

OUTDOOR MEALS

I FOUND that outdoor meals were extremely popular in America—popular from all points of view. (1) Health—eating in the open air is so much better for you than even a cool room, and calming to the nerves, too. (2) Mother has so much less tidying up to do afterwards, and wear and tear on carpet or rug is saved. In fact, a dining-room is hardly used at all in summer if you have breakfast and dinner on the veranda, or under the trees. And for those who have a dining alcove in the kitchen (so useful in winter or wet weather) how much nicer to eat outside in the summer, away from all the steam or smell of cooking. (3) Father likes it because it is informal, and he is generally let off all carving. It is convenient to bring the individual servings from the kitchen on each plate. (4) Children like it because it feels like a picnic.

Of course one must be alert to the danger of getting slovenly and just serving meals "any old how." That would spoil the whole thing. You can use cheap, checked gingham tablecloths to look gay, and have a low bowl of flowers or fruit for a centrepiece. And the children must be just as particular not to drop crumbs or spill anything as if they were indoors. But it is easier to face a hot day in town if one has had breakfast on the veranda or out of doors. The tea-wagon will do nearly all the carrying out and in. It is very easy, too, to have visitors to dinner or supper served outside. Often it consists of cold food, but it is quite easy to have one hot dish—say soup, which you can bring out in a big jug, and pour into cups for each person. If there is to be a crowd, have one big table arranged buffet style, and then card tables, or other small tables covered with washing cloths set all around with chairs beside them, for the guests to seat themselves at. If you haven't enough tables, have some trays ready, too, so that people can carry them away to a comfortable nook. The result is an easy and gay evening meal, without the trouble of setting the dinner-table formally. You can have so many more people, too, and young folks do love to be able to bring home a friend just unexpectedly, knowing that it won't make any extra work at all, and that there will be plenty of room.

A big basket of fruit makes a lovely centre for the buffet-table, and provides dessert, too. Another idea is to use a shallow basket or tray covered with soft green fern leaves, and arrange pretty strawberry tarts on it.

Another popular idea in America is to build little outside fireplaces, or grills, or barbecues, in the back garden. If there is a bank, they dig out a square recess and fix iron bars across inside for grilling, or for standing a saucepan on. Sometimes they build a little fireplace of brick or stone. Then one person, usually a man (because men pride themselves on cooking, especially the middle-aged ones!) undertakes to grill the meat, while the girls bring out the rest of the meal from indoors. Nowadays it is the

fashion to have a "Bring Your Own Steak" supper—say on a Sunday night. Each guest brings his or her own, and grills it to taste, while the hostess provides the sauce or relish, bread or buns, a crisp salad and cake, or biscuits and cheese and coffee. Everyone has a good time, no one's coupons are endangered, and you all feel you've been away on a picnic.

Here are some menus for Garden Buffet Suppers, which I brought home with me from New York. No. 1.: Hot canned soup (brought out in a jug and poured into cups outside). Big platter of cold sliced meat or chicken and ham. Asparagus and peas (fresh or canned), heated and served with melted butter. Sliced cucumber and mayonnaise sandwiches. Strawberry tarts, lemon banbury turnovers. Coffee or tea—iced or hot.

Recipe for Strawberry Tarts

Have 6 individual tart shells baked beforehand, in large patty tins. Scald $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk. Mix $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar, a pinch salt and 1 tablespoon flour with one beaten egg. Pour the hot milk slowly over the egg mixture while stirring, then return to double boiler and cook over boiling water till thick, stirring all the time. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon vanilla and cool. Just before using, fold in 2 or 3 tablespoons of cream, whipped stiff. Fill the tart shells half full with this, and arrange a layer of strawberries on top. Melt $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of currant jelly and spread a little on the top of each tart.

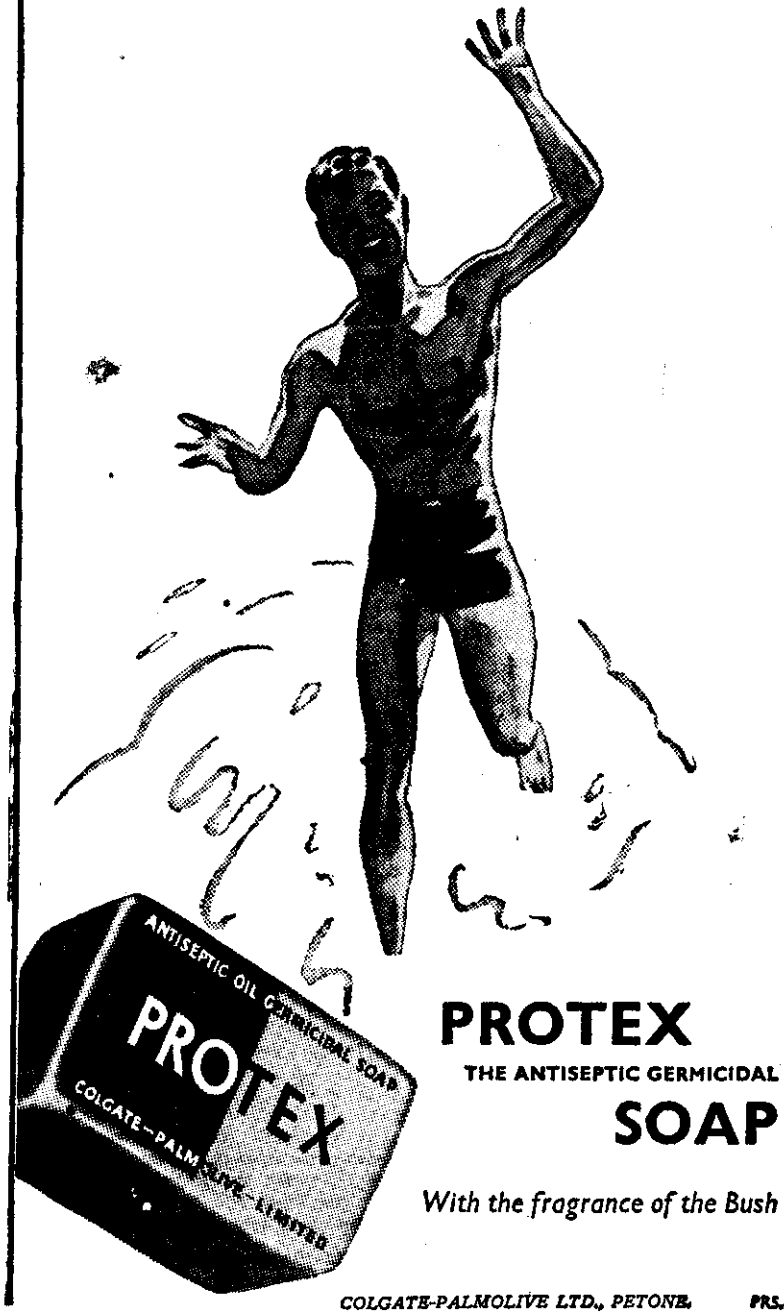
Lemon Banbury Turnovers

Make the filling with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup lemon juice, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sultanas, scalded, drained and chopped, $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups finely chopped tart apples, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped walnuts, 2 tablespoons orange marmalade, 1 cup sugar, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon powdered cinnamon, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon each of powdered cloves and ginger, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of melted butter. Mix all well. Roll out some flaky pastry to $\frac{1}{4}$ in. thickness, and cut into 4 in. squares. Place the squares on a greased baking sheet. Put a good tablespoonful of the mixture on each square. Dampen edges with water, then fold over from corner to corner to form a triangle. Crimp the edges together with a floured fork. Prick the tops to let steam escape. Brush over with milk and bake in hot oven about 20 minutes, or till cooked and browned.

An Outdoor Grill Picnic Menu

Water melon cubes on toothpicks, picnic hamburgers, corn on cob, chocolate crunch cookies, coffee. For the hamburgers have ready a pound of finely-minced beef, salt and pepper to taste, and form into 8 patties, about $\frac{1}{2}$ in. thick and $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. in diameter. Quickly sauté these over an open fire, turning once. Also have ready 8 buns or hamburger rolls; split them open, butter and lightly toast them. Then place a hamburger cake on half a toasted roll, top with a tomato slice, then an onion slice and then a small leaf of lettuce. Top with the other half of the roll. Serve immediately.

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