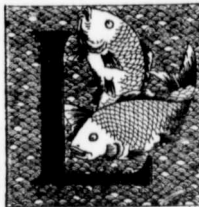


## WHAT TO COOK, AND HOW TO COOK IT.

## PART IV.

## NUTRITIVE DISHES OF FISH.

"Epicures from every clime . . . praise."—*W. Hone.*



LONG ago it was thought that fish was the food *par excellence* for brain-workers, but this is now an exploded theory; the reason why it is more suited to those whose occupation is largely sedentary is that being

lighter than meat it is more easily digested, and being more easily digested it is more nutritious. It is questionable whether fish does in reality contain more phosphorus than other articles of diet; it may do, but for other reasons than this it ought to have a prominent place on our bill of fare. We are apt to forget that fish is every bit as nutritious as meat though not in the same proportions; among the poor there is almost a prejudice against it because it is regarded as "nothing to make a meal of." It is true that the amount of nutrition to be gained from it depends largely upon the way in which it is cooked.

Under-cooked fish is more to be dreaded than under-cooked meat, but when over-cooked it is even more worthless.

Unfortunately fish is comparatively an expensive article of diet; this is partly due to the fact that demand is out of proportion to the supply, consequently prices have to be kept up that even small profits may be realised.

Those who live in or near London and can possibly avail themselves of the opportunity of visiting the central markets, will find that late in the afternoon, just before closing time, fish may be procured for less than half the price at which it was charged in the morning. A fine seven-pound cod for a shilling, for instance. For country people and those who have only the local fishmonger to deal with, the facilities now offered of obtaining fish per parcels post from the docks are well worthy of being tried.

When we have secured our fish there are one or two points we must bear in mind with regard to it, points that are sadly too often forgotten.

One is that just as a ripe peach or pear suffers by rough handling, so does a sole, or whatever other fish we touch; it may not seem to matter much, but the fact remains; its flavour will tell a tale. Then much washing, or packing with ice is very injurious; fish ought not properly to see water until it is being prepared for the table, and then only long enough to allow of its thorough cleansing. Never let any but fresh-water fish lie in water.

Skinned fish will have a very different flavour from that which is cooked with the skin left on. Take a fried or boiled whiting for an example and test it.

French cooks are far more clever in their treatment of fish, especially of the commoner and cheaper kinds, than we are; they say "*c'est la sauce qui fait manger le poisson*," and accordingly are at the trouble to prepare the most cunning sauces with which to make the dish palatable. It is in these *petits soins* that our English cookery is so faulty; if we are given a salmon or a turbot we know we shall do well, but the "small fry" is not worth troubling about.

What we want to find at this present moment are some of those dishes that shall be worthy of the epicure's praise, yet not costly, nutritive, yet so easily obtainable that no one need say they are beyond her means. To this end we will leave salmon, turbot and soles alone; they are only available on exceptional occasions for such as have small means.

Let us begin with one of the cheapest and homeliest of fish, namely plaice. We are all familiar with plaice that has been filleted, rolled in egg and bread-crumbs and fried; is there another way?

Let us take these fillets—we have four strips, but if the fish was large these strips would admit of being cut in half, so as to make eight pieces. Sprinkle each fillet or piece with pepper and salt, roll up and tie with thick white thread. Place the rolls in an enamelled soup-plate (or an old china one) and cover with another. Set this in a moderate oven and let the fish cook in its own juice for twenty minutes or half an hour. Then drain away all the liquor which will have run from them, keeping the fish covered.

Dissolve an ounce of salt butter in a saucepan, stir in as much flour until it is smooth, then add the fish liquor and three-penny worth of cream; stir vigorously over the fire until it boils and is quite smooth, then add a few drops of lemon juice, a pinch of pepper, and pour into the middle of a round dish that is made very hot. Set the rolls of fish on this sauce after removing the thread, and on the top of each roll put a tiny pat of butter with which a little freshly chopped parsley has been mixed. You may make a border of tiny fried *croûtons* of bread around this, or of fine mashed potato, if liked.

Very large and thick plaice are nice left whole and either baked with butter or boiled and served with anchovy or caper sauce.

For filleting and frying I prefer fresh haddock to plaice; the fillets are thicker, firmer, and have more flavour. The cost of both is about the same.

Fresh Haddocks are very nice also if turned round, the tail in the mouth, a little dissolved butter poured over them, sprinkling them with chopped parsley, pepper and salt, and baking them in a brisk oven. Set the fish on a hot dish, add a little lemon juice or a spoonful of capers to the butter in the pan and pour it over the haddock.

Another cheap fish is the *Herring*, but it is often objected to because of the bones. If, however, after splitting open and cleansing it, the herring be held in the left hand, and with the thumb and finger of the right the bone is pressed backwards, it may afterwards be drawn away quite easily. Dissolve a little fresh butter, pass the inside of the herring through it, and sprinkle with salt and pepper, then roll up from the head, the skin outwards, tie securely, flour each roll, and then fry for a few minutes in boiling fat. Drain well before dish them, that all fat may run away. Serve with these *Robert Sauce*, made in this wise:

Fry a slice of Spanish onion that has been cut into dice, until it is thoroughly cooked, then mix with it a teaspoonful of flour, a dessertspoonful of mushroom ketchup, half a teaspoonful of anchovy sauce, a pinch of cayenne, a little made mustard, salt, a few drops of vinegar, and about a teaspoonful of brown stock. Boil until smooth.

Suppose that we have a tail piece of *Cod*. As this also is a cheap cut, it will not be much if boiled, nor will it be much liked if baked. Let us cut it sharply across into as many slices of an inch thick as it will make, dividing the larger slices again, that the pieces may be

as much of a size as may be. Lay these in a stewpan with a little salt butter and stew them very gently until tender through.

In the meantime make a *Curry Sauce* by frizzling a small piece of onion in an ounce of butter, then stirring in a teaspoonful of curry paste or powder, a pinch of salt, a dessertspoonful of tomato sauce, a teaspoonful of flour, and a cupful of clear stock. When these have boiled, stir in half a teaspoonful of cream. Pour this over the fish in the stewpan and let all simmer together for a few minutes, then serve in a hot dish with some well-boiled rice in another one.

*Stewed Fish*.—So popular a dish with Jewish people, is not frequently seen on English tables. For this purpose cod lends itself admirably, so does halibut, and so do fresh haddock. Divide the fish neatly, but do not flour it, sprinkle a little pepper and salt over it, and add butter with sufficient milk or water to keep the fish moist, then cover tightly and cook gently until tender. Thicken the liquor in the stewpan after taking the fish out, add any flavouring liked, also a few slices of lemon, then the yolks of one or two eggs. Bring the sauce up to boiling-point and pour around the fish.

A *Salad* made from cold fish of any kind, broken into neat flakes after all skin and bone has been removed, then some slices of hard-boiled egg added, with a few strips of chopped pickled gherkins, and a mayonnaise or salad cream poured over, is another good way of presenting fish.

A *Fish Pie*.—The fish divided into fillets and a few picked shrimps or one or two oysters introduced with the seasoning, and a few bits of butter, then a little milk poured into the dish, and finally an inch deep crust of mashed potatoes put on, with about three-quarters of an hour's baking in a brisk oven, will present a dish that is fit for any table, light and nutritious either for children or invalids.

For a nice supper dish try the following mould of *Jellied Fish*.—Remove all the skin and bone from about two pounds of cod or halibut; cut it into small pieces and mix with it a teaspoonful of salt, the juice of a fresh lemon, a teaspoonful of grated onion, a pinch of cayenne, a teaspoonful of desiccated cocoanut, and a teaspoonful of water. Press all into a mould, cover tightly, and steam for at least one hour. Set the mould on ice when cold, and when required for table stand it for half a minute in hot water, then turn out on to a pretty china dish, pour a little mayonnaise dressing or seasoned cream over the top and garnish with the crisp leaves from the heart of a lettuce.

When making fish cakes or croquettes, mix an equal quantity of mashed potato with the flaked fish, and use a little milk to make the mixture moist, as well as a spoonful of sharp sauce—anchovy by preference to give piquancy. If any melted butter or sauce remains over after the dish came away from table, use that in preference to anything else.

Tinned lobster or salmon makes excellent cutlets in the case of emergency, using potato again as the binding medium in preference to bread. Tinned fish is not, however, so good from a nutritive point of view.

With a dish of cold-dressed fish a lettuce or watercress salad becomes an admirable accompaniment; salad should also accompany a dish of salmon cutlets, but for garnishing use fried parsley, and with fresh fish that has been filleted and fried use fried parsley and cut lemons.

Brown bread-and-butter, not potato, should accompany fried fresh fish.

LUCY H. YATES.