

Minnie May's Department.

MY DEAR NIECES,—Just a few words with you this month about cooking vegetables. Half of the vegetables that we see cooked are spoiled—some too much cooked and others not sufficiently. Hard potatoes, stringy squash, woody beets and tough onions exasperate anybody who cares for good food. These delicious vegetables are utterly detestable if not properly cooked. Asparagus, spinach, peas, beans and cabbage should all be boiled quickly. Have your water boiling before you put your vegetables in; add a tablespoonful of salt (some like a pinch of soda to soften the water); none of them should be boiled longer than twenty minutes or half an hour. Potatoes of average size should be boiled fully in half an hour. When done, pour the water off and set the pot back on the top of the stove until the moisture has evaporated and the potatoes have grown dry and mealy. If you want to mash them add salt, butter and a little cream to make them rich and smooth. Be sure to beat them sufficiently to make them snowy white and light. That most delicious of vegetables, squash, is often spoiled by not drying it properly. Do not allow squash to come to the table "mushy" and stringy. When you cook peas, leave a little of the liquor in which they are boiled and season with butter, pepper and salt. In spite of French cooks, peas are not nearly so good when dry as when cooked in this manner. Tomatoes cooked with a little butter and soda crackers or bread crumbs stirred in to thicken, are wholesome and nice; but tomatoes in their perfection are raw. Peel them and cut in thin slices; eat with pepper, salt and vinegar, or some prefer with sugar.

MINNIE MAY.

RECIPES.

MILK ROLLS.

These rolls can be served hot or cold. They are made with one pound of flour, one ounce of butter, one ounce of sugar, a full teaspoonful of baking powder, about a pint of milk and a pinch of salt. To the flour add the salt, sugar and butter, and mix well by working with the fingers. Then introduce the baking powder and the milk and knead quickly. Cut the lump of dough into six or eight pieces; form into rolls, cut each roll over the top twice and place on a lightly-floured pan and bake for fifteen minutes in a very hot oven. When done brush the top with the white of an egg or milk, sprinkle with fine sugar and place in the oven for one minute.

PICKLED VEAL.

Take a piece of cold veal that has been thoroughly boiled; chop it fine, sprinkle salt, pepper and a little cloves over it; pour over it enough vinegar to wet the meat thoroughly; then set it over the fire until well heated through, when you can put it in a mold; as soon as it is cold it can be sliced for the table.

PINE-APPLE PIE.

Pare and grate one good sized pine-apple; cream, one cup of sugar, and a third of a cup of butter; beat the yolks and whites of five eggs separately. To the cream, butter and sugar add the yolks, then the apple, and lastly the whites. Bake in open shells of paste. Eat cold.

PEACH CORDIAL.

Make a rich syrup of one quart of peach juice and one pound of white sugar; when cold add a half pint of the best brandy; for a drink, dilute with water at time of using.

TO CLEAN SILK.

A few potatoes, sliced, and boiling water poured over them, make an excellent preparation for cleansing and stiffening old rusty black silks. Green tea is also excellent for this purpose. It should be boiled in iron, nearly a cupful to three quarts. The silk should not be wrung, and should be ironed damp.

SLEEP.

To promote sleep there is nothing like open air exercise and plenty of it. Sleep will follow regularly and naturally, without any narcotics.

HORSE-RADISH SAUCE.

Grate as much horse-radish as will fill a breakfast cup, mix with it two teaspoonfuls of powdered white sugar, and one each of salt and pepper, a dessert spoonful of made mustard, and enough vinegar to make the whole as thick as rich cream; a small cupful of cream is also a great improvement. To use with roast beef the sauce is heated by being placed in a jar in the oven till warm, but it must not boil; and it is very good cold to eat with various cold meats. Double this quantity may be made at a time, and it will keep for some weeks if bottled.

FILLETS OF BEEF AND DUTCH SAUCE.

One and a quarter pound fillet of beef sliced about one inch thick; grease slightly a tin broiler; place the beef on it and place broiler under the flame, allowing beef to broil for about seven minutes, turning it once. For Dutch sauce take half a tablespoonful of cream, half a tablespoonful of water, the yolks of two eggs, a little pepper and salt, an ounce of butter, and the juice of half a lemon. Put the water in a small saucepan, and with the yolks of eggs, butter, pepper and salt; place it over a very hot fire till it thickens, but don't allow it to boil. Having taken the fillets of beef from the broiler, after broiling several minutes, place them in a dish and pour the Dutch sauce around it, ready for use.

WHAT SHALL WE HAVE FOR DESSERT?

Let me suggest to your readers a few ways of varying the dessert at dinner—changes from the inevitable pie. They may not be new, yet I never see them at any table besides my own: Make a dough as for biscuit, roll thin and spread with currants, cherries or any kind of berries; raspberries are especially good. Roll it up like jelly cake and steam it till done. To be eaten with sweetened cream.

Another is: To one pint of sour milk add one teaspoonful of soda, flour to make a batter, and a handful of dried cherries or currants. Pour it into a basin and steam till done. To be eaten with sweetened cream.

TO KEEP HAMS.

There are a number of modes given to keep hams through the warm season free from the attacks of insects. Some bag them and whitewash the bags, which is troublesome and somewhat expensive; some cover them with dry wood ashes and pack them in barrels; some pack them in barrels and cover thoroughly with pine shavings; but we think the best plan of all, and certainly the least expensive with all who have a smoke-house, and every farmer should have a good one, is to keep the hams hung up in the smoke-house, which should be kept perfectly dark at all times. We have eaten hams so kept two years old, and they were among the very best we ever tasted. Uniform darkness is a complete protection against the attack of insects.

HOW TO MAKE COLOGNE WATER.

With no trouble at all, any one can make in her own storeroom a better article of cologne than that which is usually bought, by thoroughly dissolving a fluid drachm of the oils of bergamot, orange and rosemary, each with a half a drachm of neroli and a pint of rectified spirits. As good as can be made out of cologne itself, however, is also prepared by mixing with one pint of rectified spirits two fluid drachms each of the oils of bergamot and lemon, one of the oil of orange, and half as much of that of rosemary, together with three quarters of a drachm of neroli and four drops each of the essence of ambergris and musk. If this is subsequently distilled, it makes what may be called a perfect cologne, but it becomes exceedingly fine by being kept tightly stoppered for two or three months to ripen and mellow before use.

PRESERVING EGGS.

The following recipe for preserving eggs is recommended very highly:—To four gallons of boiling water add half a peck of new lime, stirring it some little time. When cold remove any hard lumps with a coarse sieve, add ten ounces of salt, three ounces cream of tartar, and mix thoroughly. The mixture is then to stand a fortnight before using. The eggs are to be packed as closely as possible and to be kept closely covered up. If put in when new-laid they will keep nine months.

Conversation.

Nature weighs our talents and gives to us unequal shares of sensibility, judgment, and moral perception. With the diversity of intellect as a basis of argument, many remain silent, crowding the storehouse of the mind until they shall have amassed a fabulous array of mental riches, maintaining that conversational power is a gift inherent, and not an art dependent on sowing or culture. They are few, however, who will persistently deny that the wedge of meditation becomes thin and moth-eaten when thought finds no expression, and that all the finest impulses of the soul are corroded by a holding back of the sympathy of words. Talking is not always conversing. Parrots have learned to rehearse fine phrases and sentences without the least show of harmony or pretension to interchange of thought by language. As the bird is supposed to be destitute of the various mental faculties belonging to man, and its dialect merely an imitation of the human voice, so inarticulate sounds formed by the organs of speech belonging to the human species too often prove a toy with which to while away the hours.

Take some trifle of your acquaintance for an example. Watch his conversation through a single day; collect all the marrow thereof, find its solid worth, put in the balance against a fly, and if it weighs more the scales are false. Since for every idle word we shall give an account in the day of judgment, we should guard against talking too much for fear of saying too little. It is doubtful whether slanderers, gossips, and busybodies in other men's matters, ought to receive the appropriation of a Christian name; and when hoary hairs are guilty of the vices above named, their presence becomes as disgusting to the lovers of the good and truly beautiful as the odour of a vault in contrast to the perfume of June roses.

Some take an unaccountable liking to positive affirmation, and in every story, true or false, which they relate, make your case hopeless as to contradiction. They tell you that it is true, and that it is not false, until you are forced to believe their earnestness nothing more than a cloak for the deceit which at first emanated from the devil. It is said that "opinions gather strength from opposition;" but preserve us, from that which has been very properly termed "the duel of debate," especially when either of the opponents is an exemplification of vociferated logic. He is always in the right, of course; and the best, and, indeed, the only alternative is, to fall back in one's chair and pretend to be exceedingly interested in everything he has to advance, replying discreetly in monosyllables, and taking care to get them in the right place. If the one-sided argument has been successfully maintained in your own home, the gentleman will take his leave with a still more flattering idea of his own intellectual strength, smiling as he thinks of the similar castigation which you are to receive when he shall have accepted your very pressing invitation to call again.

There is another sort of person who belongs to the class of "mighty good kind of men." Catch him committing himself if you can! He would not dare to assert in a positive tone that the nose on his face belonged to him. With an admirable hesitation he "presumes" it may be so, he "hopes" it is—so we do! His evidence, in point of law would do more towards hanging an honest man than imprisoning a thief. Another class shows plainly lack of brain and culture in the long invention of a longer tongue, embellished now and then—and oftener—with "He said," "So said I," "Goodness gracious!" "Dear me!" and "You know."

Then there is the cautious speaker, who loves dearly to whisper in the face of his neighbour, as though each phiz had been drawn towards the other by the attraction of a magnet. His communication proves to be nearly as important as the charge of a popgun or the contents of an empty barrel. Others employ their health in telling how often they have been ill—how it seemed at times as if the disease must triumph, in spite of the physician's skill—then, when nature rallied, and they were almost themselves again, how they happened to put on a damp nightcap, which caused a relapse, and then they thought they should die, they suffered so!

Poetry may be able to paint the constraint under which many individuals suffer in society, but we are sure that colours could not do justice to the matter. Conversation, no matter what may be the chosen theme, should "flow like music after summer showers," leaving no room for monotony, trifling, slanders, conceit, shallow-mindedness, exaggerations, regrets, or embarrassments.