

COMMON SENSE in the HOME EDITED by MARGARET HARPLAND

TOAST and the EVOLUTION of the TOASTER



"Syrian muleteers toasted bread over the fire of coals."

IF THE testimony of the average housewife is to be received as law and gospel, toastmaking and tea-brewing are two of the easiest tasks that fall to her lot.

"Easy as breathing," she would say. Wiser thinkers—who lead the times, not content just to keep up with them—calling our attention to the humiliating fact that not one person in twenty knows how to breathe properly.

"But that is another story." We have been making toast long enough to have mastered the art. It came like a dash from the far-away past—when I saw the Syrian muleteers tear off portions of the leathery, unleavened bread brought from home in their knapsacks and toast them over the fire of coals kindled upon the desert sands in the lee of their tent—how probable it is that this is what was meant by the "coake baker" on the coast. Elijah found at his head with a crust of water, at awakening from the sleep of exhaustion under the juniper tree. Customs do not change in that oldest of lands as every traveler will bear me witness.

In Shakespeare's times, we have frequent references to both in his plays. The cooks of the day must have made a better variety of toast than the "sforzato" which the American cook turns out for the custom of putting a bit in the bottom of the tankard before pouring in the liquor was established.

"Go, fetch me a quart of sack! Put a toast in it!" orders Falstaff; and a few lines further on he repeats the suggestion that seems may be added to the position. He will have it "simple of itself." That is, with the toast alone. From a number of the fashionable "Tastier, bearing date 'June 4, 1702," we learn the origin of the term "toast," as applied to a reigning belle or, more widely, to a sentiment uttered by the toastmaster. We use the phrases so naturally now that we



"How many of the scholars at class-day anniversaries know why they are 'toasts'?"



"The toasting fork was an essential in our foremother's kitchen."

never bethink us of their origin. Two hundred years ago the Tattler thought it necessary to explain to readers that the "allusion was to the usage of the times of being with a toast in the bottom of the glass." How many, even of the scholars who offer them at class-day anniversaries, know why they are "toasts"? What reader of English poetry does not recall the swing and the ring of the Three Troopers as I put that question?

In each of the cups they dropped a crust. And stared at the guests with a frown; Then drew their waders and roared for a toast—"God send this Crum-well down!" "Crum" and "crumb" stand for the toast without which posset, ale and sack would not be quite to the Briton's taste. The bit of toasted bread in the bottom of tankard or wineglass must

get the impression that toast is more easily digested than plain bread. The reason for this is that heat helps on the chemical change requisite for assimilation. Heat must penetrate to the heart of the slice submitted to it, or the gentle warmth makes the inner portions clammy. Then, the eater "bolts" his toast, and commits a crude poultice to the action of stomach and intestines, instead of digestible dextrine.

The notion that toast and tea are the best food for invalids is so firmly fixed in the mind of mothers, nurses and physicians at large that it would be vain to combat it. It is founded upon the fallacious belief that tea is made with boiling water, drawn off from the tannic acid latent in the leaves and drunk before heat and tonic properties have left it; that toast is cut thin from stale, sweet bread, the crust pared away, the slice exposed evenly to clear heat and cooked through without charring; then, that it is eaten at once, with the merest suspicion of butter—if any is put upon it. The stomach that cannot assimilate this delicate offering, however, with "three or four" above, is in a bad way. Always supposing that the teeth have acted well their part in converting the toast into pulp, dextrine by the help of the saliva.

When we, as a race of nation, learn how to breathe and to chew as nature intended, each slice keeping its functions, dyspepsia will be a forgotten word, and centenarians multiply in the land until their pictures will cease to figure in the columns of the daily papers.

Contrast the ideal bit of toast described just now with that piled upon a plate, each slice keeping its functions, dyspepsia will be a forgotten word, and centenarians multiply in the land until their pictures will cease to figure in the columns of the daily papers.



"The modern electric toaster."

er beneath the glowing grate, where, unless a stray coal chances to alight upon some part of the bread, there could be no scorch, and the acid, smoky taste which would seem to be inseparable from toast in some houses—as an impossibility.

Then dawned the blessed era of cooking by gas, and the slender-barred gridiron that is set within the oven when toast is to be made. Or, the patented pyramidal affair of wire netting to be fitted over the gas flame, toasting four slices at once and evenly—if one do not take one's eyes away from the toaster too long. Then—black, cinery ruin!

One blessed day last winter I was invited to lunch with a friend whose house is dominated by what she calls "Electricity in Harness." Our luncheon was cooked by electricity; all the washing and ironing, the lighting and warming of the dwelling, were accomplished by the same mysterious, potent agency.

The next day I bought an electric toaster. Since then we have had the miracle toast invariably at every morning's breakfast. A light wire is connected with the chandelier above the table. A small apparatus, taking little more room than the silver toast rack set beside it, is at the right hand of the person sitting nearest the foot of the table. It is flanked, when we take our seats, by a plate of sliced bread. The slices are crustless and uniform in thickness. Without a break in the cheerful table chat, the one who presides over the toaster slips in four slices into the "power." This, when we have eaten our fruit. By the time the cereal is sent away, and the more substantial rashers and eggs appear, we have toast for the first help to all. It is hot, it is crisp, it is real (and ideal) toast. Those who like it buttered qualify it to their taste. Some prefer it just as it leaves the wires shielding it from the roasts heat of the magical "power." All is noiseless, rapid and conducted without expenditure of labor or thought. In two minutes one side is done to a turn. The operator quietly opens the metal flap, turns the slice and in two minutes more anybody who is

Advertisement for 'Family Meals for a Week' by Marion Harland, listing various breakfast and lunch options.

THE HOUSEMOTHERS' EXCHANGE

IMPORTANT NOTICE BECAUSE of the enormous number of letters sent to the Exchange, I must ask contributors to limit their communications to two or three lines in cases of formulas or recipes which require greater space. I will answer all correspondence in this column, and if my request in this respect is complied with it will be possible to print many more letters. Attention is called to the fact that Marion Harland cannot receive money for patterns, as she has no connection with any department that sells them.

A Home for Some One HAVING read of the grievances of "The Business Girl" and "Justice," I wish to state that I have been looking for a year for a woman to do light housework in exchange for board and lodgings, and all the privileges of a private home. It is plain that the business girl doesn't want to do housework. I don't expect a "business girl" to stay with my parents and a house to take care of, and it would be a pleasure to have somebody to help clear up after the evening paper. My husband's business keeps him out late evenings and I dread to be left alone. Wouldn't you think that I should not have trouble in getting a helper and a companion, when you read what the girls write about the hard time they have to make both ends meet? I am not using the Exchange as an advertising medium, but if any one should ask for my address through interest in the subject, please let me have it. Mrs. W. S. W. (Chicago, Ill.)

thought the same. If either of them had to do housework as I do, they would change their minds. I could write a good article on that subject. I tried it two or three times. I think there is enough said! That work is out of the question. Then again, a woman signing herself "Mother" says she does not pity girls who are not obliged to earn money, but prefer to do it. It may be that the parents of those girls can find lodgings for them, but cannot buy them clothes. I would say to this lady that I almost loathe going out into the world to strive as I have to do, but what is one to do?

Now, she goes on to say, she is in a factory. I work only fifty-five hours a week (for me Saturday afternoon) and I get more money than I can spend. Some of the girls make \$10 per week. I make \$12 per week. It is a stocking factory. We make and pack stockings. We make twice as much money as we get in the stores, never work in the evenings, and sit down most of the time at our work. I know that all factories are not as pleasant to work in as this. Of course, there are some where one cannot afford to work. I would not work in one of those.

I am a teacher in a school, but I could not stand life in the country. I tried to "rough it," but my strength broke down. I have worked in a hotel during the summer, but after three years of struggle I gave it up. Just at present, I am doing just as well as anything I could get to do. I get back some of my lost wages in the evening paper. Please excuse this painful scrawl! I am so tired and nervous tonight. In fact, I am nervous all the time. I think the majority of working girls feel the same way that I do. MARGARET M. N. (Chicago).

Apparently the nervous wreck has never found the right socket. It is as palpable that, of all the vocations to which she has addressed thought and energy, housework finds least favor in her eyes. She dismisses the topic with disdain and finally, "That is out of the question."

In the reading of the plaint, I recollected a message I had forgotten to give to the cook, laid by the paper and stepped across the intervening room and hall into the kitchen. The place was as neat as hands could make it, and bright with bracket and drop light. Under the latter, at a white-covered stand, sat two maids, one reading the evening paper aloud, the other busy with a square of embroidery. Both were neatly and becomingly dressed; their dinner had been as good as mine, and they had eaten it as leisurely as they liked to do. Each has her own room, well furnished, bright in summer and warm in winter. They draw good wages, and their expenses being the merest trifle beyond their pocket each sends money "home" and has besides her account in the savings bank. They live for years in my family without ever receiving a sharp word or the symptom of rebuke. When they are alling they are cared for as sedulously as if they were indeed members of the family. They have consideration in their work and in their enjoyments. The picture might be duplicated in thousands of American homes. The domestics in our homes are the most carefree of the working classes. Their

bread and water are sure." the term covering food of excellent quality and all the things that go to make up a good dinner. Now and then the "treat" of an evening at the theater (tickets supplied) or a jaunt into the country on the coast, and the employer's convenience, if they care for reading; church-going regularly, and evenings out in turn of the most elegant and convenient. Set down these unvarnished truths against the unrest of the woman to whose tale we have just listened, and say which of the two has chosen more wisely her lot in a working-day world. In the well-managed household duties are as distinctly defined and performed at appointed seasons as methodically as in factory or store. Even the "bugbear" of "company," against which a certain class of so-called philanthropists raise the cry, echoed by the maids whose champions they assume to be, is reduced to a bagatelle when examined near at hand and in a strong light. At its worst, it is not to be compared to the pressure of the "busy season" in factory and saleroom. I have been drawn into this defense of housework and housemother by the unrest in the very air we breathe, which fairly throbs with the murmur and moans raised against domestic tyranny, and the panting and pushing of the strugglers after a "higher and higher life" (heaven save the mark!) for the working woman.

Home Recipes

The accompanying recipes are an answer in part to correspondents who have asked for them through the Exchange. I get so much of interest and benefit through that medium that I am delighted to return the favor.

Canned String Beans Cook the beans in salted water until they are tender; drain thoroughly; glass cans. Boil the salted water in which they were cooked, and pour it into the cans, covering the beans well. Pour in at the last a tablespoonful of boiling vinegar. Seal the cans, and boil for one hour and keep in a cool, dark place.

Baking Powder One pound of the best quality of cream of tartar; 1/2 pound of baking soda; 1/2 cup of sugar. Mix all together; sift the mixture four times; mix with the cream of tartar and sugar. Mix quickly and steam for 15 hours. Then set in the oven and bake 15 minutes.

Boston Brown Bread One cup of sweet milk; 1 cup of sour milk; 1 cup of cornmeal; 1 cup of graham flour; 1/2 cup of molasses; 1/2 teaspoonful of baking soda; 1/2 teaspoonful of salt. Mix quickly and steam for 15 hours. Then set in the oven and bake 15 minutes.

question the propriety of nothing pertaining to them as you have written them.

In the interest of our housemothers at large, may I drop an observation with regard to the canned corn? If you have sweetened and salted it to make sure it will keep, and then soaked much of the sweetness of the milky vegetable out to get rid of the saltiness, is it one-half as good as the best brand of canned corn now put upon the market under the eye of the pure food laws? As I have explained elsewhere, the method adopted by scientific canners to preserve this most delicate of essences (or green cereals) is best raised to a degree not attainable by the kitchen range, and holding the corn at that for a longer time than you or I would keep it. By these means the flavor and sweetness are retained.

And don't think me ungracious, but if there be a better way of doing anything than I know of I must get hold of it. I have always maintained that to mix and pack the frozen contents of the freezer was akin to putting a piece of new cloth into an old garment. Why the combination in your brown bread? To prevent this, put a pinch of soda into the ingredients, and the freezer will be a better way of doing anything than I know of I must get hold of it. I have always maintained that to mix and pack the frozen contents of the freezer was akin to putting a piece of new cloth into an old garment. Why the combination in your brown bread? To prevent this, put a pinch of soda into the ingredients, and the freezer will be a better way of doing anything than I know of I must get hold of it.

Home-Made Ice Cream

Will you kindly print a recipe for home-made ice cream? You make frequent mention of it in your menus for family meals, and I am sure that it is more expensive than cream bought from a confectioner.

Mrs. W. H. D. (Paterson, N. J.) If you wish a plain cream, make a custard of a quart of sweet milk, seven eggs and four cupfuls of granulated sugar. Scald the milk and the eggs beaten up with the sugar, and stir over the fire until the custard is rich and smooth, but not until it begins to break. To prevent this, put a pinch of soda into the milk while cooking. Always make custard in a double boiler. Let the custard get perfectly cold before stirring into it a quart of rich cream. It is now ready for flavoring. If you use a simple extract of vanilla or bitter almond, or lemon, all you have to do is stir it in.

Have at hand a quantity of finely powdered ice and a bag of rock salt. Turn the custard into the freezer and surround the latter with alternate layers of powdered ice and rock salt. Fill to the very top of the tightly closed freezer and pour in two quarts of the strongest brine. The freezer must be

buried out of sight in cracked ice. Put over all a thick cloth—a doubled sack or a piece of carpet—and set aside. In an hour the ice will be melted and the contents, having scraped the frozen walls of custard from the sides into the middle of the freezer.

Now is the time for adding fruits of any kind—berries, peaches, pineapple, a mixture of chopped crystallized fruits and nuts; in fact, whatever you may wish to vary the dessert with. Beat these in hard with a wooden paddle, and as fast as you can, for the outer air soon melts the frozen contents of the inner vessel. But beating and churning must be thorough if you would have smooth ice cream. Fasten down the lid; drain off about half the liquid which has accumulated in the outer pan; not more, for the salt is needed to carry on the process. Pack fresh supplies of rock salt and powdered ice about the freezer; put a weight on top to keep the freezer from floating; cover so closely that the air cannot get at the salt, and leave all for two hours—or six.

This is self-freezing cream. It is about as easily made as any other sweet dish. It is not only good in warm weather. It is all the better for lingering in the ice for some hours after it is frozen. For many years it has been made for the purpose in my family. The custard is made on Saturday and set in the refrigerator. The ice is cracked for shaved with an instrument made for the purpose, and the freezer is packed down before breakfast. The opening and beating and churning and the repacking do not take fifteen minutes. Nobody's churchgoing is hindered by the operation.

When you are ready to serve the cream, lift out the freezer, wrap all about it a towel wrung out in boiling water and the cream is ready to eat. You will have a column of lusciousness, smooth and firm.

After estimating the ingredients at market prices, you have decided that a quart of home-made ice cream costs about two-thirds as much as an equivalent article under the same name would bring at the confectioner's.

A Bit of Dressing Bureau Furniture

Cut two pieces of cardboard a little longer than your longest basket and of a like width. Cover both sides of each piece with sheet wadding. Cut two pieces of velvet or plush about an inch larger than the cardboard. Stretch these over one side of each card, wrong side, and draw tightly and smoothly by catching the lapped-over edge with a needle and strong thread, bringing the thread down the center of the card and around the edges. Fasten a cord at each upper corner to hang the wadded disk square up by sticks tacked all around the edges. Put upon nine three rows of old-fashioned brass curtain pins, fastening them to the plush. They are convenient to hang keys, buttonhooks, safety pins and the like upon. LOUISE A. (Fort Dodge, Iowa).

Pickled Beets

If "E. D." (Chicago) will place the cooked beets, while they are hot, into vinegar which has been salted (and if she likes, sugar) to taste, then she will get a cold, she will, I think, find them to be pretty nearly "if not quite what she longs for."

Sometimes we add sliced onion and whole hard-boiled eggs, slicing these last in half and putting them in the vinegar. E. D. (Mount Vernon, N. Y.).

A seasonable contribution to our list of summer salads. The donor is invited to favor us further along this or any other line of housewifely enterprises.

Fried Chicken

Kindly publish a recipe for chicken à la Maryland and oblige a constant student of the lively and helpful Exchange. H. F. C. (Chicago).

Fried Chicken à la Maryland

Joint a tender chicken as for fricassee. Wash and wipe perfectly dry. Dip each piece in beaten egg, then roll in salted and peppered cracker dust until it is thoroughly coated. Set upon ice for an hour. Have plenty of clean-dripping or other fat in a deep frying pan and bring slowly to the bubbling point. Lay in the chicken carefully and fry on both sides to a fine brown. Do not put too many pieces in at a time, or all sides of each will not be done evenly. Fry long enough to make sure the thickest pieces are done all through.

Virginia Fried Chicken

If cooked as above directed, except that it is usually fried in bacon fat, a pound or so of fat bacon is sliced and cooked crisp, but not to burning. The fat is then strained from the bacon and the hot oil used for frying the chicken. The latter is, of course, prepared with egg and cracker dust. When it is dished the sliced bacon is laid about it. Those who have eaten fried chicken prepared in both ways give the preference to the Virginia method, considering that the bacon, if sweet, imparts richness to the flavor.

Cream Gravy for Fried Chicken

This celebrated dish is often served without any sauce. In Maryland, and sometimes in Virginia, it is highly esteemed as a dinner dish when accompanied by cream gravy.

Remnant of jellied calf's tongue served as a salad; soup, cold beef with horseradish sauce and pickles, green corn fritters, young beets with the tops on, canned peach pie, black coffee.

TUESDAY BREAKFAST

Fruit, cereal and cream, ham, omelet, corn bread, toast, tea and coffee.

WEDNESDAY BREAKFAST

Oranges, cereal and cream, bacon, soft-boiled eggs, fried bread, toast, tea and coffee.

THURSDAY BREAKFAST

Berries, cereal and cream, roe berrings, hominy cakes, toast, tea and coffee.

FRIDAY BREAKFAST

Berries, cereal and cream, bacon, hot shortcake and honey, toast, tea and coffee.

SATURDAY BREAKFAST

Oranges, cereal and cream, salmon trout, French fried potatoes, muffins, toast, tea and coffee.

SUNDAY BREAKFAST

Fruit, cereal and cream, broiled chicken, potato cake, toast, tea and coffee.

Jellied calf's tongue, Saratoga potatoes, peanut sandwiches, tomato and cucumber salad, crackers and cheese, home-made cream puff, ice tea.