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Its purpose is to instruct and edify, to suggest and recommend new dishes as an aid to the housewife. Published each month on the Sunday following the 15th day. Correspondence invited and will be promptly answered through these pages.

Practical Cookery



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Is Free With The Bee

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Let's Go A-Marketing

With Winifred Worth

"When the Frost Is On the Pumpkin."

"When is a pumpkin not a pumpkin" is the query which suggests itself to you when you see at the grocery store, about this time of year, countless difficult-to-distinguish pumpkins and squashes. The answer "when it's a squash," is not enlightening, either, for that's the difficulty—how to tell when it is a squash!

Now, although pumpkin pie is pumpkin pie—even though it's made of squash!—along about Thanksgiving time, you may want to make sure that your pumpkin pie is no misnomer. This, one authority insists, you can learn to do at a glance, simply by observing the stem. If the stem is ridged and furrowed, or if it flares just at the place where it joins the fruit, then that fruit is pumpkin. Either one of these marks, without the other, may be indicative of the pumpkin. The summer pumpkin, for instance, does not show the characteristic flare in its stem; however, that stem is typically hard and ridged. The big cheese pumpkins, on the other hand, and the Japanese pumpkins and the sushaws, do have the flaring pumpkin stem.

In general, if the stem is soft and spongy, with no flare at its base, the fruit is sure to be squash. The exceptions which "prove the rule" are the "crook-neck" and "patty-pan" squashes, which, according to the classification, would be pumpkins. Similarly, according to the rule, the large "chili" pumpkins would have to be called squashes.

It may save you confusion in buying if you remember that the word "pumpkin," by American custom refers only to large, late-ripened, round or oblong types, which are among the oldest of all American vegetables, since the Indians grew them in their fields of maize. Prize specimens of this pumpkin sometimes weigh as high as, or even higher than fifty pounds. In Europe, too, "pumpkin" is the name applied to large varieties. The vegetable we know as "summer squashes" are the English "marrows."

Squash Is Really "Kin" to Pumpkin.

But this similarity of the two vegetables is not a mere surface resemblance, for the squash is "kin" to the pumpkin in a deeper sense.

Their composition is strikingly similar. Both are made up chiefly of coarse vegetable fiber and water, and accordingly, though both are when young and tender quite easily digested, neither has any exceptional nutritional value. They depend, rather, upon their flavor for their popularity. It is because of this favor that they have achieved their great fame as "pumpkin pie." Summer squashes are especially soft of flesh and delicate of flavor.

Both foods are commonly eaten as a vegetable, as well as in pie, and are sometimes made into soups or used in meat stews.

PRESERVING PUMPKINS WITHOUT "PUTTING THEM UP."

You can preserve your pumpkins in others ways than by "putting them up."

Canned pumpkin is quite palatable, and is especially good for use in pie, but if you prefer to have your pumpkin fresh, all through the winter, you can do so by purchasing them slightly under-ripe, and storing them in a cool, dry, frost-proof place. You need only put them up on shelves, being careful to see that they do not touch each other, and wipe them off once in a while with a dry cloth.

The "Irish" Potato of America

Although the Irish lay claim to the "spud," it is certainly American by adoption. For rare is the American housewife who does not frequently have the "Irish" potato on her shopping list.

Now, there are "spuds" and "spuds;" and you should not, therefore, buy "just potatoes," but should make your selections carefully. The best potato buys are the medium sized vegetables, since the small ones have too much skin and are often not fully matured, and the very large ones may not have so excellent a flavor. The potatoes should be smooth-skinned and firm, without bruises or soft spots.

When you go into the grocery store to make your choice, take a potato at random from the lot, cut it in two and examine it. If dark streaks run through it, they may indicate "brown rot" or some other "potato disease." If the potato is not discolored, test it farther by squeezing the pieces slightly; if drops of water run out, the potato is soggy. As a final test, you may try to fit the pieces of the potato together again. If they stick, you probably have a good potato, whose moisture is in the correct proportion.

When "Spuds" Have Sprouts.

Never buy "sprouty" potatoes. Reject, too, potatoes having green spots. These spots have a bitter taste, caused by a poisonous substance, "solanin."

If you have a supply of potatoes on hand in the spring, go over them and remove any sprouts they may have. For, if you let them grow, they will absorb all the nourishment from the potatoes.

Keep your potatoes in a dark, cool, well-ventilated place.

"Potato Styles" Change But Is Still Cheapest Food.

There are many different kinds of potato plants, and there are styles—yes, styles—in potatoes. Luther Burbank, you know, produced twenty-three potato plants from a single potato seed ball he found in his mother's garden.

These potato styles change regularly; one kind of potato, then another, will rank highest in popular favor.

The "Why of Potato Popularity."

In spite of its popularity, the potato still remains our cheapest food. It has the additional virtue of being a "staple" food in all temperate climates.

It is healthful, too. Its high percentage of iron keeps it on the menu of the careful diner; and its starch and water consistency makes its place certain on the table of the one who merely must have "something filling."

A potato is about one-fifth starch and three-fourths water. The rest of it is tissue builder and mineral salts.

Cook 'Em "Skin'n All."

Ordinarily, potatoes should be cooked in their skins, so that they may retain their full nutritive value. However, new potatoes may have their skins scraped thinly or rubbed off. Very old potatoes, too, should be peeled, since their skins are almost sure to be bitter. Before cooking potatoes, remove any damaged parts, and clean the "eyes."

Do not keep boiled potatoes in a covered dish; to do so will make them soggy. Put them into an open dish and cover them with a napkin, which will both retain the heat and absorb the moisture.

The potato is one of the most versatile of foods, and its appearance on the dinner table may vary daily. So, even if yours is one of those typical American families who demand boiled, mashed, steams or friend potatoes morning, noon and night—don't let fear of "sameness" keep you from catering to their normal appetites.

Little Trips to the Butcher Shop

Lamb Lends Itself to Luscious Dishes

"Half cold lamb," it has been said, "makes a lukewarm enthusiast." Therefore, you must not only know the proper cuts to select at the market for certain methods of cooking, but you must cook them well, and almost above all, serve them hot. If you observe these lamb-laws, you are practically sure of having delicious dishes.

The requisite that lamb dishes, more than dishes of other meats, be served "piping" hot, is due to the peculiarly high melting point of lamb fat. This means that the lamb must be very hot if the fat is to be melted, as it should be. If the meat is cold, the fat is solidified, and therefore extremely unappetizing. And if the meat is lukewarm, the fat tastes pasty and furry.

When you want roast of lamb, buy the leg, loin, ribs or shoulder. Because of the dry heat which cooks the meat when you prepare it in this way, the juices are likely to escape if you are not extremely careful to prevent it. That means that you should sear the meat thoroughly in an extremely hot oven at the start of the cooking, reducing the temperature later.

Buy breast of lamb for braising, and rib and loin chops—cut into thin slices—for broiling. Conserve the juices of your broiled lamb by searing quickly the

surfaces of the pieces. And do not, in an attempt to see whether the meat is done, stick or "jab" it with a knife or fork, as that practice permits the juices to escape readily.

Cutlets and chops are a good buy for frying as "breaded" dishes. And for boiling, you should buy some of the cheaper cuts.

Leg o' Mutton

There is one "sure cure" for any prejudice you may have against mutton as a frequently-to-be-served meat—and that is a properly selected and cooked, luscious leg o' mutton.

For not only is leg o' mutton the most economical of all mutton cuts to buy, but it will give you as well such a variety of dishes that every member of the family is sure to like some of them. It is particularly satisfactory to buy an entire leg if your family is good-sized.

Now, though leg o' mutton usually costs more per pound than almost any other part, there is very little waste in it. The leg is often cut into thick slices which are sold, in the butcher shop, as "cutlets." But if you buy the entire leg, you can have as much of it taken off for cutlets as you care to; and keep the rest for several days, utilizing it as pot-pie, haricot or Irish stew—or, if you have a large enough piece left, you can use it as a roast.

In cooking an eight or nine pound leg o' mutton, be sure that you have it entirely covered by boiling water, then allow an hour and a quarter to cook it, if you want it done rare. If the leg is heavier than that, allow an extra five minutes for every additional pound. You can save the water in which you have boiled the meat, for soups.

You will find economy, variety, nutrition and tastiness—all in one magic leg o' mutton.

What's Happening In the Food World Today?

Good News for Peanut Lovers.

Like peanuts? Then, whether you're a small boy at a circus or only a grown-up who smuggles a sack into the house occasionally, you'll be glad to hear that peanut imports from the Orient are on the increase.

Foreign peanuts exporters, especially in China, Japan, Hongkong, Java and Madura, seem to have found American peanut prices appealing, for this country imported over 6,300,000 pounds of shelled nuts during two months this year. Imports of the unshelled variety were about 1,600,000 pounds during the same two months. This is in comparison with 673,000 pounds of unshelled peanuts during the corresponding period in 1923.

There is a tariff of 3 cents a pound on unshelled peanuts from the Orient, and of 4 cents a pound on the shelled kind. But prices here are sufficiently high to make their exportation to this country profitable to the Oriental growers.

World's Rice Crop Shrinking?

The world's rice crop is on the decrease, estimates made by the United States Department of Agriculture indicate.

Fourteen countries which were responsible for 92 per cent of the world's 1922 crop, not including that grown in China, produced during that year, 118,321,832,000 pounds of the food. In 1923, these countries produced only 106,581,322,000 pounds.

Cocoa Bread.

The United States has scored again, this time in the realm of baking. Uncle Sam is a versatile soul, and when he decided to experiment a bit with cocoa, he found himself the inventor of a most delicious new quirk in the never-failing "staff of life." That new quirk is cocoa bread.

The baking laboratory of the Bureau of Chemistry did the work for Uncle Sam, substituting cocoa for 8 to 10 per cent of flour in any bread formula, and omitting all shortening, which is supplied by the cocoa. Sugar equal to the amount of cocoa is added. The result is a delicious dark-brown loaf, distinctly cocoa-y in flavor, and delightfully "different." Best of all, it remains fresh for a much longer time than ordinary bread.

Nutrition Nuggets.

No day's diet for children is adequate that does not include a quart of milk, cooked cereal, preferably oatmeal, one green vegetable, one fruit, and either egg, meat or fish.

Sugar, and simple sweets, are a desirable part of children's diet. The only objection to them has always been that sometimes they are allowed to take the place of other important things, and so spoil the child's appetite for necessary foods.

