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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, November 16, 1934

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "FISH STEWS AND CHOWDERS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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You never can tell what your milkman may be up to in these enterprising days. Friends of mine in New York City boasted to me last year that their milkman would deliver orange juice, eggs and cheese along with milk. Then I've heard that in Detroit he would bring you tomato juice. But the latest milkman story comes from Providence, Rhode Island. If you live in Providence, your milkman will deliver oysters along with milk for oyster stew.

You see, people in Rhode Island -- in fact, all up and down New England -- appreciate the good food the sea brings them. The Bureau of Fisheries reports that the average American eats less fish than does the inhabitant of any other country in the world. But that statement doesn't apply to the New England Coast where some of our most famous sea food recipes have originated.

Well, nowadays when we can have oysters and other sea food even if we live far inland, when we can get these things frozen or canned if we can't buy them fresh, why should we let New England have the corner on good fish dishes? Oyster stew in Indiana will go to the spot just as fast as in Rhode Island, provided it's properly made. And clam chowder is as cheering and satisfying in Kansas as in Massachusetts.

Let's stop for a word about the making of these favorite old-time fish dishes of the stew and chowder variety.

Take oyster stew, since we mentioned that first. You can make an oyster stew in 15 minutes, start to finish. All oysters need by way of cooking is heating through. Good cooks say that oysters are done as soon as their edges begin to curl.

I'd like to run through the best and simplest recipe for oyster stew that I know. I don't think you'll need to write this down. The ingredients are so easy to remember. To serve five or six people, you'll need a quart of milk and a quart of oysters. Then you'll need 4 tablespoons of butter, 2 tablespoons of flour, and salt, pepper and chopped parsley -- if you like it. That's all -- just milk and oysters, a quart of each, and butter, flour, salt, pepper, and maybe parsley.

Now the making of the stew. You heat the milk in a double boiler. Then you strain the oysters from their liquor and pick out any bits of shell that may be clinging to them. Heat the oyster liquor slightly and remove the scum which rises to the top. Blend the fat and flour and stir into the milk until it thickens. Add the oysters and liquor and cook for five or ten minutes -- or until the edges of the oysters begin to curl.



Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve in hot soup plates with finely chopped parsley sprinkled over the top.

That's the traditional oyster stew -- easy and quick to make; delicious in flavor; a good way to work in part of the family's daily milk quota; hot and satisfying for a winter day; and when oysters are in season, usually inexpensive.

A variation of this simple dish is oyster and vegetable stew. You cook chopped raw turnip, cabbage, onion, and celery in water for about ten minutes. Then you add fat and flour blended, and finally oysters and salt. This oyster and vegetable mixture you serve on toasted bread or crackers.

You can generally work up a lively argument with any New Englander if you mention clam chowder made with tomatoes -- or any other colorful vegetable. The clam chowder dear to the heart of that stern and rock-bound coast is a white chowder, clams combined with milk, onion, white potatoes, flour, salt pork, seasonings -- white ingredients only, you see, except perhaps for a little sprinkling of chopped green parsley over the top.

And to make this traditional chowder, the first step is to get the clams and their liquor ready. Drain the clams from the liquor and chop or grind them fine. Then strain the liquor through cheesecloth or a very fine wire strainer to remove bits of shell. Now, put on your frying pan, crisp the finely diced salt pork and remove the pieces from the fat. Cook the chopped onion in the fat a few minutes, add flour and stir until well blended. Now add the clam liquor and the potatoes. Put the mixture on to cook in the double boiler until the potatoes are done. Now put in the milk, the chopped clams and the crisp pork. Finally season with salt and tabasco sauce, if you like it. Sprinkle parsley over the top the last minute.

That's the old-time clam chowder. And it's as good as its reputation. Nevertheless, many people enjoy what might be called a clam stew -- clams cooked with tomatoes instead of milk and combined with other cooked vegetables.

You'll find that you can use the chowder or stew idea with many different kinds of fish. You can make a good fish chowder with cod, haddock, salmon or any other large fish if you remove the bones and cut it into small pieces. Fish chowder you make much as you do clam chowder except that you add some diced carrots to the mixture.

Other good steaming dishes that belong to this list are creamed fish and vegetables -- any kind of fish and most kinds of vegetables, a good left-over concoction; then, codfish-spaghetti-and-tomatoes, cooked and served together; and creamed salmon and noodles.

Here are easy, quick, nourishing, hot dishes that are generally inexpensive and that you can count on to add variety to your winter menus. Make them with fresh, frozen, canned, even dried fish.

And that reminds me. Suppose we plan a Friday night supper with a fish main dish. Let's have a steaming dish of creamed salmon and noodles; buttered carrots or green peas to go with it; Cabbage and green pepper salad; for dessert, stewed apples with lemon.

