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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, July 26, 1932.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Lettuce Dishes and Questions and Answers." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics and the Bureau of Dairy Industry, U.S.D.A.

Yesterday after our chat I went straight home and tied a piece of string around my finger. That was to remind me of my promise to give you a recipe first thing this morning.

Well, here I am with the string still on my finger and with two recipes under my arm--two delicious and different lettuce recipes. You see, both of these recipes are favorites of mine and both suit the menu I gave you yesterday. I had such a hard time choosing between them that I finally brought them both along for good measure.

Now my personal opinion is that lettuce doesn't really get the chance it deserves to add variety to the family menu. I don't mean that we neglect it. No, indeed. Probably it's the most popular of all our green leafy vegetables. In many homes it appears on the table at least once a day. But most of us housekeepers have the habit of serving it every day in the same old way. Almost always we use lettuce as a bed of decorative green for the salad. Now and then we serve a section of a head of lettuce with Russian or mayonnaise dressing. That's about all the variety we allow to this good vegetable.

In fact, many people consider lettuce mostly as a garnish, something to make the salad look pretty rather than something to eat. The other day when I mentioned cooked lettuce, Jack Lee laughed out loud and asked if I had a recipe for fried ice cream.

But here's a serious question. Have you ever tried cooked savory lettuce? Some people call it wilted lettuce. And, what's more, have you ever tried braised lettuce? If not, here are two new and different lettuce treats for you.

Have you a pencil handy? Maybe you'd like to take down these short directions for making cooked savory lettuce. The loose leaf garden lettuce is especially good for this dish.

To serve five or six people, you'll need:

- 6 slices of bacon
- 3 quarts of shredded lettuce
- 2 tablespoons of vinegar
- Salt, and
- Onion juice

First, cook the bacon in a heavy skillet until it is brown and crisp. Then remove it from the fat. Now add the shredded lettuce to the hot fat and stir it until it wilts--no longer. Then add the vinegar and the bacon broken into small pieces, the salt--if you need it--and the onion juice. Serve the lettuce at once.

Your family will find this a dish of the best greens they ever tasted.

By the way, here are a few tricks about shredding lettuce. If you have a solid head of lettuce, such as Iceberg lettuce, you can shred it with a long thin knife, just as you shred cabbage. But if you have home-grown lettuce out of your own garden, or any other kind of lettuce, roll the leaves into a firm roll and cut them in thin strips with scissors or a knife. Many times you can save the good parts of large imperfect leaves with a pair of scissors. Cut off the imperfections and shred the rest of the leaf. The very large leaves on the outside of the head sometimes are too big or too flat for a nice looking salad. But they'll do very well for a nest of green if you shred them.

Another different lettuce dish is braised lettuce. For this you'll need very solid head lettuce. Just four ingredients for this easy and different cooked lettuce:

2 large, hard heads of iceberg lettuce
4 tablespoons of bacon fat
Salt
Pepper

That's all. Just (Repeat.)

Cut each head of lettuce into four pieces, taking care to leave a part of the center stem on each section to hold the leaves together. Now, heat the fat in a large skillet, put in the lettuce, cover and cook for about 30 minutes--or until the lettuce is tender. If much liquid comes out of the lettuce, pour it off during the cooking. Turn the lettuce carefully, if necessary. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and serve on a hot platter.

Of course, you don't need to cook lettuce to give it variety. There are many different ways of serving it raw, beside the common one of serving it simply as a green background for various kinds of salads. The simplest green dish I know is a favorite salad with the French--just a bowl of crisp green lettuce thoroughly coated with French dressing--an ideal salad to go with a heavy meal. Its success depends on having the lettuce very crisp, cold and dry; on having the dressing well-seasoned; and on combining the two quickly but thoroughly.

That's why this simple green salad must always be a last minute dish. Keep the greens in the refrigerator until the last minute. Then tear the leaves in convenient sizes or shread them. Add the dressing at the last minute. Of course, you know that dressing wilts green leaves if it stands on them more than a few minutes. For this reason, some experts at salad making insist on mixing this kind of salad at the table.

A puzzled young homemaker asked me the other day what the cookbook meant when it gave the directions, "Toss the salad." Well, the plain lettuce salad we've been talking about is the kind that you "toss." And

here's how you do it. Have the lettuce in a large, cold, salad bowl. Pour the French dressing over it. Then, with your large salad fork and spoon, turn the leaves over and over, working from the sides to the center of the bowl, until the dressing thoroughly coats the leaves. Then pour off any excess dressing in the bottom of the bowl. That's "tossing" the salad. And it makes a most delicious green mixture because each piece of lettuce is evenly seasoned.

That's all I have to tell you about lettuce today. But I have something else on my mind--some news that I heard only yesterday, which just goes to show that with these scientists around, you can't believe anything in this world, even what your grandmother tells you.

Did you ever hear that thunder sours milk? So did I. In fact, I was brought up from my earliest days to believe that idea. I remember distinctly hearing my grandmother say, "Well, if the milk hasn't turned again! I knew it wouldn't stay sweet with all that thunder this afternoon."

Now along come the scientists and explode that old theory. They say that heat and bacteria, not thunder, are the causes when milk sours. And they explain that just before a thunder storm the atmosphere is unusually warm or even uncomfortably hot. This warm temperature is ideal for bacteria to work and the sour milk is the result. If you keep milk sufficiently cold in the refrigerator, thunder can come and thunder can go with no effect at all on it.

Speaking of sour milk reminds me of a question. A recent letter asked how to substitute sour milk in a waffle recipe that calls for sweet milk. A good question. Plenty of times you have a little sour milk left-over in the kitchen. Those of us who believe in being thrifty prefer to use it up rather than to throw it away. Quick bread recipes offer a good opportunity. Waffles, pancakes, biscuits, gingerbread, and some quick loaf breads all are delicious made with sour milk. The general rule for using sour milk in a recipe that calls for sweet milk is: Substitute the same amount of sour milk as the sweet milk called for. But, for each cup of sour milk, add a scant half teaspoon of soda to neutralize the acid in the sour milk. Maybe I'd better repeat that rule: Substitute the same amount of sour milk for the sweet milk called for in the recipe. But, for each cup of sour milk, add a scant half teaspoon of soda.

One more question. "Dear Aunt Sammy: Must I have a steam pressure canner to can string beans?"

The answer to that is: "Yes, if you value your health and your family's health. Ask the specialists. They'll tell you that practical experience as well as scientific research have demonstrated time and again that non-acid vegetables like string beans, asparagus, corn, peas, beets and spinach, as well as fish and meats, must be canned under pressure to be safe from the bacteria that cause spoilage in these foods.

Tomorrow: "Food to Suit the Season."

