

HOW I FURNISHED MY STORE CUPBOARD.



AM about to detail the methods of making a few very useful and wholesome commodities, although I am well aware that most people in these days get such things from their grocer; yet, as some of them are so simple and inexpensive, especially when a garden is at hand, I feel sure that many people may be glad to attempt the concoction of them. They are, for the most part, the original recipes of a lady whose guest I was some few years ago; some of them are my own; others I may call a joint production, as they are the outcome of experiments made during the visit in question.

Space will not permit mention of many, so I will just enumerate those for which the ingredients are readily obtainable, and, while omitting any detailed reference to the excellent jams and jellies of my hostess, I will give her method of preventing the usual candying of the surface which takes place after a year or two. This was a very simple one, viz., covering with a layer of tissue paper dipped in brine before tying on the outer cover of bladder or vegetable parchment (the latter is now very generally used and is a good substitute for bladder). As to brandy papers and other preservatives, she ignored them altogether, believing that fruit well boiled, if stored properly, needed nothing more than an air-tight cover.

But to my recipes, which are all savouries:—

I will not guarantee the keeping properties of the first on my list: I have only made it once, and then it was not allowed to keep. Nine pounds of sound, ripe damsons formed the foundation, to which were added four pounds and a half of sugar, a pint of pale brown vinegar, a couple of dozen cloves, two blades of mace, a dozen allspice berries, the same number of black peppercorns, and half an ounce of bruised ginger; the jar containing them was then tied lightly over with bladder and set up to its neck in a kettle of cold water over a slow fire, the water in the kettle being kept simmering for a couple of hours. After its removal from the fire I took care to leave the jar until the water was cold; then, over the neck, bladder was tied tightly, previous to its removal to the store cupboard. This pickle, if intended to keep, is better put away in wide-necked bottles, with new corks, which should be waxed over. Although it is fit to eat at once, I was told that it *does* improve with age. It may be eaten as pickle pure and simple, or added to salads; while a fish sauce, both appetising and unique, may be made by stirring a gill of the syrup into a tureen of melted butter. As to the superiority of this sweet pickle over those of the sour, uncooked varieties, so far as its digestive properties are concerned, there is certainly no need for comment.

Most people like *Mint Sauce*, and they may enjoy it in perfection all the year if they choose to follow the example of my hostess, and store some for use in the days when lamb lingers only in the memory. On a dry, sunny day the mint was gathered, picked leaf by leaf, wiped with a cloth, and chopped a little, then pounded in a mortar with castor sugar (about six ounces to half a pound of mint), a dash of cayenne pepper, some salt, and the merest suspicion of chopped garlic; half a pint of pure malt vinegar was added little by little during the process, and, at the last moment, just before bottling, another half-pint of vinegar was put to the mixture. Small bottles, such as are used for capers, are best for it, and the corks *must* be sound. This will be voted "a lot of trouble" by those who are unaccustomed to the use of the pestle and mortar, but if any of my readers make it a rule, as I do, to pound the mint and sugar for every-day mint sauce, they will agree with me that by no other method (certainly not by chopping, however finely) can equal success be attained.

Of the *ketchups*, which were all delicious, I have but space to mention three. The first was quite new to me. It was obtained from elderberries, and is particularly good with fish dishes. During my stay a stock was made, the berries being just in their prime, so I had a practical lesson. I remember that, after stripping them from the stalk, the berries were measured and put into a jar with just half their measure of boiling vinegar, and baked in what my friend called a "baker's oven" all night, by which she meant a cool oven after a batch of bread has been drawn. The next morning she strained off the juice without any pressure and measured it carefully, adding to each quart half an ounce of salt, half a dozen shallots, half an ounce of whole ginger, an ounce of peppercorns, and half an ounce of cloves—the spices being most thoroughly bruised previous to boiling the whole for ten minutes. My informant added that a little salad oil should be poured into the neck of each bottle to ensure its keeping, and I may mention that all her bottled fruits had received the addition of some melted suet, sufficient to form a layer half an inch thick in each bottle's neck.

Mushroom Ketchup, as ordinarily made, is, in my opinion, so spicy that the mushroom flavour is almost overpowered; but, if made as I will direct, I think it will be voted very good. I must urge the importance of sound, freshly gathered mushrooms—those that we used were almost equal in size. We broke them up, after cutting off the ends from the stalks, and put them in a pan with six ounces of salt to the gallon, and stirred them every day with a *wooden* spoon for six days; the liquor was strained and measured, then boiled until reduced to half the quantity. The exact time cannot be stated, but the boiling should be quick. The spices (*viz.*, a quarter of an ounce each of whole black pepper and allspice berries, a morsel of root

ginger, and a blade of mace to each pint) were then put in, and after twenty minutes' further simmering, the contents of the pan were poured into an earthen basin and covered with a cloth until next day, when the ketchup was poured off very carefully from the sediment into small bottles.

My friend then suggested our making some "second ketchup" from the sediment and "squeezings" of the mushrooms by boiling them with spices, as in the foregoing recipe; this, I was told, was suitable for hashes and stews, and although a less refined, it is an equally useful preparation.

Of the two kinds of *Walnut Ketchup* which I learnt how to make, I recommend the one prepared from the surplus vinegar from pickled walnuts, not because it was nicer than the other, which was obtained from walnuts in their green state, but because it is such an excellent way of utilising what is sometimes wasted. Supposing, then, your jar, which once held pickled walnuts, has in it a quart of their vinegar, put into it some mixed pickling spice, about a dessertspoonful, half a dozen chopped shallots, and a generous teaspoonful of salt, and boil it for at least a quarter of an hour, when you may either bottle it as it is or make a "compound sauce" of it by mixing with it a pint of mushroom ketchup, and enough celery-seed to cover a sixpence. The combination of flavours is a very agreeable one.

With reference to celery, I should like to call attention to *Celery Vinegar*, so handy when the fresh vegetable is not to be had, for which white wine vinegar, though not absolutely necessary, is preferable, as a few drops can then be added to white soups and sauces without injuring the colour. To make it, a couple of ounces of celery-seed should be bruised and added to a pint and a half of boiling vinegar, and half an ounce of salt. It should be corked after it has cooled properly, then set in a warm place for a month, when it is ready to strain into small bottles. Another store vinegar, equally useful, was made in just the same way, by substituting four ounces of shallots and an ounce of garlic for the celery-seed. "Use it with caution," said my friend, when I took down the recipe, "or you will regret having made it, for a drop or two will give zest to a good quantity of sauce or gravy." But those of my readers who appreciate the twang imparted by rubbing the salad-bowl with a clove of garlic will not need the warning to be sparing in its use.

Our talk one day drifted to tomatoes, and, as the love-apple just then was prolific, we set about a store of conserve or chutney, for use in the winter, and the result of our labour was the undermentioned compound, which can be used for anything and everything, from a sandwich mixture or salad, to the hundred and one soups and sauces that may be concocted by the frugal housewife. It is very palatable, wholesome, and economical, but will be too mild for those who indulge in pungent compounds, though the spices can be increased to suit the palate. I only ask that the mode of preparation be carried out. Break up four

pounds of tomatoes (they must be ripe, but sound) into a jar, and add a pound of moist sugar (Demerara) and a quart of vinegar; then cover and bake gently, or, if more convenient, boil in a preserving-pan, until the whole is a pulp; while this is hot, it must be passed through a coarse hair sieve, using a large wooden spoon or potato masher; then put into an earthen jar with a pound of sultana raisins, picked carefully, two ounces of mustard-seed, three ounces of salt, half an ounce of garlic, chopped or pounded, an ounce of ginger, grated, and a quarter of an ounce of the best cayenne. Stir every day for a week, then bottle. And for one of the best and most wholesome of apple chutneys that it is possible to make, the ingredients are the same as the foregoing, except that, instead of the tomatoes, four pounds of apples form the basis, and the proportions are different. The vinegar and sugar are to be doubled, also the garlic, ginger, and cayenne; of salt, another ounce, and of raisins, another half-pound will be needed. I have not tested the keeping properties of the tomato sauce, but that from the apples will keep good for years; in any case, it should be stored for a year before being eaten; while quite fresh, it is quite another thing. As to its uses, it is hard to say for what it cannot be used. As an accompaniment to cold meat, an addition to made dishes (notably curries), or a zest to sandwiches, it is always acceptable; and the mixing of a table-spoonful of it with your apple sauce will ensure the tureen going empty to the kitchen.

And now I will give a *dry seasoning*, a useful adjunct to forcemeats, sausage-meat, rissoles, and all similar concoctions. It is very simple—just equal weights of black pepper, white pepper, ground ginger, and grated nutmeg—say half an ounce of each, and half the weight, *i.e.*, a quarter of an ounce each of ground cloves, curry powder, ground allspice, and cayenne pepper. As these may all be purchased in the ground state they only need mixing, and to ensure uniformity they should be passed several times through a sieve. That these ingredients may retain their strength, a glass-stoppered bottle, covered with a rubber cap, should be used; failing this method, use a rubber cork.

My friend is famed for her pies and puddings, notably meat and game, and I learnt that the special seasoning for them consisted of a mixture of herbs—thyme, basil, savory, and marjoram, with finely grated lemon-peel and a suspicion of cayenne and nutmeg, the herbs being gathered just in their prime, and reduced to the finest powder; while for dishes in which herbs in their dry state would prove objectionable, an essence was made from them by nearly filling a bottle to the neck with the above and other herbs on their stalks, and filling it up with white vinegar, the infusion being strained off in about three weeks. I would like to detail other uses of herbs of all kinds—indeed, I think that the information on that particular subject was the most useful item acquired during a visit which was as pleasant as it was profitable.