

great advantage. Ivy is, indeed, at all times one of the most useful materials it is possible to use in church decoration.

Heaviness should always be carefully avoided and the style of architecture of each individual building followed as closely as may be practicable.

White flowers are most suitable for the vases which adorn the communion-table, and a few sprays of Virginian creeper trailing from one vase to another have a good effect.

A stone pulpit or one of light carved wood-work requires different treatment to a dark oaken one. The crimson Maltese cross design would look exceedingly well on the two first-named; but if this design be used for the latter, white or yellow flowers should be substituted for the crimson ones.

A better appearance is maintained if a certain degree of uniformity be observed in the decoration of pulpit and reading-desk. This

is sometimes a little difficult to arrange when the work of adorning each is undertaken by different helpers, but with a little careful observation it can usually be managed, and the result will be found to amply repay the workers.

When the font is a white one, no decoration is more effective than a wreathing of crimson flowers or richly-tinted autumn leaves. The flowers may be secured by means of fine, invisible wire upon a piece of strong string of the requisite length, and their stalks should be wrapped with damp moss or cotton wool, otherwise they will quickly fade.

A wreathing of autumn foliage may easily be made by lightly sewing the leaves on to a narrow strip of muslin or calico.

Around the base of the font and lectern miniature corn sheaves may be stacked, with sprays of ivy and golden-brown bracken twined about. A pretty effect is obtained by allowing

a small cross of white flowers to float in water in the font, the outside edge of which should be lined with moss.

Boughs of the beautiful mountain ash, with its clusters of vivid fruit, form a graceful decoration for gas-brackets, window-sills, etc.

I have purposely omitted the introduction of fruit into our decorations for this reason; if it is to be really enjoyable when eaten, it should always be handled as little as possible. Therefore, as I am sure we would all wish our poor sick friends to receive it in good condition, it is best, with this end in view, to place it in baskets lined with cool green leaves.

If pretty rustic baskets are chosen, they are in themselves quite a feature in the decorations, and when daintily filled with luscious white and purple grapes, plums, pears, and rosy apples, they form a decoration not easily surpassed.

## OMELETS AND THEIR MAKING.

By DORA DE BLAQUIÈRE.

**T**HERE is nothing in the whole art of cookery, no dish that was ever concocted, round which so great a mystery is thrown as the manufacture of an omelet. The power of making one throws a kind of halo round the head of a cook, or even of an amateur cook, and the qualities which go to the formation of an omelet-maker would suffice to the position of a commander-in-chief. The qualities most required are "a quick eye, a fine touch, and a steady hand, a good judgment, and a great share of self-confidence, with a large amount of experience." I give a quotation from a well-known paper, and the portrait as drawn would do for either Lord Roberts or Lord Kitchener.

To me, when I first began to think about omelets with humble aspiration, all these things were very depressing, and the more I read the more low-spirited I became; the list of qualities was long and overpowering, and the longer I read them the more doubtful I became if I possessed any of them. An accident, however, precipitated me, as it were, into an omelet, and I found, after using all the wrong cooking utensils, and doing it all "out of my head," that the production was quite eatable, and even had some commendations scantily sprinkled over it. I can do better now, as I have obtained the final virtue in the list by dint of perseverance; and as to the other virtues—well, I have not required them. I think I must allow, however, that a certain knack and quickness is needed, especially if you use a chafing-dish, and I should advise you to seek a secluded, quiet corner in which to make your first experiment, for the presence of a looker-on makes one nervous and distracts the attention. The chafing-dish needs both quickness and all one's attention, or else it proves an absolute failure in the way of cooking. This is especially true as regards making an omelet in it, as they cook very quickly, and before we know it the batter has hardened and the omelet is out of touch with our ideals. Now everyone should have an ideal; without it even your omelets will not be perfection. So do not think I am joking when I speak of an ideal in the way of omelets.

Omelets are plain, *i.e.*, made only of eggs, or enlivened with what the French call a *garniture*, the right translation of this word

being "furnished" or "trimmed." Our word "flavouring" will hardly correspond to it, but we do use the word "trimming" in cookery as meaning a relish. The garnitures for omelets may be either savoury or sweet. For the first we have herbs, called in French *fines herbes*, or sweet herbs, of which parsley is the chief, spring onion, chives, or shallots being always added. Asparagus, peas, tomatoes, and green peas, oysters, lobster, mushrooms, kidneys, bacon, ham, and cheese. For sweet omelets we have *confitures*, or preserves, raspberry, strawberry, and apricot, chestnuts, apples, and prunes. Most, if not all, of these ingredients require cooking first, and to be well chopped up, so that they may be tender and mix well with the eggs, with which they should be carefully beaten up. The omelet made with bacon or ham owes its origin, it is said, to the epicures of the Barrières outside Paris, where it is in high repute. Soyer explains its popularity by saying that it is eaten to prepare the palate to receive with pleasure the cheap sour wines which are sold there, and which would be enjoyed with no other kind of preparation. The *omelette aux lard* is thus a kind of olive amongst dishes, used, as they are used, as a preparation for wine.

There is a difference of opinion about the very spelling of the name omelet, so I have used the ordinary English spelling of the word, although in America, and also in many of our own cookery-books, I find the French spelling—*omelette*—is used. The term is a contraction of the two French words "*aufs mêlés*," mixed eggs, or beaten up, and so mixed.

All the French recipes, and many of the older English ones, give directions for the eggs and the ingredients of the omelet to be well beaten; but in the most recent ones I find that too much beating is not recommended, and that the eggs should on no account be beaten to a froth. An experienced cook has recently told me that she gives exactly twelve good vigorous beats, then strains through a fine strainer and lets the mixture rest for a few minutes, and just before pouring into the pan she gives it a good stir round again.

In several of my cookery-books I find instructions given for the addition of milk, bread-crumbs, mashed potatoes, flour, and oatmeal. These instructions are often seen in vegetarian cookery-books, and arise, I think,

from a desire to make the omelet a more solid dish, to make it, in fact, a kind of joint in a dinner composed of vegetables. But the true omelet is only made of eggs, and these rules apply rather to the making of fritters, for which the batter should be stiffer, as they are smaller and thicker than omelets. It is not improbable that some confusion may have existed between the two. I have often been told that all batters are the same, and that omelets, fritters, pancakes, and Yorkshire puddings are all made by the same rules, which is quite true in one way, as eggs form the chief ingredient of them all, but not at all true in a dozen other ways.

The addition of cream or milk makes the omelet leathery and tough, and the same effect will be produced if the butter in which it is fried be not hot enough. Many good cooks also maintain that too much white of egg in it has the same effect, and I think that over-cooking is the chief danger, for if the omelet were to remain in the pan it would become stiff and too thoroughly set.

Many people ask how long an omelet takes to cook, and I should say that from one to three or four minutes are quite enough to cook any omelet, depending, of course, on the number of eggs used. Some years ago it was the custom to make them much larger, and to use from eight to twelve eggs. Now we consider four to six eggs the extreme number, and that, if more be needed, it is better to make a second omelet. This agrees with Soyer's idea, for he describes his omelet-pan as six inches in diameter.

And now we will begin at the very outset and describe the process of manufacture, and finish the instructions with some selected recipes from various sources. There is a good deal of sameness about all such, but there is a great deal of individuality about individuals, and some people may be much taken with one recipe, and not at all impressed by another. The best fire upon which to make omelets is a gas-stove, for that is hot, though not too much so, and is kept at an even heat. Next to that comes the chafing-dish, and after that the ordinary kitchen. I have said very little about an omelet-pan. If you have one, use it; but in the kitchen, as well as in the workshop, it is the poor inefficient workman who quarrels with his tools. If, however, you wish your omelets to be good, the pan should be kept for them alone, and need not be washed, for rubbing with a clean cloth will be quite enough

for it. You will need a basin in which to put the eggs, a couple of forks to beat them up with, and a wooden flat spoon to raise the sides from the pan. The greatest care should be taken to prevent its adhering to the pan, and this is only to be avoided by keeping the pan in perpetual motion and cooking quickly.

When you have beaten up the eggs, the next thing is to melt the butter in the pan. You will require two ounces at least, as it must cover the bottom of the pan to the depth of an eighth of an inch. Do not be persuaded to use dripping or lard, for both will make the omelet greasy, and both will impart an unpleasant flavour which you can very well do without. This is the case with lard especially, however delicate and good.

Give the eggs in the basin a stir round, and pour into the pan when the butter is very hot but has ceased to frizzle and is quiet. The eggs will set only too quickly, and must be lifted with the spoon and the pan shaken, so that the butter may flow about and the soft eggs fall to the bottom of the pan. All this time you are holding the handle with your left hand, and using the spoon with your right. An omelet should be of a golden hue at the bottom and just set only at the top. When done, roll over one side upon the other half, and slip it off upon the hot dish waiting to receive it. An omelet is never cooked on both sides, nor can you afford to let it become thoroughly set, for it then becomes heavy, and one minute is enough for one made with three eggs. The centre should be set like a soft custard.

An omelet may be from half an inch to an inch in thickness, the first being the best, as it must roll over and not break in the rolling, which it will do if overdone. The following recipes are all from celebrated cookery-books, and some are more than half a century old, and are interesting as showing how the masters of the culinary art treated the subject.

The following is Miss Acton's recipe for plain omelet. Take six eggs, very fresh; break singly, lest there should be a stale one, and carefully clear them from specks, and, if necessary, strain through a fine hair-sieve to get rid of anything objectionable. When sufficiently whisked, pour through a sieve, and resume beating till very light. Add salt (from a half to a whole teaspoonful) and a seasoning of pepper. Dissolve a couple of ounces of sugar in a small frying-pan; pour in the eggs, and, as soon as the omelet has well risen, and is firm throughout, slide it upon a hot dish, fold it together like a turnover, and serve immediately. It will be fried in from five to ten minutes.

I give a second recipe, taken from Franca-telli's *Cookery Guide*. It is for a fine-herb omelet. Break three eggs into a basin; add a spoonful of cream, a small pat of butter broken into small pieces, a little chopped parsley and shallot, pepper and salt. Then put two ounces of fresh butter into the pan, and place on the stove-fire. While the butter melts, whip the eggs well till frothy; and as soon as the butter begins to fritter, pour the eggs into the pan, and stir the mixture. As the eggs appear to set and become firm, roll the omelet into the form of an oval cushion. Allow it to acquire a golden colour on one side, and then turn it out upon a dish. Pour a little gravy or half-glaze under it, and serve.

From the *Pytchley Cookery Book* I quote the following variety in fine-herb omelets.—Mix three eggs, a teaspoonful of mustard, two tablespoonfuls of cream, some chopped chives, parsley, and a teaspoonful of salt. Boil two and a half ounces of butter in a frying-pan; pour in the mixture, stirring and shaking it so that it may not catch. If in an omelet-pan, turn it over from the outside of the pan when set; if in a frying-pan, scrape it with a fork as

soon as it catches into half of the pan; and when the whole is set, let it stand a moment to brown, and then turn it into a hot dish. An omelet, to be good, should be thick and soft. One generally sees it like a bad pancake.

My next description of a sweet omelet is taken from Mary Hooper's *Everyday Meals*. *Omelette au Confiture*.—Break three eggs into a basin, with a small pinch of salt, a teaspoonful of sifted sugar, three tablespoonfuls of milk, and a few drops of extract of vanilla, and beat up the whole together for four or five minutes. Have ready an ounce of fresh butter in an omelet-pan; when hot, and beginning to brown, pour in the mixture. Hold the pan still over the fire for half a minute, and then keep on stirring in the middle or at the edges with a silver fork. When beginning to set over the whole surface, and to colour on the under side, shake the pan round and round; then spread a tablespoonful of apricot preserve on it. Shake the pan, and slide half the omelet upon a dish; with a jerk turn over the other half, so that the omelet may have the appearance of an oval golden-coloured cushion. It is better that the omelet should be lightly set, or even underdone on the inner side, than that it should be too much baked.

A very modern indeed and up-to-date American recipe is as follows. Break four eggs into a bowl, give them a dozen beats; add four tablespoonfuls of water, one of finely-chopped parsley, and a bit of butter the size of a walnut. Put an ounce of butter into a saucepan; when melted, turn in the eggs, shake, dust with pepper and salt, and when done, fold over and serve on a hot dish. In this recipe, the addition of water is new, and will, of course, make the omelet thinner.

The various kinds of omelets that you can make are called in French, *Omelette au naturel* (plain), *omelette aux fins herbes* (parsley, etc.), *omelette au lard* (bacon), *omelette aux rognons* (kidneys), *omelette aux légumes* (vegetables), *omelette au fromage* (cheese), *omelette aux tomates* (tomatoes), *omelette au rhum* (rum), *omelette aux confitures* (preserves), *omelette aux crevettes* (prawns or shrimps), *omelette aux champignons* (mushrooms), *omelette pointes d'asperge* (asparagus), *omelette aux huîtres* (oysters), *omelette au saumon* (salmon), *omelette au homard* (lobster), *omelette au poisson* (fish), *omelette au jambon* (ham).

I daresay I have left out a few, although I have tried to remember them all for the sake of the practical cooks who read the articles in the "G.O.P.," and derive help from them.

The methods of using the garnitures are different in nearly all the omelets. *Omelette au Naturel* is flavoured with pepper and salt, and not too much of the latter.—*Aux Fins Herbes* is flavoured with a heaped teaspoonful of finely-chopped-up parsley and half a teaspoonful of either shallots or chives, tarragon, chervil, thyme, marjoram, or mushrooms may also be used, if not considered too strong.—*Au Lard* or *Jambon*. Two small slices of bacon or ham are chopped up finely and added to the eggs, and tongue or corned beef may be added in the same way. The slices of bacon are much nicer if they are lightly fried before using.—*Aux Roggnons*. The kidneys are cut into dice, and well fried before being used.—*Aux Légumes*. The remains of cold cooked vegetables, cauliflower, peas, French beans, asparagus, and mushrooms cut into pieces and fried may be used, and a tablespoonful of cheese, grated finely, will improve the flavour.—*Aux Fromage*. Any grated cheese may be used, one large tablespoonful to three eggs being allowed.—*Aux Tomates*. Tomato sauce, or three or four tomatoes stewed with a little onion and made as thick as sauce. This mixture is poured over the top of the omelet before the half side is turned over. In France, the kidneys, vegetables, mushrooms and

preserves are all put in the centre of the omelet in this way, and, indeed, with most of the garnitures as well.—*Au Rhum*. Sweet omelets are perhaps best when made by beating the whites and the yolks separately, the former to a stiff froth, adding it to the latter. Sweeten slightly and flavour with a tablespoonful of rum.—*Aux Confitures*. In making these, the preserve is spread in a layer over the top while the omelet is still in the pan. The same is done with the salmon, lobster, fish, shrimps, and kidneys; indeed, with anything that can be stewed and prepared. The following is Soyer's recipe for making the mixture for oysters, which may be applied to anything else. "Take twelve middle-sized oysters and put them into a stew-pan with their own salt liquid. Add a tablespoonful of milk or cream, and give them a boil; then add half an ounce of butter in which you have mixed a saltspoonful of flour; stir it in without breaking the oysters; put it over the centre of the omelet; turn over the other side, and serve very hot." There is immense room for invention in the way of making omelets; and if you can only make them yourself over a lamp, you will derive real pleasure and amusement from your essays in cookery.

I have lately seen some of the most delightful small gas cooking-ranges, which can be affixed to any gas-jet in any room, not necessarily a kitchen; and they are quite unobtrusive enough to be put on a small table in a corner of the dining-room, and can be hired, I believe, from the companies. Now, not to speak of the wonderful economy of being able to make these small dishes yourself, which is very great, there is also the pleasant feeling engendered by the power of doing so. It is very pleasant to know that we can create something, which feeling may extend to either an omelet, a picture, or a poem.

And now I must turn to the omelet question as viewed by vegetarians, who do not consider it at all needful to fry, or, rather, *sauté* an omelet in a pan, but who still consider it an omelet when baked in a dish in the oven, the result being excellent. A kind of savoury pie is produced, which is intended to replace the meat-course. They may be also used cold as sandwiches, and slices of them are often fried brown, and a brown sauce poured over them.

The following is taken from a well-known vegetarian cookery-book, and is called an omelet, though in reality it is a remarkably good savoury pie.—Four eggs, one ounce of butter, or one tablespoonful of olive oil, two tablespoonfuls of breadcrumbs, one pint of haricot beans (boiled), half an ounce of parsley, half a teacupful of milk, salt and pepper. Steep, boil, and then mash the beans with the milk; rub them through a sieve or fine colander, and add the other ingredients. Pour the omelet into a buttered dish, and bake in a moderately hot oven for one hour. Serve with brown sauce.

Another. Four eggs, one ounce of butter, two ounces of breadcrumbs, half an ounce each of flour and oatmeal, one or two mashed potatoes, one or two ounces of onions, half a teaspoonful of sage, half a teaspoonful of lemon, thyme and sweet marjoram mixed. Mix, pour into a buttered dish, and bake or steam for one hour.

*A Sweet Omelette*.—Four eggs, one ounce of powdered sugar, a small tablespoonful of flour, a little finely-shredded lemon peel, one pint of thin cream or new milk. Pour the mixture into a buttered pan and bake in a very moderate oven for twenty minutes. Garnish with preserves.

Omelets may be served with gravy, generally a thick brown one. In fact, ham, kidney, and fish omelets usually are thus served. Kidney omelet may be served with a fine-herb sauce. A plain omelet may also be served as *aux tomates*, by pouring over it a gill of thick tomato sauce, well flavoured and spiced.