

Secrets of Good Cookery

It is not only the professional chef who wins laurels in the art of cookery. There are many well-known men in Society who are excellent cooks. The Duke of Atholl is well known for his culinary skill, the Duchess having once remarked that she need never feel worried if there were no cook in the kitchen, for her husband could always turn out an excellent dinner. Another well-known cookery expert is Mr. Monteith Erskine, Member of Parliament for St. George's, the writer of this article.



As a young man in the backwoods and wilds of America, I either had to cook my own food or starve. I preferred the former. I soon learned to do myself pretty well. It was necessary, however, to ring the changes on such things as white salt pork, baked beans, sweet potatoes, corned beef, flour and maize meal in varying combinations. When hungry after a day's shooting, and, after all, hunger is the best cook, meals such as these were not to be despised. These were my apprentice days in the art of cookery, and surely there is no better teacher than necessity.

The Simple Things

It is the simple things in cookery that require the most attention. Take the potato, for instance. There are hundreds of ways of cooking it, but few people know how to boil a potato. The right and proper way is not to peel off all the best part, leaving nothing but the core, but to first wash the potato well, and then boil it or steam it in its skin. It can then be easily peeled. You not only get the most nourishing part of the potato, but you also save all waste.

Cabbage the same. Never boil it, for if you do, all the salts go into the water, which is thrown away, and what is left contains about as much nourishment as straw. Go to France if you want to know how to make the best of vegetables.

One doctor tells me that tomatoes are indispensable to health. Another says they are pure poison. Be that as it may, the fact remains that they are a great stand-by in all good cookery. They should, however, to be at their best, be sun-ripened. Most of the injurious acids are in that way eliminated. How decorative and tasty they are in any salad, and it is curious how beauty in a dish tickles the palate as well as pleases the eye.

Salads And Salad Dressings

Talking of salads, I have my own ideas about them. In the first place you can make a salad out of almost anything. The heart of a savoy shredded very finely forms an excellent basis for one, and I can leave it to the ingenuity of the reader to add the other ingredients. With regard to salad dressings, experience has taught me to discard vinegar, for its effect on the digestive organs of many people is far from beneficial. There is an excellent substitute to be found in lemon juice, and I would defy even a gourmet to find

any loophole for criticism. The dressing should consist of salad oil, the yolk of a hard-boiled egg, mustard, salt, pepper and a lemon juice mixed in the usual proportions.

Most people are under the impression that an egg has only to be put into boiling water for two and a-half or three minutes to be fit for the table. A great improvement in delicacy and digestibility is derived by placing the egg in cold water and bringing it to the boil. Likewise a poached egg should be steamed rather than boiled to get the best results.

Irish Stew

My great dish is Irish stew, such as the sportsman relishes at a shooting lunch on a cold winter's day. The secret is to prepare it a day before it is required. This gives the opportunity of skimming off the fat when the dish is cold. It can then be re-heated as required, which makes all the difference between a wholesome and an unwholesome dish. In your stew-pan put a layer of onions, then a layer of potatoes, and then a layer of cutlets and repeat the process until you have sufficient for your purpose—of course, adding the black pepper, salt and seasoning and enough water. Three or four hours will not be too much for this savoury dish. So much for cold weather food.

Now for the Summer. A dish to my liking is a well-made curry, a real hot climate dish. Not nearly enough sweet ingredients are, as a rule, made use of. Be liberal with apples, sultanas and dried plums, not forgetting that the basis of success is the well-browned onions; and, I may add, let your Chutney be of the best. Good rice cooked to a turn, and you have a meal to which any jaded appetite will respond.

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