

THE POSSIBILITIES OF A LEG OF MUTTON.

By LINA OSMAN COOPER, Author of "We Wives," etc.



HAT is a good house-keeper? This sounds like a conundrum. It was only a question asked by an old lady, of a friend, one bright summer afternoon. The answer was short and terse.

"One who can give two hot dinners from one leg of mutton."

Now I would like every woman who reads THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER to be a good house-keeper; so I will tell how to make four dinners from the same joint.

Most people know how much easier it is to cater for a large party than a small one. A haunch or a saddle, or a quarter, or a round is such a satisfactory kind of dish to order. But take a family of three members. Any of these joints would entail a week of cold meat afterwards. Few palates can tolerate such monotony. Yet re-heated animal food has lost much of its nourishment.

Fancy cuts, on the other hand, are more expensive than a good joint. To an economical mind—economical often from necessity, not choice—this is a serious objection to game, or cutlets, or kidneys, or sweetbreads. Besides, many of my readers live in the country, "far from the madding crowd"; only those who do so can understand the difficulties of housekeeping. The butcher only opens his stall once a week in a neighbouring village. Even then we must be content with what we can get, and a joint is always the safest and readiest purchase.

Under these circumstances and for such-like reasons, I will try to explain what ought to be done with a leg of mutton weighing from thirteen to fourteen pounds. First, choose a nice joint—lean very red, fat very white. Hang in your larder—it is well-ventilated of course, stone floor, thorough current of air—for a week at least.

Now, with a sharp knife, cut from the centre a thick steak. It should not be less than two inches thick, and it will weigh about two and a half pounds. Dredge with flour, and slightly pepper and salt it. Have a baking-tin ready with a spoonful of water in it. Place in the steak. Cover down closely with another tin or a plate. Be sure the meat is well closed in, for it has to be cooked by its own steam in the oven. An hour afterwards you will find the fillet delicately browned and as tender as game. There will be a little thick gravy to pour over it and it will melt in your mouth. For an invalid or dainty appetite, this is a most delicate way of cooking mutton chops

of all sorts. They cannot be tough. They cannot be overdone, so are ready for even an unpunctual person.

For dish number two. Cut off the lap, the shank bone and a little of the knuckle. Put a layer of onion rings in a saucepan, followed by one of the meat and then by one of sliced potatoes. Another layer of meat and so on, using the "lap" as a coverlet for all. Cover down closely. The juice of the onions, potatoes and mutton is sufficient moisture. Result—a savoury, succulent, Irish stew.

The third day we take the knuckle end. It must be plunged into boiling water, allowed to bubble up once, then drawn aside and simmered for an hour. Either a few capers served in a cupful of the liquid the mutton has been boiled in, or a dash of green sauce, makes this a tempting dish. Carrots and turnips served round the dish add to its wholesomeness and attractiveness.

Variety may be had in this dish, also, by boiling it with rice as you would a sheep's head. This is most savoury and economical.

The fourth dinner is the biggest one. We have kept it for the last, as we need mutton in prime condition for roasting, for remember, we have the chief end of the leg to account for still.

First, it must be boned. Then stuffed with a savoury force-meat. Tied together with a tape and roasted or baked in the oven. If cooked in the latter way, some peeled potatoes may be done along with it in the same tin.

Red currant jelly should be eaten with this dish.

I have spoken of four dinners, but the possibilities of a leg of mutton embrace five, if a *réchauffée* is allowable.

From the remnants soup and a curry, or cottage pie, or rissoles can be evolved.

The liquid in which your knuckle was boiled has, of course, been poured into an earthenware vessel and preserved. If left in a saucepan it will be worthless. You have also the shank bone and the fresh uncooked "tibia" from the thick end. Chop both up and add to the water. Have ready a cupful of peas, split, or, if in summer, of any fresh vegetable. Evaporate by boiling until you have only a pint of clear or thick soup as you may choose. If dried peas are used, press the *purée* through a sieve, and serve with sippets of fried breadcrumb and a dust of powdered sage. If a "sprine" soup is the one in hand, just before dishing add some tiny stars and diamonds and moons of carrot, beetroot, and turnip, and a spoonful of well-boiled green peas.

For the *réchauffée*.—For a cottage pie, pass every remnant of cold boiled or roast meat from your different dishes through a mincing machine. These useful little articles are rather expensive to buy, costing 6s. 9d. and upwards. But they well repay their first cost. If you have not one, an American mincer, consisting of three knife blades fixed in a circular handle (cost 1s.), or an ordinary carver must do, some

way or other; mince your scraps finely (putting aside all bits of fat to be "rendered" into dripping or chopped up for the hens). Moisten with a little of the soup mixture. Season with onion, pepper, salt, and a spoonful of relish or ketchup. Mash smoothly some cold potatoes with a little milk. After lining a pie-dish with this, put in your mince, and cover with a thick blanket of potato mash. Score with a fork and bake until of a light crisp brown. This will be very unlike the dry, unsavoury pie so often put before one by Mary Jane. The envelope of potato will have kept in every drop of gravy and the delicate, subtle aroma of mushroom, etc. This dish will be fit not only for the servant's hall but for the master's table.

Everyone knows how to make rissoles, I suppose. Everyone does not know how to cook them. Therein lies the secret of a dainty, chef-like dish. Having made your circulars of well-moistened mince, dip in the beaten yolk of an egg and roll in breadcrumb. These can only be prepared properly in one way. Dry every scrap of waste bread on a tin in the oven. Roll and crush with a pastry pin and bottle for use. Fresh breadcrumb never look the same, however carefully sieved.

Of course, you have a pot of prepared fat.

In these days of Kensington diplomas and general knowledge, I will not insult any reader by supposing they have not a dripping saucepan always on hand. Heat until every bubble and fizzle has subsided. When a blue flame plays on the surface plunge in your frying basket (price 1s. 2d.) previously packed with rissoles. Immediately the boiling fat will hermetically seal every surface of the meat balls. A few minutes to warm through and brown a golden colour, and the rissoles are done. Let drain for a few seconds. Then arrange your crisp, savoury eggs round a pile of dry rice that has been properly boiled. Every rissole must be ornamented with a tiny spray of parsley fried or fresh. On the top of the snow-white pile of snowflakes must also rest a bunch of the garnish. One or two spoonfuls of chutnee—I will tell how to make this condiment cheaply at home in another paper—will keep the parsley in place; and you will have as pretty a dish as you could get in the Metropole or at the Langham.

With this the possibilities of a leg of mutton do not ever come to an end. Toby the dog may sharpen his incisors on the clean white bones left, or Mary Jane may use them as fuel in her close range (see G. O. P. Dec. 1894). Every bit of bone or gristle or grease may be scraped into the hens' dish and will not be lost.

Can anything further be done with our joint? I trow not.

The wise man of old said, "A prudent wife is from the Lord." The husbands or fathers of our readers will not be backward in praising us if we likewise use foresight and skill even in the matter of a leg of mutton.

VARIETIES.

FAMILY LIFE IN JAPAN.—Japanese children are brought up under a compound system of bitter and sweet, by which the father is supposed to be strict, whilst the mother is benevolent. In fact, according to the Japanese idea, one of the four terrible things in the world is the strict father, the others being earthquakes, thunderstorms, and conflagrations.

IN PRAISE OF SHAKSPEARE.—Goethe says of Shakspeare: "His characters are like watches with dial-plates of transparent crystal—they show you the hours like others, and the inward mechanism is also visible."

BEYOND REASON.—The utmost reach of reason is to recognise what an infinity of things go beyond it.—Pascal.

TALKING WITH UNDERSTANDING.—If all people knew what they were talking about there would not be nearly so much said as there is now.

HEAVEN ON EARTH.—There are too many people who talk much about what a happy place heaven is, who do not a single thing to make this world resemble it.