

QUERIES.

Any queries, domestic or otherwise, will be inserted free of charge. Correspondents replying to queries are requested to give the date of the question they are kind enough to answer, and address their reply to 'The Lady Editor, NEW ZEALAND GRAPHIC, Auckland,' and on the top left-hand corner of the envelope 'Answer' or 'Query,' as the case may be. The RULES for correspondents are few and simple, but readers of the NEW ZEALAND GRAPHIC are requested to comply with them.

Queries and Answers to Queries are always inserted as soon as possible after they are received, though owing to pressure on this column, it may be a week or two before they appear.—ED.

RULES.

No. 1.—All communications must be written on one side of the paper only.

No. 2.—All letters (not left by hand) must be prepaid, or they will receive no attention.

No. 3.—The editor cannot undertake to reply except through the columns of this paper.

MENU FOR A SMART CHRISTMAS DINNER.

DECORATIONS.

MILKED hair fern and roses in bowls, alternately white and pink masses. Small specimen glasses with one lovely yellow or crimson half-opened bud in each, arranged on white onion folded in fan shapes with pink silk. Pink shaded fairy lamps or candles.

MENU.

Stuffed Tomatoes.	Purée of Green Peas.
	Mullet à la Hollandaise.
	Chicken Cutlets à la Bivona.
Mutton Cutlets à la Française.	Iced Curry.
Roast Beef.	Roast Turkey.
	Vegetables.
Ox Tongue à la Princesse.	Ham à la Yorke.
	Celery Salad.
Plum Pudding.	Frozen Custard.
Cream à la Pompadour.	Red Currant and Raspberry Fool.
	Strawberry Champagne Creams.
Mace à la Pompadour.	Iced Coffee.
	Juleps.
	Wines.

STUFFED TOMATOES.—Halve some nicely shaped tomatoes remove the seeds and most of the pulp, and chop up the latter with grated bread-crumbs, a little grated cheese, a very little finely minced shallot, some grated or minced ham, chopped mushrooms if at hand, salt and pepper. Fill the half tomatoes with this mixture, sprinkle the top liberally with browned breadcrumbs, and lay a morsel of butter on each. Set them on a buttered baking tin, and bake ten or fifteen minutes. Dish them, and squeeze a few drops of lemon juice over each. Any scraps of meat of any kind will do for this.

PURÉE DE POIS VERTS.—Boil a pint of green peas in water with a head of lettuce, an onion, a carrot, a few leaves of mint, and a sprig of parsley, some pepper and salt to taste, and a lump of sugar. When thoroughly done strain off the liquor and pass the peas, etc., through a hair sieve; add as much of the liquor to the result as will bring it to the right consistency, put the soup in a saucepan with a small pat of fresh butter; let it boil up, and serve with dice of bread fried in butter.

MULLET A LA HOLLANDAISE.—Pat the mullet, which has previously been well rubbed with a lemon, into a fish-kettle with plenty of cold salted water and a bunch of parsley. Directly it has come to the boil let it simmer gently from thirty to forty minutes, according to the size of the fish. To ascertain when it is done, lift up the strainer and insert a skewer into the fleshy part of the fish, and if the flesh does not stick too closely to the bone it is done. Then let the water drain off and serve garnished with lobster spawn and quarters of lemon, and the following sauce in a boat:—**Hollandaise Sauce:** Put 2oz. of butter into a saucepan; when it has melted, mix well into it a dessertspoonful of flour, and add gradually a teacupful of the water the mullet has been cooked in, which must be boiling, and continue to stir until the sauce is quite smooth. Be careful not to let it boil. At the last add the yolks of two eggs which have been beaten up with a teaspoonful of lemon juice, and pepper and salt to taste.

CHICKEN CUTLETS A LA BIVONA.—It is better to line the moulds with slices of cooked chicken. Should you only have a raw chicken to use, your cook, with a sharp knife, must remove the fillets from the breast of the bird, taking the skin from them, place them on a buttered tin, squeeze a little lemon juice over them, and cover them with a buttered paper, and cook in the oven for ten or twelve minutes. When cooked, take them from the tin and press until cold, when they will be ready to use. When cutting the fillets to line the moulds with, it is always better to cut the slices slantwise, and they should be cut very thinly. The mould should be well buttered and the chicken neatly placed inside to form a lining. The chicken will not become dry and hard by being cooked twice, for the cutlets only take a short time to poach. When cooking the cutlets it is advisable to place a double piece of foolscap paper in the bottom of the sauté pan; and when cooking creams of chicken or veal the same thing should be done, and the moulds being placed on the paper the creams are not so liable to become discoloured during the time they are being cooked. The breast of an ordinary sized chicken will be sufficient to line eight or nine moulds, if care is used in cutting up the fillets, and the legs, etc., could be used for the farce. If the chicken were not cooked before lining the moulds it is quite sure to be tough and probably a bad colour.

MUTTON DE COTELETTES A LA FRANÇAISE.—Trim a neck of lamb neatly, tie it into shape, and put it in a pan with 1oz. of butter or clarified dripping, a bouquet, some sliced carrot, onion, turnip, celery, some peppercorns and cloves; arrange the meat on the top of the vegetables, lay a buttered paper over it all, cover the pan, and fry its con-

tents for fifteen to twenty minutes. Then add two wine-glassfuls of sherry; recover the pan, set it in the oven, and let it braise for an hour, keeping it basted, and adding by degrees a pint of stock. When cooked press the meat till cold, then cut it into neat cutlets, mask each with brown chasseur sauce, and garnish with a star of hard-boiled egg, stuffing this with a few drops of aspic. Line a plain Charlotte mould with aspic, decorating the top with white of egg, chilies, cucumber, cooked tongue, etc., then arrange the prepared cutlets all round the mould, with the decorated side outward, and set them with a layer of aspic about 1 inch thick. Fill up the mould with a purée of mutton. Set this with a thin layer of aspic, and put it aside to set. Serve with a salad of tomatoes and cucumber. For the purée, pound till smooth 1lb. of cold roast mutton, mix it with a wineglassful of sherry, two table-spoonfuls of brown sauce, a teaspoonful of Liebig, and half a pint of good brown stock stiffened with 1/2 oz. of leaf gelatine. Rub it all through a sieve, and use.

ICED CURRY.—Take one and a half ounce of butter and place in a stewpan with three onions which have been cut up into small pieces, add a bunch of herbs, and fry the onions for about ten minutes, then add a dessertspoonful of Marshall's curry powder, three quarters of a pint of white stock; chicken stock is the best, and it should be well flavoured. The juice of a lemon, two table-spoonfuls of grated coconut, two green capsicums, and a dessertspoonful of tamarind mix, and then cook altogether for half an hour, keeping it skimmed all the time. Reduce three quarters of a pint of aspic jelly to the quantity by boiling it fast, and then add it to the curry mixture and rub through a tammy cloth or fine hair sieve. When the sauce is cold, add two or three table-spoonfuls of whipped cream and some cooked sweetbread or chicken cut in small pieces. Fill some ramakin cases with the mixture, and then place in the ice cave for about ten or twelve minutes previous to serving.

OX TONGUE A LA PRINCESSE.—Slice some cold cooked tongue rather thickly, and coat it with mayonnaise aspic, and when set dish *en couronne*, and serve with a salad of cold potatoes, sliced tomatoes, and cucumber.

HAM A LA YORKE.—After it has been soaked for twenty-four hours, tie it up in a cloth which has been greased, and then put it into a braising pan which should have plenty of sliced vegetables, herbs and spices in it, and pour two tumblerfuls of sherry over the ham; place the lid on the pan, and let it remain at the side of the stove to cook gently until all the sherry has been absorbed, then cover the ham with good stock, and let it cook gently, allowing twenty minutes for each pound in weight. When cooked let the ham remain in the pan until cold, when the cloth must be removed and the skin carefully cut off and the ham trimmed. After this place it in a pan with about half a pint of sherry and place in the oven and continually baste the ham while it is being re-warmed, then brush the ham over with a little glaze, and serve a good brown sauce flavoured with sherry with it.

PLUM PUDDING.—Plum pudding is not considered 'dressed' without brandy butter, which new sauce is made at the table by the fashionable hostess. A silver basin containing a lump of butter and a wooden spoon is set before the host with orders to 'cream it.' That done, the lady adds a cup of fine sugar, a large glass of brandy, and the same generous quantity of sherry. The butter, which is not butter at all, is passed round in the basin and served from the wooden spoon with which it was mixed.

FROZEN CUSTARD.—Allow one pint of cream, one pint of milk, one cupful of sugar, the yolks of six eggs, and table-spoonful of lemon juice. Put the milk and cream in double kettle and let it come to a boil; beat the eggs and sugar together and stir into the milk; stir all the time until it thickens; take it off and add the lemon juice; when entirely cool, put it into an ice-cream freezer and pack ready to freeze.

CREAM A LA POMPADOUR.—Mix together 2lb of fresh strawberries with 1 1/2 lb of strawberry jam or jelly, 2lb of white sifted sugar, the juice of two lemons, one pint of milk, and one quart of cream. Put all into the freezing machine, and when frozen, turn it out from the mould by dipping it first into warm water. This cream may also be served in glasses.

RED CURRANT AND RASPBERRY FOOL.—Stew 2lb of the fruit, mixed with sugar to taste, for about fifteen minutes; pass them through a hair sieve, when cool mix with a cold custard made with one pint of milk and the yolks of three eggs; pour into a glass dish, and ornament with whipped cream and fresh fruit.

STRAWBERRY CHAMPAGNE CREAMS.—Pass some strawberries through a sieve, add them to whipped cream, and beat all together, and then place on ice for an hour. Serve in long glasses, and just before bringing to table stir in a table-spoonful of champagne to each glass.

ICED COFFEE.—Make about three quarts of good strong coffee, sweeten it with some caenor sugar, and add to it about one quart of cream; stir it well together, pour it into a jug, and put it on ice till it is sufficiently cold. If milk is preferred substitute three pints of it for the quart of cream.

The Juleps will be described next week. A few of these dishes could be taken and an excellent plain dinner arranged.

HINTS FOR CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

EVERYONE is now thinking of preparations for Christmas—that most anxious time for all of us poor grown-ups with large hearts and small purses. It is all very well for the children; to them Christmas is a season of mirth and merry-making, of good cheer, and pleasant junketings abroad in search of pleasure, and delightful presents more or less unexpected. But to the grown-up folks, and especially to the feminine half of the community, it means a great deal of trouble, extra work of many kinds, and expense, and the old cry of 'Christmas comes but once a year, has a very different meaning to them. "And a very good thing, too!" says the worried housekeeper, as she surveys her purchases, and thinks of the number of mince-pies, puddings, and cakes that will be required of her before the festive season is over.

But though it means a good deal of trouble and a considerable amount of planning and prudent foresight on the part of those of us who are not over-burdened with wealth, still I think we all enjoy it after all, and all the more be-

cause of the kindly feeling, and good fellowship, and old memories extending through the years, which the very name of Christmas somehow wakes in the mind. I cannot imagine anything more bewildering and more tantalizing than to be suddenly placed in the midst of a shop full of Christmas novelties, with a certain number of presents to be selected and a very limited amount to cover them. Between the rival attractions and the numberless fascinations of the show of pretty things one's ideas get so confused and one's mind so distracted that it is well if we can retain any idea of the number of presents we want even, let alone remember the different tastes of the recipients of our gifts.

And yet, half the value of a gift lies in its appropriateness and in the amount of thought and kindly feeling bestowed upon it by the giver. I think the best plan is to make out a list of the names of all those to whom you intend to send a present at Christmas, and the limit of expense for each, and then jot down one or two suggestions for each present according to the taste of the recipients or their wants, and thus equipped you can pass harmlessly through the dazzling displays of useless and inappropriate articles which yet are so pretty and so tempting. There are many trifles which you can make yourself and which are often more valued for this very reason, and cost far less, yet are more original and acceptable than some costly trifle.

For girl friends it is always easy to think of something at once useful and pretty, handkerchief or glove sachets, night-dress cases, lace and chiffon bibs for evening wear, and a hundred other things which a girl is always glad to have. I saw the other day some charming lace and chiffon fichus, or rather shaped tops with full sleeves to correspond, which would transform the plainest and severest of morning dresses into a thing of beauty for the evening, and which could be copied easily by clever fingers in less expensive materials for a girl's Christmas gift. Then for married women there are a thousand and one trifles for the beautifying of the home, any one of which would be acceptable and sure to be appreciated.

HORSESHOE-CRAB LETTER RACK.

A convenient hanging-rack for letters may be made of the tough, thin, brown shell of the large horseshoe or king crab or lobster. Remove the horseshoe—the largest piece of the shell—place it on heavy pasteboard and mark around it carefully with a pencil. Cut this pasteboard back in a graceful curve, several inches higher at the top than your shell. Cover neatly with red silk or velvet paper, and glue the shell on, the points of the shell, of course, turning upwards. If preferred, the back may be left uncovered, and after the glue is dry the whole rack may be gilded.

Little white horseshoes are often thrown up by the waves. These can be mounted in a similar way for watch-cases to hang near the head of the bed at night. The back must be covered with velvet sottonly wadded, with a little gilt hook at the top to hold the watch.

A PEN HOLDER.

You can make a capital pen-holder of the stiff long tail of your crab. With your penknife cut off the wide end where it is attached to the body. Take the metal part from an old pen-holder and glue it firmly in the hollow tail. Put a pen in it, and try it before the glue sets, so as to be quite sure the three sides of the tail fit your fingers comfortably while writing.

Scallop-shells have been used for decoration ever since the days of the Crusades, when the pilgrims came home proudly wearing the scallop-shell—or, as they called it, the cockle-shell—in their hats in token of their visit to the Holy Land.



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