

# Party Savouries



**T**HE hostess planning a party for 20 or 30 people must make careful arrangements for the refreshments. She will wish to serve food which looks attractive and colourful, to have variety so that all tastes may be pleased, and to strike a balance between foods which must be cooked or heated at the last moment and those which may be prepared completely in advance. The last point is very important, as assistance is not always available, and the capacity of the hostess (and of the oven) must not be overtaxed in an endeavour to heat too many things at once. This article by Norma K. Metson, Rural Sociologist, Department of Agriculture, Wellington, describes the preparation of a variety of savouries, both hot and cold.

**T**HOUGH many savouries are more appetising when hot, some such as bacon and egg pie and sausage rolls are just as good cold. The usual hot savouries are those with pastry as a base, those which contain bacon, and those which are cooked by being fried in deep fat. Savoury scones and biscuits, stuffed celery, prunes, eggs, and tomatoes, aspic jellies, and delicacies such as crayfish and tinned salmon are served cold.

## Ingredients

The selection of ingredients depends to a large extent on what the housewife has on hand (quite ordinary items may become fascinating in combination), on the season of the year (which determines the availability of vegetables such as celery, spring onions, and cucumber), and on whether there are shops within reach which provide ready-made cocktail sausages, olives, tinned mushrooms, and similar exotic foodstuffs. The appetites and preferences of the guests must also be considered; hungry men probably are just as happy with thin bread and butter and a liberal supply of cheese, pickled onions, hot saveloys, and savoury eggs as with a more elaborate selection.

Toothpicks are essential for the preparation of some savouries and for serving others easily and attractively. Puff pastry, thick white sauce, crisp lettuce, thinly-cut medium-fat bacon, and a selection of cheeses—mild, tasty and cream—are the basic foods. To these are added a variety of materials which may be fresh, tinned, or pickled, raw or cooked—cocktail sausages, saveloys, luncheon meats, whitebait, onions, prunes, mushrooms, oysters, nuts, olives, fish, chutneys, relishes, and savoury spreads; vegetables such as peas, asparagus, corn, cucumber, celery, tomatoes, radishes, and spring onions, with lemons, mint, parsley, chives, mustard, cress, and watercress for garnishes and added flavour. Only small quantities are required, so though some of the items are expensive they do not represent a

great extravagance. For centrepieces and attractive serving, toothpicks surmounted by savoury morsels may be stuck into a firm, well-shaped cabbage heart or polished grapefruit and cucumbers.

## Puff Pastry

Puff pastry is used in a wide variety of savouries—as shaped cases for savoury fillings, for pinwheel circles, sausage rolls, small pies, tarts, and turnovers, and for large pies like bacon and egg which are cut for serving. Hollow cases should be made separately in advance and may be stored in an airtight tin for several days if necessary. Fillings are put into the cases when the main preparations for the party are being made. The whole savoury is then reheated just before being served.

Puff pastry of good quality can be bought, which is a great help to the housewife who lacks the time for the rather long process of making it, who is unable to obtain suitable fat (lard and butter are best) in sufficient quantities, or who cannot rely on uniform quality in the pastry which she makes herself. Pastry in the making must be kept cold and the ingredients should be chilled beforehand if possible. For puff pastry use equal weights of flour and fat—for example, 8oz. of flour, 8oz. of fat,  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of salt, and water to mix until the dough just clings together. Divide the fat into 4 equal portions. Rub 2oz. of fat into the flour, mix in the water, and roll the dough out thinly. Take another portion of fat, cut it into tiny pieces, and spread them over the dough. Fold the pastry, sides to middle, ends to middle, then double, and press down the edges with a rolling pin. Leave it in a cool place for at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour. Roll it out again, cover it with another portion of fat, fold it, and leave it to stand. Repeat the process with the last portion of fat. The pastry is then ready for cutting and shaping.

## Cases

Roll the pastry to a little less than  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. thickness. Cut out circles about 2 in. in diameter with a small biscuit cutter or tumbler. In the centre of the circle make a cut of smaller size with a large thimble, a bottle top, or the cap of a salt shaker; press down firmly, but do not cut right through the dough. Cook the pastry in a hot oven (400 to 500 degrees F.) until it is well risen and golden brown. Lift off the centre cap and hollow out the centre of each case, where there may be a small portion of partially-cooked dough. When the case has been filled replace the cap on top. One pound of pastry will make about 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  dozen small cases.

An alternative method of making the cases is to roll the pastry thinly and cut an equal number of circles and of rings with the centre pieces completely removed. The edges of the circles are moistened with cold water and the rings stuck on top. The central cut-outs may be baked separately for caps or rerolled.

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