

Minnie May's Department.

MY DEAR NIECES,—There is one important accomplishment which not one girl in a hundred is ever taught, and that is mending. To keep the house linen and wardrobes in neat repair, properly darned and mended, is one of the rudiments of real economy. Plain sewing, including beautiful darning and good mending, should be taught as accomplishments of the needle; it saves in home expenses, grumbling and ill-nature. Fancy sewing is well enough when it is artistic in finish as well as in pattern, but do not learn it before you are taught plain sewing, particularly mending, if you want to be a good housewife. Some may say sewing on a patch is easy, but even patching requires skill, and certainly judgment. What looks worse to the eye than a crooked patch or one crookedly set on? and not only is it an ugly sight but it fails to do all that it is intended for; for if the threads in the material are not allowed to run straight, but are pulled crooked, they will break much sooner than they would were they arranged in the straight lines in which they were woven. The smallest break in the threads or the tiniest hole should be at once repaired, and further mischief stopped by a neat darn, for the longer repairs are left undone, the larger will have to be the darn; therefore, I suggest to take that stitch in time which often saves more than nine.

MINNIE MAY.

Answers to inquirers.

J. W. N.—“Will you please furnish a list of flowers that will grow in a yard pretty well shaded with large trees, where the direct rays of the sun may be said to hardly ever reach the ground? Are there any plants that will thrive in such an exposure?” But few plants will develop their flowers if denied the sun's rays entirely. Fuschias, pansies, forget-me-nots, violets, lobelias, lilies of the valley, phloxes and other herbaceous plants, whose native habitat is a shady wood, will do best.

A. C. L.—To freshen up the colors in your carpet that has become faded and dingy, thoroughly clean it of all dust by good beating. When again laid on the floor, scrub it, a yard or two at a time, with warm soap suds containing one pint of ox-gall to four gallons of water; this will not only brighten faded colors, but will remove soils and stains of many kinds.

RECIPES.

WINDHAM CUTLETS.—Five mutton cutlets from the back rib, one gill of second stock, one carrot, one turnip, one small piece of celery, one onion, one pound of mashed potatoes, yolks of two eggs, one ounce of butter, one-half ounce of flour, one and one-half gills of cold water, one-half table-spoonful of Worcestershire sauce, one-half table-spoonful of catsup, six drops of caramel, one teaspoonful of salt, one-half teaspoonful of pepper, one pint of green peas.

Trim all of the fat from the cutlets and leave a half an inch of bone bare at the top of each one. Place them then in a copper frying-pan, and slice over them the carrot and turnip, onion and celery, adding also the pepper and salt. Pour over all the second stock and put the pan over a slow fire, allowing the contents to cook for twenty minutes, turning the cutlets meantime in order that they may cook evenly through. While they are cooking, rub the potatoes through a sieve to make sure that they are perfectly smooth, when they must be put into a saucepan, the yolks of eggs dropped into them, and stirred over the fire until the eggs are rendered dry by the action of heat.

When the cutlets are ready take a fifth part of the potatoes so prepared, and flattened with a knife upon a mixing-board to the thickness of a quarter of an inch, and roll in this one of the cutlets, leaving the bone bare as a handle. Envelope each of the cutlets in its blanket of potato prepared in this way, and when this is done lay by all of them upon a baking-tin lightly greased, brush them over with a little milk or egg, and brown them in a very quick oven.

While they are browning, stir into the frying-pan the butter, place it over the fire, and add thereto the flour, when the cold water should be put in and all stirred until boiling. Put then with this the catsup, Worcestershire sauce and caramel, and allow the whole to cook for two minutes.

Arrange the cutlets now in a circle upon a hot platter, fill into the centre a pint of boiled green peas, and pour the brown sauce around the whole through a strainer to keep out the vegetables that have been used to flavor it.

CORN BEEF HASH.

One pound of chopped corned-beef, three quarters of a pound of boiled potatoes, two ounces of butter, one gill of stock, one teaspoonful of pepper, one-half teaspoonful of salt, one Spanish onion.

Before chopping the meat, trim away and remove all the skin and grizzle, that all substance likely to present hard lumps may be taken out. Chop then the potatoes, taking care that they do not become too fine or a mashed paste, and mix them together with the meat in the chopping bowl. Chop the onion then finely and brown it to a pale brown in the butter. When brown, add to it the stock, and, when this is hot, the chopped corned-beef and potatoes, season all with the pepper and salt, and stir over the fire until very hot.

Serve this hash baked up in a hot vegetable dish with a piece of butter let into a hole made by the print of a spoon bowl in the top.

PUFF PASTE.

One-quarter pound of butter, one-quarter pound of flour, yolk of one egg, one-gill of cold water, six drops of lemon juice.

Sift the flour through a fine sieve upon a mixing board. Put the yolk of egg into a small bowl and add to it the lemon juice and cold water, beating these together with a fork.

Make a well then in the centre of the flour, pour into it by degrees the mixture from the bowl and mixing in the flour from the sides, knead all firmly together.

Flour a rolling-pin and roll the paste out very thinly, place the butter in the corner of a towel, and covering it with the opposite corner, press out in this any moisture that the butter may contain, spread it upon half of the crust, fold the other half over it, and press the edges tightly together.

Roll this out again very thinly, taking care that the butter does not escape between the edges.

Fold the crust again in three layers, and again roll it out, but rolling across instead of lengthwise, in order that the butter may not run in streaks by being always rolled the same way, and repeat this process of folding and rolling seven times, remembering to let the crust cool between the rollings, otherwise the butter will oil.

The paste may now be used for vol-au-vent, or whatever purpose required.

AUNT MARY'S PREMIUM YEAST.

Peel six large potatoes, boil and mash; put two handfuls of hops in a bag, boil well in a quart of the water that the potatoes were boiled in; add the hop-water, a half-pint of baker's yeast, two table-spoonfuls of sugar; mix. Let rise over night, then bottle for use.

TO KEEP CHEESE MOIST.

Many housekeepers complain that their cheese becomes dry, and some use a kind of bell-glass to put their cheese in. A very simple expedient will keep cheese in the best condition. Take a linen cloth or cheese-cloth, dip it in white wine, and wrap up the cheese in it. By doing this the cheese is not only kept moist, but its flavor is improved.

FLOATING ISLAND.

Sweeten a pint of thick cream with white sugar, grate in the peel of one lemon; whip it to a froth; pour a pint of thick cream into a china dish, lay sponge cake in thin slices over it lightly, then a layer of some kind of jelly, then pour the whipped cream on top and pour what remains into the bottom of the dish. Garnish the rim with sweet-meats.

TO WHIP CREAM.

Sweeten a bowl of cream with loaf sugar and flavor it to taste; set another bowl near the above with a sieve over it; then whip the cream with a whisk, and as it rises in a froth, take it off with a skimmer and put it into the sieve to drain; whip also the cream which drains off, and when done ornament with lemon raspings. This cream may be used upon custard or syllabub.

Carving.

Though carving is by many considered a masculine accomplishment, yet no lady is fully qualified to preside with grace at her own table unless she knows how to carve. As knowledge and not strength is required by the carver, there is no physical reason why women should not carve as skillfully as men. All display of exertion on the part of the carver is in bad taste, and shows either that skill is wanting, or that the dish to be carved is of inferior quality.

The knife for carving meat should be of good size, with a handle sufficiently long, and very sharp.

The knife for poultry is smaller and lighter than the meat carver; the point is more peaked and the handle longer. Fowls are very easily carved, and joints, such as loins, breasts, and fore-quarters, if the butcher has separated the joints well. This he should have strict injunctions to do, and if he understands his business thoroughly, he will do without injunctions.

The dish upon which the article to be carved is placed should be sufficiently near to enable the carver to reach it without rising, and the seat should be elevated so as to give command over the joint.

Fish requires very little carving; it should be carefully helped with a fish-slice, care being taken not to break the flakes. A part of the roe, melt, or liver, should be served to each person. The heads of carp, part of those of cod and salmon, and the fins of turbot, are considered delicacies. The choice parts of salmon lie next the head, the thin part next; the tail is considered less savory. In carving mackerel, cut off first the head, then divide it down the back; the part near the head is considered the choice part. Haddock, herring, perch, and carp should be carved in the same way as mackerel, remembering that the head of the carp is considered a delicacy.

The platter on which any article is served should be, at least, a third larger than the size of its contents. Nothing is more awkward than a large fowl or joint on a small platter. In carving a fowl, first place the fork firmly in the middle of the breast, then cut off the wings and lay the joints neatly on the dish, then cut off the legs, giving the blade a sudden turn, and the joints will break if the fowl is not old. Divide the leg at the knee joint, and lay the parts on the dish. Then cut thin slices from the breast on both sides, remove the merry thought or wish bone, then with the left hand turn the fork down with a little force, and the breast bone will easily come away from the rest of the framework, leaving the stuffing exposed. The second joint, or that part of the leg nearest the body, is by many considered the choice part, and is given with a piece of the breast, some of the stuffing and of the gravy. Each guest is usually solicited to make choice of the part of the fowl he prefers, and it is good manners and a relief to the carver to have the choice clearly expressed. Other fowls are carved in a manner very similar to turkeys. Pigeons and small birds may be cut into quarters and served.

In carving a haunch of venison, first cut in the bone across the joint, about half way from each end, then turn the broad end toward you and make as deep an incision as you can at right angles to first cut, and the length of the haunch. Cut thin slices from each side of this incision, and serve also a portion of the fat to each guest.

Roast pig is usually divided before being sent to the table; that is, it is cut down the back bone, the head is cut off, divided, and laid on the side of the platter and the ears are cut from the head. The carver should first separate the shoulder from the body, then the leg; then divide the ribs into convenient portions, and send round with plenty of stuffing and gravy. The ribs are considered the finest part, though many prefer the neck end, between the shoulders. The brains must be taken from the head and served with the gravy and stuffing. The ears reckoned a delicacy. In a leg of mutton the finest part is situated in the centre, between the knuckle and the farther end. The knife should be inserted there, and thin, deep slices cut each way. There are some good cuts on the broad end of the back of the leg.

In carving a sirloin of beef cut long, smooth slices running parallel with the bone, and serve some of the fat with each piece. Ribs of beef are carved in the same way as sirloin, always commencing at the thin end of the joint, and cutting long slices.

The usual mode of carving ham is by long, delicate slices, beginning in the middle and continuing down to the thick fat, at broad end.

If the first slice taken out is wedge shaped, all the others may be cut slanting, which improves their appearance.