

The Housekeeper's Page



DISHWASHING is one of the tasks that it is impossible to avoid; hence it behooves the housekeeper who must go about it three times a day to do so with the most expeditious and convenient method possible. Many women absolutely detest washing the dishes, and have not changed or improved their methods in all the years of their apprenticeship, the two circumstances being mutually cause and effect. To paraphrase Macbeth, "Since it must be done, when 'tis done 'twere well 'twere done properly."

The necessities for convenient dish-washing are inexpensive and easily acquired. They consist of a big deep pan of enamelled ware, a dish-mop, a soap-shaker, plenty of soft towels, a wire rack drainer, and a ring dish-washer for cleaning stewpans, etc. This last comes on a handle, one end of which is flat and moderately sharp for scraping. Having the soap in a shaker saves one's hands, and the mop is advisable for the same reason, besides making it possible to have the water really hot. A bottle of household ammonia should be on the shelf above the sink, and bath-brick at hand for steel knives, also scouring soap or powder for obstinate cooking utensils. A brush for getting at deep lines in glass-ware is useful, and a long-handled tooth-brush, kept for the purpose, is convenient. If a drainer of wire is not obtainable, one can be contrived of wooden slats nailed on to side pieces to fit in one end of the sink, or in the dripping pan where there isn't a sink, as in many farm-houses.

In a kitchen where one has an enamelled sink, and needs only to turn a tap to procure rivers of hot water, the task of dish-washing is comparatively easy, but, failing the tap, one must keep a kettle ready on the stove, because, without plenty of hot water, there is nothing that will save the process from being "messy" and unpleasant.

Clearing off the table is an unpleasant part of the work. An old steel knife with pliable blade, or a flat wooden knife, is useful for scraping off the plates, the different sizes of which are piled together. When this is done, the dregs in tea or coffee cups rinsed into the slop-bowl, etc., all is in readiness for the actual washing up. Fill the big dish-pan two-thirds full of hot water, move the soap shaker about in it to form a suds, and add a spoonful or so of ammonia. The order in washing is first the glass, then the silver, then the china. The glass must be put in carefully, and done a piece at a time, so that it will not get cracked by the hot water. It must be remembered that cut glass, from the varying thickness of its parts, is very susceptible to changes of temperature. Have a second smaller pan of clear water of the same temperature in which to rinse the glass instead of pouring the water over it as you do with the china. The silver can all be washed at once, rinsed in hot water, and dried thoroughly. Then the cups and saucers, and lastly the plates, pouring out some of the suds and adding more hot if necessary. Turn the hot water tap, or pour water over the dishes in the drainer, and as soon as they are cool enough to handle they will be almost dry, and require little effort to polish them.

The cooking utensils are the most dreaded part of the operations. Greasy frying pans can first be wiped out with newspaper, the superfluous grease being got rid of and burned. Egg-beaters, mixing-bowls and spoons, measuring cups, and any articles to which milk, flour, egg, etc., have adhered, should be put to soak in cold water after being used, then they will be ready for washing when their turn comes.

Finally, scald out the dish-mops, wash out and dry the pan, clean up the sink, hang towels and cloths to dry where they will get the air, and leave all in readiness for next time. Once the housekeeper begins to take a "proper pride" in her dish-washing, she will hit on lots of little ways of making her work nearer perfection.

Vegetable Cookery

The serving of vegetables is a branch of the cook's art calling for intelligence and interest in the work. When the vegetables are well cooked and nicely served the dinner is likely to be a success, for most people, though not professed vegetarians, relish one or two kinds of vegetables well-prepared, besides which, they are necessary to the proper proportioning of the different elements required in the meal.

It is important to have the vegetables fresh, as they lose in flavor when they begin to wilt, especially leaves, stalks, etc. To clean vegetables, soak them for a while in salted water, which removes

any insect life. Then put them in a wire basket and let water run through to carry away all dirt and grit. Use a vegetable brush to scrub roots and tubers.

Following are recipes selected for ordinary vegetables:

Asparagus with Cream.—Scrape and clean the shoots and wash them, then cut into small pieces and put in a saucepan of boiling water to blanch for about three minutes. Then remove from the water, drain, and put into another saucepan with a small quantity of warm water, some butter, a little sugar, and one onion. Set the pan on one side of the fire to simmer gently for half an hour; take out the onion, add a thickening of yolk of egg and cream, and stir well. Turn on to a warm dish, and serve.

Boiled String Beans.—Take fresh, tender beans, break off the tops and bottoms of the pods carefully, stringing both sides. Wash in cold water and drain, then put the beans in boiling salted water and let them cook for twenty minutes. Drain, and put them on a hot dish, pour over a little melted butter, sprinkle with chopped parsley, and serve. The string beans are also very nice served with cream. Boil them in the salted water until tender. Put the yolks of three eggs in a bowl and beat them well, with a little cream and some melted butter. Pour into a saucepan over the fire, and when hot, mix in a little vinegar together with the beans, after they have been drained. Serve hot.

Stuffed Cabbage.—Keep this recipe until you have new cabbages. Take a large head of cabbage and boil it until almost, but not quite, tender. Very carefully take out the heart and fill the cavity with a mixture of four tablespoonfuls of chopped cold meat, mixed ham and chicken, or whatever kinds are preferred, a tablespoonful of minced suet, a sprinkling of grated lemon rind, pepper and salt to taste, all mixed together with a raw egg or a little milk. Tie the cabbage to enclose the mixture, put it in the oven, and bake for twenty minutes, basting frequently with melted butter or dripping. When done, place on a dish, remove the string, and serve with a white or brown gravy poured round but not over it.

Cabbage and Cream.—This is a tasteful way of serving cabbage, and is easily accomplished. Blanch the cabbage in boiling salted water, drain and let cool, and chop it fine. Put in a saucepan a couple

of spoonfuls of butter, a little salt, pepper, and a sprinkling of grated nutmeg; add a tablespoonful of flour, stirring well, then pour in a cupful of cream. Put in the cabbage, mix through the sauce, and cook. Arrange on a hot dish, and serve.

Boiled Cauliflower.—Procure a sound, firm head of cauliflower, trim off the outer leaves, and let it soak, flowerets downward, in salted water for an hour or so, in order that the insects which hide among the flowerets may be killed by the salt, when they will drop down into the water. Put two tablespoonfuls of butter, a level teaspoon of salt, and one-fourth teaspoon of white pepper into a saucepan large enough to hold the cauliflower. Take the head from the salted water and put into the saucepan, cover, and set it over a slow fire. Let simmer half an hour, or till tender. Then take the cauliflower up without breaking it, and place it on a hot dish. Mix one teaspoonful of flour or corn starch smooth and thin with cold water, add it to the liquid in which the cauliflower was cooked, let it boil rapidly, with stirring, two or three minutes, and pour over the cauliflower.

Green Peas, with Lettuce.—Use the peas while young and tender. If they must be shelled some time beforehand, keep them wrapped up in a wet cloth till wanted. Put a cleaned head of lettuce in the saucepan with the peas, salt to taste, add a small quantity of water and a tablespoonful of butter or more according to quantity of peas. Cook for fifteen minutes, then remove the lettuce. Mix three tablespoonfuls of cream with the yolk of an egg, a sprinkling of white pepper, and a spoonful of powdered loaf sugar. Add to the peas, let all thicken together for five minutes, turn into a vegetable dish, and serve.



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