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Housekeepers' Chats

Friday, January 9, 1930

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: Questions and Answers. Approved by the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Bulletins available: Floors and Floor Coverings and Stain Removal

"When is the next question day, Aunt Sammy?" my Next-Door Neighbor called to me this morning from her kitchen window.

"The next question-and- answer day is Friday, January nine, and that happens to be this very morning."

"How fortunate," said my Neighbor.

"Yes, indeed. If you like questions and answers you will certainly enjoy the good selection I have to offer this morning. Two questions from the West and two from the East. I am not going to be partial to any section of the country, you see. After that I have a menu for a midwinter fish dinner. Don't you think a fish dinner is exactly the thing to give after answering four very serious questions?"

My Neighbor smiled. She is a kindly person, you know, and is even willing to indulge me by smiling at my little jokes.

"Four questions are good, but I'm sure five would be better on this morning program, Aunt Sammy. Far better."

"I almost begin to suspect that you have one to ask."

"Exactly, Aunt Sammy. How did you guess it? And, if you don't mind, I wish you would answer my question first because I have some brown bread in the oven that I shall have to run and look at any minute."

Nobody makes brown bread any better than my Neighbor and I was sure that some of it would be sent over to me as soon as it came out of the oven. So I promised that I would answer my Neighbor's question first of all.

"Well," she said. "It's about a rug. A friend of mine recently had her machine-made pile rug cleaned. As a result, the stiffening wore off the back, so now it refuses to lie flat and insists on wrinkling and curling up at the corners. My friend feels very upset over the situation. Now, what I want to know is, has that rug lost its looks forever? Is it doomed to everlasting wrinkles and rolling corners or can it be fixed somehow? Perhaps you can suggest a way of putting the stiffening back."

"I can," I said, "because I have read a bulletin called "Floor and Floor Coverings."

"What," asked my Neighbor, "is the remedy suggested in that book? I have it right up here on my shelf but I never noticed anything about rejuvenating rugs that have lost their interest in life."

"On page 23 you will find a special paragraph about re-sizing. Shall I tell you what it says?"

"Please do."

"It suggests that when the original stiffness comes off the back, a rug can be re-sized successfully either at home or by a carpet dealer and that this treatment will pay for itself by adding to the durability as well as to the appearance of the rug."

"Fine," said my Neighbor. "How is it done?"

"The rug is stretched tight and true and tacked at frequent intervals face down on the floor or some other flat surface where it can remain undisturbed. Make a stiffening solution of glue and water and sprinkle the back of the rug with it. To make the solution, soak and dissolve one-fourth pound of flake glue in one-half gallon of water. Use a double boiler or some other container surrounded by hot water. If the rug is light weight, care should be taken not to put on so much glue that it penetrates to the right side. Allow the rug to dry in position for at least twenty-four hours."

"Thank you," said my Neighbor. "I feel relieved and happier. I shall take this little book to my friend who has the unfortunate rug and we will see what we can do to brace it up according to directions."

The next question is about pewter. It looks as if a lot of people got pewter for Christmas presents. Anyway, several of my friends want to know how to clean this attractive metal. Though the pewter on the market today is made of several different combinations of metals, one thing should be remembered about cleaning and caring for it. It is a soft metal and only fine scourers that will not mark or scratch it should be used. Fine whiting, rouge, or fine rottenstone mixed with oil are all safe and effective cleaners.

Here is a question about that wholesome and popular dessert—custard. "The soft custard that I make for floating island and pudding sauce very often curdles. What causes curdling and how can I remedy it?"

My home economics friends tell me that curdling in custard is due to cooking too long or at too high a temperature, which cooks the eggs too hard and makes them separate from the milk. To avoid this, remember always to cook the soft custard over hot, but never boiling, water and to stir it constantly. Stop the cooking when a custard coats the spoon. However, if it begins to curdle, set it in a pan of cold water and beat it with a Dover egg beater.

We had quite a chat about removing stains the other day. The subject must have been on several people's minds because I have just received two requests for information on taking out spots. At her New Year's supper some candle wax was dropped on the best linentable cloth of one of my friends in New York State. How shall she remove it?

Candle-wax stains usually consist of paraffin colored with pigment or dye. First, remove the paraffin as completely as possible. Because paraffin stains do not spread like ordinary grease spots, but harden on the cloth, much of the spot may be scraped away. If the paraffin has penetrated the fiber, remove by using a blotting paper and a warm iron or by sponging with a grease solvent. Any color or dye remaining may be dissolved by sponging with wood alcohol. There are other cleaners which are also effective for removing this color stain from the fiber. These are carbon tetrachloride, chloroform, acetone, or benzol.

That finishes the five questions I had to talk about today and brings me to the fish dinner I mentioned a while ago.

A fish dinner is just as good in winter as in spring, summer and fall. That is why the Menu specialist planned one for us today. Fish, of course, will be the main dish in the main course, but the kind of fish and the way it is prepared will depend on what you can get in your market at this season. If you live inland where it is difficult to buy fresh fish, there is always salmon, tuna fish or cod and haddock in cans ready to make croquettes or be scalloped. The small fresh fish in season at present might be broiled or fried. Then there are fillets and steaks of such larger fish as salmon or halibut which may be prepared the same way. However, if you happen to find a four or five-pound fish in your market, do stuff and bake it. Far too few people in this world know the joys of baked fish stuffed with tomato, onion, and bread stuffing. The flavor of the tomato and onion has a way of blending with the fish and the fish flavor goes into the stuffing. It is so good that it makes me hungry to tell you about it. The tomato color makes the stuffing look attractive, too, and that is always an advantage.

Here is the menu for today: Fish (fried, or baked and stuffed, or croquettes); Carrots in parsley butter; Corn pudding; Relish; and Jellied fruit. The recipe for carrots in parsley butter is in the green cook book on page 16 and right across on page 17 is the recipe for corn pudding.

Monday: "Laundry Secrets"

