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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Saturday March, 30, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "SPONGE CAKE VARIATIONS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

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You can't choose a better cake for youngsters than sponge cake. This mixture of egg, flour, sugar and lemon juice is easier on young digestions than cake rich in fat and sugar.

For that matter, sponge cake is a favorite with all members of the family, young and old. Light tender sponge cake is a treat in itself, just plain with no trimmings. But if you want to dress it up, sponge cake will combine well with many foods. You can serve sponge cake with fresh fruit--crushed strawberries, for example. You can serve it with jellies or preserves, with whipped cream, with chocolate, with custard, with ice cream--but there. Let's talk about making the cake before we get lost in the trimmings.

This is the time of year to make sponge cake. At some other seasons when egg prices are up, a recipe calling for 4 or 5 eggs may seem rather expensive. But now when eggs are plentiful and low in cost--now is the time to indulge the family in sponge cake, plain or fancy.

Expert cooks pride themselves on making what they call "true sponge cake." True sponge cake contains no baking powder or liquid other than egg. Its lightness depends entirely on the air you beat into the egg, especially, the white. So the success of the cake depends on how skillfully you mix and bake.

True sponge cake needs more care and skill than cake made with baking powder. And here are some points for success suggested as a result of baking tests at the Bureau of Home Economics. To begin with, you have to beat the egg white just right. The egg white must be stiff enough to hold up in peaks yet not too stiff to flow when

you tip the bowl.

Besides care in beating the whites, you need to use care in adding the other ingredients. You must fold the other ingredients into the stiff whites so gently and quickly you won't lose air bubbles and leave the cake flat. Another thing: Your oven must be ready for the cake the minute you have the cake together. A sponge mixture can't stand and wait without losing air bubbles. Finally, you have to have the oven temperature just right. Sponge cake needs a slow oven--about 300 degrees Fahrenheit. It needs to bake slowly and not be disturbed while it bakes.

See why cooks pride themselves if they can make a true sponge cake that is light, fluffy and tender? A slip anywhere along the line, and the cake may come out flat and tough.

But don't let all this scare you off sponge cake. If you don't want to undertake true sponge cake, you have a good substitute made with baking powder. This substitute generally goes by the name of "water sponge cake." To make it, you use cold water and baking powder in place of some of the eggs in the true sponge mixture. The rule for making water sponge cake is: Substitute 2 tablespoons cold water and a half teaspoon baking powder for each egg you leave out of the standard recipe. You mix water sponge cake this way: Beat the yolk of egg and sugar together until thick; then add cold water and beat. Now sift the baking powder and flour together, and stir in the mixture of egg, sugar and water. Finally fold in the stiff egg whites.

For an amateur cook, water sponge cake is more certain of success. But whether you use a true sponge or a water sponge mixture, you have many ways to make your sponge cake different. One way is to make cocoa sponge cake. To make cocoa sponge cake, replace one-fourth cup of flour with one-fourth cup of cocoa and replace 1 tablespoon of the lemon juice with water. Sift the cocoa with the flour.

You can bake your sponge mixture in several different ways, besides in the usual round tube-pan. Try sponge drops. Drop the sponge mixture by spoonfuls on a

greased paper. Bake in a slow oven until the edges of the drops are light brown and the cake in the center is firm but tender. A tiny dab of chocolate or white frosting makes sponge drops extra good.

Or you can bake your sponge mixture in a thin square sheet, and make it into a jelly roll. For jelly roll lay the hot cake on a piece of waxed paper covered with powdered sugar. Trim off the crusty sides. Spread with jelly or jam. Roll up quickly while the cake is still hot enough to roll instead of breaking. Wrap the waxed paper around it to hold the roll. You can spread the cake with whipped cream instead of jelly, or with chocolate frosting. If you want to be very fancy, spread first with a layer of chocolate frosting, then with whipped cream. Roll up together.

Individual stuffed sponge cakes are delicious and easy to make. Bake the sponge mixture in individual muffin tins. Then scoop out the center of each little cake and fill with whipped cream or fruit preserves or chocolate frosting flavored with mint.

One of the more fancy sponge cake desserts is charlotte russe. It is one of these desserts expensive hotels charge high prices for, yet it isn't difficult to make at home. Charlotte russe is simply a sponge cake shell filled with a mixture of sweetened whipped cream and gelatin. (Hotels often use lady fingers for the outside sponge shell.)

Still another sponge cake dessert is an ice-cream sandwich, just a slice of ice cream between two slices of sponge cake with some sort of sauce over the whole thing.

These give you an idea of a few of the ways to serve sponge cake. But most important, of course, is knowing how to make the cake to perfection. If you want further information on making sponge cake, write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., for its home baking bulletin. Write for Farmers' Bulletin No. 1775. As long as the free supply lasts you are welcome to a copy.

