CREAM CHEESE, AND HOW TO MAKE IT.

A very welcome addition to the luncheon or supper-table, will be found in cream cheese; and as it is easily made, and by no means an expensive dainty, especially in the country, where cream may be readily obtained, perhaps a bow to the American method of making it may be of use to some girls who like variety in the daily bill of fare.

The first and chief consideration is that of rennet. The ordinary essence of rennet sold by the grocers may be preferred, but in this case the maker will have to exercise her own judgment, to a great extent, with regard to the quantity to use, as the strength varies.

On the other hand, the actual rennet extract used in cheese-making, may be obtained at about ten shillings per gallon, without much trouble; and where juniper, cream cheese, etc., are constantly being made, it may be worth while to purchase a quart jar, especially as it will keep good for an almost indefinite period. If carefully corked, and tied down with a piece of soft leather, the jar being kept in a cool, dark place.

We will suppose that a quart of cream is to be converted into cheese.

First stir into it a pint of milk. (This mixture of milk with cream in the proportion of four to one, unless one to two-thirds of the latter, will be found to make a quite sufficiently rich cheese for ordinary purposes.) Warm the whole to go° Fahr., and add twelve or fourteen drops of the extract just mentioned. Let the milk be diluted with two or three times their bulk of cold water, stirring constantly for several minutes afterwards. The quantity of rennet required will of course vary slightly with its strength; but one or two trials will soon decide how much is wanted to set the curd in a reasonable time, and the number of hours given here will be found correct with rennet extract of average strength.

After the addition of the rennet, cover the cream with a cloth, and put it in some warm place, in order to prevent the temperature from falling during the process of coagulating. At the end of three or four hours the cream should be sufficiently thickened to put into the bag, in which it is to be pressed. This bag should be about eighteen inches long by a foot wide, and is best made of unbleached calico of medium thickness, care being taken in its selection, as if too fine in texture the cream will run out and be wasted; while, on the other hand, if too thick, the whey will be unable to escape.

Before pouring in the thickened cream, unfit the bag out, first in hot, and then in cold water.

Salt is added at this stage. Half-an-ounce to the gallon is the usual quantity, but this is of course a matter for personal taste to decide. Stir it well, and then pour into the bag, which should be put in a basin to catch the whey that will at once commence running off.

Tie up the mouth of the bag with a piece of string, and leave it for an hour, at the end of which time pressure may be applied.

This is best done by placing the bag between two flat boards, which should stand on a shelf or table, at a slight angle, in order to allow the whey to run off freely. To obtain a gradual pressure is the point in view; and by placing a fan-sized bucket on the top of the boards, and pouring in water, at first until it is about a quarter full, and afterwards by adding water at intervals, within three or four hours, until the bucket is full, will be accomplished. The cheese should remain under pressure from twelve to twenty-four hours, according to its consistency. As soon as it is firm and dry it may be moulded.

This is done either with a wooden cream cheese mould, or with the tin ones which may now be obtained, and which are easier to work with than the former.

When the wooden mould is used, care should be taken to carefully prepare it, by first scaling it for a few minutes, or by immediately plunging it into cold water in which some salt has been dissolved. This will prevent the cheese sticking to it. A piece of wet butter-paper or muslin is placed over the top and bottom of the mould, will also help to bring the cheese away from the wood clean and smooth. To those unaccustomed to the form of the wooden mould, it may be as well to state that it is sold in four pieces—top, bottom, and sides. When using it, fix the sides, which are in two pieces, on the bottom stand, holding them firmly together with the left hand.

Place the cheese to be moulded inside, and press the top down gently until the cheese is shaped; then draw the sides up, and remove the top and bottom, with the wet paper or muslin.

The tin mould is made with a false bottom, a top, or follower, and a leaden weight. It is merely necessary to place the cheese inside, slip in the follower, and put the leaden weight on the top, pressing it down. The cheese is lifted out by means of the false bottom. Where butter is too hard, the cream may be dispersed with altogether, as the cheese can be made up with the wooden butter-hands, prepared and used in the same manner as for butter.

When the cheeses are all moulded, wrap them in muslin or butter-paper, and put them in a cool place until they are wanted for the table. They will keep fresh for three or four days if it is not very hot; and some people prefer them rather ripe, in which case they may be kept a week, or even longer.