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Cooking by Steaming

OF the various methods of cooking food, steaming is one of the best and certainly one of the most economical, both as regards the amount of heat required, and the loss of weight of the food cooked. Meat, fish, vegetables, and puddings that can be boiled, may also be steamed with the best results. Success is more assured with steaming than with any other method of cooking, but it is necessary to remember that steaming is a comparatively slow, gradual process, and therefore more time must be allowed.

To obtain the best results, the three following simple rules must be observed:—

1. When steaming puddings, the mould or basin should only be three parts filled, for steaming produces extremely light mixtures, no part of which is lost as in boiling. Therefore, sufficient space must be allowed for the pudding to rise.

2. The top of the utensil in which food is steamed should be covered with well-greased kitchen paper. This prevents condensed steam getting into the mixture and thus making it sodden. The mould itself must also be well greased. (Pudding-cloths are quite unnecessary; steaming thus eliminates the unpleasant duty of washing greasy pudding-cloths.)

3. When steaming is carried out in an ordinary saucepan or boiler, the water should only reach one-third of the way up the basin, so that even if the water boils hard it will not get into the pudding. Consequently, it is necessary to add boiling water from time to time to prevent the pan boiling dry. If basins are placed on an upturned saucer more water may be put into the saucepan with safety.

STEAMERS of all kinds and sizes can now be bought from simple round ones with perforated bases to fit an ordinary saucepan, to complete steaming outfits of four tiers.

The steaming of fish, meat, and vegetables presents no difficulty. The food is placed in the steamer and the only attention necessary is to see that sufficient water is kept in the bottom compartment to produce the required steam.

It should be the aim of every cook to be able to produce at short notice a variety of plain or rich steamed puddings. There is no need to serve a dull, uninteresting sweet because you do not want to heat up the oven. Numberless recipes may be evolved for steamed puddings from simple foundations.

Let us consider first the most homely of all—the suet pudding. Essential ingredients are flour, salt, suet, baking powder, sugar, and milk or water. An economical recipe uses 8oz. flour, 4oz. suet, 4oz. sugar, half teaspoonful baking powder, milk and water to mix. If the suet is fresh, of good quality, and chopped finely, a light plain pudding may be produced, which is delicious if served with

butter and sugar, golden syrup, jam, or marmalade sauce.

TREMENDOUS variety in suet puddings is possible by the addition of one different ingredient to the recipe above, e.g., apricot, fig date, raisin, cherry, currant, ginger, lemon. A popular proportion of fruit is half the quantity of flour. Thus a recipe for Plain Fig Pudding is 8oz. flour, 4oz. chopped suet; 4oz. figs, 4oz. sugar, half teaspoonful baking powder, a pinch of salt.

Figs dates, and preserved ginger require to be chopped finely before they are added to the dry ingredients. Lemon pudding demands the addition of the grated rind and juice of two lemons and a few drops of lemon essence. Ginger pudding is delicious if 4oz. of crystallised ginger is included as well as one teaspoonful of ground ginger.

SUET puddings in all stages of richness and lightness are possible by increasing the quantity of suet, by the addition of eggs, and by the substitution of breadcrumbs for some of the flour.

A richer Fig Pudding recipe requires 4oz. breadcrumbs, 2oz. chopped mixed almonds, 4oz. suet, 1oz. cherries, 4oz. sugar, half gill cream, 5oz. figs, 2 eggs, 1oz. flour, grated rind and juice of half a lemon, 1 glass sherry.

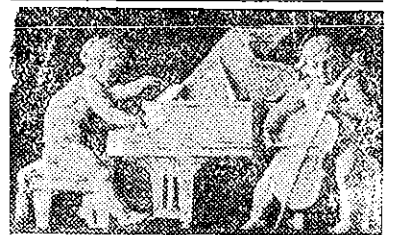
The method of making is the same as for the plainer puddings. The dry ingredients are all mixed together, and the eggs, cream, and sherry stirred in. The richer the pudding the longer it requires to be cooked. Thus, a Christmas plum pudding, which is only a very rich suet pudding, should be steamed for at least six to seven hours. The exact time must be governed by the size of the pudding.

PRACTICALLY everything that has been said about suet puddings also refers to another type of pudding foundation, except that the suet is replaced by shortenings in the form of either lard, margarine, dripping, or butter, which is rubbed into the flour. Needless to say, butter makes the most delicious pudding of all, but is considered unduly extravagant by most housewives.

A third foundation, which gives a spongy mixture, requires similar shortening, but it is introduced by creaming it with the sugar, as in cake-making.

For Raspberry Sponge Pudding the following ingredients are required: 6oz. flour, 2 eggs, 4oz. margarine, 2 tablespoonfuls raspberry jam, a pinch of salt, 1 grated rind and the juice of 1 lemon, half teaspoonful baking powder; a few drops of carmine, 4oz. sugar, milk.

Mix the flour, salt, baking powder, and grated lemon-rind together. Cream the butter and sugar, heat in the eggs one at a time, add the dry ingredients, then stir in the jam, lemon-juice, and carmine, adding a little milk if necessary. Three parts fill some small moulds with the mixture; steam for one and a-half hours.



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