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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, December 8, 1933

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Food to Catch the Eye". Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

--ooOoo--

One Sunday several years ago I went to visit a friend of mine who was in a hospital recovering from a long siege of illness. I remember that I came in about noon when the dinner trays were going around and I made some remark to my friend about "enjoying Sunday dinner in bed." She looked very gloomy and told me that she didn't enjoy dinner or any other meal anymore. The doctor urged her to eat heartily and build up her strength. But she found his orders difficult to follow. She had no interest nor appetite for food. All food seemed to look and taste alike.

Well, just at that moment in came the nurse with her tray of dinner. Let me tell you exactly what she brought for her patient's Sunday dinner. First, there was a milk soup--cream of celery, I think it was. Then, the dinner plate. That contained a slice of chicken--white meat; milk gravy with it; then, mashed potatoes; then, creamed cauliflower. There was also a slice of white bread. Salad was a plate of lettuce hearts--bleached lettuce, the whitest leaves I've ever seen. For dessert, vanilla ice cream and white cake.

Well, so far as food value was concerned, that meal was all right. It was all good nourishing food, well cooked. But the hospital dietitian who planned it certainly hadn't had much imagination, certainly hadn't been thinking about appetites. That whole meal from the milk soup at the start to the vanilla ice cream and white cake at the end was a study in white. My friend, who lay all day looking at the white hospital walls, naturally found nothing very tempting nor interesting in the sight of an all white meal.

To wake appetites, meals need to appeal to the eye and the taste. Contrast, especially in color, is most important in appealing to the eye. That's something not only for the hospital dietitian to think of but also for the home menu-maker. Haven't you noticed how easy it is to fall into a rut in this meal-planning business, to serve the same old things in the same old way day after day? Haven't you noticed that winter meals especially are likely to grow monotonous. That's something well worth fighting against. Nothing deadens appetites like sameness and monotony. The good inexpensive everyday foods are all right to use over and over again. They grow tiresome only if you always cook and serve them in the same way. You can put plenty of variety and interest into the same food served often just by fixing it in new ways. Some easy-going cooks prepare most vegetables creamed. A poor idea, for appetite's sake. That makes all vegetables seem very much alike, both in appearance and taste, and it makes them monotonous. The food experts have done a good deal of investigating on ways to prepare vegetables in recent years, so if you've been keeping up on new methods you probably have a big file of vegetable recipes to turn to and prevent sameness.

Take carrots, for example. Carrots are just one example of a good, common, inexpensive, yet valuable winter vegetable. But the family will soon complain about carrots and even refuse them, if they always appear on the dinner table, sliced and creamed. Sameness can spoil them. But you can put interest and variety into your carrots by cooking them one day in long strips and serving them with butter; by slicing and serving them in cream or cheese sauce the next time; by serving them raw in sticks or in salad another day; and by cutting them in shoestring form and seasoning them with parsley-butter on still another occasion.

The menu for today is a simple, inexpensive Sunday dinner, aimed to create appetite by catching the eye. Have your pencils handy? Well, then, let's write down this menu and then talk it over. The menu: Roast loin of pork; then, red apples and sweet potatoes, scalloped together; then, five - minute cabbage garnished with chopped green pepper or chopped parsley; hot biscuits. For dessert a beautiful mold of jellied mixed fruit, garnished with a bit of whipped cream. Tiny crisp cookies or wafers would go well with this dessert. Please notice the contrast in color in this simple Sunday menu. There's the golden brown of the roast; the red of the apples--and by the way, you leave the red peel on those apple slices for the sake of color; the yellow of the sweetpotatoes, then, the green and white of the cabbage and chopped pepper. Jellied fruit you make with a lemon jelly base and you can mold in it sections of orange, white grapes, banana slices, and red cherries or red candied cranberries.

Here's a fine recipe for five-minute cabbage. Seven ingredients. I'll read them:

2 cups of milk
1 and 1/2 quarts of shredded cabbage
1 cup of cream or rich milk
3 tablespoons of flour
3 tablespoons of melted butter
Salt, and
Pepper.

Once more. (Repeat.)

Heat the milk. Then cook the shredded cabbage in it for just two minutes by the clock. Now add the cup of cream or rich milk; then the blended flour and fat. Add the salt and pepper. Cook rapidly for three or four minutes and stir constantly. The cabbage keeps its crispness and is delicate in flavor and color. Just before serving, add some chopped green pepper or chopped parsley for a garnish. Serve promptly.

Monday: "Inexpensive Fruit Desserts for Winter."

