

Historic, archived document

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



TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1961

QUESTION BOX

How make crusty corned beef hash?
Binder for meat loaf?
How use liquid on canned vegetables?
How stick sticks on Christmas lollipops?

ANSWERS FROM

cookery scientists of the
U. S. Department of
Agriculture

--ooOoo--

Very often it's just one little trick of cooking or seasoning that makes the difference between a dish that is "just fair" and one that is "perfect." One little cooking trick missed--and the dish isn't what it might be. In the mailbag this week are a number of questions from women who aren't quite satisfied with something they've been cooking. Cookery scientists of the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Home Economics give the reasons why.

The first question is about that old favorite American dish--corned beef hash. The letter says: "The corned beef hash I've been making tastes pretty good, but it lacks the nice golden brown crust my husband likes. When I try to make a crust, the hash burns on the bottom. What's the secret I'm missing?"

Cookery scientists say: The secret is very slow cooking. Cook corned beef hash in a heavy frying pan over low heat. Be sure the hash mixture is not too moist to begin with. For a family of 5 or 6 good proportions are: one pound corned beef.....5 boiled potatoes.....one onion--all put into the food chopper together and chopped fine. Grease a heavy skillet. Then pat the hash in an even layer, and cook over low heat until a golden brown crust forms.

If you want a crust on both top and bottom of the hash, here's how to get it. When the crust forms on the bottom, place a pan or lid over the frying pan, and turn the hash out upside down, so the crust comes on top. Then slip the hash back in the skillet so the unbrowned side is on the bottom, and cook again over low heat until a brown crust forms on the bottom.



This flopping-over a whole pan of hash takes some skill and experience. An easier way for a beginner is to mold the hash into small cakes and cook slowly on both sides until crusty.

So much for the crust on corned beef hash. Now a question about making a meat loaf that holds together. A letter here says: "I make meat loaf of ground beef, bread crumbs, seasoning and egg. The loaf holds together very nicely before cooking, but when I serve it, it often falls apart. What's the secret of making meat loaf that will stay in a loaf?"

Cookery scientists suggest that you might have better luck if you used thick white sauce instead of an egg to bind the loaf together. After egg cooks it may not be as good a binder as before. With thick white sauce the loaf mixture will have a sticky consistency when you mold it. Bake in a moderate oven (350 degrees Fahrenheit) for about an hour and a quarter, or until thoroughly cooked to the center.

By the way, you generally have better results by molding the meat loaf on waxed paper or parchment paper and then baking it on a rack in an open roasting pan than by packing it in a deep loaf tin like a loaf of bread.

Here's a letter from a mother about cooking liver for the children. She says: "I know liver is one of the best meats for children. My youngsters like calf liver but I should like to serve them lamb or pork liver because these are less expensive. They object to these livers because of their strong taste. What's the secret of cooking lamb or pork liver so it will be more appetizing?"

The secret is scalding the liver in hot water a few minutes before you cook it, then cooking at moderate heat until the liver is lightly browned. You can also grind or chop liver after cooking it just a few minutes and then combine in a loaf with sticky boiled rice, and such flavorsome vegetables as chopped onion, celery and tomato. Bake liver loaf in a moderate oven about an hour.

Now a question about using the liquid on canned vegetables. This question also comes from a mother. She says: "I know the liquid on canned vegetables has food value and should be served with them, not thrown away. But my family complain that it makes the vegetables too watery."

Here's how to use that liquid without making the vegetables too "watery." Drain the liquid from the can into a shallow pan, and boil the liquid down rapidly with a little chopped onion for extra flavor. When very little liquid is left, add the vegetables from the can. Let them heat. Then season and serve.

The last question is about lollipops for Christmas. The letter says: "I have a delicious recipe for a hard candy for lollipops. But I don't know when or how to attach the wooden skewer that makes the handle for the lollipop."

Here's the secret: Lay the wooden sticks flat on a greased baking sheet, and pour the hot candy in small amounts onto the end of each one. The candy will harden on the stick.

No more questions and answers now until Thursday.

#

