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U. S. Department of Agriculture

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Monday, May 15, 1933.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

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

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Not long ago we had a talk about the food value of eggs. Remember? We discussed especially the recent studies at the Bureau of Home Economics on the vitamin D content of eggs and mentioned how rich eggs are not only in this important vitamin, but also in vitamins A and G. And we spoke of the minerals in eggs, especially iron and phosphorus. And how high eggs rate as a source of protein. Today the subject of eggs come up again. This time we're going to talk about cooking eggs -- how to cook them in simple ways, yet make them especially delicious, in a word, how to make the most of these good spring eggs now so inexpensive.

Because eggs contain so much protein, we use the general rules for cooking protein in cooking eggs. You remember when we talked about cooking fish, another protein food, the rule was: "Use a moderate temperature." The same holds true for eggs. No matter whether you are scrambling or poaching or frying eggs, keep the temperature moderate. If you want a fine illustration of what heat can do to protein, here's an experiment to try. Cook two eggs, one at a very high temperature and one at a moderate temperature. The intense heat will quickly set the protein in the egg and makes it hard and leathery. The moderate heat, on the other hand, will gradually coagulate the protein, leaving it tender as jelly, though thoroughly cooked. So whenever you are cooking eggs in water, keep the water under the boiling temperature. For example, suppose you are poaching an egg. Break the fresh egg into enough boiling salted water to cover it. But don't keep the water boiling. As soon as the egg goes in, cover the pan closely so as to hold in the heat and remove the pan from the fire. Let the egg stand in the hot water for about five minutes. Then lift it out on a perforated spoon and let the water drain off before you serve it. An egg poached like this will have a tender white, translucent like jelly, which will stand well up around the yellow yolk. That's the ideal poached egg.

By the way, one of the nicest spring dishes is a poached egg served on toast with asparagus sauce -- smooth white sauce with fresh asparagus cut up in it. In making the sauce, use some of the liquid the asparagus was cooked in. This will save food value and give the sauce more of an asparagus flavor. This is just one of the many ways to serve eggs poached. Another favorite is Eggs Benedict. Start this dish with toasted rounds of bread or toasted English muffins. On the toast lay a thin slice of cooked ham, then a hot poached egg. Now pour hot Hollandaise sauce over the top. Counting the egg yolks in the Hollandaise sauce, this certainly is an egg dish.

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Now about cooking eggs in their shells. Here "again we need" to go back to that rule of moderate heat if we want best results. The specialists these days don't advise boiling eggs at all. Instead of boiling, they cook eggs in the shell with the water just below the boiling point. They never let the water get hotter than the simmering point while the eggs are in. This takes a little longer, but the eggs come out much more tender and appetizing. Suppose now that you want to prepare a soft-cooked or hard-cooked egg. Put a little wire rack in the bottom of the saucepan to keep the eggs from coming in direct contact with the heat and help cook them evenly, not more on one side than another. Then allow about one cup of cold water to an egg. Put the eggs in cold water and heat the water gradually to the simmering point. Simmer until done. You can get the same effect by coddling eggs. Coddling is a good way to cook an egg for a young child or for an invalid's tray. Put eggs in boiling water, cover the pan and take it off the fire. Let the eggs stand until done. This makes the whites tender and jelly-like rather than tough and leathery as they are when boiled. To hard-cook eggs, put them in cold water, bring to the simmering point slowly, and keep them at this moderate temperature for half an hour. By the way, hard-cooked eggs, cut in quarters and served on toast with creole sauce are delicious. Make the creole sauce with canned tomatoes, slightly thickened and seasoned with chopped onion and green pepper or parsley. If you have a little cooked ham, chop that, too, and put it in the sauce. Or put in some bits of left-over, crisp fried bacon.

So much for poaching eggs and for cooking them in their shells. Now what about scrambling them? Still the rule of moderate heat holds good. Scramble your eggs in the upper part of a double boiler instead of directly over the heat. As soon as the water in the lower part of the boiler begins to bubble, stir the milk and egg mixture constantly and add butter and salt and pepper to season. By the way, always make a point of serving scrambled eggs in hot plates because they cool so quickly.

Time now for our inexpensive menu featuring eggs. Today we're having deviled eggs. As most housekeepers know, these are simply hard-cooked eggs, cut in half, the yolks taken out, pressed through a sieve, and seasoned with French dressing or any other seasoning you like, and put back in. The menu today is a three-part menu. First soup, then salad, then dessert. The menu: Hot tomato cocktail; Deviled eggs on shredded lettuce or cress; Buttered hot rolls; and, for dessert, Raisin bread pudding -- the custard kind of bread pudding.

Tomorrow: "Saving Silks."

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