

WHAT TO COOK, AND HOW TO COOK IT.

PART III.

SOUPS AND SOUP-MAKING.

"Nothing surely is so disgraceful to society as an unmeaning wastefulness."

Count Rumford.

It has been said—we will hope for the sake of our national credit that the statement is not true—that what one-half of society wastes would be sufficient for the other half to live upon. Even if this be not a "true bill" to bring against the wealthy as a class, it is unquestionably true that in the kitchens of the rich waste exists in a deplorable quantity. Unfortunately for us, the "unmeaning wastefulness" against which Count Rumford inveighs, is not confined to the rich; it exists in the middle-class households, and, for lack of knowledge, it exists largely amongst the working class, and even the very poor.

Only nature is untouched by this vice. She wastes nothing; even for "refuse" she has a use, and many uses. Never a plant grows but what has a function to fulfil; and if in some places she grows an abundance and in others allows a dearth, she but calls upon man to exert his powers and bring about the interchange that shall equalise the distribution. The world holds an ample provision of foods of all kinds for all creatures, but there is none to spare. We learn this latter fact when we go into a few statistics concerning the provisioning of a city like London.

In a useful book called *How London Lives*, the writer, who has collected his information first hand from reliable sources, tells us that out of the thousands of tons of fish alone, which come into the central markets and also direct to consumers, counting the whelk and the mussel as equally a unit with the salmon, the supply is not quite one fish per day per person, in this city. Of game and poultry, including the extra supplies at Christmas, the supply is not one bird per week per head, and we know there are thousands who never taste bird-flesh at all during the year, while there are a few hundreds who regard game and poultry as absolutely indispensable to their table. With meat the same rule of proportion exists, there is something under a pound per head per day brought into and distributed in the metropolis. Of milk, fruit, vegetables, bread and other "necessary" things the same may be said, in a slightly varying degree. What then becomes of the margin of surplus which we suppose exists when we see waste so lightly regarded? The fiction vanishes when we realise that the smallest waste means the direct robbery of one of our fellow-creatures—perhaps of many.

In wealthy households the food passes too frequently into the care of servants; these, springing from that strata of society which causes waste because of ignorance, have less regard still for that which is paid for by another, and are reckless in their use of it. Too much in quantity is ordered, and what is not used is thrown aside or suffered to rot; nothing can be made except by buying ingredients expressly for the dish, the "leavings" are always too insignificant to be of any account, and the very suggestion of economy is scouted by those who reign belowstairs.

If there is no excuse for such a state of affairs in the upper strata of society, there is still less excuse for those of the middle rank, for these have matters largely in their own hands to make or to mar. They have intelligence too, and books and papers that can help and instruct; if they will not see evil it is because they are wilfully blind. The wealthy are largely in the power of their

servants, the code of their society prevents them from coming very closely in contact with these even when they have the will, and one establishment is much like another in the order of its maintenance, but for the middle-class household such a position is quite untenable. Although waste is not so noticeable amongst the latter, it is impossible to say that it does not exist.

Want of management, method, and forethought, are the causes of waste here, just as they are amongst the working poor.

Waste, be it noted here, is not simply an abusing of food, but it also includes that want of economy that is shown by not knowing how to extract the greatest amount of nourishment out of the materials that are used.

When we realise that it is waste of food and food materials that really impoverishes a country, we shall understand that the practice of economy in its preparation is not merely a saving to our pockets, but is a duty that we owe to our fellow-creatures. Those who now die—literally—from starvation might be saved from death many times over by the food that is—literally—thrown away.

Of all forms of economy in the art of preparing food there is none more striking than that which is illustrated by the soup pot. The French are a nation of cooks, and they cannot afford to dine without soup, for in nine times out of ten the soup represents a saving and not an extra expenditure.

It must be a small household indeed that has not trimmings, bones, and odd scraps enough to supply a small stock-pot, and even if stock of this kind be lacking, we have a score of soups that require no stock, no bones nor meat whatsoever in their composition, yet they are nourishing, satisfying and cheap; and because they satisfy they are economisers of the meat course which follows them.

Personally I do not favour the use of stock as a foundation for soups; I reserve it for gravies, sauces and the like. So also does the French cook. *Bouillon*, or the broth from fresh beef, mutton or veal, fowls, etc., after boiling, is the clear soup to which he gives preference, varying it by distinctive flavours, but never spoiling it by cooking it a second time over with other bones, thickenings, colourings, etc. To do this is, in his opinion, a grave error.

Vegetable soups, when properly made, require no stock, and *consommé*, a soup quite apart from all others, cannot rightly be made from stock. But, soups apart, a small stock-pot—preferably a brown stone jar with lid—is an indispensable adjunct to a kitchen. Bones left at the table, if washed in warm water, should all add their remaining juices to the stock-pot. Bear in mind, please, that stock should never be allowed to boil, but only to simmer, that long, gentle stewing may extract all the goodness from even the most obdurate bone. Chop all bones with a hatchet into quite small pieces. The stock that is made from bones will usually be found to be a firm jelly when cold, owing to the gelatine that is concealed in the bones, while that made from fresh meat rarely sets.

In hot weather stock should be poured off the bones as soon as it is well cooked, then it should be re-heated every day.

Soups in general we may divide into three classes, clear, thickened, and *purées*. The distinction between a thickened soup and a *purée* lies in the fact of the former owing its consistency to some thickening agent, such as rice, tapioca, potato or corn-flour, etc., while a *purée* is obtained by a careful rubbing of all the ingredients through a tamis or wire sieve. Peas-soup is really a *purée* of peas, tomato soup a *purée* of tomatoes, etc.

When rice, vermicelli or macaroni are added to a clear soup they should have been previously boiled in water, otherwise they will be liable to give a cloudy appearance to the soup.

It is not customary to serve the vegetables in the tureen when true *bouillon* is intended; they are generally passed around separately; if vegetables are added it is better to treat the soup as a *julienne*, and cut them all into small even strips.

If a clear soup is to be thickened use tapioca or potato flour (*féoule*) as the medium. When added early enough tapioca will dissolve and lose all its grain. A small teaspoonful of potato flour (dissolved in cold water first) is sufficient to thicken a pint of clear soup.

For thickened soup that is not required to be clear there are many agents to be employed. Bread is one that is largely favoured in France and Switzerland, either broken up and put into the pot with the other ingredients, or cut into dice and delicately fried in butter, then put into the tureen for the soup to be poured upon it.

The first desideratum for the making of a successful *purée* is patience on the part of the cook. Upon a patient rubbing of all the ingredients through the sieve will hang all the quality of the soup.

In the South of France a vegetable *purée* that is made of lentils, or peas, potatoes, or beans, will have no other vegetable save onion and perhaps a few herbs added to it. After rubbing these, together with the liquor in which they were cooked, through the sieve and bringing up to the desired quantity by adding milk or water, the *purée* is rendered much richer and smoother to the taste if one or two beaten yolks of eggs are added on taking the pan from the fire. If eggs cannot be spared use a spoonful of cornflour and one or two of cream.

Take care to season all soups and *purées* sufficiently before bringing them to table, remembering the poor man's axiom, "It's the seasoning wot does it."

To make a white soup use milk for the main part of the liquid and add a little cream at the last; turnips, artichokes (Jerusalem), vegetable marrows, white haricot beans, celery and parsnips, all make delicious white soups.

If green peas-soup is not sufficiently green, add to it a little spinach juice or a little harmless vegetable colouring.

In rubbing the ingredients through the sieve a portion will be found to adhere to the bottom; this must be cleared, and from time to time it will be found necessary to add a little water to the contents of the sieve in order to pass them.

You will generally find that in recipes, boiling cream is ordered. The distinction is important; not merely is the risk of curdling avoided, but the flavour is different. Most people know how different coffee tastes that has had boiling milk added to it instead of unboiled, so it is with cream; when it is to be added to soup of any description boil it previously.

For many of us cream is a luxury to be done without, in soup or out of it. As a substitute try the yolk of an egg added to milk, but in adding it be wary. Boil the milk, taking care not to let it boil over, and pour it boiling into the soup. Have ready a hot soup tureen and throw the beaten yolk of an egg into this. Remove the soup from the fire, let the first heat pass, then add first a teaspoonful to the egg, whisking all the time, then a little more, and gradually the whole. When cream or milk is used a suspicion, no more, of nutmeg is an improvement to the flavour. In conclusion, do not make too much soup; "little and good" is far better than much and poor.

L. H. YATES.