

CHRISTMAS POULTRY AND GAME, AND HOW TO COOK IT.



THERE are many persons who regard poultry and game, but especially the latter, as expensive luxuries, that should be indulged in only at rare intervals or on special occasions. Of all great occasions there are none equal in importance to the present. Of all birthdays that we celebrate none can compare with *the* birthday. Of all feasts that we keep, how do they sink to insignificance when contrasted with *the* feast! When, too, we cast our eyes over the world, and remember that this day all nations, peoples, and tongues unite in homage and praise to One Who, meek and lowly, 1900 years ago, first preached the gospel of mercy and compassion, love and forgiveness of sins, who can doubt the divinity of the Author and Founder of the feast?

There are other persons who consider either poultry or game as necessary to their daily dinner, and who order them regardless of the variation in price which they undergo at different seasons of the year. For instance, a couple of chickens, weighing a little over a pound each, will cost more in early spring than a couple of substantial fowls weighing, perhaps, four pounds each, would in July or August. Early spring chickens are undoubtedly expensive luxuries, and so are grouse at 12s. a brace. On the other hand, a couple of fowls, weighing, perhaps, eight pounds, if they can be bought at 6s. a couple, are as cheap, if not cheaper, than butcher's meat, especially if we take into account the very important use to which the bones of the fowls can be applied. Game also varies considerably in price, especially in very hot weather, when there is a large supply, and the danger of the game getting too high if not sold off quickly; and we must also take into account the increased importation of foreign game from Russia, Norway, and even America.

Probably the two standard dishes at the present season are the humble goose and the patrician turkey. How many a poor family

there is to whom poultry, like Christmas, comes but once a year!

At the season of Christmas there is an enormous demand for geese; and, thanks to Free Trade and the laws of supply and demand, the supply is equal to the occasion. Hundreds of thousands of geese are sent over from the Continent, and can be bought at times as cheap as 6d. per pound; and many a poor household, like Bob Cratchet's of old, are enabled to "make merry with the goose," while no doubt the children, like his, get steeped in sage and onion up to their eyebrows. We will commence our few practical hints on poultry and game by giving a few words of advice on "How to cook the poor man's goose," more especially as there is an old saying that a goose is too much for two but not enough for three. If there is any truth in this, it is certainly very important to know how, in cooking the goose, to make the most of it. And the difficulty increases somewhat as, practically, too often many persons are dependent upon the baker's oven. Besides, there are many of our readers who would gladly advise their poorer brethren how to improve their Christmas dinner if they only knew how, notwithstanding the fact that the poor too often resent any interference in their domestic arrangements, never mind how kindly or how wisely such advice may be given.

The poor man's goose is generally sent to the bakehouse as follows:—The goose is placed, just as it is, in the middle of a large tin, and a heap of sage and onions is placed on one side and potatoes peeled and cut up for baking on the other. The idea of placing the sage and onions inside the goose evidently is an advancement in the art of cooking which they have not yet reached. First, a few words on the sage and onion stuffing. It is not every one, perhaps, that is aware of the fact that French cooks, who are generally, and justly, supposed to be superior to the English, differ altogether in their ideas of sage and onion stuffing from our own cooks. In England it is customary to make our sage and onion stuffing as follows. Supposing we have a large goose, we should take, say, six good-sized onions, parboil them till they are nearly tender, and then chop them up fine with either six fresh sage leaves or twelve dried, the allowance being one fresh leaf or two dried to each onion. In addition to this, we should add a tablespoonful of dried breadcrumbs to each onion, and a little pepper and salt. Some cooks add an egg. The whole of this stuffing is put inside the carcass of the goose, and is of course securely fastened in with a skewer or string, and roasted with it. If a Frenchman were going to stuff a goose, he would take, say, six onions, but would add nearly twenty times the quantity of sage. In France the proportion is in quantity three-parts onion and one part sage. The sage leaves are parboiled for a couple of minutes, and then stewed with the onions in a little butter. Those who have ever eaten ducks or geese abroad—in France—will probably remember that the sage entirely overpowered every other flavour, and the stuffing resembled in appearance dark spinach. Of course this variation of stuffing is entirely a matter of taste, and perhaps some persons may be disposed to try the French method as an experiment. There is one thing to be said in its favour. Supposing a duck or goose has been kept in a damp or close larder, and consequently has reached that stage which is generally described by housekeepers as

"it ought to be cooked immediately." In this case the French stuffing is very useful. If we wish to make a goose go as far as possible we must have plenty of stuffing, and have the stuffing mild, and we would recommend, in cases where a small goose is cooked for a large family, two tablespoonfuls of breadcrumbs to every onion instead of one; and in this case we may add a little butter in order to avoid the possibility of the stuffing being too dry.

Another point to be borne in mind, if we wish to make our goose go as far as possible, is to have plenty of apple sauce. This is especially important where there are children, who as a rule enjoy the sage and onion stuffing and the apple sauce more than the meat itself. Boiled potatoes are much more suited to be eaten with goose than baked, and probably it is only amongst quite the poorer classes that baked potatoes are ever served in conjunction with it.

There is always a charm in novelty, and we might ask ourselves the question, "Is there any other method of cooking a goose besides roasting it? We wonder how a goose would taste boiled. It is an experiment we never tried, nor did we ever hear of its being boiled." But the idea provides material for thought. In France it is a very common thing to meet with a goose that has been braised. For this purpose we should require a large oval stew-pan, and in private households an ordinary fish-kettle would answer every purpose. We must first of all take a couple of large onions, half a dozen fresh sage leaves, and a teaspoonful of fresh thyme, or double that quantity of dried thyme, and having parboiled the onions, chop them up very fine first, and mix them all together with the herbs. Many French cooks add rosemary—a teaspoonful will be enough; add about half a grated nutmeg, pepper, and salt. We then stew these onions and herbs in about a couple of ounces of butter for about ten minutes. You then place this in, say, the fish-kettle, with half a pound of butter, a small handful of parsley, a small head of celery cut up, and a carrot sliced. Add a quarter of a pint of sherry, and place the goose in the fish-kettle; put on the lid (which ought to fit very tight), and let it what is called braise for nearly two hours. The goose must be turned from time to time over and over, in order that it may acquire a good colour. When the goose is thoroughly cooked, if any portions lack colour, the light coloured parts may be browned with a salamander or red-hot shovel. Next take a pint of good stock or gravy and throw it into the fish-kettle, and let it boil up, and scrape off all the brown sediment that may have collected on the sides and bottom of the fish-kettle, exactly in the same way that we pour boiling water into a tin that has roasted a large joint of meat in order to make the gravy. This very rich gravy must now be poured off, strained, skimmed, and thickened with a little brown roux or browned flour. Some must be poured over the goose, and the rest served separately in a tureen. The goose is generally sent to table with a border of glazed turnips or glazed onions, and in Italy small heaps of boiled macaroni are placed between each. A goose cooked this way is extremely nice. Foreign geese are much coarser, but fortunately much cheaper, than English ones. The fumes arising from the herbs and wine impregnate the meat, and render it exceedingly nice. A very cheap common wine is quite good

enough for the purpose. It is a good plan to put a heavy weight on the lid of the fish-kettle, though of course a long oval braising pan is still better adapted for the purpose, as in that case when used abroad they always put hot charcoal on the lid.

In Belgium, when a goose has been braised in this manner, and some of the rich bright gravy poured over it, it is sent to table surrounded by a border of glazed vegetables such as turnips, onions, carrots, and Brussels sprouts.

Glazed vegetables make a very pretty border to a variety of dishes, but there are many English cooks who do not even know what glazed vegetables mean. To make glaze for vegetables is so simple and so cheap, that we would strongly recommend a trial, especially at the present season of the year, when it is customary to indulge in a little extra hospitality. What we want is a little gelatine and a little caramel. Caramel, as you probably know, is burnt sugar dissolved in water, and should be of the consistency of treacle. It is a great saving of both time and trouble to buy a small bottle for eightpence, which will probably last you for months. It is sold by grocers under the somewhat grand name of Parisian Essence. To make glaze, all we have to do is to open a packet of gelatine and put a large pinch into a tea-cup—we will say half a tea-cup. Now pour sufficient water over the gelatine to rather more than cover it. Let this stand, and in about an hour's time the gelatine will swell and absorb the water, and the cup will appear nearly full. Put the cup in the oven, and in five or ten minutes we shall have rather more than half a cupful of what looks like white glue. Add about half a teaspoonful of Parisian Essence, or caramel, and stir it up, and we have what looks like dark, old-fashioned treacle, very nearly black. Suppose you have some young carrots, turnips, or Brussels sprouts, drained off from the boiling water and quite dry; dip a paste brush into this glaze, and paint them over. The difference in their appearance is almost magical. You can paint over some small baked onions, and indeed almost any kind of vegetables. A roast turkey can be surrounded by these glazed vegetables, as we shall show by-and-by, in describing that very *recherché* dish, turkey à la *chipolata*. If you have this glaze ready, it is a great improvement to paint the breast of the goose with it, and pour some of the gravy round the base.

In the case of having cold roast fowls for luncheon or supper, it is well worth while to make a little of this glaze in order that they may be properly decorated. Brush the outside of the fowl, and it will assume the appearance of a well-polished Spanish mahogany table. Fill in the crevices with bright green parsley, and put plenty of parsley round the base. A few small red tomatoes, placed on the parsley make the dish look exceedingly pretty.

Supposing we are going to give a little supper party. It is wonderful what a difference half a teacupful of this glaze will make, although it only costs a few pence. Supposing we have a cold tongue, or a piece of cold pressed beef; its appearance, after it is glazed and before, makes all the difference between a dish fitted for a wedding breakfast and a homely one that we may meet with in a cottage; or perhaps a better simile would be, the difference between a plank of mahogany just planed in a carpenter's shop and the top of a well-kept mahogany table.

The Christmas turkey is as standing a dish among the well-to-do classes as the goose is amongst their poorer brethren. In high-class cooking, where expense is no object, few dishes rank higher than the turkey stuffed with truffles à la *chipolata*. It is exceedingly expensive, chiefly on account of the truffles;

and in London there are many who, at Christmas time, send over to Paris and have their turkey sent back ready stuffed. The *chipolata* ragoût by which the turkey is surrounded is also somewhat expensive, as, properly speaking, it should contain cockscombs, button mushrooms, truffles, quenelles of forcemeat, besides carrots and turnips cut into pretty shapes, small round balls of streaky bacon, and chestnuts. If we leave out the cockscombs, quenelles, and the truffles, this ragoût ceases to be really expensive, as a tin of mushrooms can now be bought at a, comparatively speaking, trifling cost.

First of all, we must give up stuffing the turkey with truffles; but a very good substitute can be made with chestnuts. A turkey can be stuffed with chestnuts only, but it is better and more customary to mix the chestnuts with some ordinary veal stuffing: half of each is the usual proportion. Suppose we are going to have roast turkey à la *chipolata*, we should want some of the chestnuts whole, to go round the turkey by way of garnish. If the turkey is a large one, we should want, say, six dozen chestnuts, half of which will be required for the stuffing. We must first of all peel the chestnuts; and to do this easily (as otherwise it would be a very long job), put them in a saucepan or stewpan with a little butter, put them on the fire, occasionally shaking the saucepan. In a very short time the peel will come off without any trouble. The chestnuts should then be boiled till tender in a little good stock, and half the quantity taken out and pounded, and mixed with a similar quantity of ordinary veal stuffing. With this we will stuff the turkey. The next point is the ragoût. We shall want a small tin of button mushrooms, and some carrot and turnip. These must be cut into little round balls, about the size of a small walnut. They must be boiled till tender in a little good stock; and we must remember that the stock improves their flavour, while they improve the flavour of the stock. A piece of streaky bacon should also be cut up into round balls, about the same size, and fried brown on the outside. We already have three dozen chestnuts, boiled tender. Some good, rich, brown gravy must be made from the stock in which we have boiled the carrots, etc., and to which should be added the water in the tin of mushrooms. The gravy must be made thick with brown roux, made of a rich dark colour with a few drops of the Parisian Essence, and a wine-glass of sherry should be added to it. A little of this gravy should be poured over the turkey and a little round the base, while the bulk should be served separately in a tureen. The button mushrooms, the chestnuts, the round balls of carrot, turnip, and bacon, should be dipped in the thick bright glaze we have been speaking of. Little heaps of each should be piled up round the dish, so that a little heap of vegetable, either carrot or turnip, is placed alternately right round the dish. Thus a heap of chestnuts, mushrooms, or bacon will always have a little red heap on the one side and a little white heap on the other. The turkey itself should be ornamented with a couple of imitation flowers, one cut out of a carrot and the other from a turnip. These colours will of course match with the colours round the base.

There are many ways of utilising the remains of a cold turkey. Of course the drumsticks can be grilled, and we can have from the remainder minced turkey, in making which we can use up the remains of the gravy, mushrooms, chestnuts, and fried balls of bacon, while the vegetables, carrot and turnip, if any are left, should be placed round the edge. A very nice dish for supper can be made from cold turkey, in the shape of a mayonnaise salad. We will not enter into the details of making an ornamented mayonnaise salad, beyond

pointing out the very pretty decoration that can be made if any of the white part of the breast of the turkey is left sufficient to be cut into slices. Cut some thin slices off the white meat of the turkey, and get a few slices of red tongue. Now, with a cutter or knife cut these red and white slices into the shape of a cockscomb, and dip them into the glaze, which should be made rather thinner for the purpose. When they are cold they will be bright and shiny. These should be placed alternately round the base of the mayonnaise salad; the pieces cut off should of course be added to the meat, and placed underneath the lettuces.

In conclusion, a few words on Game. In England, it is customary to serve game plainly roasted, with some good gravy and bread sauce, or fried breadcrumbs, as the case may be. English game is so superior to foreign that we can well afford to do without any accessory to flavour, and trust to the game itself. There is one point worth mentioning in connection with game, and that is, what are we to do with a grouse or brace of pheasants when they are undoubtedly regular old stagers. These very old birds, even if hung a long time, are hardly worth eating, they are so tough. We will suppose we have got an old grouse, too tough to be roasted in the ordinary way; what can we do with it? An old bird like this will make half a gallon of really first-rate game soup, and will well repay the trouble of making. We shall want, say, a couple of pounds of knuckle of veal, or rather more. Chop up the bone of the veal into little pieces, and put it with the veal in a stock-pot with a couple of onions, in which have been stuck half a dozen cloves, a carrot, a turnip (small), and a head of celery (also small). Let all this boil for six or seven hours, and keep adding water, so that the quantity is about half a gallon. In the meanwhile, partially roast the grouse. Now strain off the stock, cut up the grouse into little pieces, and put it in the stock to boil. Do not forget to pour a little of the stock into the tin in which the grouse is roasted, so as to catch the drippings. Let the whole boil till the bones come out quite bare, add a small teaspoonful of aromatic flavouring herbs. These are sold by grocers under the name of herbacious mixture. Now rub the whole of the meat of the grouse through a wire sieve, with the soup, after first removing the dry bones. Thicken the soup with a little brown roux, and add a claret glass of sherry to the soup before sending it to table. This is a far better method of treating old game than trying to keep birds till they are very high in order to get them tender. We may add that game soup should be dark in appearance, and in order to attain this object we can add about a teaspoonful of our Parisian Essence. The thickness of the soup should as much as possible depend upon the meat rubbed through the sieve, and very little roux should be added; in fact, only sufficient to give it consistency. When sent to table in the tureen, whoever helps the soup should bear in mind to give it a stir before each helping, as the meat rubbed through the sieve is a sort of powder, and has a tendency to sink to the bottom of the tureen.

Game soup can be made from partridges, pheasants, and Norwegian grouse. These latter should be kept a long time before being used for the purpose. If game soup is made from hare, or the remains of roast or jugged hare, an exactly similar method should be pursued, including the addition of the aromatic herbs; only, in the case of hare soup it is a great improvement to add a teaspoonful of red currant jelly to every quart of soup. Game soup should not be thick, like pea soup, but of the consistency of ordinary good mock-turtle, as if too much roux is added it overpowers the flavour of the game.