

THE EVENING NEWS.

Saturday, December 14, 1912.

WATCH THE POT.

DIRECTIONS HOW TO COOK MEAT AS TO MAKE IT PALATABLE AND DIGESTIBLE.

Cooking in all its branches is both a science and an art. A Frenchman would perhaps rank it among the fine arts. There can be no doubt that much valuable nutriment is wasted, owing to the imperfect and irrational methods of preparing it, which prevail in many households. In fact, the processes to which food is subjected are often precisely such as a chemist might adopt, if his object were to get rid of its really valuable constituents, and retain only what is worthless for purposes of nutrition, or such as some mischievous demon might devise in order to tantalize his victims with the empty semblance of nourishment, while he was destroying the food, as a rule, suffers less in this respect than animal, and we therefore restrict our attention in the present familiar essay to some suggestions with regard to the cooking of meats.

The most economical way of using meat is to cook it in hot water, and serve it up in its own gravy. It is boiled for preparing soup, the water should not be too quickly raised to the boiling point, since this tends to coagulate the albuminous portions and prevent the juices from passing into the water. The meat should be chopped or cut as fine as possible and steeped for some time in cold water, which should then be gradually heated up to a temperature not exceeding 150 degrees Fahrenheit, or 62 degrees below its boiling point. At the last moment the soup may be allowed to reach the boiling point. The bones should be crushed or broken up into small pieces, and boiled, or rather simmered, for eight or ten hours, in order thoroughly to extract their nutritive matter.

Soup contains the greater part of the saline matter, with the creatine, creatinine, and kindred compounds, some of the albumen and fat, and an amount of gelatine that depends upon the duration of the boiling process. Cold water extracts from one-sixth to one-fourth of the weight of the solid constituents of the meat; and this watery extract contains nearly all the savory, saline and crystalline ingredients. After long continued boiling, most becomes a hard mass composed of tough, muscular fibres, the areolar tissue connecting them, and parts of the nerves and blood-vessels. This is difficult to masticate, more difficult to digest, and so devoid of flavor that it is impossible to tell from what animal it came. As Liebig remarks, even a dog will reject it.

For invalids, beef soup is by far the best. That made from mutton is less digestible, and is seldom free from fat. The remarkable restorative properties of soup are due to the presence of a large quantity of highly nitrogenous principles. Very strong beef tea may almost be classed with such stimulants as brandy and tea. Creatine, creatinine, and other similar substances in meat bear a close resemblance to the theine of tea and coffee, and the theobromine of cocoa.

If we wish to cook meat in such a way as to preserve the maximum of nutriment in the most digestible form, we should place it in large pieces in boiling water, and keep it there for five minutes. The high temperature coagulates the albumen at the surface of the meat; stops its pores and thus prevents the juices from escaping. After this boiling of five minutes, add cold water to reduce the heat to about 150° Fahrenheit, and keep it at that temperature until the meat is sufficiently cooked. It will then be found to be tender, juicy, savory and nutritious. Salted meat, intended to be eaten cold, should be allowed to cool in the water in which it has been boiled.

In roasting meat, as in boiling it, the first object should be to coagulate the albumen at the surface, in order to prevent the escape of the juices. The meat should be at first placed close to the fire, kept there for ten or fifteen minutes, and then withdrawn to a greater distance from the heat. If cooked in the oven of a stove or a range, the oven should be very hot when the meat is first put into it, kept at the same heat for a short time, then cooled down partly (by opening the door or checking the fire), and the roasting should then be allowed to go on very slowly, so that the inner parts may be thoroughly done. The loss of weight (mostly water and fat) is nearly one-third more in roasting than in boiling. Roast meat has the richer flavor, because certain aromatic principles are developed by this method of cooking. The occasional "dredging" of flour over the surface of the meat helps to stop up the pores and check the escape of the fat. Roasted meat is not as well suited for invalids and dyspeptics as boiled meat, since it is apt to contain solid substances formed out of the highly heated fat. Broiling is a species of roasting, but it ordinarily produces a somewhat more digestible food for the dyspeptic. Frying is the worst possible mode of cooking meat, especially for persons whose digestive powers are not vigorous, as it almost invariably develops a very acrid substance known as acrolein, and renders fatty acids that are nearly as unwholesome.

Stews and hashes are often very savory, but seldom agree with weak stomachs. They are better when made from a fresh meat than from that which has been already cooked. The repeated cooking of any kind of food detracts materially from its nutritive quality. As some one has said: "It is better to reheat our good cold beef and mutton in our stomachs than in our frying-pans or steaming-pots." Salted meat is less nutritious than fresh, because much of its saline matter is dissolved out by the brine. It is well known that scurvy is often produced by the continued use of salt meat, without fresh vegetables. Some have asserted that meat may become poisonous by being cured in brine that has been used again and again; however that may be, the flavor of meat kept in old brine can hardly be as good as if the liquid was fresh made.—Journal of Chemistry.

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