

# PRUNES UP TO DATE

**A**BOUT twelve months ago when I gave some prune recipes, we noticed how much prunes had improved from the old, hard, dried ones of years ago, which needed long soaking as well as cooking, and were regarded as a breakfast duty, or as an accompaniment to boiled or baked rice on mother's busy day. Now we have some even more delightful prunes, from a California growers' association, which can be eaten straight from their carton of aluminium foil, like dates. Of course, they can also be cooked in many ways, but they certainly are good straight from the packet like that—as a "bite" between meals, or in school lunches, or included in salads.

They are quite plump and juicy. This is because they go through a tenderising process which employs only heat and moisture, and makes the prunes plump and tender. Actually, they are pasteurised.

The complete fruit-breakfast should be of some citrus fruit (grapefruit or orange) and prunes, because prunes are rich in vitamins A and B2, and the citrus supplies the vitamin C. Prunes also contain iron and copper—good for

anemia! Their laxative value is well known.

## Really French

Another reason why these prunes are so "meaty" is because they are not picked off the trees, like other fruits, but are allowed to hang in the sunshine till they are so plump and juicy that they actually drop from the trees by their own weight. Then they are put through their tenderising process. As a matter of fact, these are really French prunes. They were first brought to California in two old trunks, as little prunings or graftings from prune trees in France. To keep them alive in the long voyage round the Cape they were stuck into potatoes, and the moisture from these kept them (or at least some of them) alive. Then the little pieces were grafted on to some wild plum roots in California, and so began California's great prune industry.

## A Refrigerator Trick

This is supposed to give extra flavourful prunes. Just put them into one of the pretty coloured refrigerator dishes and cover them with boiling water; put on the lid and stand the dish in the refrigerator for 48 hours or longer—the

longer the better. You will find the prunes tender and delicious and the syrup quite thick and lovely. No sugar.

## Pine Meringue Pie (with Pineapple)

One and a half cups cooked prunes, 1 cup liquid from prunes, 1 cup crushed pineapple, ¼ cup sugar, 3 tablespoons cornflour, ¼ teaspoon salt, 3 eggs, 1 baked 9-inch pastry shell, 6 tablespoons sugar for meringue. Cut the cooked prunes from the stones and into pieces. Combine with cooking liquid and the pineapple and heat. Blend sugar, cornflour and salt together thoroughly and stir into hot fruit. Cook and stir until mixture boils thoroughly and is clear. Beat egg yolks lightly and stir a little of hot fruit into egg yolks. Stir all slowly into remaining fruit. Cook 3 to 4 minutes longer over very low heat and cool. Pour into baked pastry shell. For the meringue, beat egg whites until they are stiff and then beat in the sugar, 1 tablespoon at a time. Pile meringue lightly over the filling, and bake in moderately slow oven (325 degrees) for 15 to 20 minutes. Cool the pie thoroughly before cutting. Serves 6 to 8.

## Prune Meringue Pudding

Boil 1½ cups prunes in 2½ cups water very gently until soft; adding about 4 to 6 tablespoons sugar the last few minutes. Turn into a glass baking dish.

**Meringue:** Beat the 2 egg whites stiff and fold in 5 tablespoons sugar carefully. Spoon meringue in swirls over fruit. Sprinkle chopped almonds or nuts

over top. Bake in a slow oven (300 degrees) until the meringue is light yellow colour, about 20 minutes. Serve with cream or vanilla sauce.

## Baked Prune Whip

One cup cooked prunes, 1 tablespoon lemon juice, 3 egg whites, few grains salt, ¼ cup sugar. Stone prunes and force through a sieve. Blend in lemon juice. Beat egg whites with salt until stiff and gradually beat in sugar. Fold in sieved prunes. Turn into greased 1½ quart casserole, and set in pan of hot water. Bake in moderate oven (350 degrees) 45 to 55 minutes. Serve warm or cold. May be served plain or with a custard made with the egg yolks.

## Frozen Prune Whip

One egg, ¼ cup milk, ½ cup sugar, ¾ cup pureed cooked prunes, 3 tablespoons orange juice, 3 tablespoons lemon juice, ½ teaspoon salt, 1 cup whipping cream. Cook milk, lightly beaten egg and ¼ cup sugar over hot water, stirring continuously until mixture coats spoon. Cool. Mix remaining ¼ cup sugar with pureed prunes, fruit juices and salt. Fold fruit and whipped cream into cooled custard. Pour into refrigerator tray, place in freezing compartment with control set at lowest temperature and freeze to desired consistency, stirring occasionally with a fork. When the whip is firm, re-set the temperature control to normal. This makes about 1½ pints frozen whip.

## Prune Apple Betty

Two cups sliced cooking apples, ½ cup brown sugar (packed), ¼ teaspoon



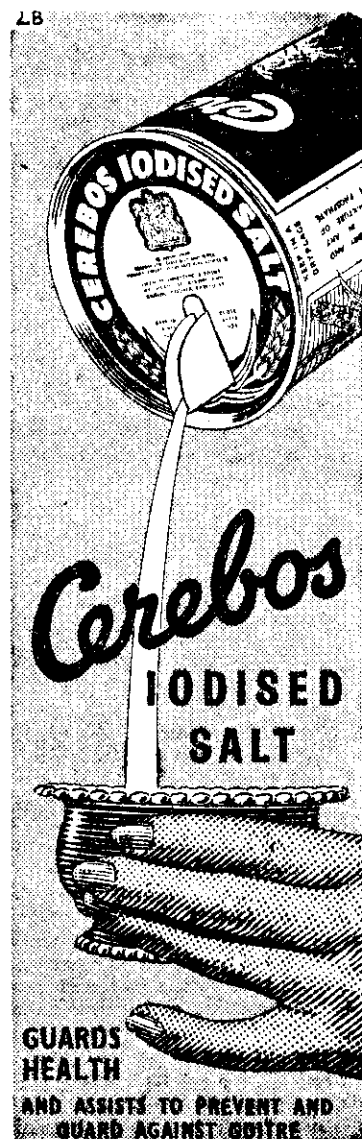
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