

COMING TO US IN THE HOME EDITED by MARGOT HARLAND

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 "cake 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 "slices" of the modern 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 one who is to be drunk. We use the phrases so naturally now that we



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

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 toast, as 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.

his remote ancestor, contemporary with Elijah—stuck his "cake" upon a pointed stick and held it over the fire of coals. When one side was done he pulled off the bit of bread, reversed it and stuck it on again. One may see the same operation in the Adirondack woods today when a tourist or hunter is so eccentric as to refuse flapjacks. The toasting fork was an essential in our foremother's kitchen. It hung above the sink in a line with ladies and pith helmets. She thought her busy brain as little with troubled her as the antiquity of the implement as her granddaughter vexes her yet busier wits with the history of toast. Yet name and uses had passed into a proverb by the time Shakespeare wrote "King John." In the altercation over the dead body of Prince Arthur, Faulconbridge admonishes Salisbury:

"Pat up thy sword betime! Or I'll so meal you and your toasting-fork, etc."

In "Tom Brown at Oxford" he was a like opprobrious epithet applied to a bully's sword, "pistol" and "toasting-fork" were coupled together. The conventional toasting fork of early days had three prongs and a long handle which allowed the cook to conduct the work at a safe distance from the open fire. When fire-places and andirons were superseded by the closed cook stove, a lid was removed that the bread might be held through the hole it had covered, down to a bed of clear coals—an awkward business that brought about the patented wire frame laid across the uncovered hole in the plate, the range. I recall the glow of pride that went through me when, forty years ago, I bought a plan for preventing smoked toast—an oft-recurring annoyance unless the cook were abnormally vigilant. Some loose crumb would fall into the fire through the wires set above it, blaze up and catch the toast or smoke it into bitter-smelling particles, and only way to secure unburnt toast was to watch it the moment it went over the coals until it came off, turning it several times to make sure all was going well. My device was to set the toast-



"The modern electric toaster."

er beneath the glowing grate, where, unless a stray coal chanced 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 wiping; 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 meals, 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 at a time, and the toaster, with a turn on 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

ready for more may be served. Toast of the right sort enters so largely into housewife's calculations in devising beautiful, economical and agreeable variety for daily menus that I offer no apology for an exhaustive talk respecting it. We do not lay it in the bottom of beaker and "stein" now. But it is an acceptable underpinning for fricassees and mince. It works up stale bread in a dozen different ways, and the left-overs, crushed into crumbs and kept in a closed jar, are invaluable in breading chops and other meats; also in thickening soups.

Lovers of Dickens will be reminded by my reprobation of black-bordered toast of Mr. F.'s aunt in "Bleak House," who passed over the crusts of her toast to unlucky neighbors, stigmatizing a visitor as "a proud stomach—that chap!" when he would not accept the cast-off remnants. The half-witted good builded berry shortcake knew that there should have been no crusts for distribution. Yet—that nothing be wasted—lay the parings in the oven to broen slowly and when they were crisped roll them fine for your crumb jar.

Maria Harland FAMILY MEALS FOR A WEEK

Table with 7 columns: Day, Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner. Lists various meals for each day of the week.

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 not be responsible for the return of any letters, and if by 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 always go 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 she does. 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 live. I would not work in one of those.

I am a teacher in 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 hard to get back some of my lost money. I am a teacher in 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 hard to get back some of my lost money. I am a teacher in 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 hard to get back some of my lost money.

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." I recall 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 a 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 careful of the working classes. Their

question the propriety of nothing pertaining to them as you have written them. In the interest of our house-mothers 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 good things together is my family motto. Your frank reply to my request herein made may put a crumb—maybe a loaf—into my hand. One hint to the canner may not go amiss with your gift of recipes. Wrap jars or cans in paper, secured closely by paste or string, before setting them away. Wait until the glass and contents are cold before doing this. The paper will exclude the light and help preserve the color of fruit and vegetables.

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 corn, beat and churn 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 water and pounded 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 milk and cream, 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 so difficult as you may think. 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 of 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. The freezer is packed down before breakfast. The opening and beating and churning and the packing 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 set it in a cool place. You will have a column of lusciousness, smooth and firm. If the expense. 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.

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, she will find them 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.)

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)

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, but you never give a recipe. It is more expensive than cream bought from a confectioner. Mrs. W. H. D. (Paterson, N. J.)

A Bit of Dressing Bureau Furniture

Cut two pieces of cardboard a little longer than your longest basin 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. Strutch 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 upon the outside. Now lay two wrong sides of the cards together and sew with a neat overhand stitch all around the edges. Fasten a cord at each upper corner to hang the wadded sack square up by. Stick tacks 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)

Home Recipes

- Canned String Beans: Cook the beans in salted water until they are tender; pack closely in 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 pound of sugar. Mix all together; sift the mixture four times; mix with a little of the finest flour. 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.