

THE REDISCOVERY OF AN OLD DISH.

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A VALUABLE FOOD WHICH LACKED RECOGNITION.

MANY an old-time cherished dish has gradually disappeared from its accustomed place on the American table. Sometimes its very existence has been almost forgotten. Such was the case with that stand-by of our grandmothers, "Dutch" or cottage cheese. Nearly all those of the older generation will remember having seen their mothers make this delicious cheese. It was good and they liked it, but for some reason it has largely disappeared. Cottage cheese has been made in a small way, it is true, but its appearance in the meal of the average family has been all too rare. One might have thought this cheese had been guilty of a crime, since it had apparently been dropped by polite society. There was more or less reason for the city family's not making cottage cheese. Seldom was there milk to spare, and when there was the small quantity was used in cooking. Cities with a large foreign population, however, did consume a considerable quantity of cottage cheese. Much of it was of inferior quality, but as it was almost always used for cooking, that fact did not hinder its sale.

The situation in the country districts was somewhat different. Nearly always there was plenty of skim milk for making cottage cheese, but for some reason it was believed that skim milk or "blue milk" was really of little value for human food. Every one knew that it was good for calves, pigs, and chickens, and that they made their best growth when it was abundant in the ration. The fact that skim milk can supply a rich and nourishing food for the family table was not recognized.

EXTENT OF SKIM-MILK WASTE.

It took a jolt to jar us from our lethargy. It required a great world war to make us realize the necessity of using

food wisely. During the war every effort was made to hunt out and eliminate waste and to make the best utilization of the food at hand. It was this search that revealed the immense food possibilities of that common dairy by-product, skim milk.

Of the 84 billion pounds of milk produced annually in the United States, 41 per cent is used for buttermaking. In securing cream to make butter, approximately five-sixths of the original milk remains as skim milk. In other words, about 29 billion pounds of skim milk is produced as a by-product. What has this skim milk been used for? Some of it has been condensed, much of it has been fed to live stock, some of it has been used in cooking, but a considerable portion has actually been wasted. "Blue milk," or skim milk, has all too frequently run down the sewers of creameries and milk plants, especially during the spring and summer. In one factory, only a year ago, 25,000 pounds of skim milk is said to have been wasted daily, and in another factory 10,000 pounds ran down the sewer every day.

To obtain the better utilization of skim milk for human food, the Department of Agriculture inaugurated a nationwide campaign. It was easy to see that much skim milk was available, but it was difficult to know how to get people to use it. There was a decided prejudice against milk from which the cream had been removed. How to convince people and make plain the great value of this product was a problem. Being a fluid, skim milk was thought to contain little or no nourishment. It therefore seemed desirable to devise ways of using skim milk in a more solid or concentrated form. Cottage cheese offered the opportunity. Easy to make, palatable, digestible, it could be eaten alone or in a great number of dishes. In fact, few people realized the diversity of its uses.

CONSERVING FOOD BY MAKING COTTAGE CHEESE.

The food situation during the war demanded the sparing and careful use of meat; therefore, the food value of cottage cheese compared with meat was properly displayed. Calculations indicated wonderful possibilities. It was figured that if all the 29 billion pounds of skim milk were converted into cottage cheese, its food value would be practically

equivalent to our annual consumption of beef. So from an idea it grew to be a plan. People must be told that skim milk is valuable, that it can easily be made into cottage cheese of delicious flavor and high food value. But how to get the information to the city housewife and to the farmer's wife was the question.

A call was sent to the various State colleges: "Women trained in home economics are needed to demonstrate the making and use of cottage cheese in town and country." Forty women reported at Washington within a fortnight. A week or more was devoted to intensive drilling on improved ways of making cottage cheese and using it in various dishes. Then the force went into the field and intensive campaigns of a week or more were conducted in the large cities from coast to coast.

MANUFACTURE SHOWN BY MOTION PICTURES.

Demonstrations were given many times a day to all classes of people, in home-demonstration club rooms, in community kitchens, in stores, in settlement houses, schoolhouses, cafeterias, in fact any place that offered an opportunity for introducing the cottage-cheese propaganda to the people. In the demonstrations, cottage cheese was used alone, as a relish, in soups, in salads, in making meatlike dishes, and even in pie and custard. Meanwhile marketing specialists from the department cooperated with grocers, milk dealers, and others in order that cottage cheese of high quality might be available at reasonable prices. Dairy-manufacturing specialists visited creameries and milk plants where cottage cheese was being made or where there were possibilities for its manufacture. They advised, assisted, and instructed in the making of a first-class product. Moving-picture theaters showed notices of the meetings and pictures of the various ways of serving cottage cheese, and in many instances exhibited the department's two-reel feature film, "Why Eat Cottage Cheese?" In this film, the various steps in the manufacture, handling, and use of cottage cheese were graphically portrayed, and in that way instructed thousands of people who were not able to attend the demonstrations.

The demonstrators often were received with skepticism by the city housewife. She doubted whether cottage cheese

could be used in the variety of ways suggested, but if she attended the demonstrations and saw prepared and actually tasted the delicious dishes displayed, all doubt was quickly dispelled. "I never dreamed that cottage cheese could be used in so many ways," was a remark frequently overheard. Many a husband has been served with cottage-cheese soup, sausage, or salad. Like Cæsar, the women demonstrator came, saw, and conquered. The success of such an effort is hard to gauge. Exact figures are usually difficult to obtain. In one city, the quantity of cottage cheese sold daily jumped from 10 pounds to nearly 3,000, and in another from 350 pounds to more than a ton. The creamery which formerly poured 10,000 pounds of skim milk down the sewer every day later turned it into 700 pounds of cottage cheese. Restaurants, cafés, hotels, clubs, and dining cars added cottage cheese to their menus, and, what was more important than all, it was served in many homes. Cottage-cheese banquets and lunches, at which cottage cheese was used in practically every dish, came into vogue.

A COTTAGE-CHEESE MENU.

The following menu was served at the banquet of a prominent club of an eastern city:

First Course: ASTONISHMENT.

Cream of Cottage-Cheese Soup.
Croutons.

Second Course: INTEREST.

Cottage-Cheese Cutlet (No meat):
Creamed Potatoes. Mustard Pickles.
Graham Muffins. Whey Sirup.

Third Course: ADMIRATION.

Cottage-Cheese Salad.
Wafers.

Fourth Course: DEVOTION.

Cottage-Cheese Tart.
Mints.

The occasion was a great success. The food was good, in fact delicious, and even the critical went away thoroughly delighted. In some places, the enthusiasm reached such a

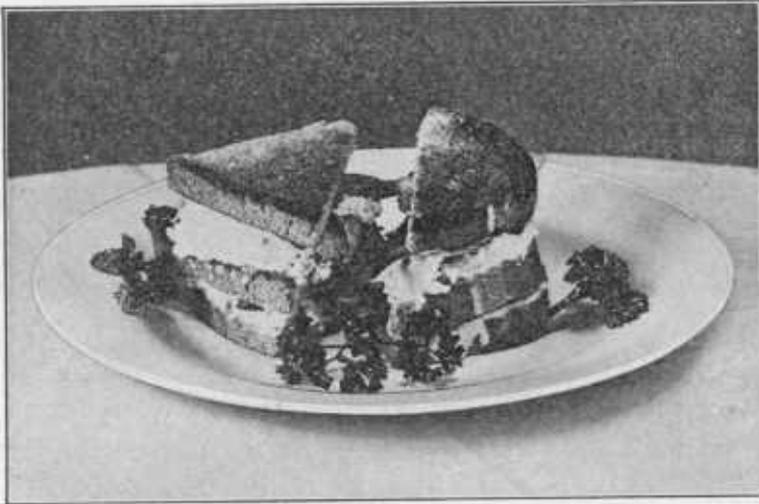


FIG. 1.—COTTAGE-CHEESE CLUB SANDWICH, PALATABLE AND NUTRITIOUS.

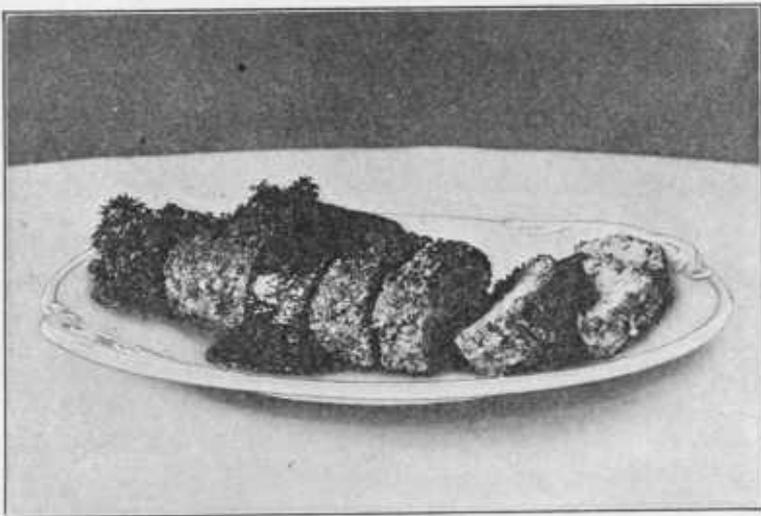


FIG. 2.—COTTAGE-CHEESE LOAF, A SUBSTANTIAL MEATLIKE DISH.

pitch that the common greeting was: "Good morning; have you eaten cottage cheese?" If we are to believe the indications, the success was very real.

THE FARM CAMPAIGN FOR COTTAGE CHEESE.

While not so spectacular, the farm campaign was no less successful. It was not carried on with the wave of enthusiasm that attended the city effort, but was a steady, constant, and, it is believed, effective effort to reach the people in the rural districts. A cottage-cheese worker was sent into nearly every State to train the State and county home demonstration workers, that they as well as she might be prepared to teach farm women the making and using of cottage cheese. The work was well organized. Whenever possible it was carried on through the farm bureaus with men and women county agents as leaders, but all agencies working for the betterment of country life were enlisted. There was no lack of skim milk. On most farms, indeed, in the North, there was an abundance which was being used for feeding live stock. To be sure, some was used for human food, but the quantity so utilized was pitifully small. In the South less was available, but as the people realized the human-food value of skim milk, the demand for cows increased.

So far as time and funds would permit, the States were covered systematically, county by county. Meetings were held at convenient times and places, in school-houses, Grange halls, churches, and in private homes. The women came doubting but were willing to be convinced. Too often the farm diet was without variety, meat and potatoes being the great stand-bys. In some localities, for months at a time, only salt meat was served. Seemingly the economy of using dairy products was not appreciated. That they were sold so completely that the farm family did not use them was indeed surprising, yet it was true. Gradually cream had disappeared from the farm table, followed in many instances by whole milk. Frequently skim milk was served, but who can like oatmeal with only a little skim milk? The result was that its use gradually declined. In other words, the people who were producing such a vital food did not use it. This was the situation that the demonstrators had to

face when talking cottage cheese. "Why, skim milk isn't worth anything," was a common remark. To produce delicious food from this little-valued product seemed amazing.

Remarks like "I never realized that you could make good things to eat from skim milk" were often heard.

ADDED FOOD VARIETY FOR FARM TABLE.

While skeptical at first, farm women were eager to learn. In a short time, from the farthest southeastern part of the country to the Northwest and from New England to the western coast, farm women were making cottage cheese and giving it to the family, not only alone, but in many attractive and tasty dishes. It furnished a much-needed variety for the farm table. Many took up the making of cottage cheese on a larger scale to sell to neighbors or to take to town. Selling cottage cheese was found to be profitable. One young girl, by making cottage cheese on Saturdays and selling it in town, was able to pay her way through a term at college. Girls' and boys' clubs in several States took up the work and found it one of their most interesting and profitable lines.

In at least one instance, cottage cheese saved a dairy herd from slaughter. A little 9-year-old girl, who attended a demonstration, learned to make cottage cheese, thus utilizing the skim milk from her father's herd. It turned the tables. An unprofitable herd became a profitable one, and dairy cows were saved at a time when none could be spared.

The ingenious ways of preparing cottage cheese often led to interesting incidents. At one place where supposed sausage was served, a prominent chemist refused to believe that it contained no meat. Only a practical demonstration of the preparation and cooking of the dish convinced him. A fireman who attended a cottage-cheese exhibit remarked: "These things are fine: Why did we have to wait till war time to have good things to eat?"

When properly and carefully made, cottage cheese rivals its more aristocratic sisters, Neufchâtel and cream cheese. Made by the process introduced by the women demonstrators, it became a new product, not the common dry, tough, grainy, sour-tasting cheese that tended to repel both

eye and taste, but a smooth, fine, rich, creamy product that appealed to all. Put up in a neat, attractive package it was readily sold.

SKIM MILK FOR HUMANS OR HOGS?

Sometimes the question arose, "Is it better to turn skim milk into cottage cheese or feed it to the hogs?" for meat was vitally needed. This seemed a fair question, and the correct answer was sought. Investigation showed that when fed with corn or other grains, as is necessary, 100 pounds of skim milk would produce about 5 pounds of dressed pork. Compared with that, the same quantity made 15 pounds of cottage cheese. Now every one knows that cottage cheese is practically equal to most meats for furnishing that blood-and-muscle-building element, protein. With about three times this element of human food produced when made into cottage cheese, there seemed to be no argument left.

TO MAKE THE BENEFITS PERMANENT.

The main effort is over, and looking back, we try to find the real accomplishments. Certainly it is not too much to say that the American people, both in town and in country, have rediscovered an old dish. A food much used by former generations has been reestablished in society, but, more important than all, millions of pounds of skim milk have been converted into a palatable, digestible food.

It is too much to expect that cottage cheese will be used continuously in as large quantities as it was during the campaign. It is not too much, however, to look forward to a constant use of so valuable a food in thousands of homes where formerly it was not known. By no means the least accomplishment was incidental. The American housewife has been made to appreciate more fully the true value of dairy products. A food shortage developed the use of a valuable by-product the continued use of which will be a permanent benefit to the health and welfare of the American family.

The extent to which cottage cheese will be used in the future depends largely, of course, on its quality. Like many other dairy products, it is highly perishable, and should

have the same consideration as other foods requiring proper handling and, in warm weather, refrigeration. Even a knowledge of its high food value will not induce the public to use cottage cheese which is unpalatable. This fact suggests the advantage of marking the package with the name and address of the maker, in order that consumers may be able to make later purchases of cheese which has proved satisfactory.

PUBLICATIONS ON COTTAGE CHEESE.

The following publications of the Department of Agriculture on the manufacture and use of cottage cheese may be obtained on application to the Secretary of Agriculture:

Cottage-Cheese Dishes. Office of the Secretary, Circular 109.

How to Make Cottage Cheese on the Farm. Farmers' Bulletin 850.

Manufacture of Cottage Cheese in Creameries and Milk Plants. Department Bulletin 576.

Ways to Use Cottage Cheese. Bureau of Animal Industry Leaflet 18.

Cottage Cheese—An Inexpensive Meat Substitute. Bureau of Animal Industry Leaflet 24.