

DIFFERENT WAYS OF MAKING AND SERVING FRENCH PASTRY AND CAKES.



As I write I have in my mind's eye the tempting-looking chocolate and coffee *éclairs* that most high-class confectioners display. But these high-class confectioners are not to be found in all towns, to say nothing of the

numberless small country places where any variety of that species is unknown, and yet it is often here that hostesses are at a loss to find something a little out of the common with which to regale their guests at the small social functions in which most people find enjoyment. Chocolate *éclairs* are universal favourites with old and young, and yet they are seldom to be seen where the refreshments provided are home-made. Let no one say, "How absurd to try to make these delicacies from written instructions!" a remark, I must own with regret, that I should not be surprised to hear, for truly in many of the recipes one reads the quantities are vague, and the length of time required for cooking often left to one's imagination, while whether the oven should be hot, cool or moderate, is a point apparently not worth consideration. I can only suppose that in these days of cookery schools and County Council classes scattered all over the country, writers think details are superfluous. And yet generally it is the details which make or mar not only the recipes, but many other things in life. Want of detail, then, shall not be laid to the charge of this paper, and if attention be paid to that, I feel sure I can promise my readers success.

Personally my experience is that French pastry is easier to manipulate than puff pastry, and it is a great deal more digestible and not any more expensive, though cheapness cannot be claimed for it; but there are occasions when it is necessary to launch forth a little in the matter of expense.

Before giving the actual recipes I should like to say a little about weights and measures. My reason for doing so is this: a little time ago, in speaking to a friend with whom I was staying, about the usefulness of *reliable* recipes, she remarked, "I do wish that in giving quantities the American plan of measuring in cups and spoons was followed instead of always employing weights and scales, for it frequently happens that the latter are not available in houses of modest means," and she went on to say that her scales were far too cumbersome to weigh anything under pounds, and that as she often had to do her own cooking when anything special was required (for her *ménage* consisted of two inexperienced domestics), it was a great boon and a real help if cups and spoons replaced scales. "A word to the wise is sufficient," and I made a mental note that henceforth in writing cookery articles I would always give the equivalent for *avoirdupois* weight. I shall carry out my resolution by beginning the reform to-day. After this digression we will come back to the subject in hand.

French Pastry.—Five ounces (five tablespoonfuls not heaped up) of pastry flour, two ounces (two tablespoonfuls) of castor sugar, three ounces of butter (one ounce is a piece the size of a walnut), half a pint of water (one tumblerful), a quarter of a teaspoonful of salt, one teaspoonful of flavouring of any kind, three small eggs. Take a saucepan of the capacity of two pints, put in the water, butter,

salt and sugar; when boiling fast sift in the flour with one hand and stir vigorously with a wooden spoon with the other. Remove from the fire and heat well until the lumpy-looking mass becomes perfectly smooth; when this is accomplished add the eggs one at a time (unbeaten). As each egg is added you will find the mixture again separates and has a lumpy appearance, but it will get smooth with beating and stirring. The lightness of the pastry depends entirely upon the beating, for it is in this process that the necessary air is beaten in. In passing I might say that we *stir* when we wish to mix, but we *beat* when a mixture depends upon the amount of air beaten in for its lightness. The flavouring goes in last, and then the pastry is ready to make up into any desired shape, the most popular being a roll. Take a dessertspoonful of the mixture and roll lightly with the hand on a floured board until you have a roll three and a half inches in length, and about two or two and a half inches in circumference. They should be free from cracks, and if made this size you will get at least fourteen *éclairs* from the amount of pastry I have given. Place on a slightly greased baking tin, and bake in a moderately hot oven until well risen and of a pale fawn colour. Twenty minutes is generally long enough for this; afterwards they should be allowed to dry and become quite firm in a rather cooler heat for three-quarters of an hour. I must expatiate upon the baking, for it is so important. Many people can make, few can bake, and I think most will agree with me, that the latter needs far more experience than the former.

If the oven for French pastry be too cool at first, it will not rise properly; and when it has risen be careful not to move it until the surface is firm to the touch; if the cold air (which is much heavier than hot air) is allowed to fall upon it before being set, the weight of it will cause the pastry to fall irretrievably. Now we have the reason for never banging the oven door. Therefore a moderately hot oven for first twenty minutes, and a more gentle heat for rest of time. To be very exact, 350° F. to begin with, and 300° to finish. When cooked enough the pastry should be crisp and of a pale brown colour. Sift on to a sieve or place round a plate to allow the steam to escape from underneath, and when cold finish them off with whipped cream or custard inside and icing on the outside.

The rolls must be split open with a knife, a spoonful of cream or custard nicely flavoured inserted. If the cream is unobtainable make a custard as follows: One tablespoonful of cornflour, one cup of milk (half pint), one tablespoonful of sugar, two eggs beaten, flavouring. Mix the cornflour smoothly with the milk, add sugar and eggs. Stir over a gentle heat until quite thick. Turn on to a wetted plate and when cold, use. This is a very good substitute for cream and not much trouble to make.

Icing for coating.—Eight tablespoonfuls of icing sugar, two tablespoonfuls of coffee essence, four tablespoonfuls of water. Put coffee and water into a small saucepan and then stir in the sugar. Stir over the most gentle heat until the icing is smooth and thick enough to coat the back of the spoon. By coating the spoon I mean the icing should only just run off, for if too thin it looks poor and unfinished, and if too thick the pastry lacks the professional appearance it should have. The icing may be varied by using the juice of a lemon or orange instead of water and

coffee; if chocolate icing be preferred, allow one ounce of chocolate, Fry's soluble is best, to half a small cup of water, boil until dissolved, and add sugar as before, flavour with vanilla, and use. Instead of making the *éclairs* into rolls, they look very pretty made in the shape of meringues. Tea-spoons must be used for shaping, and being smaller they will only take forty minutes to cook; of course, the finishing off is the same.

Victoria Sandwiches.—These are most superior and, as far as I know, are only to be obtained at one well-known confectioner's in the West End. Make the pastry exactly as for *éclairs*, except that the sugar and flavouring are left out and a little more salt added. Make up into rolls and brush each over with a little beaten egg, bake until crisp. When cold, split open, have some mustard and cress washed scrupulously clean, place some inside each roll with a teaspoonful of good salad-dressing and a boned sardine. Serve daintily on a folded napkin garnished with parsley. Watercress, shred lettuce, or any other green-meat may replace the cress, while it is hardly necessary to remind my readers that any cooked fish, hard-boiled eggs, or finely-cut pieces of chicken will find as much favour as the sardine.

A very favourite sweet which one often meets with abroad and occasionally in England is a *Gâteau à la Princesse*. It is so pretty that I really must give the readers of the "G. O. P." the benefit of the recipe.

Gâteau à la Princesse.—Make some French pastry as directed for *éclairs* and drop it in rounds about the size of a halfpenny on to a greased baking-tin. If a forcing-bag and pipe are at hand, put a tablespoonful of the mixture into it and force it out sharply; this will ensure the drops being of a uniform size. Do not have them too large. Bake for half an hour. The little cakes look much nicer if brushed with beaten egg before being cooked. Take a round of sponge cake (or short crust not rolled too thin) as large as a breakfast plate. Dip each cake into syrup (which I will give instructions for presently), and arrange in a circle on the flat round of cake. It must be done quickly and a strainer used for dipping the cakes into the syrup. This makes them adhere to the foundation besides giving a brilliant surface. Place two more rows on the top of this until you have formed a kind of wall with a well in the middle. Whip half a pint of thick cream flavour and sweeten to taste, pile it high in the middle and decorate with few dried fruits. Custard may be used instead of the cream; whichever is employed it must be piled high to give a handsome appearance to the dish, which should be served on a round silver dish.

Syrup for coating.—Three-quarters of a pound (three teacupfuls) of loaf sugar, a quarter of a pint of water (one cup). Put sugar and water into a saucepan, and when dissolved boil briskly over the fire until on dropping a little into cold water it sets; use at once, as it very soon goes sugary. When taken from the fire it is an excellent plan to plunge the saucepan into another utensil containing hot water. This prevents the syrup getting sugary or crystallising. Stir as little as possible for the same reason. While the sugar and water are boiling skim if needful; it depends entirely upon the sugar whether there is little or much scum. Inferior sugar throws up a good deal; cane sugar is the best to use.

There is another kind of pastry which is much more like cake both in appearance and texture. It is made with the following

ingredients: Three large eggs, four tablespoonfuls of good flour, five tablespoonfuls of castor sugar, three tablespoonfuls of butter (melted), pinch of salt, flavouring. Put the eggs into a good-sized mixing-bowl, whisk in the sugar, place the basin over a pan of hot water and whisk until the mixture is quite thick and light in colour. It will take at least twenty minutes to get it the right consistency; the heat from the water helps the eggs to thicken more quickly. The flour and butter go in alternately. They should not be stirred in but folded in with a few turns of the whisk. Have ready a small Yorkshire pudding tin greased and lined with unprinted paper. Pour the cake into this and bake in a moderate heat for about thirty minutes. Turn out upside down on to a sugared paper. Remember that, if the oven is not the right heat, this, like French pastry, will not rise

properly. It should be the colour of a sponge cake when finished and one and a half inches thick. It is much nicer for cutting up when stale, and does not get dry even if kept for longer than a week. This is a great advantage when one wishes to get forward with the making of the fancy cakes. The same advantage cannot be claimed for French pastry, which cannot be too fresh. To finish off the flat cake, cut with a sharp knife into small squares or diamonds, coat with chocolate, coffee or lemon-icing entirely so that the cakes are completely hidden beneath it; on the top of some place half a blanched almond, on the rest a cherry or star of angelica, or anything that presents itself for decoration.

So far I have said nothing about the ingredients used, but as it is a matter of importance as far as the success of these

recipes is concerned, I will conclude with just a few hints worth remembering.

Flour.—This must be of good quality, and the tests by which you can distinguish superior from inferior flour are that a good flour is always perfectly dry and is of a yellowish tinge, smooth to the touch, free from all trace of grittiness, and lastly the smell should be pleasant.

Butter ought to be fresh, but if salt butter be employed, wash it in a basin of cold water first and dry in a floured cloth.

Eggs need not be touched upon, as very few people think of using a stale egg.

Icing Sugar.—This is best procured from a confectioner, and should not cost more than fourpence per pound, at the outside fivepence. This, like flour, should be perfectly smooth after passing through a sieve.

A. M. B.

PAINTED AND EMBROIDERED PHOTOGRAPH FRAME.

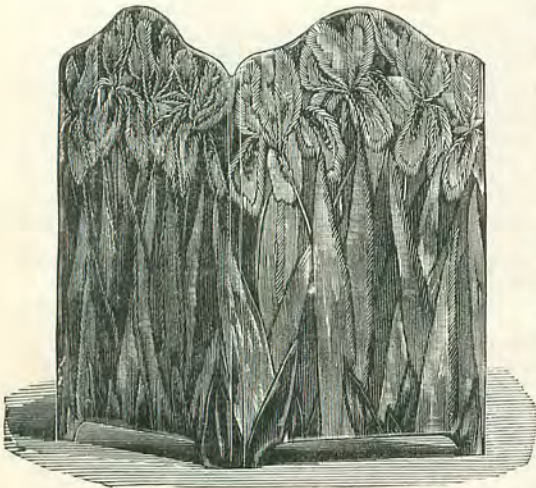


FIG. A.

In this two-leaved photo-frame brush and needle are united in the most charming manner. Each leaf is about seventeen inches high and seven inches broad, and the material used is bright calf-skin. The pattern is first "pounced" on a piece of the calf-skin which should be nine inches wide (to allow for turnings) and twenty inches long, then the painting is carried out in *gouache* colours. The leaves and stalks are in various shades of green, and the blossoms are heliotrope. The enlarged detail of the work (Fig. B) shows how the individual blossoms should be executed, but, of course, these may be arranged according to individual taste. All the blossoms have rather sharply marked black edges. The painting being finished, the shading is carried out in flat embroidery stitches (as may be seen in Fig. B), using *filoselle* divided in half. On the other side the frame is completed by rose-coloured silk arranged in fans to hold photographs.

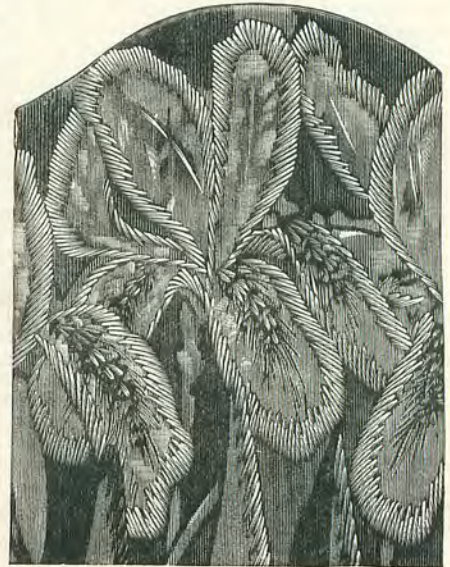


FIG. B.

SOFA-CUSHION OF GAUZE AND LACE APPLIQUÉ.

The foundation of the cushion may be made in any size preferred, of soft white material stuffed with down or pulled cotton wool. You cover this with bright-coloured silk, attaching to the corners, as in the illustration, flat pieces of velvet to match, so shaped as to leave a circular centre of the silk. Now take a gauze scarf, which must be wide enough to entirely cover this centre and must be about twenty or forty inches longer; gather both edges of it and attach one edge to the velvet all round; the other edge is entirely drawn up and securely fastened in the centre, so that folds radiate from thence to the sides. Then the outer edge of the gauze next the velvet is embellished either with embroidery or lace appliquéd lightly on, and single sprays are also appliquéd on the velvet corners. A huge puff or rosette of gauze (used double) is fastened in the centre. You must reckon five or six times the width of the cushion for the gauze, as it spoils the look of it altogether if the latter be not full enough. The back is covered with plain silk or velvet. Any colours or combination of colours may be used, though delicate shades are preferable, but our girls may safely

be left to their own taste in the matter, though the following suggestions may be of use. Orange looks especially rich, the gauze being



always white, the velvet being either a contrast or some shades darker in tone, and the surrounding frill of the gauze may also be lined with orange silk, which looks charming under the white gauze, in which case it need not be quite so thickly gathered. Chiffon would also be suitable instead of gauze. Pink silk, crimson velvet and white chiffon, would be delightful; also pale turquoise-blue silk, a darker shade of velvet and white chiffon. The remains of old evening dresses, if tolerably fresh, might be utilised in this way, but made of entirely new material the cushion would be an elegant gift. It would be most elegant though extremely perishable if made entirely in white or cream-coloured silk with velvet to match, and the lace pattern accentuated with jewels such as turquoises or gold spangles. If any of our girls contemplate making a wedding-present, I recommend the above suggestion, as it would be decidedly unique, besides being very delicate. It has also the advantage of not being expensive to make at starting, though of course to ensure its attractiveness it would have to be renewed directly the chiffon or other materials became in the least degree soiled.