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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, February 18, 193

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "PUDDING POINTERS". Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Today I'm bringing you some pointers about puddings -- the kind of puddings you serve for dessert. These filling sweet dishes just seem to suit cold weather meals. And the hot puddings are at the peak of their season right now.

Pudding for dessert! I don't know how that announcement appeals to you. But when I was much younger it always put me on my best behavior. I would haunt the kitchen and be very helpful. I'd stir things on the stove and insist on washing any dishes that needed to be cleaned up before dinner.

And usually I got my reward -- what I had been working for. That was either an extra size helping of pudding for dinner or something even better. Sometimes mother would let me "lick the pan".

It seemed to me then that there was almost no end to the kind of puddings mother could make. There was my favorite of all, chocolate blanc mange. And hot bread pudding which mother always served with a caramel sauce. There were steamed puddings -- and baked puddings -- and creamy rice pudding -- and tapioca puddings.

And then around Christmas time there'd be the climax of all -- spicy plum pudding.

As far as I could make out then puddings didn't have much in common except their name. But now I see the pudding family resemblance quite clearly. It's this -- all of them are bound together by some kind of a cereal product.

And that definition brings more puddings to mind. There are plain butter cakes with sauces -- the cottage puddings. There are up-side-down cakes. And then there are fruit and bread crumb combinations such as the apple betty.

But by whatever name they are called -- betty -- blanc mange -- up-side-down cake -- they are good pudding desserts if you make them well.

And that brings me to my pudding pointers. I'll have to divide these into several sections because puddings cover such a lot of territory. And the things to watch in a steamed pudding are different from the pitfalls you may come across in a cornstarch pudding.

Take the puddings made on top of the stove -- like the blanc manges -- or the cornstarch puddings. Getting a good pudding of this kind requires a definite technique. And this technique is based on your three ingredients that need special handling -- the starch -- the milk -- and the eggs.

Most important of all is the starch. You must see that it gets mixed in with the rest of the ingredients and then thickens without lumping.

In puddings this is fairly easy. You have quite a bit of sugar in the recipe. So just mix the starch with the sugar. The sugar will separate the starch grains. Then you may add the milk. And the milk may be hot if you want to speed up the cooking.

Of course you'll have to stir the pudding constantly until the starch thickens. You may do this first part of the cooking over direct heat if you want to hurry the cooking.

But for the last part of the cooking you'll need a double boiler. The pudding must cook about twenty minutes more to get the starch thoroughly cooked. And over direct heat such a thick mixture of starch and milk would scorch and stick to the pan.

Just let the pudding cook in a double boiler with the lid on it. Keeping the lid on helps prevent a skin of milk from forming over the pudding. However, if a slight skin does form, just beat the pudding with a Dover egg beater.

And last of all -- the eggs. After the starch is all cooked add the eggs-- by gradually pouring some of the hot pudding into the eggs. If you put the eggs directly into the hot pudding mixture they will cook too rapidly and the pudding will be full of hard lumps and streaks of egg. Cook the mixture just two or three minutes after you add the eggs.

Now for the puddings cooked in steamers. And here's a little tip that makes a big difference in the way your steamed pudding looks after it's done. It's just the little precaution of putting a loosely fitting lid on the pudding before it goes into the steamer. Water condenses on the steamer lid and if the pudding has no lid this moisture will fall into the pudding and make it soggy.

Still other puddings are baked in the oven. And of these there are many that have a custard base. Here the cooking principles are the same as they are for baked custards.

Set the pudding in a pan of water. Then put this in a moderate oven. The water in the pan should never get to boiling. Take the puddings out of the water immediately once they have set. Overcooking or cooking at high temperatures will make the custard curdle.

Here's a special tip if your bread puddings ever seem to be overly dry. Maybe you are using bread that has dried out more than the recipe made allowances for. If you use very dry bread, you'll have to increase the liquid in the recipe. For very dry bread takes up a lot of moisture.

Of course fine bread crumbs are not used for bread puddings at all. The pieces of bread are larger in size -- usually cubed.

And that's all the pudding pointers I have time for today.
