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Thursday, December 24, 1942.

QUESTION BOX:

Short cuts on Christmas dishwashing?
How carve turkey?
How make milled cranberry juice?

ANSWERS FROM:

Home Economists of the U. S.
Department of Agriculture

--ooOoo--

More before-Christmas questions, answered, as usual, by the home economists of U. S. Department of Agriculture... how to carve the turkey... how to make mulled cranberry juice.. and how to make dishwashing easier after the Christmas dinner.

Let's take that question about doing dishes first. "We shall have 10 people at the dinner table for Christmas. Perhaps you can suggest ways to make the dishwashing easier?"

Home economists suggest 3 things you can do to make the holiday dishes less of a chore. One, cut down the number of dishes and utensils to be washed. Two, arrange the kitchen for easier work. And three, organize your helpers for table clearing and dish wiping.

Cook some of the dinner the day before if you can... that's today. This gives you time to wash mixing bowls, knives, spoons, measuring cups and cooking pans as you go along. Also, you might plan to have some foods come to the table in baking dishes.... foods like candied sweetpotatoes, or scalloped white potatoes.

Arrange the kitchen to have as much counter or shelf space as possible. If you haven't a counter, a small table will do. Right-handed persons generally work from right to left in dishwashing. Stack the soiled dishes on the right drain board or right side of the sink, wash in the dishpan in the sink, and drain in a drain-basket on the left.

Time your dinner with a few minutes' leeway at serving time so you can clear your surfaces in the kitchen before dinner, ready for the dishes to be brought out afterward. If possible, wash the "pots and pans" right after using, leaving only the tableware to be done later. If the dinner won't stand even a few minutes'

delay, put water in the saucepans as you empty them, and start water for dishes heating before dinner, if you don't have an automatic hot water.

Now let's suppose dinner is over and dishwashing about to begin. Every woman has her favorite theory about how dishes ought to be washed. Most agree that with plenty of hot sudsy water and a second pan of very hot rinse water, the dishes will be clean.

Let's get on to the next question. A homemaker says: "I've been carving several years, but I'd like to know the easiest and neatest way to carve a turkey."

For easy carving, home economists of the Department of Agriculture recommend first, a well-sharpened carving knife with a long, thin blade and a keen edge. Next, serve the turkey on a large platter, not overloaded with garnishes or other trimmings. Steady the bird on the platter with a wedge of bread or apple under each side. Bring the bird to the table on its back on the platter, and place it with the legs pointing directly toward you if you are the carver, or to your right, whichever you prefer. Unless the platter is very large, provide an extra plate for the pieces as they are cut off.

Now for the second part of the question... how to carve a turkey neatly. First, remove one leg and one wing from the turkey. Cut cleanly between the leg and the body. With a slight twist of the drumstick, the leg will usually separate easily. Once the leg is separated from the body, cut the skin between the leg and the back. Be careful not to cut that small oval of exceptionally delicious dark meat that lies in the hollow of the back in front of the hip socket joint.

Next, lift the leg to the extra plate or to one side of the platter. Separate the drumstick from the second joint. Slice the meat from the bone. There is a special knack to getting the wing off. Start the cut about an inch above the point where the wing seems to join the body. Cut slantwise to hit the joint. Lay the wing on the side plate, and there separate the joints at the elbow.

Now anchor the bird down firmly on the platter with the carving fork in your left hand. Place it squarely across the ridge of the breastbone. In carving the breast, the trick is to keep the left hand still, and use a slightly sawing motion to slice with the right hand. You slice downwards and away from yourself.

One more Christmas question: "I'd like to serve mulled cranberry juice as a Christmas night 'wassail cup'. How do you make it?"

As "mulled" simply means "heated, sweetened and spiced", you can mull any fruit juice that is good flavored with spices. For making mulled cranberry juice, the home economists give these directions:

Wash and pick over a quart of cranberries. Be sure to take out any soft or spotted berries. Boil the berries in 5 cups of water until they are soft, then let them drip as for jelly, in a cheesecloth bag. This method will give you a clear, brilliant juice, and about the right amount to serve 5 or 6 people. Of course, you may wish to double or triple this quantity, if you are serving more.

When the juice finishes dripping, add a little more water if it seems to have too much body. Sweeten it to taste. Don't forget to add a few grains of salt. Put the juice on the stove with 4 or 5 short pieces of stick cinnamon to each quart of juice, and about 12 whole cloves. Bring the juice just to the boiling point, cool, and let it stand several hours to blend the flavor. When you're ready to serve the mulled juice, take out the spices and reheat it. Pass sandwiches or cookies with the "wassail cup" if you like.

And, by the way, don't throw away the cranberry skins and pulp after you drip the juice. Press them through a sieve, and cook again with about half as much sugar for 3 minutes and you'll have some good cranberry sauce. Or cook those skins with apples to make a deep pink applesauce.

And so, good-bye, and Merry Christmas to everyone!

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