UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT
AGRICULTURE
Radio Service
OFFICE OF
INFORMATION

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Thursday, March 17, 1932

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Measuring for Success." Information approved by the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

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Uncle Ebenezer pulled a long face as he gave a last jerk to his best tie and prepared to go out to dinner last night.

"Why, Ebenezer, anybody'd think, to look at you, that you were a martyr off for the lion's den or Mary Queen of Scots before the execution," said Cousin Susan.

"No wonder, No. wonder," answered Uncle Ebenezer in a very testy voice. "I'd rather be eating at home than going out all dressed up to eat one of Josephine James's dinners. These women who cook by guess and by gosh! Sometimes their food is good and sometimes it's the contrary. Their popovers pop one time and fall flat the next. Their coffee is good one day and as strong as medicine the next. Maybe I <u>am</u> fussy and finicky about my food. But I'm not so young as I used to be and good food is one of the comforts of life that I need. I don't enjoy being uncertain about my dinner."

All the way up the street Uncle Ebenezer continued on this subject, in spite of all our efforts to soothe his disposition. As we reached the front door of the James house he was still muttering, "I tell you what. If any young man ever asks <u>my</u> advice on choosing a wife, I'll say 'Watch out' for these helter-skelter, guesswork cooks. Find a girl who follows reliable recipes and measures carefully."

Just why anyone should have an idea that a dash of this and a handful of that put together in slap-dash fashion is likely to bring perfect results is more than I can understand. But some people do their cooking that way. Just the other day a young housekeeper invited me to see her very handsome modern kitchen. Her husband had fitted it all out with the latest equipment -- electric dishwasher, beaters, stove and so forth. But, if you'll believe it, she didn't even own a measuring cup.

"I use this old china cup without the handle for cooking" she told me. "You see, I don't bother much about measuring and fussy things like that, anyway."

So I wasn't very surprised when she confided in me some time later that she never had any luck making cakes -- somehow they just <u>would</u> fall.

I've met other women who measure with any old spoon handy whether the recipe calls for a teaspoon or a tablespoon.

Can you imagine a bakery, for example, running a successful business, if its bread and cake were made without accurately measuring the ingredients? Suppose the head baker said to the manager some morning," Boss, luck seems to be against me today. Two hundred cakes fell flat. I'll have to throw them out and start again."

Somehow, I can't imagine that that baker would hold his job very long. Or, if he did, how long before the company would go broke?

In these thrifty times, especially, housewives will declare war on cooking failures if they're interested in preventing waste, saving pennies and serving good meals. No more uncertainties about the cake, the pie, the popovers or the coffee.

First, let's send out detectives to find out the cause of these uncertainties in cooking. Sometimes they can be traced to poor recipes. More often, though, the trouble is in exact measuring tools or carelessness in measuring. Wrong measurements change the proportion of the ingredients so that the result is quite different from what that recipe could produce if carefully followed. If you don't believe that correct proportions are important, try this experiment. Make a cake with more flour than the recipe calls for. And then make another with too little flour. With too much flour, your cake will crack open and be heavy. With too little, it will fall.

To be sure of success, measure and have the same ingredients each time you use a recipe.

And now a word about recipes in general. The safest and easiest kind to follow are those reliable recipes that have been tested and standardized, the kind that are based on accurate measures and level measurements. Older recipes used to call for such items as "heaping teaspoons" of this and that, for "butter the size of an egg," for "enough flour to roll" and so forth. Up-to-date recipes call for so many teaspoons and tablespoons, so many cups or fractions of a cup, and for certainty all measurements level.

What are the approved containers for measuring? First, the cups. A standard cupful is one-half pint. Better check up on the cup you are using for cooking to be sure it meets the standard. There are measuring cups on the market that hold both one and two cupfuls. It's handy to have both sizes in your kitchen. Then, when a recipe calls for two cups, you won't have to fill the measure twice. Just use the larger cup. All measuring cups should be marked off to show half, quarter and third cups. Good measuring cups on the market are made of aluminum and glass. Heat-proof glass will hold hot foods without cracking.

Now about measuring spoons. The rule is that sixteen standard tablespoons -- level, of course -- make one standard cupful. Does the large spoon you use when tablespoons are called for check with this correct standard?

Teaspoons? The rule for them is: Three level teaspoons equal one level tablespoon. To use a measuring spoon, fill it full, then level it off with a knife or spatula. If you need a half spoonful, divide the spoon lengthwise.

There's a handy set of measuring spoons -- tablespoon, teaspoon and half and quarter teaspoon all fastened together, that makes measuring small amounts very easy.

It's never hard to measure dry ingredients or liquids. But sometimes it's difficult to get an exact amount of fat, especially if it's very hard. For ease in measuring it's a good idea to take some fat out of the refrigerator some time ahead and let the warm atmosphere of the kitchen soften it a little. Pack it into the cup firmly with no air spaces and level off the top with a knife.

Suppose you need to measure a fraction of a cup of fat -- a half cup, for example. Here's a quick way to do. Fill the measuring cup half full of water and add the fat little by little, always pushing it under the water until the water is exactly at the one-cup level. Then pour off the water and there you have the correct half cup of fat. Any fraction of a cup may be measured by this easy device.

Young housekeepers ask me every now and then whether it's really necessary to sift flour before measuring. Indeed it is. And sift it immediately before using. Here's why. Flour packs down easily. If you measure a cup of unsifted flour -- right out of the bag, say -- you'll have anywhere from a cup and a quarter to a cup and a half of flour instead of the level cup that the recipe called for. So, to be sure you're getting the right amount, sift the flour directly into the cup and then level off the top with a knife or spatula without jarring or shaking the flour down. Or, you can fill the cup with the sifted flour by spoonfuls lightly. But never dip the cup into the flour and never shake the flour down or you'll get too much.

Little things. Yes, but they're important for success in cookery. To be certain of good results every time, be accurate. It's very easy to measure carefully, especially when you get the habit. Be sure of your recipe first. then be accurate about measuring and, when you're baking, be sure about the temperature of your oven.

Where do you keep the measuring cups and spoons in your kitchen? Hanging up right near the table where you do your mixing, I hope. One hook for the set of measuring spoons and other hooks for your measuring cups -- all where you can reach them easily when you need them.

Friday: "A Chicken and Dumpling Dinner for Sunday."