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"GOOD Housekeeping's Home Encyclopaedia" describes a soufflé as "A light fluffy dish, sweet or savoury, made with a panada base and fresh eggs, the egg whites being well whisked before they are added; a soufflé may be either steamed or baked, and should be served very hot". The ideal time to include a soufflé in the menu is when eggs are plentiful and when the cook can depend on her family or guests to be punctual.

A SOUFFLÉ which is delicate and palatable when removed from the oven will soon shrink and lose its attractiveness unless served immediately. However, it is wrong to suppose that soufflés are difficult to make, and from a foundation recipe many variations can be made.

### Hot Souffles

The basis of a good soufflé is a smooth, properly thickened white sauce. When this is cooked it is removed from the heat and the flavouring ingredients are added. The hot sauce is then stirred into the beaten egg yolks until the two are blended. This mixture is folded carefully but thoroughly into the stiffly beaten egg whites. The whites should be beaten to the stage where they are stiff but not dry, and the blending can best be done by using a spatula with a wide blade and working gently with a down-up-and-over movement. The lightness of the soufflé will depend largely on the amount of air incorporated with the egg whites.

The mixture is then poured into an ungreased baking dish, sufficient room being allowed for it to double in size. If a straight-sided soufflé dish is being used, a double layer of greaseproof paper can be tied round the outside to give extra height and then removed before the soufflé is served.

If the soufflé is to be steamed, the top of the dish should be covered with well-buttered greaseproof paper. A steamer is best for the purpose, but a

saucepan with a rack on the bottom may be used. A pressure cooker rack is suitable. The saucepan should have about 1 in. of gently boiling water in the bottom. A steamed soufflé will take from  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour to 1 hour to cook, depending on its size.

In the following recipes all measurements are for standard measuring cups (8 fl. oz.) and standard measuring spoons and are level measurements.

#### Foundation Recipe for Souffles

2oz. of butter	3 eggs, separated
1oz. of flour	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of salt
1 cup of milk	

(Serves 4)

Melt the butter, add the flour and salt, and cook until blended but not brown. Remove from the heat and add approximately a third of the milk. Return to the heat and stir until thickened. Repeat until all the milk is used and the sauce is thick and smooth. Beat the egg yolks and add the hot sauce to them. Stir until blended. Beat the egg whites until stiff, add the sauce mixture, and fold them into the mixture gently but thoroughly. Pour into an ungreased baking dish. Bake in a slow oven (325 degrees F.) over a pan of hot water for 1 hour.

#### Savoury Souffles

**Cheese soufflé:** Add 1 cup of finely grated cheese and a shake of pepper to the hot sauce and stir until the cheese is melted.

**Fish soufflé:** Add  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of cooked flaked fish, a shake of pepper, and 1

teaspoon of anchovy sauce to the sauce. If smoked fish or salmon is used, omit the anchovy sauce.

**Oyster soufflé:** When making the sauce use some of the oyster liquor to replace part of the milk. Add 1 teaspoon of lemon juice, a shake of pepper, and 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  dozen bearded and cut up oysters to the sauce.

**Meat soufflé:** Add 1 cup of minced ham, corned beef, or chicken and a shake of pepper to the sauce.

#### Sweet Souffles

**Prune or apricot soufflé:** Add 1 tablespoon of sugar and  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of fruit pulp to the sauce; 9oz. of dried fruit gives  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of puree.

**Chocolate soufflé:** Mix together 2 tablespoons of cocoa, 2 tablespoons of sugar, and  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of water. Cook to a thick paste. Add to the sauce and flavour with vanilla.

**Caramel soufflé:** Caramelize 3 tablespoons of sugar and blend with the sauce.

#### Cold Souffles

The term soufflé is sometimes applied to certain cold desserts with a light texture which have whipped cream and egg whites added to a gelatine base.

They should give the impression of having risen in the same way as a hot soufflé and can be set in a straight-sided soufflé dish which has been given extra height by a double piece of greaseproof paper being tied round it so that the paper comes about 3 in. above the edge. The collar is removed before the soufflé is served and the soufflé garnished with cherries, angelica, or nuts.

If a straight-sided soufflé dish is not available, the dessert can be set in a glass or crystal bowl.

All photographs by Oddie.