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# Rub The Bowl With Garlic!

AND, of course, a rub of garlic to the salad-bowl," prattles the salad expert on the radio. But will someone please tell me how much rubbing is required to get the garlic off the fingers afterwards? Because garlic on the salad-bowl is one thing, but clinging about the person of the hostess is something different. In fact, I will go so far as to say that the hostess who attempts to handle the stuff with any less pro-



"Dropping pea-sized pieces into the soup"

tection than a pair of rubber gloves is just digging her social grave with her finger-nails.

Even the redolent East observes certain niceties in the matter—if one can believe the story from the *Thousand and One Nights* of the wedding-guest who ate garlic and then danced with the bride, and was condemned under the existing social code to a tedious routine of hand-washing and gargling with carbolic for the rest of the social season.

But social stigma or no, garlic has its following in this country. The cult gains every day some new adherent whose presence speedily becomes so unbearable to his friends and family that they either renounce him completely or are themselves driven to the bulb. And so the thing spreads till nobody knows whence the next breath of garlic will strike.

THE tragedy of the garlic-eater is the familiar one of never knowing where to stop. He may begin by rubbing the salad-bowl with garlic, but pretty soon he is dropping pea-sized pieces into the soup and sneaking slivers of it into the rolled roast. The faint, pungent fillip to the lettuce salad no longer satisfies, nor does the rich foreign flavour of the stew which still excites the palates of his unsuspecting friends. No, he wants something stronger and, oblivious to his narrowing social circle, he goes out to get it. He absents himself from family meals to sit in one and then another chop-suey shop, eating his pork and garlic-sauce, his *chow mein* or fried rice with the relish of a gourmet. He puts on weight—who wouldn't on oil and noodles? His friends pass him coldly in the street; his acquaintances fail to recognise him. He has lost his job in the city and his only hope of employment is in the market gardens or

Written for "The Listener"  
by M.L.D.

the kitchens of the back-street restaurants. Naturally he chooses the latter course, and here we may as well leave him, a greasy apron string round his middle, a brace of chop-sticks in his vest pocket, and about his person a nauseous cloud of garlic.

IT may be argued that his is an extreme case, and that there are moderate eaters of garlic for whom the habit is no more of a menace than, say, a taste for worcester sauce. But anyone who has watched the misery of a man faced with a meat pie and no worcester sauce bottle can see the flaw in that. The life of the moderate garlic fancier is full of such incidents. He approaches his food without pleasure and without hope. All very well for Mr. So-and-So to say, "You haven't a little worcester on hand, I suppose?" His hostess is delighted; his little foible endears him to her. But let the garlic fancier try it and the faces of host and hostess will set in a mask of polite incredulity, the diners on either side will draw slightly away as though they already detected a disgusting odour. And the chances are that he will never be asked there again.

In the sanctuary of his own home where a man may usually count on a little indulgence for the things he fancies, his taste for garlic meets with as much favour as a fancy for pet cobras. If he suggests adding a clove or two to the corned beef his wife will immediately remind him of a bridge engagement with the Gillespies down the road. "We couldn't possibly," she says, full of gentle reproach, "after all, a bridge table is rather intimate, and you know the Gillespies never even touch spring onions. . . ." If he approaches her tactfully in the kitchen on the day when he's certain that nobody is going anywhere it always turns out that his brother-in-law is half-expected for dinner . . . "and you know how Alex feels about garlic since he broke off with that French girl in New Caledonia."

Or, suppose that, maddened by the sight of a good dish of mushroom sauce simmering on the stove, he drops the smallest knob of garlic into it, satisfied that the heightened flavour will meet with nothing but praise from pleasantly titillated palates—his eldest daughter is sure to rise from the table in a torrent of tears, and his wife upbraid him bitterly for spoiling the poor child's first evening out with that nice boy from the tennis club.

AND so it goes on. No matter how often he bears home his bulb of garlic from the fruiterer's, when an occasion comes to use it there is never so much as a clove of it left in the house. His wife has thrown it out on the pretext that it was going bad and beginning to smell. When he prepares for himself some little delicacy at the week-end his wife will rush about the house flinging up windows and opening