THE RETURN OF THE GIRL FEMININE

THE FAMILY PRESERVER

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BY ANNA S. RICHARDSON.

THE girl feminine has come into her own again. The girl athletic no longer monopolizes the center of the stage. It is the fad of the hour to possess at least one dainty, feminine, household accomplishment, from butter-making to embroidery.

The new girl feminine is like a figure stepping from an old-time picture of domesticity and adjusting herself to modern conditions. She is a delicious combination of the old-fashioned girl and the new. She is just about right; and happy is that family of which she is a member.

This is the season of the year when the girl feminine who has a taste for cookery executes her annual triumphs in the preserving line. She is not necessarily the eldest daughter, nor yet the most staid member of the household. She may be young and fond of sport, but she will break an engagement to play tennis any morning when she reads that berries have dropped three cents per box.

But behold Ma'mselle Dainty in spotless percale and cambric, adjusting the flame of her gas stove, secure in the thought that the temperature beneath the preserving kettle cannot vary save at her touch. She further protects her handiwork by a thick asbestos mat reinforced by a square of sheet iron.

Great-grandmother's preserving kettle was of iron, big and heavy as a small wash tub, and blackened on the outside with coal and wood soot. Ma'mselle Dainty uses Austrian enamel, speckled blue without and pure white within, four ply thick, yet light enough for her to lift with ease. To match this kettle she has measuring cups, colander and ladles in Austrian ware, cherry pitters and apple parers and fruit knives with china handles. No patent has ever improved on the old-fashioned screw-top and rubber-band glass jar, but there is a pretty novelty in jelly glasses, a small cone-shaped glass to hold a portion of jelly for the invalid.

The term preserving in the average household includes the making of jellies, jams, preserves, sweet pickles, relishes and butter and the canning of fruits, but it is upon her canning that Ma'mselle Dainty particularly prides herself. This is the most healthful and natural way to preserve fruit.

To be a successful canner, she must be as cleanly as a surgeon, for canning is merely sterilizing fruit by heat. To can small fruits she picks them over carefully and washes them. Then she packs them in absolutely clean jars, and fills the jars to the very top with cold water, after which she adjusts the rubber bands and lays over each jar its screw top, immaculately clean within and without.

She has ready a large, new wash-boiler, fitted in the bottom with a wooden rack or tray not unlike that used in the ice compartment of a refrigerator. She sets the filled jars on this rack, pours cold water into the boiler until it rises to half the height of the jars, and lights the gas flame beneath the boiler. She claps on the boiler lid, allows the water to boil briskly for five minutes, uncovers the boiler, lifts each jar separately, being very careful not to let its lid slip off, and, directly she sets the jar down, she screws the lid tight. Her fruit is sterilized and canned.

If she wants her canned fruit sweetened, she sprinkles sugar over the fruit as she packed it in the jars. Large fruits must be peeled and boiled in a sugar syrup, allowing a quarter pound of sugar to each pound of fruit. When tender, the fruit is skimmed and packed into the jars, the syrup is poured over it and the canning process is completed as described.

Jellies, Ma'mselle Dainty regards as especially desirable in case of illness, and in her preference runs to crabapple, quince, grape, blackberry, currant and a mixture of raspberry and currant.

She selects fruit that is barely ripe rather than over-ripe to secure firm, clear jelly. In the cool of the evening, she cooks her fruit for the first time, allowing one quart of water to each pound of fruit, and twenty minutes for the boiling process. The juice is poured into the jelly bag, Ma'amselle Dainty using double cheese cloth instead of the flannel bag her great-grandmother considered essential for clearing jelly. It is left to drip over night into a large agate bowl.

The next morning Ma'mselle Dainty measures off fruit juice and sugar, half a pound of best granulated sugar to each pint of juice. She brings the juice to a boil, and spreads the sugar on tins, setting them in the oven to heat. When the juice has boiled ten minutes, she drops in the hot sugar, "tries" the jelly on a cold sauce plate set on the ice, and quite generally finds that, thanks to the hot sugar, it already "forms." Then she pours it into the sparkling glasses and leaving it to cool, she is away on her game of tennis.

On her return, she covers the glasses with white paper, fastened down with white of an egg, cleanliest of all mucilages.

When country relatives, with gaze critically fixed on city ways, visit Ma'mselle Dainty's home, she surprises them with preserves equal to any country-made sweets.

In preserving, her primary object is to retain the shape of the fruit, so she handles it with infinite care. Strawberries, raspberries and blackberries are washed by plunging the colander into cold water before stemming the fruit. If they are stemmed first, they soak up water. Only the largest and firmest fruit is selected for preserving.

Allow one pound of best granulated sugar for each pound of fruit. Arrange in the preserving kettle a layer of sugar on the bottom, next one of berries, and so on until all are used. Stand the kettle over the gas stove, with the fire turned low and heat gradually until the boiling point is reached, or until the fruit is thoroughly scalded.

With a perforated ladle, lift the fruit out of the syrup in small quantities, so that it will not be bruised, and fill the jars half full or more. Boil down the syrup, pour it over the fruit in the jars, and leave the jars open until the preserves are cold Then cover as directed for jelly.

There lives not a man who does not recall some friend of his mother, famous for her brandied peaches, and it is to please "Father" that Ma'mselle Dainty perfects herself in the art of brandying peaches.

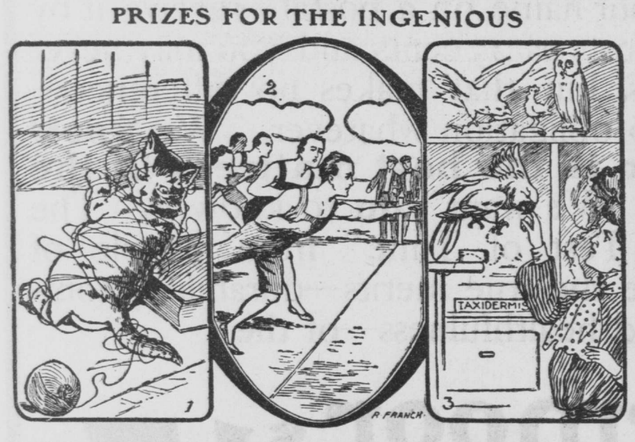
For this she selects the firmest and finest peaches on the market, the best French brandy, and the purest granulated cane sugar. To every four pounds of peaches, pared, she allows an equal weight of sugar and a pint of brandy. The peaches are laid in the enamel kettle, covered with the sugar and allowed to stand over night.

The next morning the peaches are swimming in a syrup formed of the sugar and their own juice. Each peach is lifted out carefully with a skimmer and laid on a platter, after which the syrup is brought to a boiling point, skimmed carefully, and allowed to boil until quite thick. Then the peaches are returned to the boiling syrup and cooked until clear, when they are skimmed from the syrup and dropped skillfully into glass jars. The syrup is again boiled down until thick, the brandy is added, and the mixture poured over the peaches until the jar is full, when it is sealed just as for preserved fruit.

On her list of meat relishes, Ma'mselle Dainty prides herself justly upon Chili sauce, the like of which no canning factory ever produced. It it made when tomatoes are plentiful and cheap.

A peck of ripe tomatoes are plunged into boiling water and peeled, then chopped and boiled until thick and mushy. To this, she adds one pint of chopped onions, one half-dozen large, green peppers, chopped fine, and boils them gently for half an hour; after which she adds one-half cup of salt, one pint of vinegar, one tablespoon of cloves, one of cinnamon and two of whole mustard seeds. The savory mixtures simmers gently for an hour more, after which it is bottled in jelly tumblers or clean, old pickle bottles, corked and sealed with the same old sealing wax her great-grandmother used.

PRIZES FOR THE INGENIOUS



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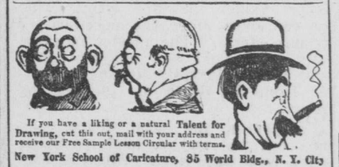
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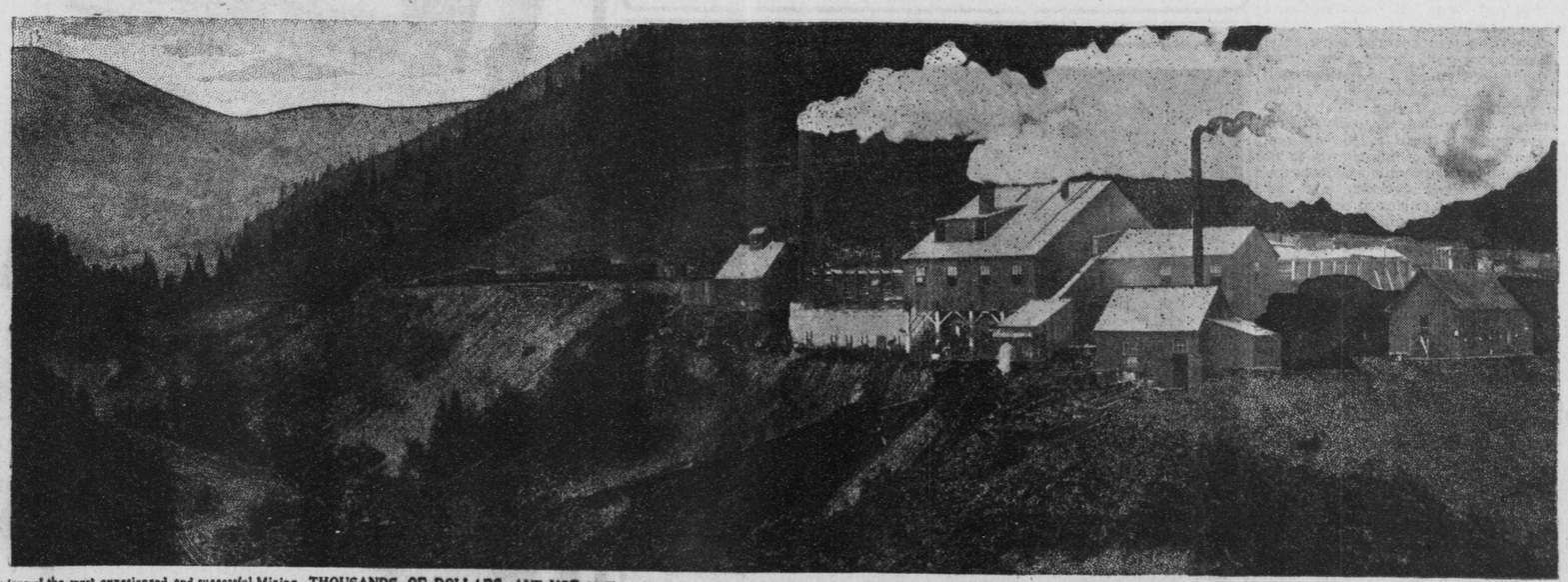

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