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U. S. Department of Agriculture

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Monday, June 1, 1931.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Making Butter Cakes." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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The Recipe Lady and I had a nice long chat on Saturday. And what do you think we chatted about? Cake makers we had known. Cake makers and their ways. Those that are successful and those that are unsuccessful. Delicious cakes we had eaten and some others we had tried to eat on occasions just to be polite.

That conversation taught me a lot about the fine old art of cake making. When I went home I told Uncle Ebenezer that I couldn't wait until Monday to relay some of the things I had learned from the Recipe Lady to my radio friends.

You remember that it was just a short time ago that we discussed the sponge cake family. Today it is the other family, known as butter cakes--those made with fat--that will concern us. This is a large family. The relatives include chocolate cake, layer cake, pound, caramel, maple, coconut, fruit, nut, spice and many others.

All the cakes in this family contain fat and are leavened by baking powder or soda and some acid. It is a good idea to learn first to make a good recipe for plain butter cake and to make it to perfection. Then you can vary this recipe and make other types of cake with this as a foundation. Success is a matter of following a reliable recipe with care, making accurate measurements, and keeping the oven at the right temperature during baking.

Of course, you know that an efficient cake-maker starts out by centering in one place all the ingredients and utensils which she will need. If the kitchen is conveniently arranged, both utensils and ingredients will be within reach of the mixing table. Nevertheless, be sure to check up before you start mixing the cake. Don't get your sugar and fat all creamed and then discover that you are out of eggs. The pans should also be greased ahead of time and the heat regulated so that the oven will be the right temperature when the cake is ready to bake. Every last thing should be in readiness, before you even start to combine the ingredients.

What utensils does the cake maker need? Like every other skilled job, making cake is easiest and the results are best when the right utensils are used. First you will need standard 1/2-pint measuring cups with marks to indicate both quarters and thirds. Then choose teaspoons and tablespoons of standard capacity. Three teaspoons equal one tablespoon. For the mixing spoon, wood has its advantages. A wooden spoon is less noisy, does not darken the mixture, and is more comfortable to handle than



a metal spoon for beating and stirring.

Bowls? An earthenware bowl with a rounded bottom for mixing the batter is better than lighter bowls, for the weight helps to hold the bowl during the mixing and beating.

Most expert cake makers depend on two types of egg beaters. A dover egg beater for beating whole eggs or egg yolks is efficient and can even be used for some thin batters. For beating the whites alone, many cooks prefer a wire spoon-shaped whisk. More air can be beaten into the whites with this whisk than with the dover beater. This is especially important for sponge and angel cakes. The whisk can be used also for folding beaten egg whites into a mixture and for beating thin batters smooth.

Now let's consider the pans or tins for baking cakes. Pans are made of tin, aluminum, enamel, ovenproof glass, and Russian iron. Cakes baked in the thicker pans require a higher temperature at the beginning of the baking, and a lower temperature at the end, than those baked in the thinner pans. The lists of oven temperatures published for the housewife are usually worked out for the thinner pans. Large pound cakes bake best in round tube pans--those that, as Horace says, have a round chimney up the middle. Such pans allow the heat to reach the center of the cake and bake it thoroughly and evenly in all parts. Square pans are useful when cooking large amounts of cake for church suppers and so on. Round flat tins are the things for layer cakes.

So much for the utensils. Now a word about the ingredients. Let me remind you again that all measurements should be level to be accurate. That's very important. Flour should be sifted before being measured; it should be put into the cup with a spoon, but never packed down. Level off the top of the measure with a knife.

Fats are best measured by packing them solidly into the cup and levelling the surface.

Now the procedure for mixing butter cakes. If you learn the principle of mixing, you can apply it to any butter cake recipe and you won't have to cling frantically to the cook book to tell you what step to take next,

First step. Grease the pans and lightly dredge them with flour.

Second step. Measure the dry ingredients in a large bowl. Sift together the baking powder, salt, flour and spices, if any.

Third. Prepare the fruit, nuts or other flavoring ingredients.

Fourth. Break the eggs each one separately, into a saucer before adding it to the mixture. This is a safety measure.

Fifth. Measure the fat and measure the liquid.

Sixth. Put the fat into the mixing bowl and work with a wooden spoon until it is soft and creamy.

Seventh. Add the sugar gradually, beating all the time, until the mixture is light and fluffy.

Eighth. Beat the egg yolks and whites either separately or together, as called for in the recipe. Yolks should be beaten until light-colored, and whites until stiff but not dry.

The following information was obtained from the records of the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General, regarding the activities of the [redacted] during the period from [redacted] to [redacted].

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Ninth. Add the beaten yolks or whole eggs to the creamed fat and sugar, and beat until smooth and creamy.

Tenth. Add small amounts of the flour mixture and liquid alternately, beating well after each addition.

Last. Add any flavoring, fruit and nuts and fold in the egg whites, if the recipe calls for them to be added separately.

The Recipe Lady says that when you pour this mixture in the pan, be sure to have a little more around the edges than in the center, since the center is the first to rise. Otherwise you may have a cake with a bulge in the middle.

Our menu today features a cake of the butter cake variety for dessert. A layer cake, this is, and a rather unusual one. Its name is Washington pie, but it is a cake just the same.

Have you your pencils and notebooks at hand? We're all ready for the menu.

Corned Beef Hash; Cabbage; Scalloped Tomatoes, or Sliced Tomatoes on Lettuce and, for dessert, Washington pie.

Washington pie is made by baking foundation cake in two layers and then spreading one layer with jam or jelly, covering with the other layer, and sprinkling powdered sugar over the top.

If you are ready, I'll give you the ingredients for foundation cake.

There are 8 of them:

1/2 cup of butter or other fat  
1 and 1/2 cups of sugar  
3 eggs  
3 cups of sifted soft-wheat flour  
4 teaspoons of baking powder  
1/4 teaspoon of salt  
1 cup of milk  
1/2 teaspoon of flavoring.

Let me repeat those to see that you got all eight. (Repeat.)

Cream the fat and sugar together. Add the beaten egg yolks and beat well. Sift together the dry ingredients and add alternately with the milk to the first mixture. Fold in the egg whites and the flavoring. Bake in greased layer-cake pans in a moderately hot oven (375 degrees F.) for about fifteen minutes.

Grape or plum jelly or raspberry jam both make excellent filling to use between the layers.

Tomorrow: "Saving Feet."

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