

Marion Hume's Page



Popping the Corn for Molasses Balls.

whitening rope is drawn out as far as may be without danger of parting, caught dexterously in the middle, first by one, then by another of the pullers, turned back upon itself to double its thickness, then drawn out again. The process, often and swiftly repeated, bleaches the dark yellow candy to cream white, if it is not allowed to cool too suddenly. In hardening it opposes more resistance to the arms and hands, until the strain is a test of agility and strength. Here is where skill and grace come into play.

It will be so brittle, by and by, that further pulling would snap the rope. Now, lay it carefully on the platter, coiling as you let it down. If you wish to braid it, do it on

the platter, not when suspended in the air. Divide into three strands of equal length, and plait them evenly and fast. Set the platter in a cold place for a few minutes before breaking the candy into lengths. If properly cooked and pulled, it will be light, porous, of a pale straw color, and delicious to the taste.

DON'T STIR SUGAR CANDY

What is sold in the shops as "old-fashioned molasses candy," is too often doctored with chemicals, and thickened with flour. The cornstarch of which mention was made just now is for the benefit of luckless pullers whose fingers have got sticky. A touch of the starch is safer than rebutting. Too much

butter will cause the rope to split into strings.

Sugar candy is made thus: To two large cups of granulated sugar allow half a cup of water. Do not stir it, but set over the fire to heat slowly while dissolving. When you have a clear liquid, dissolve a bit of cream-of-tartar not bigger than a lima bean in a teaspoonful of cold water, shaking the saucepan to induce mixing. Cook steadily until a teaspoonful, poured slowly from the tip of the spoon into cold water, hardens and threads in the air.

Proceed then as with the molasses candy.

Home-made candies, packed into paper-lined boxes, will keep for

weeks. If the sugar be stirred at any stage of the process, it will soon granulate.

The above are warranted (truthfully) pure candies, that cannot hurt any healthy child. The taste for what English children call "sweeties" is normal and right. When founded upon wholesome domestic confections, it revolts at unholy combinations of white and colored earths, false essences, and froth-at-midnight on Halloween. She "French bon bons."

Recipes for various home-made candies will be found in another column.

Marion Hume

THE HOUSEMOTHERS' EXCHANGE

YOUR friendly Talks embolden me to ask a question that weighs upon the mind of this and your readers, and probably perplexes some others. Do you know of any book or periodical that tells what vegetables, fruits and meats should be used together, to give what I should call a balanced ration, and the reasons for eating them at one and the same meal?

I do not ask this with the desire to do anything, but to get the best and most helpful results from money spent for food and labor expended in the preparation of meals.

That my luncheon was all starch with the exception of the meat never occurred to me as an objection to the menu, I felt that it was wrong without being able to formulate my belief.

If you can take time to answer me by mail, please do it. If not, won't you say something in the Exchange on what seems to me an important matter to such of us as would like to feed our families well, incidentally, ourselves intelligently?

K. N. (Boston, Mass.)

This letter has set a-going a train of thought which has led to expression in a private communication to a single individual.

K. N. has worded a query that comes daily to the mind of the householder, caterer, never order a meal without thinking and often saying, "What will go well with this or that main dish?"—the "piece de resistance," as the French have taught us to name it. Instinctively, I condemn the menu of beef and two or three starchy vegetables, such as our intelligent correspondent enumerates.

Reflection assures me of the justice, upon hygienic principles, of the instinctive revulsion. Beef is a "red meat," a heavy meat—nutritious, it is true, when properly masticated, but fatty in part, and demanding condiments in the form of horse-radish, mustard, pickles, etc., to make it go down palatably and rest easily on the stomach when down.

In other words, we demand vegetable acids to help on the assimilation of suet and fibres.

While I do not know that any book or magazine has been published that deals with this subject, it is true that convention—which is an interchangeable term with fashion—has settled many of the mooted questions of this, as of many another difficult matter. An astonishing percentage of conventionalities will be found in the most common sense.

It is not an arbitrary and irrational rule, which ordains that delicate green peas and currant jelly shall accompany roast lamb. The dictate of mint sauce in the same connection is based upon something which approximates natural selection. Green peas and apple sauce go as naturally with duck as apple sauce with pork; turnips with boiled mutton; sweet potatoes with roast beef; and boiled rice with chicken.

We serve cucumber sauce with fried, pass sliced lemon with soft shell crabs, and garnish broiled chicken with fried hominy, from the force of habit, or so we imagine. If interrogated as to any deeper reason for the habit, we fall back upon custom. Somebody set the fashion in culinary "trills" long ago, and one must be in the fashion in table appointments or be considered antiquated. Nobody who anybody would think of serving venison without currant jelly. That custom has the flavor of antiquity. The careless talker

and superficial thinker never asks herself why the fashion was made in the first place, nor why everybody follows it slavishly—in the popular opinion, Epicures made a study of culinary affinities in days gone by, and we have entered into their labors—ignorantly, perhaps, but to our advantage.

Now and then somebody awakens to the consciousness that there must be reason back of action, and questions why they buckwheat cakes and the like heat-making foods are wholesome in winter, and unwholesome in summer.

Also why they are more easily digested if the longing to coat them with molasses be gratified. The syrup is a beneficial agent in the business of converting the homely, hot and "hearty" food of the farmhouse kitchen into brown and bread.

The theme is interesting and practically inexhaustible. It is one that commends itself with peculiar force to the housemother who would feed her brood with food convenient for it, in the deepest sense of the word.

The Dried Flour Ball

If "Eva," the young mother, who asked you for advice some time ago, will try the following remedy, I think she will soon see in what her willful waste and squandering of food, especially as he is twelve months old, Mine was only a few weeks old and it was perfectly assimilated.

Another mother (Ohio).

Thirty-odd years ago, when my little ones were in the nursery, the subject to the dangers of teething and second summers, a kind friend, the wife of our family physician, dictated the formula of the "dried flour ball" to me, and I wrote it down as it came from her gentle lips. She had used it with each of her nine children, and believed it to be the best remedy for teething.

Satisfaction, I incorporated it into a bottle of my little remedy manual, under the heading: "Dried Flour for Teething Children."

Scores of letters from grateful mothers have told how widely the good news has spread. I am quite certain that the mother who recommends the recipe to her sister got it indirectly from my dear old mentor. I thank her for reminding me of it, and thus setting the admirable "simple" before our members. I have said how cordially and unhesitatingly I can endorse all she says in praise of it.

Ridding Fat of Salt

I think it "W. H. R." will put her hand, bones and sinews into a pot with an equal quantity of water, and set it on the stove, bring to a boil, cook then for ten minutes, and let it cool, the salt will leave the protein, settling in the bottom of the

pot. The cake of fat may be taken carefully from the top and used for soap. I have used this recipe many times, and with the salt. I get the lye from the grocery. My soap is white and good.

Will "H. E. S." Evanston, Ill., let me hear from her?

C. R. S. (Poland, N. Y.). You do not give your full address. Should "Mrs. H. E. S." wish to communicate with you, will that you append to your letter be sufficient?

Recipe Asked For

Can you give me the recipe for Lady Baltimore cake? It was published in your paper some time ago, but I failed to keep it, and now I want it. I enclose stamp for reply. E. S. (Chicago).

The recipe did not appear in our Ex-

Recipes for Domestic Candies

"Velvets."

MIX in a saucepan three cupfuls of coffee sugar, a cupful of boiling water, and one of the best quality of molasses. Set over the fire and bring to a boil. Then, a half-teaspoonful of cream-of-tartar, stirred in well. Cook steadily until the syrup hardens in cold water, when stir in a half cupful of butter and as much soda as will lie on a dime.

Take at once from the fire when it boils up, after the effervescing is over, and mix in a half cupful of butter, and a pinch of baking soda. Let the sugar melt slowly over the fire, and then bring to a fast boil. When the syrup threads from the tip of a spoon, stir in a tablespoonful of butter. When it reaches the boil again, pour into buttered pans, and cut into squares as it hardens.

Maple Fudge.

Crush a pound of maple sugar fine with a rolling pin. Pour upon it a pint of hot milk. Into which you have put a pinch of baking soda. Let the sugar melt slowly over the fire, and then bring to a fast boil. When the syrup threads from the tip of a spoon, stir in a tablespoonful of butter. When it reaches the boil again, pour into buttered pans, and cut into squares as it hardens.

Chocolate Fudge.

To three cupfuls of coffee sugar add a half pound of grated chocolate (best quality and unswetened). Stir until thoroughly mixed, when wet with a half cupful of sweet cream. Beat to a smooth paste, adding, as you go on, two tablespoonfuls of warmed butter. This done, put the mixture into a porcelain-lined kettle, and set it where it will melt very slowly. It should not reach the bottom of the kettle for two hours. At the end of that time, increase the heat, and boil fast for ten minutes, or until a teaspoonful "balls" if you manipulate it. Stir into the candy two tablespoonfuls of vanilla, and pour into buttered pans with straight sides. While still rather soft, mark into squares.

Vanilla Caramels.

Wet two cupfuls of granulated sugar with half a cupful of milk. When it has dissolved, add a quarter teaspoonful of cream-of-tartar and set it at the side of the range until very hot, when draw to the front, and stir to a ball. Stir for ten minutes, or until a little dropped into cold water forms into a soft mass. Add a dessert-spoonful of vanilla, pour into a broad

change, I think. In any case it will be sent in by some compassionate reader, and you shall have it. Be patient, recollecting how many "wants" we have and how little space.

HALLOWEEN DREAMING.

A GIRL who wants to dream of her future husband should eat a hard-boiled egg, without any salt, just before she goes to bed. The old superstition must not speak a word to any one after she has finished eating, and must go to bed and to sleep without breaking the silence. She will surely see the desired face in her dream, says the old superstition, but the charm is made more certain if she places her shoes beside her bed in the shape of a T.

Plain Fudge.

Dissolve two pounds of brown sugar in a pint of milk. Add a pinch of soda, to prevent curdling, and cook in a porcelain-lined saucepan until a dropped into cold water hardens into a brittle mass. Pour into a buttered pan with straight sides, and as it cools cut into small squares with a wet knife.

Hoarhound Candy for Coughs.

This is best made from the fresh herb, but as coughs and sore throats do most about in winter, I give a recipe in which the dried leaves are used.

Steep a double handful of the leaves of boiling water for an hour. Set the vessel containing the infusion in hot water, not letting it boil. Strain and press the leaves dry. Pour the tea upon three cupfuls of coffee sugar and set over the fire as soon as the sugar is dissolved. Add then a tablespoonful of vinegar and cook steadily until the candy breaks when dropped into cold water. Pour into a buttered pan and cut into caramels or pull into ropes.

Peanut Brittle.

Wet three cupfuls of granulated sugar with a scant cupful of boiling water. Let it melt over a slow fire. Cook gently, without stirring, until a little dropped into cold water hardens quickly. Add a cupful of roasted shelled and skinned peanuts, with as little use of the spoon as may be; turn the mixture into buttered pans and cut up while hot.

The brittleness of the candy depends much upon the scant use of the spoon. To stir sugar candy is to invite granulation.

APPLE SEED CHARM.

IF YOU want to find out which of your admirers is the true one, save the seeds of the apple you have eaten on Halloween, name them and place one on each eyelid, letting it remain until it falls off on its own account. The seed that sticks the longest represents the lover who is to be relied upon.

Almost too Hot to Handle.

THAT is what they call it now-a-days.

In my youth and at the South, it was known familiarly as a "Molasses Stew," sometimes as a "Sugar Stew." It was a popular form of entertainment on winter evenings, and divided the honors at "Halloween" with snapdragon and the dozen charms practiced in order to get a peep into the future we had not then learned is lovingly veiled from our presumptuous eyes.

HOMEMADE SWEETS

I do not know that confectioners were more honest then than now, but they were more simple concerning that which is evil. In unbiological language, they were not "up" in the matter of adulterations of their wares. Alba terra had no marketable value, and candy-makers neither poisoned nor painted the "goodies" that had children for their chief customers.

The subject of this was suggested to me by the sight of a "scare head" in a newspaper.

"WHOLE FAMILY POISONED BY CANDY BOUGHT OF A REPUTABLE CONFECTIONER!"

It was not cheap candy, I learn from perusal of the story, but put up in pretty boxes, and colored attractively. Retail price—40 cents a pound. The father bought it on his way home from work, and he, the mother and the three children ate the whole pound before bedtime, with the exception of a few bits left in the bottom of the box. These, when analyzed by the doctors, whose united skill saved the lives of the sufferers, were adjudged to contain arsenical green and other deadly drugs.

For many years the purchase of cheap candies has been sternly prohibited in the several households in which my word has the weight of lawful authority. Chocolate, which was more than suspected to be half American mud; lemon drops, so sour as to cut the throat of the infant that swallowed them, demonstrating to the initiated the active presence of sulphuric acid; green, red and yellow sticks and cubes

that owed brilliancy to mineral dyes; brandy drops, sticky and cloying, redeemed from insipidity by alcohol—one and all of these fruits of juvenile speculations with pocket-money and windfalls of pennies—are ruthlessly confiscated and burned in the market place—alias, Grandmother's wood-fire, or the kitchen range. If a child fall ill suddenly of indigestion, the first query is—"Have you eaten shop candy?"

If the answer be affirmative, the case is treated as one of poisoning.

This is not an idle tale, or an exaggeration of facts. I could make yet stronger the appeal to mothers to withhold hurtful sweets from their darlings were I to tell all I know of the infamous cheats foisted upon us by men who, after all, are no worse than their fellow money-makers.

These things being true, why do we not make our candies as well as can our fruit and vegetables? And this last is what we must do if we would not be done slowly to death by salicylic acid and more potent drugs.

Pulling candy on a frosty evening, when a boy or two, and a girl or three, have dropped in, may be a puerile amusement in the sight of sophisticated younglings of the human species. I submit that it is better exercise for the moral muscles, as it assuredly is for the physical, than waltzing and "bridge."

CLEANING THE KETTLE

Now, as to the modus operandi of the family and social entertainment: Cover the dining table with a clean white cloth, and set on this four large platters, and a large plate for each pair of "pullers." Platters and plates are well-buttered, and saucers of cornstarch and pats of butter stand conveniently near the platters. The candy is cooked in the kitchen. If Bridget resent the invasion of her domain when an "acquaintance" may be with her, choose her "evening out" for the frolic. "Our" cooks have been uniformly tolerant of candy pulls, for we give them no additional trouble in the way of cleaning kettles and plates next day. As soon as the kettle is emptied it is filled

with hot water and set on the side of the range to soak itself clean by the time the fun is over. The plates are piled in the sink, soaped, and covered with hot water when they are cleared.

To return to our candy! For a "molasses stew," put into the kettle ingredients in the following proportions:

FOR "MOLASSES STEW"

To one quart of the best quality of molasses allow one cup of granulated sugar, a great spoonful of butter and half a cup of vinegar. Dissolve the sugar in the vinegar, mix with the molasses, and cook—slowly at first—until the mixture hardens when dropped into water. At this point stir in the butter, and when this is melted a teaspoonful of soda, dissolved in a little hot water. The boiling mixture will foam up furiously, so be on your guard against spatters of hot syrup. As soon as the effervescing ceases, take the kettle from the fire and empty into the buttered platters, dividing the contents equally between them.

Now, let the pullers gird them for the work by donning birch white aprons, turning back sleeves, removing cuffs, and buttering the tips of the fingers. The adroit candymaker never touches the hot mass except with dainty finger-tips. It is a sign of awkwardness or ignorance if any other part of the hand is sticky.

The hot mass must be taken from the platter as soon as it can be handled. The butter will keep it from adhering to the sensitive skin, and a little fortitude enables one to bear the heat in consideration of the fact that the hotter it is when drawn out into a rope, the better the chance of working it speedily into excellent candy. If left to cool until tolerable to the touch, it will string, and give no end of annoyance. Let the practiced puller—who is almost surely a woman—manipulate the hot lump alone for a minute to get it into working order. When she can draw it into a thick rope, her partner must come to her help by grasping the other end of it. Henceforward the business is play, and graceful play. The fast-