

Health and Home.

A Chapter on Potatoes.

BY ANNIE BALCOMB WHEELER.

Hired girls as a rule, no matter how good a meat and pastry cook they may be, have but a slight interest in preparing vegetables, especially potatoes: in fact, judging by their manner, they consider the necessary washing, paring and cooking the worst form of drudgery; they either leave half the eyes or pare to a ruinous depth, then wash them in half enough water, then throw them into the kettle with hot or cold water, whichever is most convenient; then forget them until the dinner hour, unless, as is sometimes the case, they are unpleasantly reminded by the kettle boiling dry and filling the house with the fumes of scorched potatoes.

A potatoe may be a humble vegetable, but it is a very necessary one, and as such is entitled to more consideration than it receives from both mistress and maid. The majority of cooks serve them simply boiled, with the possible exception of frying them for breakfast if it happens that there are some left over.

Only very good potatoes are inviting when plain boiled, but when mashed they are one hundred per cent. better, especially when run through a patent masher.

Baked potatoes would be served oftener if they allowed for tardiness at meals, but they must be eaten when done, or straightway they shrivel into soddiness, and become the most unattractive viand of all. Potatoes when properly baked are delicious, and it does not require a very wise head to do this: they should be of uniform size, not large and small mixed; they should be baked upon the raised grate, and should be spread apart, not heaped together. Small potatoes require about half an hour for baking, larger ones from half an hour to forty-five minutes, the fire to be brisk in either case, and the potatoes to be stirred about when half done: a poor oven will ruin the finest potato grown.

A plain croquette made from equal parts potato and rice, or potato and Southern hominy, is frequently found upon the table of the writer. They are shaped while warm, then when ready to cook are dipped in beaten egg, fried in hot fat, and served with crisp bacon. One can make numerous dishes from cold diced potatoes: a simple one is to cover the little cubes with sweet milk, season with pepper, salt and butter, and simmer a few minutes until the milk has thickened.

Another mode is the scalloped dish, making it as one does scalloped oysters, adding a very little finely chopped onion to each layer.

Some pour a cream dressing over the diced potatoes, and garnish as one wishes for a salad. Lyonnaise potatoes and "French fry" increase the variety, and are too well known to need explicit directions; potato soup is a pleasant change from the meat and vegetable soups, and is especially nice in mid-winter, many mothers serving it frequently for the cold weather supper when the children come in from conasting or skating.

A cream potato salad, which I think has never been given in any receipt book, and one which I have used for years, is made as follows: Three cupfuls of sifted potato; stir into this while hot a piece of butter the size of a small egg, one beaten egg, one-half teaspoonful of salt, the same of mustard, a little cayenne or white pepper, the juice of a small onion, and a large tablespoonful of vinegar; beat well and set away for the next day; it blends more perfectly if it is made the day before it is needed, and it will be found delicious to serve with cold meat for the picnic or Sunday lunch. If you wish the dish of mashed potatoes to take on a festive air, have some eggs boiled hard, and sift the yolks upon the top in small spots or a wide border; sometimes sliced eggs may be added for a finish, or tomatoes in their season; and if one is fortunate enough to add a touch of green, the dish will be very attractive.—Christian Work.

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