

Bread

By Laura Rose, Lady Instructor in Dairying, O.A.C., Guelph.

It is the things we are interested in—the things we are familiar with—which we like to hear and talk about, and so we find a bit of newsy gossip relating to our next door neighbor far more exciting than the latest daring bank robbery in a distant city.

I am going to say a little about bread, for it certainly is a very familiar article of food, and one which everybody apparently likes. This being the fact, every thrifty housewife's aim should be to have upon her table the very best bread procurable. But our ideas of the "best" may differ.

I fear, as cooks, we study to please the eye more than the palate or stomach, and therein have we greatly erred.

Food is taken that our bodies may be built up, and that energy, heat and nervous activity be maintained, and whereas bread forms so large a portion of our diet, and is relied upon to such a great extent to supply the demands of the body, we should take special thought to the food-value of the bread we eat, in connection with its digestibility. The appearance, odor and taste all help to increase its nutritive value, as they excite the flow of the digestive juices, and as a result a larger quantity is eaten and is better digested. Fresh bread, sour bread, underdone bread, heavy, soggy bread are accountable for much of the serious stomach trouble which is so rife in our country.

Especially should care be exercised with regard to the kind of bread fed to infants and invalids. I have seen many a child eating a huge slice of fresh baker's bread—bread which, had I pressed together in my hand, would have become nothing but a lump of dough. As I thought of the tax put upon the dear little child's frail stomach, my heart ached for the lack of knowledge the mothers of our land have.

Much more thought and study are given to the care and feeding of the calves in the farmer's stable than to the rearing of the young at our own tables.

Lately in talking with a baker the question of lightness in bread came up. He said the people thought by getting a large-sized loaf they were getting more for their money, whereas he himself knew that a drier, closer, better-baked loaf, would be vastly superior, but he had to meet the demands of the people and give them what they wanted.

The great objection I have to baker's bread is that it must be eaten fresh. Home-made bread is at its best when three days old and still quite good at the end of a week. Not so baker's bread, it seems to lose instead of develop flavor. A fact which may appeal to many is that, apart from the many qualities in favor of good home-

made bread, about one-third of the bread bill can be saved by baking at home.

Bread to be nutritious should readily crumble in the mouth to enable it to mix freely with the saliva, which acts on the starch, converting it into sugar and preparing it for further assimilation. Bread contains a large percentage of carbonaceous matter and a much smaller amount of proteids and ash.

We could hardly call it a balanced ration, but eaten with meat, butter or cheese all the essentials are secured for the proper support of the body.

Bread is commonly made from wheat flour. To obtain the best results much care should be exercised in the selection of wheat from which the flour is to be manufactured. Recent chemical investigation at the O. A. C. showed that flour made from some of the softer varieties of wheat contained only from five to six per cent of gluten—the nitrogeous, muscle-building element of the grain—while that from the harder varieties had as much as eleven per cent. gluten.

The lightness, the digestibility and nutrition of the bread depends largely on the amount and quality of gluten contained in the flour. This is why Manitoba wheat has such a preference over many of our home-grown varieties.

While much importance may be attached to the flour, too much stress cannot be laid upon the yeast used to raise the bread. Many fail in bread-making owing to their ignorance of the nature of yeast.

Yeast consists of microscopic vegetable organisms—tiny little plants—which under favorable conditions grow and multiply very rapidly. In their presence starch is converted into sugar and the sugar changed to alcohol and carbonic acid gas. The gas is quite perceptible in the sponge and dough, but, along with the alcohol, passes off in the baking.

Like other plants, yeast when subjected to too great heat, will die, so when putting dry yeast cakes to soak

care should be taken not to have the water hot, nor should the sponge or dough be kept over eighty degrees. This is a favorable temperature for the development of the yeast plant. Cold seriously retards their growth and causes the bread to be "slow." I might just here give my formula for yeast which makes excellent bread: Peel and grate raw, four medium sized potatoes into a stone crock, add three tablespoons of flour, two tablespoons of sugar and one tablespoon of salt. Take a generous handful of fresh, loose hops, put in a granite kettle, pour over one quart of cold water and let simmer for fifteen minutes. Strain the boiling hop water over the ingredients in the crock. Let cool to blood heat then stir in one fresh, dry yeast cake which has been soaking in a little lukewarm water. If made in the morning and kept warm, it will be ready for use by night. Next day put it into a self-sealer and place on the cellar floor. It will keep for several weeks.

I make a rather stiff sponge at night, using a large cup of yeast for eight small loaves. In the morning sift sufficient flour into the bread tins, sprinkle over two large tablespoons of salt, pour over the sponge, mould into a stiff dough and knead thoroughly for fifteen minutes. This thorough kneading gives a nice, fine, white, close-grained bread. When the dough has risen twice its original bulk, form into small loaves.

I would just like to say a word regarding "show" bread. I have taken special notice for a number of years of the exhibits in bread at our fairs, and in four cases out of five the loaves are too large. It is almost impossible to thoroughly bake to the centre a large loaf, and more especially so if two or three loaves are baked in the same pan. If the yeast plants are not all killed during baking fermentation still goes on and the bread becomes sour.

It is well to slightly prick the loaves with a sharp fork before putting them in the oven. This allows the gas to

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