

SCHOOL for HOUSEWIVES By MARION HARLAND

DANGERS THAT LURK IN FOOD



"Judge Freshness by eye and fin."

"We should suspect some danger near. Where we possess delight."

THUS runs the platonic whine. Dr. Isaac Watts said it. Like a host of other mechanical jingles turned out from the same brain and fingers, it is unworthy of the man who wrote some of the noblest hymns in the English language. The story goes that the illness pained, in a corner of whose mansion he lived for years, expected him to produce a hymn every morning before he met them at breakfast. He was, during these years, engaged upon the "Divine Songs and Hymns" that earned him immortality in church and Sunday school. If this be true, one comprehends much and forgives almost as much in the said "productions."

In pondering the subject set down for today's Talk, the pessimistic couplet set at the head of this article has haunted me persistently. To a healthy body and the normal appetite that should go with health, eating is a delight. The day has gone clean out of sight in which the refined women and intellectual men thought the pleasures of the table beneath the consideration of noble minds.

Our age is essentially practical and commonsensical. When one has no religion, bluff squires would have said "no stomach for victuals!," we assume that he is ailing in body or perturbed in spirit. One and all, we eat to live, and are not ashamed to confess that we live to eat, so far as to reckon the gratification of appetite one of the joys of existence.

Therefore, when brought up against the truth that dangers, seen and unseen, disport themselves in the food we love and must have, we sicken at heart.

A CASE FOR CAUTION

At the outset of our dissertation I call attention to the fact that caution may degenerate into foolish squeamishness. We have heard from babyhood of the overreligious Brahmin who, believing it a mortal sin to eat of any living creature, perished with thirst after a mischievous Englishman showed him a drop of wriggling water under the microscope. Fastidiousness akin to this fanaticism moved the woman who asked her doctor which was the lesser risk, to drink unboiled water with its freight of animalcules, or the flat cooked liquid, which, she had been told, contained no elements of nutriment.

"It depends entirely, madam," replied the witty Galen, "upon whether you choose to make an aquation or a cemetery of your stomach."

Yet we cannot deny that the water we drink is sometimes a fruitful source of disease. Witness the neighborhoods that have been plague-stricken by rivers polluted at their sources or converted into sewers in midflow by filthy drainage. During the Civil War the creeks draining the outlying swamps into the Chickahominy slew more than the Federal guns. An officer who escaped the fever that decimated his regiment told me that he owed his safety to his practice, persisted in from the beginning of the campaign, of drinking no water that had not boiled at least forty

is a degree of truth in the rumors touching the germs that are proof against freezing, and which, if torpid for a time, regain life and action in the human stomach. I have tasted ice that had the "tang" of coppers, and was frankly condemned by scientific men who analyzed it. I have detected other flavors in ice that should be absolutely destitute of any taste or smell. Clearly, it is the part of prudence never to put suspected ice into glass or pitcher. Set the vessel of water in the icebox or pack it with broken ice long enough to cool it. Nobody is compelled to drink a beverage in which ice is dissolved, unless one wills to do it. Give yourself the benefit of the doubt when you "suspect some danger near" in the guise of equivocal ice.

AN UGLY NAME

"Ptomaine poison" is a phrase sprung upon us within the last decade. The thing itself is an old acquaintance, although thus lately christened. It is an ugly term, being derived from a Greek word, signifying a corpse, with the added significance of "falling." In the loose way even educated people have of fitting words to things that "come handy," we associate our new scientific term with fish, seldom applying it elsewhere. In fact, it is the "generic name of alkaloid bodies formed from animal or vegetable tissues during putrefaction." From these alkaloid germs thus evolved spring livelier bacteria, and so on and so on, and for all we know, ad infinitum.

We knew, and our ancestors before us, that stale fish is one of the most deadly of unwholesome foods, long before chemists helped us to a name for the noxious principle pervading it. The very elements that make it a valuable brain food are, by decomposition, perverted into ptomaine.

Without knowing why, we learned long ago that fish is less likely to disagree with delicate stomachs if eaten with acid sauce or with the accompanying vinegar. Without a suspicion that the deadly "alkaloid" was thus measurably counteracted, I fell into the habit of mixing a little vinegar with my fish. Instinctive obedience to what we felt rather than knew that we came to consider lemon and sardines inseparable.

I think I have told before of the chef who boasted of having "preserved" fish from decomposition by a process of vinegar and charcoal. He bulleted better than he knew.

Granting that acid helps to ward off the peril of ptomaine, stand fast to the rule of eating none except fresh fish. Cold storage has done an incalculable amount of harm here. Ten years ago it was worth a five-year course in a cooking class

country. I have had the added advantage of employing three excellent French cooks in America, from whom I gathered a store of miscellaneous information with regard to household economics. An active apprenticeship of twelve months in a well-ordered kitchen is worth a five-year course in a cooking class

Home-Made Fireless Cooker
A Kentucky correspondent sends in a capital recipe for home-made bread which I lay aside reluctantly. We devoted so much space to yeast last week that other subjects claim a hearing to-day.

The concluding paragraph of the letter has to do with another matter: Have any of the readers of the Exchange a home-made fireless cooker? I'd like to have directions for making one. I am sure there must be an economical device for housekeepers. M. R. W. (Kentucky).

An excellent patented fireless cooker has been in constant use in my kitchen for two years, past. We never think of cooking corned beef, soups, boiled mutton or fried chicken in any other way.



"Sprouting Potatoes are Unwholesome."



"A Musty loaf for the chickens."

sideer lemon and sardines inseparable. I think I have told before of the chef who boasted of having "preserved" fish from decomposition by a process of vinegar and charcoal. He bulleted better than he knew.

Granting that acid helps to ward off the peril of ptomaine, stand fast to the rule of eating none except fresh fish. Cold storage has done an incalculable amount of harm here. Ten years ago it was worth a five-year course in a cooking class

country. I have had the added advantage of employing three excellent French cooks in America, from whom I gathered a store of miscellaneous information with regard to household economics. An active apprenticeship of twelve months in a well-ordered kitchen is worth a five-year course in a cooking class

Home-Made Fireless Cooker
A Kentucky correspondent sends in a capital recipe for home-made bread which I lay aside reluctantly. We devoted so much space to yeast last week that other subjects claim a hearing to-day.

The concluding paragraph of the letter has to do with another matter: Have any of the readers of the Exchange a home-made fireless cooker? I'd like to have directions for making one. I am sure there must be an economical device for housekeepers. M. R. W. (Kentucky).

An excellent patented fireless cooker has been in constant use in my kitchen for two years, past. We never think of cooking corned beef, soups, boiled mutton or fried chicken in any other way.

My first trial of the valuable "Friend of the Housewife" was an impromptu and so crude as to appear ridiculous to incredulous lookers-on. I can give both recipes. I wish I could engage to supply with them the boy's appetite that greeted their appearance upon the table.

those of soft flesh. If you have any misgivings on the subject, yet cannot refuse the "delicacy" (?), lessen the peril by seasoning it with red pepper and tart sauce or clear lemon juice.

Purchase none that is in the least doubtful as to age. If the eye be dull and sunken and the fins flabby, take to yourself the benefit of the doubt and let it alone.

I have talked at length upon fish ptomaine because danger lurks more frequently in this perishable article of diet than in any other. The edible mushroom is a close second. If the truth were known, we should find that many cases of illness attributed to poisonous fungi, gathered by mistake, should have been ascribed to stale mushrooms, that were harmless when freshly gathered. Give a wide berth to such as are offered as bargains because "not quite fresh, you know." When they begin to wither into flabbiness and curl up at the edges, the ptomaines are getting in their final work. Red pepper and lemon may, and will, kill the weaker breed of destroyers. They avail little against those that have had three days' start.

MORE UNSAFE FOOD

Mouldy bread is another lurking place for ptomaines. I have heard housekeepers gravely assert that "mould does not hurt bread." A woman who had studied domestic science in college argued with me, to her own satisfaction, that mould, being a vegetable growth, when it appears upon stale bread, is as harmless as yeast. "Of which it may be said to be a by-product," she concluded. "Under the microscope you would see a miniature forest in that slice of mouldy bread. Toast it, and you have dead wood—nothing worse."

She may have been right. I may err in advising my fellow-householders to keep bread from moulding, if possible, and to throw it to pigs and chickens when the blue-edged forests appear

been in the must and sourness. I actually knew one frugal housewife who sifted the weevils out of the flour and put it back into the barrel for family use! It never occurred to her that there might be as many invisible germs in the sifted flour as there were living wrigglers before she used the sieve.

Custards develop poisonous qualities if kept too long. Not a dozen years ago twenty families in one neighborhood of a great city bought custard pies from the same confectioner, and all who ate of them were made ill. The symptoms were distinctly those of poisoning, and investigation was made. The confectioner confessed that the custard had been made three days before the pies were baked. Also, that the pies were, twenty-four hours old before they were offered for sale. Chemical analysis showed the presence of some deadly agent—I forget what. Now we should call it "ptomaine."

Sprouting potatoes are unwholesome. I have said before, and repeatedly, that the water in which raw potatoes are cooked should be thrown away as unfit for culinary purposes. In some countries it is reckoned poisonous. Old potatoes should be cooked in two waters. Sprouting potatoes should not be cooked at all, except for chickens and pigs. Luckily, the rank smell that goes with the pale, dingy green of the peeled vegetable repels the would-be eater.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Raw oysters have had such a black eye (to borrow a sporting phrase) in some of our cities within the past few years that a word of caution would seem needless. In consequence of the general alarm, the bivalves have fallen into disrepute as an opening course of dinner and luncheon. When they appear in this capacity, it is often under the guise of "oyster cocktails." The acid and tabasco sauce are supposed to neutralize or kill the poisonous bacilli.

Since prevention is, always and everywhere, better than cure, it behooves the wise manager of the household to shield her provisions, raw and cooked, from the peril of contagion. A fly will deposit enough eggs in meat in a second of time to stock it with larvae in less than forty-eight hours. Therefore, keep them behind wire, and if they are to be kept a day or so without cooking,

upon it. I counsel the same, and strongly, with regard to musty leaves. I am yet more positive in the conviction that musty flour and souring Indian meal are unsafe as food for human creatures. Left to their own destruction as foods, the flour will develop weevils and the meal mealworms. If I am an incorrigible infidel as to the effect of freezing upon fish, particularly

sure a goodly supply of rich roast-beef gravy, pour two cupsful of boiling water, slightly salted, over the beef when it goes into the pan. This sears the surface and prevents too rapid escape of the meat juices. Cook in a covered roaster, basting freely after the first half hour. Have at hand hot butter and water, and baste with this alternately with the liquid that flows from the meat. Turn the meat at the end of an hour. When it is done, lift the meat to a hot dish and thicken the gravy in the pan with browned flour. Season to taste. Send to table in a gravy boat.

Boiled Indian Meal Pudding.
Scald a quart of milk (do not let it boil) and add to it, as it heats, a pinch of soda. Now stir into it half a pound of finely chopped suet from which the strings have been taken. It should be like coarse meal for fineness. Cook one minute and put in gradually, stirring steadily, two cupsful of Indian meal, with a scant teaspoonful of salt. Cook two minutes and turn out to cool. When it is perfectly cold, beat into the mush a small cupful of molasses, a half teaspoonful of ground ginger, the same quantity of soda dissolved in hot water, and three well-beaten eggs. Beat hard for a full minute, and add gradually a cupful of seeded raisins well dressed with flour.

Baked Indian Meal Pudding.
Add to a pint of yellow cornmeal an even teaspoonful of salt and sift twice. Have a pint of boiling water over the fire and stir the meal gradually into this, beating hard. When smooth, turn it into a larger vessel and pour into it a quart and a pint of scalding hot milk. Cook in the double boiler for an hour. Take from the fire and let it get cold. Then beat into it four eggs that have been whipped light, a coffee-spoonful of molasses, a tablespoonful of melted butter and a salt-spoonful each of ground ginger, cinnamon and nutmeg.

Three Wants
I. Please tell me how to make good, strong roast-beef gravy.
II. I can give both recipes. I wish I could engage to supply with them the boy's appetite that greeted their appearance upon the table.

Under my direction he filled a box with hay, packing it hard; hollowed the center; received a hot, put boiling from the range. So the pot held the oatmeal porridge the cook was cooking for breakfast. It had boiled just ten minutes before it was popped into the pre-



"Musty meal will develop meal worms."

wash over with vinegar and a dash of red pepper.

Lay a lump of charcoal in the bottom of the chamber of the refrigerator in which milk and butter are kept.

Make free use of the whitewash brush in the root cellar, and everywhere let in the free air and sunshine (when you can get it) once a day. Have wire screens in your windows and doors all summer long.

Corruption breeds in warm darkness, and is carried into your dwellings upon the feet and feelers of insects. The price of security from perils, visible and microscopic, is eternal and intelligent vigilance.

Spit pea soup, based upon Hoger in which beef was boiled, larded with a liver, whole, cooked as casserole; tomato sauce, asparagus and cheese, chocolate blanc mange, cake, etc.

MONDAY BREAKFAST.
Orange, cereal and cream, bacon, boiled eggs, fried mush, toast, tea and coffee.

LUNCHEON.
Salt mackerel, soaked, boiled and served in yesterday's tomato sauce, baked potatoes, asparagus and lettuce salad (a left-over), crackers and cheese, jam and cookies, tea.

DINNER.
Spit pea and tomato soup (a left-over), cannelloni of corned beef and mashed potatoes, browned, carrots, sweet potatoes, spinach, French toast, with lemon sauce, black coffee.

TUESDAY BREAKFAST.
Stewed rhubarb, cereal and cream, stewed kidneys, French rolls, toast, tea and coffee.

LUNCHEON.
Baked cold and sliced (a left-over), quick biscuits, egg and lettuce salad, crackers and cheese, and cocoa.

DINNER.
Spinach soup (a left-over), beefsteak and onions, Bermuda potatoes, browned, string beans, rice and raisin pudding, black coffee.

WEDNESDAY BREAKFAST.
Oranges, cereal and cream, bacon and eggs, cornmeal mushes, toast, tea and coffee.

LUNCHEON.
Stew of beefsteak and onion (a left-over), string bean and potato (a left-over), corned beef, macaroni, cream, puddings, tea.

DINNER.
Potato soup, mutton chops in casserole, mushrooms on toast, soufflé of canned green peas, celery roly polly with bean sauce, black coffee.

THURSDAY BREAKFAST.
Oranges, cereal and cream, fried fish, potato biscuits (the genuine Irish article), toast, tea and coffee.

LUNCHEON.
Cold ham and liverwurst, fried sweet potatoes, potato biscuits warmed over from breakfast, macaroni pudding, tea.

DINNER.
Clear soup with noodles, kidney and mushroom pie (a left-over), asparagus, fried carrots, queen of puddings, black coffee.

FRIDAY BREAKFAST.
Grapefruit, cereal and cream, clam fritters, graham biscuits, toast, tea and coffee.

LUNCHEON.
Breaded and baked sardines, salty luncheon, stuffed potatoes with butter and parsley, stewed rhubarb and cranberries, tea.

DINNER.
Asparagus cream soup (a left-over), baked stuffed salad, mashed potato, stewed celery, snow custard, black coffee.

Marion Harland
Family Meals for a Week

THE HOUSEMOTHERS' EXCHANGE

German and French Books
I AM a domestic science graduate of Pratt Institute. Hence I may say that I have more knowledge of cookery than the average housekeeper.
When I began housekeeping two years ago I hired two German girls, of the best type—strong, clean and willing—in preference to Americans. I had to train my maids, who had been in the country but six weeks. As I could speak a little French, she could understand one another fairly well.
For a year there was not a meal, except breakfast, which I did not superintend personally. The housemaid left me a year ago, to be a bookkeeper in a grocery store. She had attended night school for some time. My cook cannot read English well, therefore, she does not comprehend certain scientific principles I have taught her to practice in cooking.
At last I am coming to the point of this epistle. Can you tell me where I can find in this country a book in German, a book corresponding to "Knight's Practical Cookery" and "The Elements of the Theory of Practical Cookery" by S. F. M. Perria, Ill.
I am sorry to be able to help you in the struggle with "Kitchen German." My first cookbook, "Common Sense in the Household," was translated into German, and the translation is still to be had from the publishers; but that does not treat of scientific reasons for practical cookery.
"French Dishes for American Tables," by Pierre Caron, has been translated by Mrs. Frederic Sherman. It may meet your second demand. I gained my knowledge of French housewifely methods, including cookery, by the Squeezers' patent.
"First the boy spells a thing and then he goes and does it." Having lived abroad for several years, and kept house for much of that time in France, England and Italy, I became tolerably well acquainted with the cuisine of each