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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, April 7, 1933.

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Subject: "Cooking Meat to Conserve the Food Value." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

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A week ago we talked about cooking fish to conserve the food value and flavor. Today, with Easter arriving in a couple of days, we're interested in cooking meat. Many of us who believe in following old customs and traditions will be having roast lamb for our Easter dinner. Let's see what the experts have to say about cooking meat, especially roasts, to save the food value and give the most delicious flavor.

The first rule for meat cookery is: Know your meat cuts and know how to cook according to cut. Some cuts are tender; some are less tender. They grow that way naturally. In a beef side, you find both kinds. The tender cuts are the loin and rib. The less tender cuts are the chuck and rump and round, which have more connective tissue. Lamb and pork, as marketed nowadays, are so young that all the cuts are tender.

If you want to conserve food value and give your meat the best flavor, or "appetite appeal," you'll cook tender cuts either by roasting or broiling. The less tender cuts you'll cook by braising, or some other method of long slow cooking in a covered utensil that holds in the steam and softens the connective tissue.

Of course, you don't have to be told that meat is a protein food. The minute you apply heat to protein, certain changes take place. Long cooking at intense heat toughens and hardens protein foods. Moderate heat keeps them tender. That's why the experts advise controlling the heat when you're roasting or broiling or cooking meat in any other way.

To bring out that savory flavor in meat, you will want to apply enough heat to brown the outside at some time during the cooking process. Tender cuts with a good covering of fat on the outside are best if browned first, very quickly. Put them into a hot oven, say 450 to 500 degrees F. Then, as soon as the meat is lightly browned, reduce the temperature to moderate -- about 300 to 350 degrees -- and finish the cooking at this low heat. The moderate temperature keeps the juices in the meat -- in other words, prevents excessive shrinkage. A moderate temperature cooks the meat evenly. And the drippings in the pan are nicely browned, not burned, so they make good gravy.

Now about this process of searing or browning the meat at a high temperature first. We once thought that searing the meat sealed in the juice. That is an exploded theory. Now many people ask if searing doesn't shrink the meat -- make it lose weight.



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The experts say that sometimes it does have this effect. But the loss is mostly fat from the outside of the roast. But, if you have an oven that you can't change quickly from hot to moderate, you'll have better results if you use a constant moderate temperature the entire time the roast is cooking. If the meat is cooked well-done in this moderate oven, then it will be brown by the time it is finished. If it is a beef roast cooked only to the rare stage, it will be only lightly brown on the outside. Searing does put the bloom on roast meat -- no doubt about that. It starts the fat trickling down and makes a roast self-basting from the first and keeps the lean meat from drying out.

Old-time cookbooks will tell you to put a cover on the roasting pan to keep meat from drying out. That's another old idea that the experts have thrown overboard since science took a hand in meat cookery. All the experiments show that a lid on the roaster tends to draw out the juice rather than keep it in. This is rather surprising. Anybody might think that a lid which holds in moisture in the pan would naturally keep the juices in the meat. But what actually happens is that the steamy atmosphere causes the meat to give up its juice and with it a lot of flavor. Of course, you get back this flavor in the gravy, but the meat is cooked more by steaming than by roasting.

Ask the experts who have been working on meat cookery. They'll tell you to cook all tender cuts in open pans with no water added. An open roasting pan with a rack is best for all tender roasts of beef, lamb, and pork with a good covering of fat. The rack holds the meat off the hot pan so the bottom doesn't overcook. As for pan-broiling beefsteaks and lamb chops, the same rules apply. Use a heavy skillet. Never put a lid on them. Never add a drop of water. Use a high temperature first for browning. Then finish cooking at a moderate temperature.

As for the less tender cuts of beef, cooking them is a different story. The problem is to cook in such a way as to soften the connective tissues. For this, long slow cooking at moist heat is best. That's why the experts suggest cooking by braising. Brown the meat in fat first. Then add a little water, and cook slowly in a covered kettle until done.

We'll talk more about cooking these less tender cuts some other day. Just now the Easter dinner is on my mind. If you are ready, I'll give you the menu right now. Here it is: Roast stuffed shoulder of lamb; Browned potatoes; Onions baked in tomato sauce; and for dessert, Jellied fruit; Coffee. Once more: Roast stuffed shoulder of lamb; Browned potatoes; Baked onions in tomato sauce; and for dessert, Jellied fruit; Coffee.

A word about that roast stuffed shoulder of lamb. That is a most delicious roast and an inexpensive one. Ask your butcher for a shoulder of lamb weighing from three to four pounds. And ask him to remove all the bones and the fell. Save the bones for making soup. Stuff the pocket left by removing the bone and either the roast flat or roll it. The flat shoulder is easier to sew up than the rolled, and the pocket holds twice as much stuffing. Either way the roast is easy to carve. You carve straight through the roast and that will give attractive slices of part meat and part stuffing.

When you have stuffed and sewed up the roast, place it on a rack in an open pan without water. Sear for 30 minutes in a hot oven (450 - 500 degrees). Reduce the oven to moderate (300 - 350 degrees) and cook at this temperature until tender. The time required will be from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 hours.

