Yuletide Bounty

The piece de resistance of the Christmas dinner of ye olden time was the uncouth boar's head, borne to the table with much pomp and ceremony. Roasted peacock and peacock pie were also popular. Gradually, as the festivities became less boisterous, the boar's head was superseded by a huge roast of beef, which to-day is regarded as essential at a Christmas dinner in "merry" England. The Christmas goose held sway until its rival, the turkey, usurped the place of honor, it having reigned supreme for nearly two centuries.

The Christmas dinner of to-day introduces a few innovations, but the orthodox turkey "with trimmings," the traditional mince pie and plum pudding appear. The Christmas dinner should be a mid-day function, any hour between 12.30 and 2.30 p.m. The table should be laid as handsomely as possible. Sweet cider may be served throughout the meal. I desired the cakes may be cut star shape (a few cents will buy a cutter of that shape) or they may be baked as usual and decorated. Little dishes of olives, salted nuts and quaking jellies are effective.

DECORATIONS.

Holly and mistletoe belong properly to Christmas festivities — they breathe a spirit of good cheer — but should these be lacking, evergreen wreaths and garlands are beautiful, and, where possible, obtain the scarlet partridge berry to enhance the effect. A dish of rosy cheeked and golden apples set within a wreath of evergreen is simple and decorative. Three wreaths tied together with red satin ribbon, a large wreath in centre and smaller ones placed, one on each side, are also artistic. Do not crowd the table. If a fruit centerpiece is chosen, keep the fruit in a cool place until the dinner is ready to be served.

The menu which follows is for ten people and if properly cooked and correctly served is good enough for royalty. However, it may easily be modified to suit any taste or to lessen the labor of serving. The soup may be omitted, as also the salad, with still an abundance of good cheer. If it is not desired to serve the dinner in courses, the soup plates may be removed, the salad served with the meat course, and the dessert may be served from the sideboard or side table, the pudding, of course, must come piping hot on heated dishes. Coffee may be served throughout the meal. It is more hygenic to drink it black and should be taken clear after or with a hearty dinner, even if sugar and cream are usually preferred. It thus aids digestion.

THE MENU.

Clear tomato soup Toast fingers
Salted peanuts Olives
Roast young turkey, Almond forcemeat, Garnish of celery plumes
Green grape jelly Giblet gravy
Franconia potatoes Royal oyster pie
Steamed squash au gratin
Celery and walnut salad in cabbage shell
Yuletide plum pudding Mince tart
Kris Kringle cake Cheese
Black coffee.

A dry picked turkey is preferable to a scalded one. The tendons should be removed from the legs, permitting the slicing of the latter. From 15 to 20 minutes is allowed for each pound in roasting, dependent on the age of the bird. If steamed first, this rule does not apply. Chop the liver and add to the gravy. It is one of the finest elements of the gravy, and thus served, everyone gets the benefit of its rich flavor.

Up-to-date Dressing—It is becoming gradually, the custom to serve the turkey unfilled, although stuffing accompanies a turkey, naturally as cream with strawberries Canadians are wedded to sage and summer savory dressing. Without it, to the average person, turkey would not be turkey. But the old-fashioned bread stuffing, with these seasonings, is highly conducive to indigestion. In this menu, a compromise is effected, and the noble bird is stuffed with almond forcemeat. Beat the yolks of three eggs with a gill of good cream and add ½ teaspoon of salt, ⅛ as much white pepper and eight gratings of nutmeg. Mash fine 4 ounces blanched sweet almonds, moistening the paste with the white of an egg; add a pound of light bread crumbs, discarding the crusts, and 4 ounces good butter broken into bits. Pour the egg mixture over this, mixing well, then stir in the beaten whites of two eggs. Stuff the turkey about three-fourths full as room must be left for the dressing to swell.

Franconia Potatoes—Select potatoes of uniform size. Wash, pare and drop at once in cold water to prevent discoloration. Parboil 10 minutes, drain and place in pan in which turkey is roasting. Bake until soft (about 40 minutes), basting when basting the meat. Sweet potatoes may be prepared thus also.

Royal Oyster Pie—It may be omitted, but will pay for the time and trouble of making. With good, rich paste line a deep pudding dish. Roll another sheet of the paste nearly half an inch thick, and cut it into a little larger round than the top of the dish. Butter the edges of the dish and fill the latter with crusts of dry bread. Over it lay lightly the round of pastry and set it in the oven. While it is baking put into a saucepan two tablespoons butter and two heaping tablespoons flour. Cook both together until they bubble, pour upon them a cup of oyster liquor and half a cup of cream, stir until smooth. Drop in 1½ pints oysters. Cook until they begin to ruffle and plump. Add 2 eggs beaten light, putting them in carefully, a little at a time, and stirring constantly. So soon as they are all in season the stew with a teaspoon of salt and ¼ teaspoon white pepper. Time your cooking of the oysters that they may be done at the same time as the crust. If anything must wait, let it be the paste. Lift the top crust carefully from the pie, lay it on a very hot plate, remove the bread crumbs, pour in the oysters, replace the crust and serve immediately.

The Pocket-Book—Good-bye, old man; I'm going shopping with your wife—and you won't know me when I come home.

Steamed Squash au Gratin—Steam or boil a small Hubbard squash, cut in halves, until tender. Let it dry on the back of the range, remove from shell and pass through a colander or mash fine. Add 2 tablespoons butter, 1 tablespoon cream, the beaten yolk of 1 egg and salt and pepper to season. Mix thoroughly and turn into a buttered baking dish, round the mixture on the top Cover with ½ cup cracker crumbs, stirred into ¼ cup melted butter, and bake nearly half an hour in a slow oven. Serve very hot.

Celery and Walnut Salad in Cabbage Shell—To 1½ cups chopped celery, add 1 cup English walnuts coarsely chopped, or hickory nut meats. The centre of a handsome head of cabbage is removed, and may be used in place of the celery or be reserved for another day. Remove the outside leaves of the cabbage and use the shell as a bowl from which the salad is served. Moisten the salad with cream dressing made as follows: One teaspoon each dry mustard and salt, 2 teaspoons flour 1½ teaspoons powdered sugar, a few grains cayenne, 1 teaspoon melted butter, yolk of an egg, ½ cup hot vinegar, ½ cup thick cream. Mix dry ingredients, add butter, egg and vinegar slowly. Cook over boiling water, stirring constantly until mixture thickens; cool and add to thick cream, beaten until stiff. Serve the cabbage shell on a folded napkin and garnish with a few celery plumes.

PLUM PUDDING POINTERS.

Remember that in making plum puddings you will have an opportunity to show your skill. There is as much art in preparing the ingredients as in putting them together and cooking them. The raisins, currants, citron, lemon and orange peel, suet and bread crumbs should all be prepared the day before they are combined. Large raisins are preferable. They have a better flavor, and a pound contains more fruit in proportion to the seeds and skin than the inferior qualities. Free them from the stem, wash "plump" them by leaving them in boiling water five minutes, drain and remove seeds. Get the best and largest currants you can buy, rub them hard under water with the hands, and change water often. Rinse them in a final water, drain and spread on a platter to dry. Cut the citron in strips an inch wide, then shave it across as finely as possible. Cut the lemon and orange peel in thin strips with a sharp pair of scissors. Buy suet from vicinity of the kidneys as it is finer and less stringy, pull it apart, chop very fine, reject all skin and strings. Grate and weigh the bread crumbs. Better results are obtained by boiling than baking a pudding, and steaming is better than either. It is more tender and hence more digestible. The water must be kept boiling steadily, and more added to it as needed. Make the pudding some time before Christmas; it will keep indefinitely.

An English Pudding—This is by Mrs. Owens, who states that it was awarded the prize of two guineas offered by Queen Victoria for the best recipe in a competition open to the world. The ingredients are 1 lb. seeded raisins, ¾ lbs. stale bread crumbs, ¼ lb. flour, same of brown sugar, 1 lb. each of currants and suet chopped fine, ½ lb. minced candied orange peel, 5 eggs, ½ tumbler brandy (coffee, or canned fruit juice may be substituted), ½ nutmeg and the grated peel of a lemon. Mix flour, fruits and spices well, add crumbs and suet. Beat the eggs, add to them the brandy or juice and pour over the dry ingredients, mixing thoroughly. Pack into small greased molds, and steam eight hours at the time of making, and two hours when wanted for use. When serving, garnish with a sprig of holly. On the dish lay five or six lumps of loaf sugar that have soaked a few minutes in alcohol or brandy, and set fire to them just before carrying to the table.

German Sauce—With the pudding serve the following: Mix the yolks of 4 eggs with ½ lb. sugar and the grated rind of half a lemon. Stir over the fire until the mixture coats the spoon. Serve hot. If preferred, serve hard sauce or currant jelly sauce.

Kris Kringle Cake—Great pleasure is afforded the children by this pretty cake, requiring a greater expenditure of time than money. Cover a white fruit cake with boiled frosting. Decorate with tiny red candies in the shape of a star. Or decorate with red candles for berries.

Pfeffer Nuesse (Pepper Nuts)—This recipe is for the little cakes always made in Germany for the holiday. It makes 70 small cakes which will keep a long time. Take 1 lb. sugar (2 cups), 1 lb. flour (4 cups), the grated rind of a lemon, ½ cup chopped citron, 1 tablespoon cinnamon, ½ tablespoon, each of cloves, mace and nutmeg, 2 teaspoons baking powder and 5 eggs. Pass the flour, sugar, spices and baking powder through the sieve together. Add the citron and lemon rind and mix to a dough with the eggs beaten without separating the yolks and whites. With buttered hands shape into small balls, the size of a hickory nut. Bake on waxed or buttered paper, an inch apart, to a delicate brown, in a quick oven. These much resemble macaroons, improve by standing and can be made weeks before Christmas.

FRUIT GLACE.

Two cups of granulated sugar, one cup of hot water. Boil slowly half an hour, without stirring, then carefully dip the point of the spoon in the syrup, then into cold water. If the thread is brittle the syrup is ready; pour into a bowl and place over hot water. Dip white grapes, English walnuts (halved), cherries, orange quarters thoroughly dried, into this, separately, and drop on to oil or waxed paper to cool. Dip carefully, so as not to stir up the syrup.

HER CHRISTMAS FAIRY

Mrs. Merrill smiled as she entered the room, to see her daughter curled up on the window seat, blissfully regarding a sheet of colored paper, which she held in her hand.

"Still admiring the signature on that bit of paper, Mollie?" she said quizzically.

"Oh, wasn't it lovely of Uncle Dick!" cried Mollie. "I think he's the very kindest man in the world, and wasn't it nice to have it come just now, when I wanted some money so badly? Now I shall have plenty of time to decide on just what I want and make my purchase before the big sleigh ride Christmas Eve. Oh, mother, dear! Just think of me all muffled up in a beautiful, long, snuggy fur. Doesn't it take your breath away to think of it?"

Mrs. Merrill smiled again into her daughter's happy face as she answered: "I am glad indeed to think that the wish of your heart should be realized so unexpectedly. But now, dear, will you please run over to the parsonage with this note for me? It's about the sewing circle next week, and I would like Mrs. Bassett to have it to-night."

A short time later Mollie tapped at the door of the parsonage, but met with no response, and then, thinking she heard voices at the rear of the house, she stepped briskly around the corner.

"I guess the children must be building a snow house," she said to herself, as she saw the Bassett baby watching a heap of snow which his brothers and sisters were busily adding to from moment to moment. Mollie paused for a moment or two to watch the pretty picture, and, as she waited, Harriet Bassett's thin little treble came floating clearly to her ear.

"Oh, Rachel, aren't you glad it's only a little more than a week till Christmas? It's a week from Friday, you know."

"Why should I be glad?" answered Rachel, crossly, as she sat down on the heap of snow and pulled the little red hood closer about Harriet's chubby face.

"Why, Rachel? Because it's Christmas. Folks are always glad then."

"Well, I'm not going to be glad if other people are, and I'm not going to pretend to be, either."

"Not glad," gasped Harriet, weakly, regarding her sister in amazement.

"No, I'm not glad. Not a speck," returned Rachel, firmly. "And you wouldn't be, either, if you were fifteen years old and had to go around all the time looking like a—a regular scare-crow, dressed up in a lot of horrid things that no one else will wear any longer and so consider 'just the thing for the minister's oldest girl.'"

Rachel looked so forlorn that Mollie almost laughed aloud. And, then as the pathos of it all struck her, she looked grave again and drew back between the lilac bush where she might listen unobserved.

"I'm sure you always look all right," stoutly asserted Harriet. "And mother says she doesn't know how ever she would manage if people didn't give us so many things, and that it's very, very kind of them to do it."

"Look all right!" sniffed Rachel scornfully. "I should think I did! Just look at me this minute," and she threw off the shawl she was wearing, rose to her feet, and regarded her sister sternly. "Do you realize that I've had to wear this waist for best for two winters? Isn't it a model of beauty and style and fit? I've been actually afraid to breathe sometimes for fear it would rip cross the shoulders, and it's altogether too long-waisted. Goodness knows what I'll have to wear this winter, but I'm in deadly fear that Miss Prim is going to send me that old green delaine that must have been handed down through two generations at least. Oh yes, I always look all right," and she glared at Harriet reproachfully.

The waist which Rachel so scornfully rated did look rather funny: it was so tight that the girl looked most uncomfortable in it, and it was made in a style which was very unbecoming to her. But what made it all the funnier to Mollie was that it was one which had once been her very own and had been given to Rachel and she almost laughed aloud at the thought of the girl's pretty face peering above Miss Prim's old green delaine.

"I wish," pensively continued Rachel, "that some one would give me something—just one thing—that was really pretty and new and nice, and then I really would be thankful; but of course it's too much to hope for. Come, let's go into the house; it's beginning to snow and mother told us to be careful not to let the baby catch cold. Come on, little man, we'll run a race with sister," and Mollie decided that it was time to take her departure.

"Poor thing," she mused as she walked slowly along. "I really believe that she never does have anything new and nice, though I never thought of it before. It's a pity that there are no good fairies to send her a box of pretty things. I really must try to save enough from my check to buy her a little something; it's dreadful to think of her never having anything new at all."

For several days it was a very serious Mollie that went about the house, and at last one evening in the gloaming she had an earnest talk with her mother which seemed to leave her her old bright self.

Christmas morning dawned in Harrissville clear, bright and cold, as such a morning should, and in the general pleasant air of the day even Rachel Bassett felt that perhaps the world was a fairly pleasant place in which to live after all, and hurried cheerfully to respond to a knock at the parsonage door.

"YOU OUGHT TO BE A VERY THANKFUL GIRL."

A moment later Mrs. Bassett, who was upstairs helping the twins dress, was wildly commanded to "come down" in tones of such earnestness as to lead her to believe that some dire domestic calamity had taken place below. Arrived in the sitting-room, she was surprised to see Rachel bending, in wide-eyed astonishment over a large pasteboard box, while Harriet with trembling fingers was trying to undo the cord from another still larger one at its side.

"Oh, mother!" gasped Rachel, "just see this lovely hat, and the card says it's for me—for me. What does it mean?"

"Your fairy godmother's just found where you live after all these years, I guess," observed Dotty, in awe-struck tones.

"Oh, Rachel, and only just see this," cried Harriet, as she lifted a pretty brown cloth dress from the box which at last she had succeeded in opening and held it up to view.

"A jacket and dress and hat to match! My dear, you ought to be a very thankful girl," said Mrs. Bassett, with a little catch in her voice. "I am! I am! You'll never really know how thankful, but I don't deserve it at all. You can't believe how wicked I've been, mother But oh, do you think they'll fit me?"

The pretty clothes did fit, as one pair of eyes did not fail to note when Rachel Bassett entered church for the Christmas service that morning, and Mollie murmured to herself, as she found the place in her hymn book: "It's really wonderful how far twenty-five dollars will go. How happy she does look. It's easy enough to see she's thankful, and I'm as glad as I can be that I did it."

SUGAR TAFFY.

Three pounds best brown sugar, one pound butter, enough water to moisten the sugar; boil until crisp when dropped into cold water, then pour into pans, or upon platters, as thin as possible. It usually requires to boil fast, without stirring three-quarters of an hour.