

The Housekeeper's Page



THE picture on another page of the arrival of Santa Claus in an aeroplane might suggest something novel in the way of decorations for Christmas festivities. A miniature bi-plane or monoplane can be made by almost any handy boy, at least one that will serve the purpose, as it need not have actual flying qualities. Decorate it with sprigs of evergreen and tiny flags. A Santa Claus doll, dressed in scarlet cloth and fur, will, of course, be the aviator, with his pack fastened beside him. A neatly made aeroplane, with pure white cotton for the planes, would make an interesting table decoration, suspended over the centre-piece from the ceiling, by thin elastic bands or by some means that is as little visible as possible. Cotton batting "snow" sprinkled over the evergreen garlands would suggest the cold of the upper regions of the air through which Santa had come. His pack might consist of small bags of bon-bons for those at the table, or small articles, each wrapped in tissue paper and accompanied by a written amusing message.

How to Keep Christmas

There is a better thing than the observance of Christmas Day—and that is, keeping Christmas.

Are you willing to forget what you have done for other people, and to remember what other people have done for you; put your rights in the background and your duty in the foreground?

Are you willing to stoop down and consider the needs and the desires of little children; to remember the weakness and loneliness of people who are growing old; to stop asking how much your friends love you, and ask yourself whether you love them enough; to try to understand what those who live in the same house with you really want, without waiting for them to tell you; to trim your lamp so that it will give more light and less smoke, and to carry it in front so that your shadow will fall behind you; to make a grave for your ugly thoughts and a garden for your kindly feelings, with the gate open—are you willing to do these things even for a day? Then you can keep Christmas.

Are you willing to believe that love is the strongest thing in the world—stronger than hate, stronger than evil, stronger than death—and that the blessed Life which began in Bethlehem nineteen hundred years ago is the image and brightness of the Eternal Love? Then you can keep Christmas.

And if you can keep it for a day, why not always?—Henry van Dyke.

Christmas Bon-Bons

In many households making candy is included in the festive preparations, and surely no expensive "bought" confections can compare with the home-made sweets. There is a decided knack, however, in making candy, and it must not be undertaken in any haphazard way, or the results are sure to prove crude. The person who chooses for her share this branch of the preparation should give to it her close and exclusive attention for the time being, and bring to her task patience as well as skill.

Fondant, which is the foundation for cream bon-bons, can be made up several days before it is wanted, and kept covered with waxed paper; or the bon-bons can be finished at once, whichever is most convenient. The one thing to guard against in making fondant is granulation; that is the reason why it must not be stirred while boiling, nor allowed to cook too long. Use a porcelain-lined or enameled saucepan with straight sides, and see that it is scrupulously clean and smooth. Buttering the sides of the saucepan is a preventive of granulation, but do not use much butter as you want your fondant not to be discolored. Put a pound and a half of granulated sugar into the saucepan with a cupful of water, and add a pinch of cream of tartar, "as much as will lie on a ten-cent piece," a reliable recipe calls for. Put the cover on the saucepan until the sugar is melted and boiling is well under way, then take off the cover. When you think it has boiled enough, test by dropping a little into cold water; if it makes a soft ball it has reached the right stage. Turn it out of the saucepan, without stirring, into a flat dish, and when the mass cools beat it with a wooden spatula until it is white and creamy, and stiff, then turn it out on

to a bread-board, and knead it with the hands into a smooth lump. Mould pieces of it into balls. These may be coated with chocolate, flattened between walnut meats, made to enclose blanched almonds, and colored and flavored to give a varied assortment of bon-bons. A drop or two of cochineal gives a pink tint; yellow and orange can be obtained from mixing in a little strained orange juice, some of the grated peel, and a spoonful or so of powdered sugar to bring back to the right consistency; while a very little strong coffee will impart flavor and color to a third sort.

Use unsweetened chocolate for coating creams, nuts, dates, etc. Break the bars into an enameled cup and set it in a pan of very hot water or over a boiling tea-kettle, and let it melt, with occasional stirring, and guarding against water or steam getting into the cup. Flavor with vanilla. Let it cool till tepid, then drop in one by one the blanched almonds, walnut meats, stoned dates, square bits of preserved ginger, etc. With a close-tined fork, push each sweetmeat down to get coated all over, lift it out, drain, and put on waxed paper to dry. In coating creams do one at a time. Nuts may be dipped for a second coating.

Fruit caramels should find a place in the box of sweets. Stone some dates; remove the pits from raisins; blanch almonds by pouring boiling water over them, then immersing them in cold water and rubbing off the skins; also wipe off some figs. Mix the fruit in equal quantities, and put it through the meat chopper. Dust a bread-board with powdered sugar, knead the mixture, roll it out to about half an inch thickness, and cut into small squares. Wrap them in waxed paper.

Fruit bars can be made by combining the kneaded fruits with fondant. Take two equal thin slices of the fondant, one white and the other pink or yellow, and between them put a layer of the fruit caramel preparation. Press together, roll out flat, and cut into bars.

Glaze grapes and sections of orange help to make the candy box attractive. Make a syrup of sugar and water in the proportion of a pound of sugar to a cup of water; boil until it forms a thread from the spoon, or becomes hard in cold water. Remove to the back of the stove. Drop in the fruit, turn it over with a fork, lift out, and drop on waxed paper, doing one piece at a time.

Most candy-lovers are fond of chocolates. To make chocolate fudge put a teaspoonful of butter into a saucepan, melt, then add two cups of sweet milk and four cups of soft brown sugar; when heated, add two small cakes of chocolate, stir with a wooden spoon until dissolved, and occasionally until cooked, which should be in about twenty minutes. Remove from the fire, add half a teaspoonful of vanilla essence, and then beat thoroughly to a creamy consistency. Turn into buttered plates, and cut into squares or "dominoes."

Things Useful to Know

If a window requires cleaning in frosty weather, wipe it off with a rag moistened with methylated spirits, which will not freeze, as water would do.

Lemons of which the rind is to be grated should be first scrubbed well with a vegetable brush.

Darning large holes in stockings can be done more quickly and easily if a piece of net is basted over the hole. The threads are darned back and forth through the meshes of the net—making a smooth, even piece of work.

Tea stains on linen can be removed by rinsing them in cold water, then pouring boiling water through the stained portion stretched over a bowl. If the stains have dried, soak first in diluted glycerine.

To clean a soiled place on a painted door or wainscot, try rubbing the spot lightly with a little whiting on a piece of clean flannel rag. It is less injurious to the paint than soap and water or washing-soda.



COOKING THE CHRISTMAS DINNER

—Sallows, photo

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