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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, April 14, 1933. Agriculture

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Subject: "An Inexpensive Easter Dinner." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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The traditional meat for Easter dinner, of course, is lamb. Some people insist on roast lamb; others want lamb chops. But lamb is the meat, whatever cut you prefer. Tradition also dictates some fresh green foods at this meal. You see, on Easter day everyone wants food that suggests spring in both flavor and color. Plenty of fresh spring green and plenty of lively flavor. For the centerpiece on your dinner table, daffodils or other spring flowers. For food, lamb and new potatoes and green peas and spring salad -- but there. Somebody had better stop me before I tell you the whole menu long before the proper time.

Lamb as sold nowadays is practically all tender meat. So whether you are having a roast or chops you'll use the rules for cooking tender meat. We've often mentioned these simple rules for meat cookery. For a tender cut, use high heat at the beginning of the cooking to brown the surface and bring out flavor; finish the cooking at moderate heat which will penetrate to the very center of the piece and keep the flesh tender and juicy. If you are having chops you can broil them under a direct flame. Or you can pan-broil them in a heavy skillet on top of the stove. When you are either pan-broiling or roasting meat, here are two things to remember. Never put a lid on your skillet or on your roaster. Never add water. So much for general rules. Now about the particular meat we're planning for Easter. On such a special occasion even the lamb deserves to be "special." So we've planned double lamb chops with a strip of bacon fastened around the edge. They make a very handsome platterful garnished with green parsley.

Have your lamb chops cut about an inch and a half or two inches thick and have the fell removed. Then ask your butcher to bone them, and wrap a strip of bacon around the edge of each one. If you plan to broil the chops by direct heat, lay them on a cold greased rack and place over live coals or under an electric grill or the flame of a gas oven. If you have a gas stove, you'll place your chops two or three inches below a moderate flame. If you have a coal or wood or electric stove, probably you'll do better at calculating your own distance. That will depend somewhat on how hot your coals are or how hot the electric plate is.

Sear the chops on both sides. That's for rich flavor. Place the double rib chops, fat side up first, so that they will also sear along that edge. After searing, lower the flame and finish cooking at a reduced temperature. Turn the chops occasionally, but do not prick the brown crust. Sometimes you'll have better results with thick chops if you sear them under the flame and then transfer your broiler to a moderately hot oven to finish cooking.

Now suppose you want to pan-broil the chops. Then heat a heavy skillet until it's sizzling hot and lay in the chops. Sear them quickly on both sides. Turn thick chops up on the edge also to brown the fat. Then reduce the heat, turn the chops frequently, and finish the cooking at low temperature. Don't add water nor cover the skillet. From time to time pour off any excess fat so that the chops broil, not fry. If you prefer, after searing the chops, set your hot skillet on a rack in the oven and finish cooking in the oven at moderate heat (375 degrees to 400 degrees F.). By either method, double lamb chops require 25 to 30 minutes. Place the broiled chops immediately on a hot platter. Add salt, pepper, and melted butter. Garnish with parsley.

So much for the meat. Now for the rest of the meal. Carrying out the green color scheme, let's have boiled new potatoes with parsley butter. And let's have green peas. With that combination, something tart and sweet and spicy all at once would be good. Have you some sweet relish on your pantry shelf, possibly some you put up last summer? That will be just the thing. And how about some currant jelly? That is especially delicious with a delicate meat like lamb.

There's the first course planned. Double lamb chops wrapped in bacon and broiled; New potatoes with parsley butter; Green peas; Sweet relish; and Currant jelly.

Now for the salad. Spring salad, of course. This is a well-seasoned, colorful, crisp combination of vegetables piled on green lettuce leaves or garnished with watercress. The vegetables you use will depend on what you can get in your market at this time of year, but here's one good mixture as a suggestion. Chopped cabbage, chopped green onion shoots, chopped celery; green pepper either chopped or cut in thin strips and chopped radishes. Dress with French dressing and add to the dressing a bit of mustard and a bit of horseradish. A big green bowl of this spring salad looks most tempting on the table. Or, you can serve it as individual salad plates. Crisp thin cheese crackers toasted in the oven make good accompaniments for the salad.

Finally comes dessert. Lemon sponge is a delicious and simple dessert with just the right tart flavor. We haven't time to give you the recipe for it in detail, but, as it's very simple, you can work one out for yourself. Just make the usual lemon jelly mixture. For six people you'll need about four cups of the mixture. As it begins to chill and stiffen, beat it up until it's frothy. Then add three whites of eggs stiffly beaten. Pour into a mold and chill. Serve with custard sauce.

There. Easter dinner is all planned. And as you'll notice, it's both tempting and inexpensive, and it's springlike in flavor and color.

Monday, we'll have a chat on ways to use the new spring greens.

