

# California's Housekeepers

## THE WOMAN WHO INVENTED "THE DEVIL'S FRUIT CAKE," AND THE RECIPE



Mrs. Elizabeth Lyle Wilson

It is no little thing to tickle the jaded palates of the mighty of the land, and the woman whose cookery is fine enough to accomplish this end has reason, indeed, to congratulate herself. But such a course is far from the thoughts of Mrs. Elizabeth Lyle Wilson of Nashville, Tenn., the little southern woman whose cakes for the last few years have been steadily climbing in favor and are now the toast of continents, for a more delightfully retiring woman would be hard to find. Not only has Mrs. Wilson conquered the likes and dislikes of her own people, but the products of her ingenuity are shipped abroad to many lands. Her cakes have graced the tables of the courts at St. James and also at Vienna, not to mention our own president's board. They have traveled to Australia and Brazil and some have even gone as far as Russia. In no matter what land or clime, however, to eat a bit of a Wilson cake is to keep on eating if more is obtainable.

A more modest person it would be hard to find than Mrs. Wilson. Like Byron she awoke one morning to find herself famous, and she has been quietly and ineffectually trying to sidestep fame ever since. Greatness has been thrust upon her unawares, and while she deplores the accompanying publicity, it has not in the least deterred her from following up her chosen profession, nor hindered the sale of her cakes. She is as truly an artist in her line as is the painter of a great landscape, or the writer of a wonderful book. She has given expression to

the talent that lay dormant within her, and a more womanly accomplishment would be hard to find.

Mrs. Wilson's home life is singularly happy and free from care. For a time early in the beginning of her success her husband strenuously opposed the business career of his wife; as the head of the family he felt that the support of it and the added luxuries should properly come from him. But in time the wonderful little cake maker overruled all objections, and has finally brought her lord and master to a state of quiescent acceptance. And not only that, but he is more than proud of his clever spouse's conquests. Little Mary, the 9 year old daughter of the house, is planning to follow closely in her mother's footsteps. Already she is beginning to make cake on her own account and has given promise of becoming as fine a cook as her mother.

Mrs. Wilson's first big triumph came during the exposition at Nashville in the late President McKinley's time. McKinley and his wife were visiting in Nashville, and the Women of the South City planned a wonderful breakfast in honor of the first lady of the land. All the flower of southern beauty was gathered about the board in Nashville, and the hour set for the affair was 12 o'clock. Covers were laid for 100 guests. At break of day that morning, Mrs. Wilson, who had been asked to furnish the cakes for the affair, rose to go about her business, and to her surprise she found her home crowded with guests. In order to have them as fresh as possible, she had put off baking until the day of the affair. With her usual dispatch she mixed, and whipped and stirred cakes, big and little, the former for slicing and the individual ones to be served for the last course. These last

resembled more the wonderful things you read of in fairy lore, for each and every one had been fashioned to represent some beautiful flower. There were chrysanthemums, pink and white, snowballs in all their pure white beauty, roses, violets, pansies golden eyed, tulips, narcissi, lilies of the valley and dainty colored sweet peas. Decked with these wonderful confections, the table looked like some stray nook out of fairyland. Fashioned out of icing that was yet, not sticky, and cake that was deliciously rich, sweet and light with no hint of clamminess, they seemed much too beautiful to eat, and still much too good to leave untouched.

The result was that not one of the ladies of Nashville not one of their guests left a stray crumb to tell the tale, and from then on Mrs. Wilson's reputation as a cakemaker was established beyond a doubt. Nashville declared that to concoct cakes in one or two flower patterns would have been difficult enough, but to bring to life on the breakfast table the facsimile of every flower in the ordinary calendar was a most remarkable feat and one worth talking about.

From then on she became the official cake baker of presidents, and so popular has her cookery become that not only does she include presidents among her patrons, but she is also baker extraordinary to the cabinet members, not to mention a city full of senators and such like. During Mrs. Wilson's visit to Nashville, she placed on the top of the confection "Gates Ajar," and in reply received a charming note of appreciation from the gifted author herself. On another occasion Justice of the supreme court delectation of Mrs. Taft. The following Christmas Mrs. Wilson received

an order from the White House for the annual Christmas cake, and since then has furnished the sweet things for the White House functions with great regularity. Last Christmas, besides the usual order from the capital, she sent no fewer than 11 huge devil fruit cakes into Washington to grace as many festive yuletide boards. Not plain ordinary cakes were these by any means, but gorgeous creations, bedecked in holly and mistletoe and glistening with snow white icing. Some even carried an elaborate pattern of orchids, while others boasted wreaths of purple grapes.

Shortly after Christmas Mrs. Wilson was called to Chicago. She went at the behest of a prominent society woman, the wife of a well-known railroad president, who wished to show the malds and matrons of her native town something they had never seen before. The affair had a Dutch tone, and in consequence there were cakes with quaint-looking windmills, mild-faced Holland cows and bright-colored tulips. Also there were bon-bons and other dainties of candy to fit any occasion, and she also has a knack of combining sentiment with merchandise. For instance, on receiving an order for a cake for the birthday of Mrs. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward, she placed on the top of the confection "Gates Ajar," and in reply received a charming note of appreciation from the gifted author herself. On another occasion Justice of the supreme court delectation of Mrs. Taft. The following Christmas Mrs. Wilson received

ceded the quality of the ones his mother used to make. She also has notes of acknowledgment from American ladies of title abroad and not a few from other expatriates.

The care which she gives to the making of her cakes Mrs. Wilson extends to their packing when ready for shipment. Like everything else, this stage of the work has risen to the level of high art. To begin with, the cake to be shipped is first sturdily secured with icing to a square of very heavy clean white cardboard. It is then covered with crumpled tissue paper over the finest of paraffine paper and popped into a box which the cardboard exactly fits. Around it is wedged firmly some crushed tissue paper. The box is tied up very firmly and then wrapped in stout paper and labeled. If its journey is to be a short one it is placed in a light wooden basket, but in case of a lengthy trip, especially sea voyages, the box is placed in tin and soldered tightly. Handles are attached to the top of the metal casing, and in this fashion the Wilson cakes are shipped around the world safe and sound. Individual cakes are fastened with the icing to the bottom of tiny boxes made to accommodate them, and these are in turn packed together in one large box. Bridal cakes are sent out in all their glory of shimmering white satin streamers. And taking everything into consideration it would indeed be hard to find a more finished product than the Wilson cake, once it has left its paraffine hands.

That the gifted little southerner has never even darkened the portals of a cooking school is encouraging to her aspiring sisters. After her marriage in 1884 she followed her husband to a keeping and home making was given free rein, and her talents in that line

were directed toward the pleasures of her friends and her own family, with no thought of the great hungry public without her doors. Gradually her fame as a baker of cakes spread beyond the bounds of her little circle of acquaintances, and occasionally she was induced to supply a customer here and there with the fruits of her skill and labor. From small beginnings often come big things, and in time Mrs. Wilson enlarged her field, until now she is one of the busiest women in Tennessee. While at first her husband failed to lend his approval to her money making industries, he has long since become reconciled, the more so, in fact, since her work has succeeded not only in bringing her financial profit, but health and happiness as well. From a frail, almost slight, little being she has developed in the last few years into a healthy, robust woman, with a keen, inventive mind and a wholesome outlook on life. She does not hold with her patrons that she has reached perfection, but is always studying combinations and striving to invent something new in the cakery line. Her home is handsome and well kept, and it is a matter of deep principle with her to never neglect her family for business or anything else.

Her achievements are seemingly accomplished with the greatest ease. In the case of her marvelous icing effects the results are reached through the manipulation of the different icings in paper tubes clipped variously at the pointed ends. As Mrs. Wilson does it, it looks deceptively easy. Roses, grapes, wreaths and the like grow under the skillful handling of her clever fingers, but let the amateur make a like attempt to fully realize what an art it is. Some flowers, for instance, require delicate shading. The upper petals of a violet must be of one hue, while the

lower part of the petals must be of another, while the center must be contributed from a tube of golden yellow. Cupped flowers, such as the foxglove or the morning glory, are molded from a special icing, which is cooked almost to candy and then stuck on with a soft icing.

Below is given the recipe for the devil fruit cake, which is perhaps the best known of Mrs. Wilson's creations. It has won the approval of a potential president, an actual one and of all their counselors. It is a wonderful combination of goodies, which in the finished state is warranted to bring a smile of sweet contentment to the face of the lowest pessimist.

**DEVIL'S FRUIT CAKE**  
One pound flour, browned and sifted; one pound butter, one pound sugar, 12 eggs, four pounds raisins, one pound home made citron, one pound crystallized cherries and pineapple mixed, one pound almonds, cut fine and soaked over night in rosewater, one pound pecan meats, cut small; one glass grape jelly, half glass good cordial, one glass good whisky or brandy, tablespoons each powdered allspice, cinnamon and nutmeg and teaspoons powdered cloves. Soak all the fruit 12 hours in the whisky, cream together butter and sugar, add to them eggs, yolks beaten very light, then the cordial, spices and jelly. Put in next two teaspoons melted chocolate, next add the whites of four eggs, beaten stiff and part of the flour, and the fruit in the rest of the flour and add to the mixture. Put in nuts last of all. If nuts are left out put in a third more fruit. Bake several hours keeping a watch on the water in the oven until almost done.

## Ideas That Will Help Along Household Affairs

**I Found Out**  
Marie Merkel, 2889A Eighteenth Street, San Francisco

**Dustless beds**—That by nailing an old, strong piece of carpet on the top of your wire mattress you will save yourself lots of hard work. This is a spot where dust, lint and dirt will be found, falling out of the top mattress. Once in a while take a brush and a dustpan in order to clean the old piece of carpet, then there is no need of taking the bed apart. Very little dust will be seen on the floor, as it will all settle in the old carpet, and a lot of hard work can be saved this way.

**To clean clotheslines**—When selecting pulleys for your washline take the one which has a large space behind the wheel, wooden or iron, so that you can pass your line freely with knot. In order to clean both sides take good soda and a rag; rub all the way, every inch of it, passing up and down; then dry it with another rag. It will save you the big trouble of taking your line down.

**To protect stovepipe**—Besides keeping a clean newspaper on top of the range and under the gas stove, the stovepipe needs a protector, too. A double sheet of a newspaper with three pins to close it around, will save you lots of dirty work. It is easier to change the paper than to clean stove and pipe after each meal, and it does not alter the looks of the stove in any way whatever.

**Some Good Pointers**  
Mrs. Luna Eckles, Dinuba, Cal.

A small dish of charcoal placed in your meat larder will keep the articles sweet.

Bread must always be allowed to get perfectly cold after baking before it is put away, or it is liable to mold or sour.

To remove mildew, rub over the spots with juice of raw tomato, sprinkle with salt, then lay in the sun, and repeat if necessary.

Do not use cornmeal or tea leaves in sweeping carpets, as cornmeal has been known to attract water bugs if not very carefully swept up, while tea leaves often make stains on carpet.

To prevent matting from becoming dark colored, wash it occasionally in salt water.

Remedy for Croup—Give an emetic and a warm bath and apply a sponge wrung out of hot water to the throat to ease the breathing.

Sure cure for diphtheria if taken in time, and also good for sore throat: Peroxide of hydrogen used as a wash.

A few drops of oil of lavender scattered through the bookcase in a closed room will keep the volumes from getting damp and molding.

**To Wash Black Goods or Delicate Colors**

If you do not like your black goods to look "smeary," do not starch them. Make your flour starch, just as you would for any starching, and have it smooth and thick. Then to each gallon of water, for the first "suds," add one quart of the thick, smooth starch and in these proportions have enough starching water in the tub to wash the garments. Use no soap, but wash the black goods in this starching water just as though it were the ordinary soap-suds. When through the first water, add to the second tubful one pint of starch to one gallon of water, wash as usual. When the clothes are clean rinse in clear water and hang to dry wrong side out; dry in the shade and iron on the wrong side. For delicate colors, do the same, but do not use the water in which the black goods are washed. Garments washed in starch water will not fade or "run" if carefully attended to. Delicate colors should not be kept wet any longer than can be avoided.

**Things Worth Knowing**  
Mrs. W. C. Turpin, Yuba City

**Cement for Broken Glass**—Make a chrome cement of five parts of common gelatine to one of acid chromate of lime. Cover broken edges, press together and expose to sunlight. The effect being to render the compound insoluble, even in boiling water.

**Cement for Cracked Stoves**—Take wood ashes and salt in equal parts and make into a paste with cold water; then fill each crack when dry is cool. It will soon harden.

**Fine Stove Polish**—Mix dry stove polish with turpentine and apply when stove is a little warm (but take care not to have any coals in stove) and fully attended to. This mixture will be blacked more glossy and durable than when mixed otherwise. The turpentine prevents rust, and when applied to rusty stoves makes them look like new.

**How to Give Children Castor Oil**  
Miss R. Fontana, Batavia, Cal., Post-office Box 25

Children who refuse to take castor oil make no fuss if it is given in this way: Take one cup of milk, one of molasses, half a cup of sugar, half a cup of castor oil, a teaspoon of carbonate of soda, two of ginger, a little salt and enough flour to make a stiff paste. Roll out thin, cut into shapes, and bake in a quick oven. One or two of these cookies are as good as a dose of oil. Cod liver oil can be administered in the same manner.

**Around the Yard**  
Miss Evelyn Long, 1713 Seventh Street, West Oakland

**Save the Old Bones**—Don't let old bones lie around in the barnyard and fester. They should be preserved, as they contain phosphoric acid, one of the most valuable ingredients in manure. Put a layer of wood ashes on the bottom of a cask, and then a layer of bones; then add another layer of ashes, and so on, until the cask is filled. Keep the mixture wet and in a few months the potash in the ashes will have so combined with the phosphoric acid in the bones as to give you a most valuable fertilizer.

**Rose Bushes**—Insects of various kinds mutilate and destroy the leaves of rose bushes and other garden shrubs. Use a strong tea made from quassia bark and sprinkle on the leaves as frequently as needed until the pests are driven away.

**To Drive Off Caterpillars, Slugs, etc.**  
From Vegetables—Wet the plants with a weak solution of chloride of lime and water.

**The Care of Chamolis**  
Miss Grace McGinn, 1714 Clay street, San Francisco

When a buffer is used for polishing the nails it is found that a month's use brings holes in the chamolis. To avoid this, peel off the chamolis, and cover first with thin muslin or cheese cloth, and over this place chamolis, drawing very tight. My 10-inch buffer fixed in this way three years ago, shows no signs of wear and has been in constant use. In washing the chamolis never rinse in clear water, but always have a bit of soap in water; this applies to gloves as well. A glove maker in New York told me this and he makes a specialty of chamolis gloves. Just rinse in pure suds and you will find it leaves the chamolis soft and pliable.

**Seasonable Suggestions**  
Mrs. C. C. Peppin, 4228 Montgomery St., Oakland

**To Wash Blankets**—Fifteen table-spoons borax and one cake borax. Shave soap, add borax and boil in two quarts of water until dissolved. Strain and add enough cold water to cover blanket. Soak over night and in the morning shake blanket up and down a little, but do not rub. Rinse and hang out to dry without wringing. It will be light and fluffy as new. If blanket is bound with colored ribbon, it is better to remove the ribbon, as the color may run.

**Every Day Helps**  
Mrs. H. F. TAYLOR, 931 Dolores Street, San Francisco

Systematize your work. Much time and strength may be saved by spending a half hour every morning in making up plans for the day.

First, see that every part of the stove is in perfect order. If using a gas, gasoline or blue flame stove never light flame for boiling till food is ready to cook. Always turn on full force of gas in heating oven reducing flame to desired point when putting in food.

For baking bread and fruit cake heat five minutes, for loaf cake eight minutes, for layer cake, rolls, etc., 10 minutes.

Before mixing any article of food have all ingredients ready on the table and pans ready for use.

Never attempt to economize by using cheap foodstuffs. Quality not quantity should be the first consideration. Also remember that it is not necessarily the richest food that is the most appetizing; the method of mixing and cooking had much to do in the matter.

Broiled fish and meats are not only more economical than fried, but are more healthful and better relished.

Make your table attractive to the eye. A little daintily arranged will be more satisfactory than a large quantity carelessly served.

**To Arrange Invalid's Tray**  
E. Mack, 20 Adam Street, San Francisco

First use a tray just large enough for the dishes it is to hold; then take a clean napkin and arrange as if you were setting a place at the table. Always use the prettiest dishes and if possible lay a fresh flower on the tray. Serve everything in small quantities, as it is more tempting to a delicate appetite. Try to surprise the patient with some unexpected food, and in this way induce him to eat.

Except in making jellies, gruel and other foods that are not injured by cooking, always set the patient more than the patient can eat at one time. No food left by a patient should be served the second time or left in the room. Do not allow others to eat food that has been in the sickroom.

**Suggestions**  
Mrs. R. G. Bartell, 814 Main Street, Chico

To thread a needle so that the thread will not kink or tangle, thread the end that comes first off the spool.

For mending china dip a brush in lightly beaten egg and use as glue, and brush the edges to be joined, then dust on one edge a little pulverized unslacked lime and hold evenly and firmly together for a few moments, then set aside to dry. One must work with speed as the lime sets quickly.

To darn glove fingers use a marble as darning.

Soak beefsteak in salt water 15 minutes, before frying and it will fry as white and tender as chicken.

Dampened soda will remove tea stains from cups and saucers.

In making pies if there is dough left over do not throw it away, but roll thin, sprinkle with sugar, cinnamon and small flakes of butter, then roll up and bake.

The juice of a roasted onion is splendid for croup and colds in children. It should be sweetened and is very pleasant to take. To give children any kind of oil always put it in molasses. Pour the molasses in a spoon, pour the oil in the center. Do not mix. There will be no taste of the oil.

**Precautions**  
Mrs. T. S. Field, 1572 Lincoln Avenue, Alameda

If sealing wax is not obtainable and the safety and privacy of a letter have to be assured the flap of the envelope should be dampened with white of egg instead of being moistened in the ordinary way. An envelope secured in this way can be steamed open.

In making pies there is neither hot water nor strong soap should be used. If this is done the colors will probably run and the garment be spoiled. The moonlight tinged vinegar should be rapidly stirred in, more being added until the color seems to be set, when washing can be proceeded with in the usual way.

**To Keep Hands White**  
Mrs. George T. Beck, 1836 Eleventh Avenue, Sunset District, San Francisco

When the hands are dry and cracked from the use of soap and cleaners, a little vinegar rubbed in will destroy all the effects of the lye, leaving the skin soft and white. If this is done after dishwashing, laundry work and cleaning, the hands will not suffer at all.

**Helping Hints**  
Kate M. Winslow, Gilroy

One of the best ways to freshen violets, roses, etc., is to plunge both blossoms and stems into cold water, then wrap closely in several thicknesses of newspaper that have been thoroughly soaked (not dampened, but wrung out of water) until the sheets are nearly ready to fall to pieces. Wrap again in dry newspapers, tucking the edges in carefully to exclude the air, and leave over night in a cool and dark place as possible. In the morning the freshness of the flowers will be a surprise.

One need never be troubled with cakes sticking to the tins if a piece of ordinary Manila wrapping paper is put in the bottom of the tin before pouring in the batter. Neither tin nor paper needs to be greased.

An excellent way to take tea and coffee stains from a porcelain sink is to sprinkle on chloride of lime, leaving for half an hour or so, when the stains will have disappeared.

**Two Valuable Hints**  
Mrs. J. W. Otterbach, 3284 Eighteenth Street, San Francisco

**To Utilize Scraps of Soap**—When a bar of soap is used until it becomes too small for further use lay it aside. When a sufficient number of these pieces accumulate tie them in a piece of cloth. They can be used nicely in this way and quite a saving made in the course of a year.

**Cure for Earache**—Take a piece of butter, the size of a pea. Work it full of salt, melt it, and when cool enough pour it in the ear. Place a piece of cotton in ear to keep out air.

**A Sure Way to Get Rid of Ants**  
Mrs. George W. Miller, 2631 Fulton Street, Berkeley

Dissolve 5 cents worth of alum in a pint of water; when thoroughly dissolved paint around the places where the ants come in with the alum solution, and you will find that you will not be again troubled with ants. This rule has proven good when all others have failed.

**To Remove Pitch**  
Mrs. E. M. Westfall, Lodi

People frequenting the woods at this season of the year will find the following excellent for taking pitch out of clothing: Cover the spots with brown paper, placing a hot iron over it, and the pitch will be absorbed.

**Sewing Cabinet**  
B. E. Mason, Callahan

Two fruit boxes 12x14, procured at your grocer's, nine cigar boxes 9x5x2 1/4, three cigar boxes 9x5 1/2x1 1/2, one dozen glass push pins, a pair of 10 cent hinges, a few finishing nails, some light beaten egg and a sewing cabinet far ahead of any \$1 cabinet I have seen. Out of one box cut three shelves, 9 inches wide, and nail in the other box, so as to leave three spaces 2 1/2 inches wide. The upper space is the bottom space narrower, on which the three 1 1/2 inch boxes can go. Tear off the covers of the boxes and push a pin in the end of each to serve as a knob with which to put the boxes on.

Take the top of the cabinet, if it is not broken, or if it is, get the side of a box that is whole and put it on hinges to serve as a door. On the inside of the door hang a needle cushion, an emery bag; also nail a strip the length of the door on which put little wooden pegs or nails for spools of thread. These will shut into the space between the shelves and door.

The narrow space on the end of each shelf will admit shears, pin cushion, rule, etc. The boxes will hold buttons, tape, hooks and eyes, silk thread, darning cotton, mending tissue and all the little necessities of a woman's sewing outfit which are so hard to keep track of and out of a tangle. I took narrow strips of molding and paneled the outside of the door and ends of the cabinet as a finish.

**For the Laundress**  
Mrs. E. H. McMillan, R. F. D. No. 1, Napa, Cal.

If clothes to be laundered are moistened and well soaped on the soiled portions, the work of washing is made much easier, especially if done the evening before. But this requires considerable time if the soap is applied from the hard bar. I have saved time by slicing the soap into a gallon of water, hot or cold, and allowing it to dissolve, then dipping the soiled portions into the liquid and wringing out.

**Helps for Ironing Day**  
Mrs. J. F. Donaldson, 223 Eureka Street, San Francisco

Fold a piece of carpet or place a thick rug beneath your feet while you stand to do the ironing. You will find that you do not get as tired as when you rest upon the floor or oblongs. When iron is stuck add a pinch of salt to the starch or rub each iron separately upon a paper sprinkled heavily with salt.

**Whooping Cough**  
Mrs. M. Basler, Newark, Cal.

Take one gill each of garlic, sweet oil and honey and one-half ounce camphor. Cook the garlic in the oil and strain and add the other ingredients. This will cure the worst cases, as I have tried it myself and found it a great relief with a few doses.