

SIMPLE SOUFFLÉS.



HAT is a soufflé? or, rather, what should it be? A very light pudding, either sweet or savoury, steamed or baked. There are writers on the *cuisine* who assert that no one can learn to make a soufflé by reading, and that a practical lesson is the only thing to ensure success.

I think otherwise. I yield to no one in my belief

in the value of practical training for any sort of work; but I am of opinion that any person of average intelligence who can make a pudding worthy the name should be able to concoct an eatable soufflé (not, perhaps, a first-rate one) although she had never watched the operation. Why? Just because certain principles underlie the art of the making of soufflés, and if these are committed to memory, the rest should be plain sailing.

There are people who have what is termed a "heavy hand"; there are others who are above paying attention to details; neither of these ought to attempt the task under consideration, as they would be sure to fail.

No mention is made in this paper of the elaborate cold savouries now served as soufflés, and I will confine myself to the humblest of the class of dainties that bear the name. If the first venture should turn out too much of a failure to set on the dinner-table, the chances are that it will be consumed secretly, if not openly. Let all beginners in the culinary art take comfort in the thought that there was a time in the history of the greatest of French *chefs* when the boiling of a potato was beset with difficulties, and that perfection is the child of experience. But to our dishes. First, the

General Rules for Guidance.

The flour, or any other farinaceous substance that may form the foundation, must be dry, free from lumps, and carefully sifted. Eggs should be fresh and separated, so that not a particle of the yolk gets mixed in the whites. The latter must be beaten so stiffly that the egg should not fall from the plate when turned upside down. During the beating a pinch of salt will facilitate the stiffness, and there should be a current of air.

The person beating should stand near an open window or door. However hard the mixture may be beaten *before* the whites of

egg are introduced, there must be nothing more than thorough *mixing* after. For a *steamed* soufflé, the water should simmer regularly the whole time; for a *baked* one, the heat should be great enough to fetch it up without burning; and the smaller the dish, the quicker the heat all through.

From the oven to the table should be the work of a moment; and better keep the eater waiting five minutes for the soufflé than reverse the order, even by half the time. The *serviette** to pin round the tin should be quite ready and well warmed by the time the soufflé is done.

Now we are a little way on the road to success. A last general hint: the most scrupulous cleanliness is absolutely needful; the least taint in saucepan or baking-tin spells failure.

A soufflé-tin proper is to be bought of any good ironmonger; one about three and a half inches in depth and four and a half in diameter will be found a handy size; but the beginner may use a bright new cake-tin, either oval or round: I say new, because one that has been burnt and scraped will not do—the soufflé would stick; and after use it should be wiped out while hot with a clean coarse cloth. Failures will happen, and any burnt part *must* be scraped away; but avoid this as much as possible. Then to grease the tin: no salt should be in the butter used, and it is best melted and brushed thoroughly into every part; the soufflé will stick to any unbuttered portion. Then pin a strip of thick paper, also buttered, round the tin, to come a few inches above, because the soufflé should rise a good deal. This is best pinned at the join and tied round the tin; it is then doubly secure. For a *steamed* soufflé, put on a saucepan of water, and when it boils, set the tin in; the water should come an inch or two round it, and must not touch the paper; a sheet of paper should be buttered on the top side and laid over before the lid goes on. The soufflé should rise gradually, and when done, must be firm to the touch. The one below will take about twenty minutes, or a trifle more. It is called

Vanilla Soufflé.

I have given this first place partly because it is very easy, and partly because those who can make this may make a dozen more by altering the flavouring. It is literally a dozen dishes in one. There is no harm in

* This is to be put round the tin or dish in which the *baking-tin* is slipped.



THE QUEEN'S KITCHEN, WINDSOR CASTLE.
(From a photograph by H. N. King, Shepherd's Bush.)

trying one's prentice hand with even half the quantities given below.

An ounce of flour, an ounce of butter, three-quarters of an ounce of castor sugar, a quarter of a pint of milk, about half a teaspoonful of vanilla essence, and four eggs* are required. The mode is as follows:—Take a little saucepan and melt the butter by gentle heat; shake the flour in and stir to a smooth paste; then, still stirring, add the milk; let it boil up, not ceasing the stirring, and when it leaves the sides of the pan take it from the fire and sweeten it; then put in the yolks of three eggs, one at a time, beating hard, but do not put the pan on the fire again; the flavouring and four stiff whites go next (see the hints above). Should this turn out "tough," you may take it for granted that you have *over* cooked it. If *under* done, the sides will crack.

The turning-out needs a little "nerve." The soufflé must be gently slidden on to the dish. Don't be in a violent hurry, although

* For soufflés made with three or four eggs, omit one of the yolks, the whites generally exceed the yolks in this proportion.

speed is important. Cut the string and take the paper off, lift the tin up and slope it towards you, then turn it, that the edges of the soufflé may leave the tin; and in turning it on to the dish, mind not to drop the tin, or its weight would crush the soufflé. If any sauce, pour it gently and neatly round without splashing.

Any good sweet pudding sauce does, but a very nice one is made by boiling a tablespoonful of raspberry jam in a gill of water for a minute; a little colouring, a few lumps of sugar, and a squeeze of lemon-juice will be wanted: or, in place of lemon-juice, a heaping teaspoonful of good marmalade. The sugar and water should boil to a syrup before the rest of the materials are added; and in straining the sauce, remember to make the strainer very hot. Apricot jam in place of raspberry is only one of the dozens of variations, and a little thin melted butter sweetened with red currant or black currant jelly can be recommended.

The amount of sugar in the soufflé itself is small, for much would reduce the lightness; for this reason a sweet sauce is called for.

Now conjure up some other flavourings for the soufflé proper; and when dealing with spices, let me remind you that essences often give a better flavour than ground spices, without injuring the colour.

Cassia, nutmeg, mace, ginger, cinnamon, and many others, are almost certain to be liked, but always adapt the sauce to the dish. For example: if flavouring the soufflé with ginger, it will at once occur to you that the syrup from some preserved ginger, with a little of the fruit, if you like, in tiny dice, forms a fitting adjunct to the sauce.

Lemon Soufflé.

This will take about forty minutes' steaming. The ingredients are an ounce and a half each of sugar and butter, the same of arrowroot or corn-flour, four eggs, a lemon, and half a pint of milk. The lemon must be wiped and peeled, and the peel infused in the milk for a time on a warm corner of the stove. When well-flavoured, the milk is strained off, and the materials blended in the way I have detailed above. Another way, which I recommend to those who do not begrudge a little extra trouble, is to rasp the rind of the fruit on the lumps of sugar, and then to crush it, and add as before.

Of course, essence of lemon might be used, but the dish is not so good in any respect. A little good custard, flavoured with fresh lemon-rind, goes well as sauce with this. Should you have no arrowroot or corn-flour handy, use a couple of ounces of pastry-flour; the larger quantity is owing to the difference in the amount of starch. Of arrowroot less is needed, by reason of its starchiness; this should be borne in mind always in making variations of this sort.

Orange Soufflé.

This needs a little less sugar than the lemon soufflé. The rind of a small orange should be used in addition to that of half a lemon; otherwise, proceed as above. A good sauce is composed of the juice of an orange and half a lemon, some sugar, and a little orange marmalade, boiled to a thin syrup.

Cherry Soufflé.

This is a dish that is very popular in Germany. The term *auflauf*, the German word for soufflé, is applied to dishes of very peculiar kinds, many of which are of a very substantial nature so far as the foundation goes; in such cases a large number of eggs have to be used to produce the lightness of a really good soufflé; and some are troublesome to prepare. The following is one of the simplest: the foundation is nothing more

than a carefully-made batter, and all sorts of stone fruit may be used in the same way, the spice being regulated according to taste. Too much sugar, however tart the fruit, must be guarded against; a little extra sweetness in the sauce should be relied on to make up any deficiency.

Take an ounce of fine flour, the same of potato-flour, half a pint of milk, two ounces of butter, three eggs, a saltspoonful or so of powdered cinnamon, two or three ounces of sugar, and half a pound of ripe black cherries. The flour and milk are blended and stirred over the fire to the boil, and cooked until smooth, then removed and stirred until half cold. The butter is beaten to a cream and added with the yolks of the eggs, and the beating can hardly be too hard; the sugar and spice go next, and then the whites of the eggs, prepared as detailed above; here the yolks and whites are equal; at the same time, an extra white always means increased lightness. The fruit is put in just before baking, and if not put in the oven at once it will sink. A good heat is wanted at starting, but after, a slightly reduced temperature is desirable. This may be simplified by using an ounce more flour and an egg less, and a smaller amount of fruit; the dish will then be found good.

Sugar alone may be sent to table, or sugar and cream, or a sauce of the melted butter type, with sugar and a little syrup—that from bottled cherries comes in handy; but for the best dishes some cherry syrup is used, drawn from the fruit as for making jelly, and it is much improved by mixing a little currant juice with it.

Apple Soufflé.

When apples are cheap, this is quite a low-priced, though high-class dish, in the matter of taste and appearance. There are hosts of ways of preparing the apples for the base, but not one beats the simple one of baking them in their skins.

Supposing, then, half a pint of pulp be handy, free from core and skin, of course: let it cool, then beat it up until white and foamy with white sugar and a little spice; the grated peel of a lemon is a good flavouring, or some like almond essence; then add half a pint of batter, prepared as for the cherry soufflé given above, but with the yolk of one egg only, and the whites of two. Butter is optional—from an ounce to two or three would be used by many cooks, or cream would replace it. It wants a moderate oven, and should be dredged with sugar.

Space fails to tell of the number of soufflés of the *savoury* order, but with the Editor's permission, they shall have attention later.

DEBORAH PLATTER.