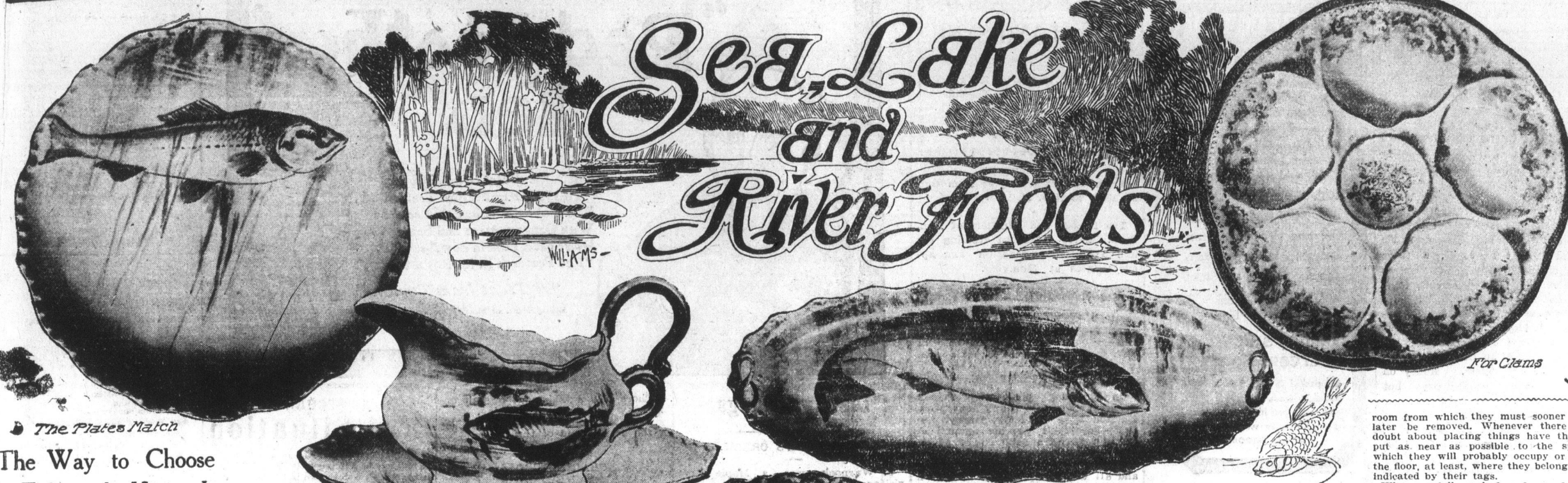


School for Housewives

by Marion Harland



The Way to Choose Fish and Keep It Fresh Until It Is Cooked

IF THE average native housekeeper comprehended thoroughly the nutritive and economic values of fish, the great American meat bill would be cut down to at least two-thirds of its present proportions. We eat more meat and less sea, lake and river food than any other nation upon the face of the globe.

I have explained briefly in a former chapter why fish deserves a more honorable place upon the family bill of fare than it now enjoys. One reason why it is undervalued, if not discredited, by many careful domestic caterers is the general impression that much of the fish offered for sale in our markets is not quite fresh. The least intelligent reader of the daily newspaper knows of and dreads the name of "tomato poisoning."

The first essential, then, to be considered in the selection of fish is that it shall be fresh. It behooves our housewife to learn how to satisfy herself on this point.

One may judge of the time that the whole fish has been exposed in the shambles or packed away in boxes by the color of the gills and the brightness or dullness of the eyes.

The gills should show a bright blood color, instead of the dim maroon betraying that the fish has been a long time out of his native element. The eyes should be clear and crystalline, in opposition to the filmy, opaque appearance which has given occasion for the term "fish-eyed."

Soft Fish Not Safe.

When, as in the case of large fish, such as cod, halibut, sturgeon, salmon, etc., the sections of the body are offered to the purchaser, one must look to the texture of the flesh. Soft fish is always unsafe food. The fibre should be distinct, the flakes firm, the color pure.

As soon as the fish is brought home after it is purchased it should be placed upon the ice, not left in the hot kitchen to await the cook's convenience. Before leaving her hands after she has received it from the fishman or errand boy it should go into the refrigerator. Neglect of this rule has ruined many a fine mess of fish.

Once upon the ice, it should stay there until preparation for cooking is immediately has been made. Drawn from icy security, it should be washed quickly and wiped, never left to soak and soften, even in iced water.

I recall now but one exception to this rule. Sturgeon is less oily and rank, and the tough flesh is made tender, not flabby, if laid for an hour in iced water before it is cooked. Market men keep their fish almost at a freezing temperature. This fact emphasizes the danger of leaving it even for a few minutes in a warmer place.

Lobster Gumbo.

Two pounds of lobster meat, taken from the shell in large pieces, breaking as little as possible; two tablespoonsful of butter and one of salad oil; a tablespoonful of minced onion; three fresh tomatoes, large and ripe; one sweet green pepper; six okra pods; cayenne

Ready for a Delicious French Sauce.



and salt to taste; one cup of boiling water. Melt the butter in a saucepan, lay in the lobster, turn over to coat it thoroughly, add the hot water and stew gently, covered, half an hour. Strain from the meat, which should be kept hot over boiling water until you are ready for it. Heat in another pan the oil, minced onion and green pepper, the sliced tomatoes and okras. When the mixture smokes, turn in the lobster broth; simmer half an hour, rub through a fine colander and stir almost dry over the fire. Turn out upon a hot platter, lay the lobster upon this bed and serve.

Broiled Soft-Shell Crabs.

Melt three tablespoonsful of butter in a deep platter, and mix with it the juice of half a lemon and a dash of cayenne. Sprinkle salt upon the cleaned crabs, roll them in the butter mixture, drain for a second and dredge well with salted flour. Cook in an oyster broiler over clear coals. Serve with sauce tartare.

Scalloped Crabs.

Two cups of crab meat, cut into pieces an inch long; one tablespoonful of flour and a larger spoonful of butter; one cupful of good white stock; half a cupful of cream; one tablespoonful of sherry; salt, cayenne and half a teaspoonful of Worcestershire sauce. Lay the crab-meat in a deep buttered dish. Heat the butter and flour to a roux, and when smooth, stir in the hot stock. Cook three minutes, and work into it the cream, which should have been heated with a bit of soda not larger than a pea. Season and pour the sauce over the crab meat. Cover with cracker dust, sprinkle this with paprika and bits

Clean, wash and dry them inside and out; rub with salted and peppered flour, then dip in egg and roll in cracker dust or very fine crumbs. Heat the fat gradually, and have it deep enough to float the fish. Otherwise, they are saute, not fried. Strain the fat and set it away until you wish to fry other fish. Unless you are so unfortunate as to let it get scorched, you can use it more than once.

Boiled Cod or Halibut.

Wash well, wipe dry and score the skin in squares. Put into the kettle, with cold salted water enough to cover it. It is so firm in texture that you can boil without a cloth if you choose. Let it heat gradually, and boil from half to three-quarters of an hour, in proportion to the size.

Fried Catfish.

Skin, clean and remove the heads. Sprinkle the fish with salt and lay aside for an hour or more. Have ready two or three eggs beaten to a froth, and in a flat dish a quantity of powdered cracker. Dip the fish, first in the egg, then in the cracker, and fry quickly in hot lard or dripping. Take up as soon as it is done.

Catfish Chowder.

Skin, clean and cut off the heads. Cut the fish into pieces two inches long and put into a pot with some fat pork cut into shreds—a pound to a dozen medium-sized fish, two chopped onions, or half a dozen shallots, a bunch of sweet herbs and pepper. The pork will salt it sufficiently. Stew slowly for three-quarters of an hour. Then stir in a cup of milk, thickened with a tablespoonful of flour; take up a cupful of the hot liquid and stir a little at a time, into the well-beaten eggs. Return this to the pot, throw in half a dozen Boston or butter crackers, split in half; let all boil up once and turn into a tureen. Pass sliced lemon or cucumber pickles, also sliced, with it. Take out the backbones of the fish before serving.

Fried Eels.

Skin, clean well, taking especial heed of the fat, which must be removed to the last bit. Cut into short pieces, marinate in salad oil and vinegar for an hour; roll first in salted flour, then in beaten egg, then in rolled cracker, and fry in deep, boiling lard or other fat. Drain, dash and garnish with parsley and lemon.

Stewed Eels.

Skin and clean; cut into short lengths; lay in cold water for half an hour; put over the fire in cold water, just enough to cover them, and cook slowly for half an hour or more, according to their size. A large eel may require an hour to make it tender. Turn out the water, cover the eels with a white sauce, seasoned with paprika, onion juice, salt and minced parsley; simmer five minutes and serve.

Cream Baked Pickers.

Wash and wipe the fish and lay at full length in a baking pan, with just enough water to keep it from scorching. If large, score the backbone with a sharp knife. Bake slowly, basting often with butter and water. By the time it

For Serving a Large Fish



ECONOMY OF TIME AND OF EFFORT IN CLEANING HOUSE

By M. E. Carter

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AFTER a house is thoroughly clean and ready for its furniture each article, as it arrives, should, if possible, be taken by the man who delivered it directly to its destined place. When this plan is followed a house can be put in order much sooner and with far less labor and expense, than if those who deliver the furniture are allowed to set articles down in halls or

room from which they must sooner or later be removed. Whenever there is doubt about placing things have them put as near as possible to the spot which they will probably occupy or on the door, at least, where they belong as indicated by their tags.

When carefully packed goods are about to be unpacked a large square of the unbleached muslin will come into service. It should be spread down in a vacant room with empty barrels at hand to receive the excelsior and all the packing stuff. With the barrel or box to be unpacked in the middle of the cloth, you can guard against letting the excelsior get scattered. To prevent this the corners and sides of the muslin should be often lifted and every bit of the excelsior shaken well toward the middle. Each barrel, when filled, should be sent below, either to the trash place in the cellar or else, if a thrifty housewife wishes it kept for kindling, it ought to be snugly stowed where it can be reached easily, but not allowed to litter the cellar or be too convenient for reckless boys who drop matches about broadcast. (The cellar of a good housekeeper is kept in order; slovenliness is not tolerated there any sooner than in the other parts of the house.) Without these precautions every whiff of air and every person passing to and fro will wait bits of excelsior upstairs and downstairs, and the lady's chamber, to lodge in corners, on furniture, and in every conceivable place as sempiternal tokens of the unpacking. Many successive sweepings will be required to make the house tidy, whereas an orderly method of unpacking will effectually keep the packing stuff within bounds.

Economy of a Dust Pan.

From start to finish, in house settling as well as ever afterward, a dustpan and whisk broom should be kept on every floor ready for use. The house where the pan and brush are promptly used for keeping clean will not need to be swept all over half so often as one where everything is left for "sweeping day." A good old housekeeper used to say, "I'd rather have one keep clean than ever so many cleanings." That is the secret. Never allow things to get copy-turky while you are settling, or at any time afterward. This advice belongs under the head of general housekeeping as much as it does to the period of settling.

During settling all pretty, decorative things should be left in their wrappings and in closets until they can be put out with safety. Bureau covers, pin cushions, splashes, sofa pillows and other dainty articles should not be exposed until the finishing touches of the new abode are everywhere in the house.

In hiring cleaners it is well to realize that it costs no more to have a strong force for a few days than it does to employ fewer and poorer people for service at critical times and very much longer getting in order. A competent superintendent of cleaning women busy. It is really less expensive to employ enough to finish the cleaning and settling rapidly than to keep a few along for some time with only one or two. Besides this, whenever there is a need for a little lunch or a cup of tea, there need be no delay about it waiting for men to be called, who are paid for fifteen minutes' time, or even less, quite out of proportion to a whole day's work. Every one who has a house to settle knows how costly and formidable a series of items in the accounts.

All Depend on the Kitchen.

Since the whole household, irrespective of age, sex, or class, depends upon the kitchen, it would seem superfluous to emphasize the necessity of providing in season with all things requisite for preparing meals, that whoever may have the cooking to do may be able to do it unhindered by a lack of utensils unpacked, clean and ready to her hand. Then, too, with a nice, orderly kitchen, if the dining room be not ready immediately to serve a meal, any one can get a little lunch or a cup of tea. The mistress of the house herself, when in the midst of all the work and fatigue with her crowded calendar would often prefer to take some refreshment almost anywhere in her own house than go out.

A nice, clean kitchen, with a tidy cook serving everything promptly and hot, is far preferable to the average restaurant with strange people eating all about one and everything served lukewarm on cold dishes in a stifling atmosphere. In fact, the only restaurant one gets in an average restaurant is the air that all are compelled to breathe.

Supplies of milk, butter, eggs and fruit, as well as groceries, ought to be provided early in order to remember everything it is good to have. The grocery catalogued list, with that before you there will be little danger of overlooking or forgetting what you are in the habit of using on your table; but, in the beginning, avoid all foods that take much time in their preparation, for you want all the help you can have to get settled and in order.

To Put Up Vegetables

I see "H. M. B." (Ontario) asks for a way to put up beans. As I think I remember the process, I have been thinking it possible "H. M. B." may not see the request. I have been thinking of them when young and tender. Cut them up in small pieces, wash them, then drain dry and spread on pans to dry in a moderate oven for ten minutes. Then add the salt, and you dry them the better, and the color will be better retained. Right here I will say I dry peas, celery, leeks and green stalks, cut up the, also parsnips in the same way, except I do not salt them. I wash them, drain them, then between two soft towels, then spread them on a pan, and dry in a moderate oven. They will dry perfectly in two or three days, and as the fresh herbs for soups or the small items of the country they can be preserved fresh, and I think that kind as good as any, and I have to have in the house," as Mrs. Toodles would say. M. E. C. (Ontario).

Housemothers' Exchange

Old-Time Housekeeping

THE question propounded a while ago by "A Graduate Nurse," "Why were our foremothers better housekeepers than we?" has drawn forth a pleasant, chatty letter from one who claims to be well advised as to old-time housekeeping and of up-to-date housekeeping methods.

I see that you wanted to know why "old-time" housekeeping was the best. I would not care to say it was the best, but it was certainly the easiest. Twenty-five years ago we had no delicatessen or bakeries open on Sunday, and if our own pantries could not furnish bread and cake, we would have to go without. Of course, Sunday was regular washday with us. It was never "pick-up day," only so far as cake was concerned, for it was easy in summer to make a pudding for dinner, and in winter there was always a jar of mincemeat to bake.

As to housekeeping, we might have had a few more niches than that we do now, but I doubt it. Every one cleaned thoroughly twice a year. The only thing we did not do, or have to do, was to wipe up hard-wood floors, but every week furniture was removed from the rooms, the carpets were well swept and generally wiped off with a cloth wrung dry out in ammonia water. Furniture (bedroom) had marble tops. That, of course, was an easy matter to keep clean.

Modern housekeepers say we did not do as much work. I do not know why. We had the same amount of bedding and linen, and our woodwork was painted white. We considered her a pretty good housekeeper who kept the floors clean and the windows, no matter how many doors or windows, no matter how many panes, always bright and free from spots. Everything was methodical, and the consequence was we always had time for rest, and we were never hurried or worried, and as to dyspepsia, what could be more than it is now?

Go into a modern home, and it is hard to believe where you cannot look under some article of furniture and see a little web of spider. Modern housekeeping, with Marion Harland's "Housekeeping" and "The Old-Fashioned Housekeeper" to help and guide, is a world of difference from the old-fashioned housekeeping.

I should be glad to know how our correspondent's views upon this much-discussed subject impressed other practical housewives. It is hardly probable that all will acquiesce in her statement that the former methods were easier than those made possible by modern improvements.

Preparing Hominy

I notice recipes for preparing corn for hominy. Replying, you question the health-