

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

TUESDAY, September 6, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

The mailbag this week is overflowing with cooking questions. Must be something about September that makes listeners take their cooking problems seriously.

A gingerbread question comes first: "What gives my gingerbread a yellowish color and disagreeable flavor and odor?" Answer: Probably too much soda. Evidently your gingerbread recipe needs correction.

Second question: "When adding chocolate to a plain butter-cake mixture, why do the directions advise cutting down on fat and flour?" Answer: Because chocolate contains both fat and starch. If you add an ounce or square of chocolate, consider that the equivalent of 1 tablespoon of fat and 1 tablespoon of flour.

A fruit jelly question: "What makes my current jelly cloudy?" Answer: Cloudiness may come from imperfect straining and usually occurs with the red juices. Re-straining a juice with no pressure on the jelly-bag gives a clear jelly though it gives less jelly.

Another jelly question: "In July I put up some jelly in carefully sterilized glasses, sealed it with paraffin, and covered the paraffin with jelly-glass lids. But this jelly is starting to mold already. Why?" Because you have stored it in a warm or damp place. Unless jelly is kept cool and dry, the best paraffin seal and tin friction-top lid will not protect it. Moisture collecting beneath the paraffin may break the seal and let it mold and yeast spores. If you have to keep your jelly in a warm or moist atmosphere, put it up in an airtight container which seals with a rubber or composition gasket. Of course, jelly sometimes molds because the glasses were not sterilized or the paraffin seal was not perfect.

Another listener asks: "Is it possible to make good yeast bread using only oatmeal flour?" No. Oatmeal flour alone makes heavy bread because it does not form gluten so the dough hasn't the elasticity that allows it to "rise." But oatmeal and wheat flour together make excellent bread though somewhat coarser in grain than white bread. Use 3 cups of finely ground rolled oats with 9 cups of sifted white flour.

"What causes baking powder biscuits to have yellow or brown specks on the top?" Too little mixing. Baking powder biscuit dough needs to be stirred and then kneaded slightly before rolling. This kneading makes the biscuit light and it gives the baking powder time to dissolve so that the acid in it will act with the soda rather than with the flour. Too much kneading, however, makes a small, close-grained rather tough biscuit.

"Why does my recipe for sponge cake say to turn it upside down in the pan to cool?" Answer: To keep it light and "spongy." The cake clings to the sides of the pan and is kept stretched in position until it cools and becomes firm. This prevents its shrinking or settling. (Something the same idea as drying your curtains on a curtain stretcher.)

"What makes muffins have tunnels on the inside and peaks or knobs on the outside?" Too much mixing. Best results in muffins come from adding the dry ingredients all at once to the liquid ingredients and stirring only enough to moisten and give the mixture a rough appearance.

"What can I do about piecrust that is always sticky and always makes a tough crust when baked?" Answer: You can use less water in mixing the pastry. Good proportions for piecrust are: a cup and a half of sifted flour; a teaspoon of salt; 5 to 6 tablespoons of fat; and 2 and a half tablespoons of water, or even less. The way you add the water is as important as the amount you use. Add it gradually--sprinkle it on little by little until the mixture "collects itself" into a stiff dough. It is safer to use too little water than too much.

"What causes popovers to pop?" The sudden formation of steam in the batter as it comes in contact with the hot baking pans and the hot oven. Popover batter should be poured into hot iron, earthenware or glass baking cups and baked for 30 minutes at a temperature of 450 degrees--a hot oven; then fifteen minutes at 350 degrees--a moderate oven.

My, that's a lot of baking questions all at once. I guess there must be a good many listeners who haven't yet sent for their copy of the home baking bulletin from the Department of Agriculture. If they had this bulletin, they wouldn't be asking these questions because every single one is answered in its pages. Once more, the title of that bulletin is: "Home Baking"; and the number is 1775; and you get a copy just by sending a postcard to the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. and asking for it.

Last question: "How can I put up tomato juice like the tomato juice I buy-- I mean the kind that stays evenly red all through?"

Answer: With home equipment you can't expect to sieve juice so fine that the particles of red stay in suspension. That is only done by commercial devices. But you can put up excellent tomato juice at home and even if the clear juice goes to the top and the red pulp settles to the bottom, you can soon shake them together before serving. For tomato juice use only red ripe firm tomatoes freshly picked from the vines. Avoid tomatoes with green, moldy or decayed parts. Wash the tomatoes well, remove the cores, cut in small pieces and put them on the stove to simmer until soft. (Avoid boiling). Put the softened hot tomatoes at once through a fine sieve, preferably a bowl and cone-shaped sieve because it allows less air to be incorporated in the pulp. Add a half a teaspoon of salt for each part and reheat at once to the boiling point. Then pour hot into sterilized containers and seal. No processing is necessary. Invert the bottles while cooling. The faster you go through this process, the better tomato juice you will have and the less likelihood of spoilage.

###

