

Household Suggestions.

Country Cookery, Southern Methods with Fish.

By Phebe W. Humphreys.

The cooking of fish has become a fine art among Southern housewives. Not only in the preparation of specialties, but in the simple processes of boiling, one may gain useful knowledge from Southern cooks. The Northern housewife is wrongly taught to have the water at a bubbling boil before dropping in the fish. Moreover, she is often unfamiliar with the best plans of acidulating the water, and also of providing means of lifting the fish from the water; or she allows the fish to boil too rapidly, so that when it is done it is almost impossible to remove it to the platter for serving, without breaking it into an unsightly mass. The Southern dish of boiled fish offers a pleasing contrast well worth studying. The fish appears on the platter whole or in thick, even, smooth-edged pieces, firm, flaky and white, with bits of butter melting on its appetizing surface, and with rich, piquant flavor in every morsel.

I watched a Southern housewife famed for her sea-food cookery prepare the water for the boiled fish. She explained that there must be just enough liquid in the boiler to cover the fish and cook it by slow boiling until it is thoroughly done. She first added salt to the water to give it flavor. Then a tablespoonful of vinegar for each quart of water to acidulate the liquid and keep the fish white and firm. Lemon juice may be added in the same proportion for some kinds of fish, and may be used alone for the small fish that require little cooking. Lemon juice mixed with the vinegar is added to the water for the larger fish. The flavor may be further varied according to taste and to the kind of fish to be boiled, by adding to the water cloves or peppercorns; carrots or onions for the big fish similar to our fresh salmon and the haddock steaks; or sprigs of parsley and celery for the small varieties. White pepper is in favor, but dark peppers and spices are avoided in the boiler, because they are liable to spot and discolor the white, flaky flesh.

After this careful preparation of the liquid in which the fish is to be boiled, the expert explained that if the water is too cold when the fish is dropped in the flavor will be extracted. If it is at the usual bubbling boil the skin of the fish, in coming into contact with it, will contract and break. If the fish is slipped into the water carefully just as it is beginning to steam no injury will result from either extreme. The majority of the housewives in the famous fishing sections of Florida think that they cannot keep house without a regular fish-kettle for boiling the various forms of sea food. A good substitute is frequently found in the metal sheet, to be slipped into the pan, on which the fish can be placed during the boiling and from which it is easily slipped to the platter without being broken. Others, who do not possess either of these conveniences, use a shallow frying basket from which the fish is quickly drained and slipped unbroken to the platter. Another makeshift for keeping the fish free from scum during the boiling, and for keeping it firm and unbroken, is to wrap each piece in a square of cheesecloth before dropping it into the water.

The Boiling and the Garnish.

For the slow, steady boiling, which is much better than the furious bubble, these experts allow from twenty to thirty minutes for four or five pounds of fish like our cod or haddock. An equal quantity of bluefish or bass will require from forty to forty-five minutes, and fish cut in solid steaks, or a good-sized Spanish mackerel, will require a full half hour's steady boiling. After the water has reached a brisk boiling point the pan is set away from the strong heat and allowed to boil slowly but steadily until the fish is done; but the expert cook watches very carefully to see that the boiling does not cease for a

moment until the fish is taken from the water.

Small brown potato balls fried in hot fat, and sprigs of parsley, form the favorite garnish for boiled fish. Sprigs of celery and hard-boiled eggs garnish the platter when mayonnaise dressing is served with the fish. A spicy sauce that frequently accompanies boiled fish in the South is made by rubbing a tablespoonful of flour in a tablespoonful of browned butter in the saucepan, adding a scant teaspoonful of ground mustard and thinning with two tablespoonfuls of vinegar—or one of vinegar and one of lemon juice—and a cupful of the strained liquid in which the fish was boiled. It is seasoned with pepper and salt to taste.

Judging from the delicious fish chowders that are served, one imagines that the fish from Southern waters must have an especially rich flavor. The secret lies, however, in the preparation. When large fish are used the heads add much to the richness of the chowder, and even in case of smaller fish the head is boiled with the rest of the carcass after it has been thoroughly cleaned.

The Mysteries of Chowder.

After the fish has been boiled until



A View in the New Kildonan Park, Winnipeg.

tender in the acidulated and onion or parsley flavored water, it is boned and shredded into fine flakes and set aside during the further preparation of the chowder. The rich, glutinous liquid in which it was boiled is strained and also set aside. Then the expert chowder-maker cuts a slice of bacon or fat pork into small pieces and simmers it slowly in a frying-pan with one or two sliced onions, according to the size, allowing it to simmer until all the fat is extracted from the meat, but not until it is discolored. The onion and bacon are then strained from the hot fat, which is returned to the saucepan. A tablespoonful of flour is simmered in fat and a cupful of milk is added, the mixture being stirred constantly to make it smooth and creamy; the fish broth is added to the contents of the pan and when it boils a cupful of potatoes, cut in little cubes, is turned into the hot, creamy liquid and cooked gently until tender. The whole is then seasoned with salt and white pepper to taste, and at the last moment the flaked fish and a generous lump of butter are added to the liquid. Tiny cubes of carrots and sprigs of parsley are sometimes added to the chowder; but the clear, white liquid, with the white potatoes and white fish, is the favorite form.

A baking sheet is invariably used among good Southern cooks for preparing their sea-food delicacies in the form of baked fish. This does not necessarily consist of an elaborate or high-priced fish-pan with an adjustable sheet-iron bottom, but is quite as often home-made or made by a local mechanic—being simply a smooth piece of sheet iron of the right size and shape to fit a large baking-pan, with a ring at each end. By means of this the fish is quickly lifted from the baking-pan and slipped to the hot platter without being broken. It would prove almost impossible to lift

the tender baked fish from the pan with a fork and fish-knife.

To make a good-sized turbot the Southern housekeeper flakes sufficient cold boiled fish to make two cupfuls, and rolls very fine enough dry breadcrumbs or cracker-crumbs to fill a cup. She then makes a rich sauce by stirring a tablespoonful of hot butter in a frying-pan, gradually adding a cupful of milk and stirring constantly until the mixture is smooth and creamy. She then adds the yolk of an egg which has been beaten up in a little cold milk in order to prevent it from lumping on being stirred into the hot sauce; for a white sauce the egg may be omitted. The sauce is then highly seasoned with pepper, salt, lemon juice and onion juice or whatever herb flavoring may be desired.

A deep baking-dish is then buttered and filled with alternate layers of the flaked fish and the sauce, with an occasional sprinkling of breadcrumbs. A thick coating of breadcrumbs is placed over the top layer of sauce, bits of butter are dotted over the crumbs, and the turbot is baked in a quick oven until the mixture is well blended and the top browned. Exactly the same method of preparation is followed when the alternate layers of fish and sauce are placed in the scallop shells. A grating of cheese is popular over the top of the fish en coquille.

certain feeds may be checked by regulating the time of making. These feed-stuffs should not be given until after the milk is drawn.

The best flavors of milk are secured when there is a well balanced feed and when cows are thrifty and healthy and are given all the pure, fresh water they desire. Silage mixed in the right proportion with alfalfa or clover hay and some grain, will produce milk of the best quality.

Cookies.

During the winter months cookies are especially welcome additions to the bill of fare and the following recipes will make them the more so.

White Cookies—One-half cup butter, one cup sugar, one tablespoon milk, two eggs well beaten, one heaping teaspoon baking powder and two cups flour. Mix and roll on a well floured board and bake in a moderate oven.

Ginger Cookies—Two cups molasses, one teaspoon soda, one cup lard, one teaspoon ginger and three well beaten eggs. Mix the molasses, soda, lard and ginger, adding the beaten eggs last. Stir in flour enough to make a cookie dough; roll, cut and bake in a moderate oven.

Lemon Snaps—One cup butter, and two cups sugar creamed together; two well beaten eggs, one teaspoon soda, two tablespoons sour milk and a dust of cream of tartar. Beat thoroughly, add the juice of half a lemon, and flour to make a light cookie dough. Roll thin and bake in a quick oven.

Cocoanut Cookies—Four eggs well beaten, one tablespoon butter, three teaspoons baking powder, one pound powdered sugar, one cup shredded cocoanut and one and one-half cups flour. This dough will be soft and should be dropped in tablespoonfuls on buttered tins and baked in a quick oven for about fifteen minutes.

Cakes.

Sponge Jelly Cake—Three eggs beaten separate, one cup sugar, one cup flour, two teaspoons of good baking powder put into the flour, and three tablespoons boiling water. Mix all together and cook in jelly tins in a quick oven; place either jelly or chocolate frosting between the cakes.

Cocoanut Puffs—The whites of three eggs, one cup of ground sugar, one teaspoonful of the extract of vanilla, one tablespoonful of corn starch, two cups of desiccated cocoanut. Beat the whites well, then add the sugar, and beat over steam, until a crust forms on the bottom and sides of the dish. Take it off the steam, add the other ingredients and drop in small pieces on buttered tins. Bake rather quickly to a light brown.

Drop Ginger Cakes—Put in a bowl 1 cupful of brown sugar, 1 of molasses, 1 of butter, then pour over them 1 cupful boiling water, stir well; add 1 egg, well beaten, 2 teaspoonfuls of soda, 2 tablespoonfuls each of ginger and cinnamon, ½ teaspoonful of ground cloves, 5 cupfuls of flour. Stir all together and drop with a spoon on buttered tins; bake in a quick oven, taking care not to burn them.

Macaroons—Ingredients 4 oz. of almonds, 4 spoonfuls of orange flower water, 1 lb. of white sugar, wafer paper, 4 eggs. Blanch the almonds, and pound with the orange flower water; whisk the whites of four eggs to a froth, then mix it, and a pound of sugar sifted with the almonds, to a paste; and laying a sheet of wafer paper on a tin, put it on in different little cakes, the shape of macaroons. Bake from fifteen to twenty minutes.

Preserved Pumpkins—Ingredients: Equal proportions of sugar and pumpkin. 1 gill of lemon juice. Cut the pumpkin in two, peel and remove the seed, cut in pieces about the size of a 50-cent piece; after weighing place in a deep vessel in layers, first sprinkling a layer of sugar, then of pumpkin, and so on, until it is finished; now add the lemon juice and set aside for three days; now for every three pounds of sugar add three gills of water, and boil until tender. Pour into a pan, setting aside for six days, pour off the syrup and boil until thick, skim and add the pumpkin while boiling, bottle in the usual manner.

The Control of Flavors in Milk.

High quality will sell any product, and usually at remunerative prices. The milk, butter and cheese manufactured in the dairy when possessing a pleasant, agreeable flavor command top-notch prices, but when tainted, due to improper mixing or sour feeds, or giving too largely of cabbage, rape, rye, silage or pumpkins, they are soon refused by the customer. Flavors may also be absorbed in the cellar or dairy house where the milk is cooled. The most common causes, however, are due to some one feed which is given in too large quantities, and if dairymen guard against this practice and their animals are thrifty and healthy, pure wholesome milk is always secured.

The most common flavor that is noticed particularly is due to turning cows out in spring on rye pasture. Rye gives the milk, as well as the butter, a distant flavor, and usually the consumer is not well pleased with it. This evil requires but a simple remedy. When changing from dry feeds to green pasture it should be done gradually. In that instance there will still be a flavor, but customers are so gradually accustomed to it that they do not register a complaint.

Flavors caused by feeding cabbage, rape, pumpkins and silage occur in the fall and early winter when these feed-stuffs are plentiful. These flavors, however, are not entirely disagreeable, and many customers really prefer them after a time, especially the mild silage flavor. Sometimes milk contains an appreciable odor and taste of onions. This is caused by absorption in the milk house, or by onions in the hay or grain. Wild onions are a pest and in some sections of the country, and where they are a part of the feed it is practically impossible to remedy the evil. Flavors caused by