

Springtime Meals in the Nursery

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times the child who has a small appetite and seems unable to fancy anything more after a plate of cereal and milk, will take with relish a raw egg beaten up with sugar in the milk (warm, of course) which is poured over his cereal. I have tried this plan many times with great success; only the egg must be well beaten up in a froth, or there will be unattractive "strings" to contend with. If a whole egg seems too much given this way, give the yolk only.

Dried fish, such as haddock, or kipper (I have seen fresh fish fervently recommended for children's breakfast, but have never been able to make out how it is to be procured at that hour), a little cold cooked bacon now and then, or sandwiches made from thin brown bread-and-butter with a little mashed sardine spread in between, will help to furnish the savoury element at school-children's breakfasts—an element which our British heritage, rightly or wrongly, still leads us to expect! If the youngsters have a garden in which they can grow lettuce or mustard-and-ress, now is the best time to eat them. These highly valuable "rabbit's foods" are so often saved till tea-time, when it is at breakfast that they are needed most of all.

As far as beverages go, don't try to press too much fluid on a child who has perhaps already had half-a-pint of milk with his cereal. Cocoa is perhaps a little heavy for some of us in warm weather; a thin malty drink is better, or weak tea will refresh the older children. But the longer we can keep our growing girls and boys from developing a keen taste for tea and coffee, the better.

Some raw ripe apple should be given if possible at the end of the meal; some people say at the beginning, but then it does not have the same chance to clean the teeth.

Now about dinners. Meat three times a week, fish twice, eggs once (scrambled or made into an omelette or some other such tempting dish), and a vegetarian dinner once, would be a good rule. The vegetarian dinner could be a delicious milk soup made from white stock and vegetables, thickened with cornflour and sprinkled last thing with chopped parsley; or a cheese dish, such as cauliflower *au gratin*, or macaroni cheese with tomatoes, or cream cheese with salad. Would it not be possible to arrange a dinner like this on the day that the children have meat (bacon, let us say) for breakfast? Meat once a day is quite enough in the warm weather.



Claude Ring, Photo

Joan Frances, the daughter of Mr. & Mrs. R. Chamberlain, Christchurch

And then we must be rather careful about the *balancing* of food elements in the first course and the pudding. After a hot joint, or chops let us give a light, "clean-tasting" (to quote a fastidious small girl) sort of second course; stewed fruit with junket, bananas and oranges

in jelly, or something like that. When the first course has been of a very light or "vegetarian" variety, we can give light steamed puddings or milk puddings of the more substantial kind.

Don't let us forget the usefulness of gelatine and isinglass in making attractive and really nourishing cold "shapes." On warm days in October and November I have found that steak well cooked in a double saucepan the night before, and put into a basin with slices of tomato and a few sheets of gelatine dissolved in a gravy, will turn out next day as a very delicious "galatine" and make a welcome change from ordinary "stewed steak." It is the same with fruit; we all tire of stewed fruit sometimes, but if it is made into a "shape" (you can use either corn-flour or gelatine for this) and has a little thin custard poured over it, most children will consider it a real treat.

At tea-time let water-cress and mustard-and-cress take the place of jam at least every other day. Home-made scones, split and buttered when cold, are often more enjoyed than sweet cakes just now; for children seem to know instinctively that the body has less need of sugar in warm weather than it has in cold. Ripe bananas, mashed up with a squeeze of lemon juice, and spread between slices of thin bread and butter, are favourites too. "Anything that has a kind of cold taste."

A word about milk. If the children like it cold instead of warm at tea-time, let them have it, but insist that they drink it slowly. If they seem very thirsty and can't be trusted to do as you say, let them start with a few sips of water, to take the edge off their thirst. The more water they drink just now, especially between meals, the better for them; it is one of the finest spring medicines in the world!

"'Tis a devilish night, my lord,
I pray thee look to thyself."

—Sabatini.

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