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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Friday, May 22, 1931.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Strawberry Shortcake for Sunday Dinner." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Bulletin available: "Home Baking."

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Our Sunday dinner menu is too good to keep, so let's write it first thing today and talk about it afterward.

Tomato Bouillon or some other clear soup; Broiled Lamb Chops; New Peas and New Potatoes, Creamed together; Mint Gelatin Salad (served with the main course); and, for dessert, Strawberry Shortcake.

I'll read that menu again, just to be sure you have every item. (REPEAT).

Whenever the subject of strawberry shortcake arises in our family, a heated discussion ensues. To hear Cousin Susan talk you would think that the world was divided into two kinds of housekeepers -- those who make shortcake with the traditional rich biscuit dough, and those who make it with cake or pastry. I do believe Cousin Susan really considers this the basis for separatin the sheep and the goats, as the old saying goes. She is a conservative, you know, and comes from a long line of good New England housekeepers, and she insists that shortcake is not shortcake unless it is made with a biscuit mixture

Betty Jane, on the other hand, contends that layers of cake with crushed fruit between is considered shortcake by many people she knows and that she herself likes this variety best.

Well, there you have the argument. Probably we'll have it all over again this Sunday at the dinner table. And, as Uncle Ebenezer says, since this is one of America's most famous desserts, the argument really ought to be settled, once and for all. Custom and tradition certainly stand behind Cousin Susan in her opinion. Most old-fashioned housekeepers will tell you that shortcake is a baking powder biscuit mixture made rich with shortening and with possibly a little sugar added for flavor and to make the crust brown extra well. In actual practice however, as Betty Jane says, so-called shortcake is made in different ways. Beside the biscuit mixture, pastry squares are sometimes used. So are layers of sponge cake or some plain butter cake like one-egg cake. On top and between the layers, crushed fruit, either canned or fresh is spread and usually the whole thing is topped with a little whipped cream. By the way, recipes today rarely use that old-fashioned term "shortenin

In this outspoken age we say butter or fat when we mean fat.

The favorite shortcake fruit, of course, is the strawberry. But many other juicy fruits are popular -- raspberries, for example, or fresh cherries, blackberries, huckleberries or loganberries. Sliced oranges and even prunes make good shortcake. So do sliced peaches, apricots or fresh or canned pineapple. The more acid fruits, of course, need extra sweetening. When fresh fruits like berries are used, the large perfect ones should be reserved whole for garnishing and not crushed or cut up with the rest.

As for making the shortcake itself -- Cousin Susan's kind of shortcake-- the proportion to remember is one-third to one-half cup of fat to three cups of flour. This makes a little richer mixture, you see, than the plain baking powder biscuit dough, and is enough for a large amount.

The Recipe Lady has sent me her recipe for making strawberry shortcake. This is planned for a family of five. I have it here all ready to give you this minute. First the seven ingredients. Then the directions.

2 cups of sifted flour
3/4 teaspoon of salt
4 teaspoons of baking powder
1 tablespoon of sugar
4 tablespoons of fat
3/4 cup of milk -- or enough to make a soft dough, and
1 quart box of strawberries.

I'll repeat that list. (REPEAT):

Mix and sift the dry ingredients. Cut in the fat with a biscuit cutter or with two knives, or rub it in lightly with the finger tips. Form a well in the flour and add the milk gradually. Stir from the center with a fork until a soft dough is formed. Knead the dough very lightly until it is well mixed. Then lay it on a lightly floured board and with the palm of the hand pat it until it is spread in a piece about one-half inch thick. The shortcake may be baked either in one large piece, or cut into individual portions with a large biscuit cutter. Bake it in a moderately hot oven (about 375 to400 degrees F.) for 12 to 12 minutes -- or until it is light brown. While still hot, split and butter it. Place the crushed strawberries, sweetened to taste, between and over the biscuit and serve at once while the biscuit is still warm. Be sure to add the berries only at the last minute. Otherwise, the juice will soak in and make the cake soggy.

When baking a large shortcake, some cooks place two layers of the dough together -- one on top of the other with butter spread between, so that the large piece will split easily.

You may often find that you can avoid the rush of last-minute preparation of either shortcake or biscuits by mixing the ingredients -- all but the liquid -- earlier in the day; then add the liquid and bake just before mealtime.

My interest in that shortcake almost made me forget to tell you about the creamed peas and new potatoes -- green and white spring dish to go with the lamb chops. Cook the peas and potatoes separately. Pour the white sauce over the potatoes and then add the green peas cooked until just tender. This combination has several merits. It is different and worth serving occasionally to give variety to a meal. Then, it requires only one vegetable dish instead of two and that saves time and gives room for serving the salad with the dinner. If you have a small amount of peas, they will go farther if combined this way with potatoes and cream sauce.

I've spoken of the mint gelatin salad before. Another green note, you see, for a spring dinner. There's a picture of it in your Lamb Leaflet -- the back page -- showing just how the white slices of cucumber look when molded in the green salad. For those who missed this good recipe when I gave it last St. Patrick's Day, and who have since asked for it, I am repeating it again today.

Eleven ingredients:

2 tablespoons of gelatin
1/2 cup of cold water
1 and 1/2 cups of boiling water
5 tablespoons of sugar
1/2 teaspoon of salt
1/2 cup of sliced cucumber
1/2 cup of canned crush pineapple, drained from its juice,
2 tablespoons of pineapple juice,
4 tablespoons of lemon juice,
5 drops of oil of peppermint, and
Green coloring.

Once more let me go over those eleven ingredients. (REPEAT):

Soak the gelatin in the cold water for five minutes. Add this to the boiling water. Add the sugar and the salt and stir until all are dissolved. Cool and add the cucumber, the pineapple and the lemon and pineapple juice, the oil of peppermint and enough flavoring matter to make the mixture pale green. Set the container in ice water and stir until the gelatin mixture begins to stiffen. Then rinse a mold with cold water, coat it lightly with some of the clear gelatin mixture, and place thin slices of cucumber on the bottom and sides. The gelatin will help these slices stick to the mold while the salad mixture is poured in. Fill the mold with the gelatin mixture and let it stand in a cold place until firm. Serve with tart salad dressing on a bed of crisp lettuce.

Monday: "Superstitions About Food."

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