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U. S. Department of Agriculture

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, August 21, 1931.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Salads First." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics,
U.S.D.A.

Bulletin available: "Aunt Sammy's Radio Recipes Revised."

—ooooOoooo—

For many long years conventional people served salad at just one place in the meal. In fact, it was felt that there was just one possible correct place to bring a salad on to the table. That was between the main course and the dessert course. The idea was, you see, that the salad could provide a cool fresh break between a warm hearty first course and possibly a rich or warm dessert. But, as salads became more and more popular, housekeepers with a little originality began to think of many other good ways to use them at a meal. Today salads are used at any course— there is a salad suitable for every part of the meal from the appetizer at the beginning to the dessert at the end.

One of the good habits of modern times is the salad habit. Most of us have learned in recent years how useful it is to our health and dispositions to eat plenty of fruits and vegetable, both raw and cooked. Those foods are so generous with their mineral and vitamins. So what more effective and appetizing way of putting them into our meals than in the form of salads? And because there are so many different foods that can be used for the purpose, a salad, as I said, can be featured as a main dish or a dessert, and as an appetizer to start the meal, or as just plain salad served with the main course or at the conventional salad time.

I don't know who first had the idea of starting a meal with a salad. But I've often been told that the custom started in California. I'm all for encouraging that custom wherever it began. In fact, I'd like to see it often used for summer meals whether they are served in Maine or Minnesota or Oregon.

Any salad used as a starter before a main course should, of course, be light and simple. Its purpose is to create appetite. So, above everything else, it must look tempting to the eye and appeal to the taste. And it should never be rich or filling. It is meant to pave the way for nourishing food to come, not to satisfy in itself.

I have the very pleasantest memories of the first salad-appetizer I ever had. A simple but most successful one it was--just a plate of crisp lettuce and endive with a few thin slivers of crisp cucumber on top, all dressed with tart French dressing. That was all. And it was just right to introduce the meal.

Another good salad for a starter can be made simply of lettuce and chilled fruit. Separate a head of lettuce and place the small curled leaves on the plate in the form of little cups. Into each one pile chilled diced fruit--perhaps orange sections or diced pineapple or seedless grapes.

No rich dressing for any of these appetizer salads. No dressings heavy with oil. A delicious French dressing can be made with lime and lemon juice in place of vinegar and with a little sugar added. Less oil, you see, and more fruit juice. You can also make this dressing with pineapple and grapefruit juice added to the lemon juice.

Did I mention gelatin salads for appetizers? I certainly didn't mean to miss talking about them. Gelatin salads made in tiny molds with tomato juice or fruit juice or ginger ale. Fruit juice or ginger ale may be used as the basis for a mold of diced fruit. And diced or chopped vegetables may go in a tomato gelatin mixture. Small molds of delicately colored jelly look most tempting when served on a green bed with piquant dressing.

I heard recently of a mother who has adopted the "salad first" idea to be sure that her children have their quota of raw vegetables and fruits every day. She serves a crisp vegetable salad first thing at dinner when the children are hungriest. And the main course never even appears on the table until each youngster has finished his salad. Each meal of the day in that home begins either with raw fruit, fruit juice, vegetable cocktails or salad. The children not only get the fresh food they need in this way, but they learn to enjoy it.

So now I want to tell you about another modern salad idea--using salad as a main dish in the first course. This plan offers all sorts of fine possibilities, for summer meals especially. Fish, meat, chicken or hard-cooked eggs may be combined with vegetables and served on lettuce with mayonnaise. Sort of an all-in-one dish, you see. You get your protein and your minerals and your vitamins and your fat all at the same time. Or, if you happen to be serving a strictly vegetable meal for variety, the main dish can be a salad of many vegetables combined.

A salad main dish has many advantages worth considering. It combines nourishment and good looks. It is cool and tempting in warm weather. It is easy to prepare. And it can always feature some vegetables.

Three guesses now about what the main dish for our menu today will be.-- Somebody got it on the first guess. Of course, it is a salad. Today we are featuring a handsome, inviting, delicious, nourishing, but there. No use going into all this enthusiasm until you have had a taste yourself and can appreciate it. Yes, for today we'll have a main-dish salad. Next week the Menu Specialist will plan for you a dinner featuring a salad appetizer.

I'll read the menu. Then I'll give you the recipe for that salad with variations.

Stuffed tomato salad, with crab meat and diced cucumbers; Buttered fresh peas; Potato chips; and, for dessert, Jellied white grapes.

For the salad, choose large firm, but ripe tomatoes. Skin them. Then cut a round piece from the stem end and remove enough of the pulp to make a cup. Season with salt, turn the tomato cups upside down to drain out the juice, and place them in the refrigerator until time to serve them. Now, says the recipe, if you want a hearty salad--and you do with this menu--stuff the tomato cups with a filling of crab meat and diced cucumbers mixed and dressed with thick mayonnaise. You can also use chopped cooked meat, chicken or fish. And for vegetables you can use not only cucumber but also chopped celery or some cooked green vegetable. In case you want a lighter salad, stuff the tomatoes with mixed vegetables.

When you have filled in the stuffing mixture, drop a spoonful of dressing on the top of each stuffed tomato, add a dash of paprika and set each tomato on a crisp lettuce leaf.

The recipe for jellied grapes is on page 96 of our new green radio cookbook. The recipe, you'll notice, calls for Tokay or Malaga grapes. But, at this time of year, the small sweet, white, seedless grapes are plentiful and generally inexpensive, so these might well be used in this recipe.

This is a gelatin dessert made with a back ground, lemon and grape juice as well as the fresh grapes. So attractive, served in a pretty mold with whipped cream.

Monday, we'll talk about apple dishes.

