER.



By A. E. WICKHAM, Author of "Two Women," etc.

CHAPTER IX.—HUGH'S RESOLVE.

"OTHER!" Hugh said.

She threw her hands out to him, but seeing his face, dropped them in her lap. Her head sank upon her breast, her tears ceased.

A little silence fell on the room; the look on Hugh's face awed the women and silenced the man. The fire gave a crackle and sudden spurt of light.

"All is to be the same," muttered Sir James.

"You know nothing of him," said Hugh to his mother, "and—and, oh! mother, how could you do it without telling me?"

"I thought you would be angry, and he did not want me to say anything."

"How long has this been going on?"

"He asked me to marry him three weeks ago last Friday, and—I said Yes—and the banns were called at Trentham the next—Sunday."