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ASK Aunt Daisy

PRACTICAL FARE FOR CHRISTMAS

THE Christmas cakes and puddings have already been arranged for. It remains now to think of the equally practical meaty fare, especially items which can be fixed beforehand, leaving Mother free (well, almost free!) for two or three days at Christmas.

Ham

Put into large pot with plenty of cold or luke warm water, adding a little vinegar, a few cloves, and a little sugar. Bring slowly to the boil, and simmer gently till cooked (approximately 4 hours for about a 12 pound ham). Leave in the pot until nearly cold. Then skin, and stick a few cloves into the fat before covering thickly with crisply-baked bread crumbs. For those who have a wash-house copper, fill it with cold water, put in ham, and bring to the boil. The lid must be put on, and a couple of sacks laid on top, to keep in the steam. Boil $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour, then let fire die out, and leave till cold. This uses very little fuel, can be started at night, and left to cook while you sleep. Only a wash-house copper will do, because it keeps hot so long.

Baked Ham

Wrap the ham in 2-3 thicknesses grease-proof paper. This keeps in the juices and flavour. Put into baking tin with a little hot water to keep it from burning. Bake very slowly, allowing 20-25 minutes to the pound. Leave in oven till cool, after turning off heat. After removing paper, skin and stick all over with cloves. Pour over ham a thick syrup of spiced vinegar and brown sugar. Put back in oven to brown. Sprinkle with crisp browned breadcrumbs. Maple syrup may be used.

Tongue

Cook like ham. Put in large pot with plenty of cold water, adding 2-3 table-spoons vinegar, a large onion, 1 table-spoon sugar, 12 allspice, a few cloves, 8 peppercorns. Cook until tender, leave in water till cool enough to skin. Roll it round, tie it with string, and press into large basin. Cover with a plate, put a weight on, and leave till cold.

Veal and Ham Pie

About 2 lb. veal, including a knuckle if liked, as it makes good jelly. Cut meat into chunky pieces, about 2 inches square and simmer slowly in water to cover till tender (about $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours). Let cool. Put a layer of veal in deep piedish, then a layer of pieces of cooked ham; pepper to season. Next comes a layer of slices of hard-boiled egg. Finish with a layer of veal. Fill dish $\frac{3}{4}$ full with the cold stock the meat was cooked in. Cover with flaky pastry (having put a small cup or pie funnel in the middle of the pie). Leave the pastry loose, as it shrinks a bit in the cooking. Cut it an inch or so too big, and turn under the overhanging edge instead of cutting it off. This saves putting an extra strip around the edge. Make the edge ornamental with a fork. Prick holes in the crust to let the steam escape. Brush over with milk to glaze. Bake in hot oven about $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours or until done, reducing heat last $\frac{1}{2}$ hour. Heat any re-

maining stock and serve with pie if eaten hot. This pie is also nice cold, especially if a rich short pastry is used instead of flaky.

Pork and Veal Pie

Cut into big dice $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. each of veal and pork. Slice an onion and saute in butter or substitute. Add veal and pork and simmer 20 minutes longer. Remove from heat and stir in about a tablespoon of powdered gelatine. Or perhaps you have boiled a knuckle of veal and obtained a good jelly which you could use instead of all water to cover. Add chopped parsley and season to taste. Pour into shallow piedish, cover with good pastry, flaky or short, and bake until crust is cooked. Put in refrigerator or cold safe. Serve cold with potato salad. An easy potato salad is just cold cooked new potatoes, sliced in $\frac{1}{2}$ inch slices, and some finely minced onion put into a bowl with a good salad dressing poured over. Toss a little with two forks to mix well. Garnish with tomato slices. If possible, add a generous quantity of diced celery, and always some chopped parsley to the salad. A dash of chopped mint is good, too.

Mince Pies

These are as much a part of Christmas as the pudding or the tree. The pastry is supposed to be flaky but many people (including Aunt Daisy) prefer a good short crust made with an egg. Make mince pies in big patty pans if possible, and don't be mean with the mincemeat. Some mince pies are practically all pastry (most disappointing!) Don't have too thick a crust, either, especially the top crust. If you have not made a rich mincemeat with brandy in to make it keep here is a quick one which can be used straight away: One pound raisins, 1 cup sultanas, lemon peel as liked, $\frac{1}{2}$ teacup orange or lemon juice, $\frac{1}{2}$ teacup brown or white sugar with about 1 teaspoon mixed spice added, a little shredded suet, or a lump of butter. Put in double boiler and simmer 20 minutes. If using straight away spread over pastry and grate over an apple and sprinkle with sugar. If not using straight away put in screw-top jar; it will keep a few weeks. Do not put apple in when making mince, add when using.

Picnic Pie

This was sent in by Dame Christina Massey for a cookery book prepared by the After-Care Association. Fry pork sausages till brown, but not quite cooked. Line deep piedish with flaky pastry. Put on sausages halved lengthwise, then rashers of bacon, sliced tomatoes, and lastly carefully break some eggs on top. Season with pepper and salt, cover with pastry. Bake till done. Serve hot or cold.

Meat Loaf

One pound topside steak, 1 egg, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. bacon, $\frac{1}{2}$ nutmeg, 2 cups breadcrumbs, pepper and salt: Mince topside and bacon together. Mix in breadcrumbs and beaten egg, the grated $\frac{1}{2}$ nutmeg, pepper and salt to taste. Mix well. Press into a basin and steam $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 hours. Remove basin from saucepan and press loaf down with a saucer

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