

The Whole Story of the Art of Frosting

Skill In Mixing and Cooking Gives Fluffy, Luscious Results.

Time was when every girl knew all about cake making and was past master of the art of frosting and candies. Then, it seems, came a slump in culinary arts until the schools toop up Home Economics. Now these baking-ignorant girls are married and want to know the touches of home cooking. They write to us their woes and difficulties, one of which is how to frost a cake.

The simplest of frostings—which clever cooks would scorn—is made by brushing the top of the cake with fruit jelly or egg white and covering with confectioners' sugar. The next elaborate is a covering of sugar, coconut, nuts or sugar and cinnamon put on the batter before the cake is baked.

Frostings Without Cooking.

Uncooked frostings have a bad name because they are often poorly done. First comes the class from sugar, liquid and flavoring, made by working confectioner's sugar into water, milk, cream, fruit juice or coffee (two tablespoons of the liquid, with sometimes a little butter to make it richer). If the sugar is carefully sifted and the liquid well flavored this frosting is satisfactory, although never as smooth as the boiled variety.

Of the same general type are those made of egg white, sugar and flavoring—one egg white mixed with two tablespoons of water, fruit juice or other flavoring, plus the confectioner's sugar. One authority says, apropos of this frosting, that if the mixture be beaten, instead of stirred, less sugar will be required, but it will be less soft and creamy and will dry out more quickly.

Another egg white frosting is made by beating two whites, then beating in the sugar and flavoring with a whisk until smooth and glossy, making a very soft icing.

The yolk of the egg may be used with flavoring and enough confectioner's sugar to spread. This is good with orange and lemon for flavoring or cocoa.

Boiled Frostings.

Many cooks consider the boiled frosting their Waterloo. But with a little care the trick is learned and is not really difficult. The essential point is to cook sugar and water to a definite point and beat the syrup into whites. It must not grain; it must be dry on the outside, but not hard. "How does it get that way?"

The fundamental boiled frosting is based on the same rules as fondant, and is practically the same as divinity or seafoam candy. Two cups sugar, one-half cup water, one-quarter teaspoon cream of tartar, two egg whites and one-quarter teaspoon vanilla.

Boil the sugar, water and cream of tartar together without stirring to the soft ball stage, or until it threads from the tines of a fork (238 to 242 degree). Pour the syrup in a fine stream over the stiffly beaten egg whites, continuing the beating. Add the vanilla and beat with a wire whisk until stiff enough to ice the cake without any dripping (the frosting just holds its shape). This may take 10 or 15 minutes of beating, but if stopped at the psychological minute, before the icing becomes too stiff, it can be heaped up one or two inches high and still remain soft inside—the ideal condition. If not beaten long enough it will run; if beaten too long it will not be smooth.

The addition of another egg white will make a more fluffy frosting, but the syrup should be cooked to a higher temperature (244 to 243 degrees or a firm ball). This is universally true, the more egg white the higher the temperature.

General Technique.

The main point is to keep the syrup from crystallizing in coarse crystals; in other words, graining. To do this the syrup is not stirred while boiling and any crystals formed on the side of the pan are removed with a damp cloth or brush, never stirred into the mixture.

Overcooking causes graining because of the amount of water

that is driven off. The cream of tartar has the definite purpose of changing the sugar so that it will crystallize in fine grains, which make for the creamy frosting. Corn syrup serves the same purpose, and two tablespoons of the latter may replace the cream of tartar, and gives, according to one authority, consistently better results than the acid ingredient.

The thermometer assists greatly in candy and frosting success. With one you can determine after a few attempts the proper temperature for your conditions and then use it. Remember that a syrup undercooked will take a much longer beating to make it stiff and may never get dry; an overcooked one will result in a hard, dry and more granular frosting. On a damp day it is wise to overcook the syrup a little to compensate for the lack of evaporation during beating; conversely, on a clear, dry day it will probably get dry enough on the surface to handle, even if cooked below the regular temperature.

Variations.

With this basic recipe many variations can be made—coconut, nuts, raisins, candied fruits added either before or after the frosting is spread. Vanilla, almond, orange, lemon and other extracts are good alone, but better if blended, giving one predominate flavor with a background for the other, such, for example, is orange backed up with lemon; raspberry with lemon to accentuate it; almond with a bit of vanilla to make richer and more mellow.

Fresh fruits as halved strawberries or diced pineapple or oranges in sections laid on the icing make perfection in cakes. Marshmallow frosting is made by adding two heaping tablespoons of a commercial marshmallow whip or eight marshmallows cut into quarters to the syrup when it is removed from the fire. When the cake is finally frosted coconut may be sprinkled generously over the top.

One of the most delicious cakes is made by frosting with a thick boiled icing or marshmallow frosting, and when just firm cover with a thin layer of melted bitter chocolate.

To help those who stumble and fall over the usual boiled frosting we offer a different technique which has been proved successful. The greatest difficulty to this is beating over the stove for seven minutes, but what is that to the triumph of a finished product? (See boxed recipe.)

Fudge Type Frostings.

For the fudge type of frostings we must hark back to our candy-making days, for these follow the same rules. The recipes are many and varied, but there is always sugar, milk or cream, butter and flavoring. To get a finer-grained product, corn syrup is used, as cream of tartar would curdle the milk mixture. The ingredients are boiled to the soft-ball stage, the syrup allowed to cool, and then beaten to the right consistency for spreading.

The whole technique is worked out to keep the frosting from being too granular, to get it to crystallize in fine grains. The corn syrup helps to do this and cooling the mixture before beating is another time-honored means of attaining the same end.

To Use Green Celery.

The green stalks of celery which are unfit for salad may be utilized in a number of ways. Chopped fine they may be added to potatoes hashed and slightly browned, or to creamed eggs.

They may be cut into four-inch lengths, boiled for ten minutes in salted water, then finished with a cream sauce, and served on toast.

Or after boiling they may be drained on a towel, egged and crumbed, and fried in deep fat.

The cooking of food for children is itself very important. The simpler the dishes, the more desirable for children. Many combination-dishes should be avoided, and the foods should be mild in flavor.

Foods to Supplement Baby's Milk.

Milk is so often, and rightly, lauded as the most perfect "baby food" that an occasional mother wonders if there aren't any other foods at all she should feed her very young child.

There are. Unless an infant is constitutionally indisposed, he should after he is five or six months old, have fresh fruit juice once a day. The best time for him to take it is one hour before feedings, if he is breast fed, and earlier if he is bottle fed. Orange juice is excellent; and, as a substitute, so is the juice of tomatoes.

In the winter time, when fresh fruit juices are unobtainable, the mother can feed the baby strained cooked tomato juice, prune juice or juice from sound carrots or turnips. Dilute the juice with an equal quantity of boiled water; and increase the amount of the juice and water mixture until, at the age of one year, the child is getting from two to four tablespoonfuls daily.

After the baby is six months old, barley water instead of boiled water may be used to dilute the milk. At ten months, the child may have every day an occasional bit of dry bread or toast, two or three tablespoonfuls of well-cooked and strained cereal and one or two tablespoonfuls of vegetables, well-cooked and put through a ricer.

But however great your zest for teaching your baby to eat new foods—don't for a minute forget that milk, after all, is his mainstay.

When He's From Ten to Eighteen Months.

If your small son or daughter has been in the world more than ten and less than eighteen months, there are several im-

A Scientific Cup of Coffee.

If we told the truth we could all own up to numerous cups of unpalatable coffee that we have had in our own homes or at the homes of friends where we know that the best of coffee is used. There are two kinds that are particularly distasteful—the bitter kind and the too finely ground—almost pulverized—which leaves a sediment on one's tongue and a choky feeling in one's throat.

But at last the scientists have found the secret of making good coffee. In a report entitled "Scientific Coffee Research," recently issued by Samuel C. Prescott, Professor in the Department of Biology and Public Health in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, many facts of interest are revealed.

Professor Prescott maintains that the blend of coffee has very little bearing on the flavor produced—that coffee of low commercial grade, if freshly roasted and ground and properly prepared, is better than high-grade coffee when it is stale and badly prepared. He also points out that the utensils employed are of the most importance. Metal containers should never be used, says the report, because the action of coffee infusion on metals is pronounced, and bitter, astringent or metallic tastes may be produced. Enameled ware, with its vitreous, porcelain surface, has no influence on the taste of coffee.

For best results the coffee should be freshly ground. Surprising as it will be to most, Professor Prescott says that the coffee should not be more than two minutes in water of from 185 to 203 degrees Fahrenheit. At these temperatures most of the caffeine will be dissolved, says Professor Prescott, the flavor-giving oils will not be boiled away, and the bitter and woody taste will not be developed as much as by boiling. Professor Prescott finds also that coffee boiled for one minute is markedly more bitter than that which has been infused at a little below the boiling point.

Ham is more digestible when thoroughly boiled, cut thin, and eaten cold. Fried ham should not be given to invalids. It is often given scraped or "rasped."

Venison corresponds very closely in chemical composition to beef. It is tender-fibered, when obtained from a young deer, and very digestible.

The fresh and salt waters of the United States produce annually more than 2,000,000,000 pounds of sea food.

"What Shall I Feed My Child?"

portant changes in the baby's mode of living which you must contemplate.

Every normal child should be weaned at the end of the tenth month. From that time on, for a lengthy period, a quart of cold, clean milk daily should form the basis of his diet. An increased amount of starchy food may also be used at this time.

Now, at ten months, your baby may have, in addition to his milk, cereal, well-cooked and strained, such as oatmeal, farina, barley, arrowroot and brown rice; fruit juices, of the orange, prune, cooked apple, ripe peach, ripe raspberry, pineapple and cooked tomato; broths made from vegetables, either with or without the addition of beef, mutton or chicken; bread that is dry, or in toast or cracker form.

When the baby is thirteen months old, you may add to his diet macaroni and spaghetti; and you may give him more cooked, strained vegetables, including baked potato, spinach, asparagus, peas and carrots. Between the ages of fourteen and eighteen months, he may also have a soft-boiled egg daily, and a small amount of butter; and he may take his cereal unstrained.

Morse and Talbot advise, as a general rule, at this age, five feedings, giving 9 1-2 ounces to each feeding. The amounts and intervals will vary to suit the child, but regularity of feeding must be maintained.

The Run-About Child.

If your baby has passed the

eighteen-month stage, the chances are that he has a pretty good grasp on life.

But be careful that you do not, on that account, relax your efforts at seeing that he has proper, and perfectly sanitary, food. The reason the "Second Summer" has acquired a bad name is probably because the mother ordinarily "slacks up" on her precautions a bit after the child has safely weathered his first year.

Now, a quart of milk daily should form the basis of diet for the child at this age. He should have vegetables, too, daily. And he should certainly have regular feedings—one at six or six-thirty in the morning, one at nine or ten, one at one o'clock or at two, and one at five-thirty or six in the evening.

Besides the milk and vegetables, your child can eat cereal, well-cooked and unstrained; fruit juice or pulp, either of orange, prune, cooked apple, fresh ripe peach, fresh ripe raspberries and cooked tomato juice; egg, soft-cooked, possibly once a day; broths, made from beef, mutton or chicken; bread, dry or stale, or in the form of crisp toast or rusks; butter, one teaspoonful daily. At the end of eighteen months, he should weigh twenty-two and a half pounds; at the end of two years, he should weigh twenty-five or twenty-six pounds.

Mashed and strained carrots, spinach, and beets may be given after the 15th month. Baked potatoes are advised at this time. In addition the child of 18 months may have plain macaroni, tapioca, custard and rice.

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