

Domestic

By Maureen

SOME "WHY'S" IN COOKERY.

"WHY CAN'T I MAKE GOOD BREAD?"

"Why do my omelets fall?" "Why is my pastry not flaky like my neighbor's?" These are some of the questions that trouble housewives which I shall try to answer (says a specialist in a contemporary).

"Why are not my results always the same?"

The chief reason for this is that you do not measure, and if you do, you do not measure accurately—all recipes nowadays are compiled with the idea of level measurements, and if one over-measures even ever so little, it upsets the proportions. Take a cup of flour, for example—did you ever measure a cup of flour, and then sift it and measure again? If you have, you have found that measuring after sifting gives you sometimes as much as a quarter of a cup more flour than just measuring right out of the barrel. Now, all recipes are for sifted flour, and if you do not sift it before measuring, you are putting too much in the recipe. A teaspoonful of baking-powder or spice means a spoon just level full and not one bit more. Then when the recipe says, "Sift the baking-powder with the flour," it means to make all the measurements, put them in the sifter, and sift all together before you start to make the cake, and not to wait and sift them in as you go along.

"WHY DO MY OMELETS FALL?"

Because they are cooked too fast, or over too hot a fire. All egg cookery should be done at a low temperature; the air in the bubbles of the omelet should have time to expand. Then you must dry out the moisture in the egg slowly, for when it is quickly taken from the fire it goes back into water and makes the omelet fall.

The same rule applies to meringues. They should be cooked in a very slow oven. Leave the door almost open and watch them carefully.

"WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH MY BREAD?"

Perhaps you put the yeast in the milk or water when it is too hot. Hot liquid will kill the yeast, and then the bread will not rise. Have the temperature lukewarm, and keep your bread at that temperature for the best results. Try to knead in all the flour necessary in the first kneading, or mixing, if you use a mixer. Knead until it does not stick to the board, and then put it to rise. If you use much flour, when you make it into loaves it is apt to leave a heavy line at the bottom of the loaf; use very little flour or better still, none at all. Let the bread rise until it is double its original bulk when rising the first time, and then let it rise again after it is made into

loaves. The second kneading generally determines the texture of the bread. Cut it open and see if the bubbles are evenly distributed before you form the loaf. Bake it until it feels light for its size. If you want a soft crust, wrap it in a clean cloth as soon as it comes from the oven, but if a crusty loaf is desired, let it cool on its side until perfectly cold. Sour bread is often caused by unclean utensils, sometimes by not scalding the milk or by letting the bread rise too long.

"WHY IS MY PASTRY TOUGH?"

Do you use enough fat? Good pastry must have at least a quarter-cupful of fat to a cupful of flour. Then cut the fat in; never use the fingers, and keep all the ingredients cold. Be careful to use just enough water to make a soft ball that will leave the sides of the bowl; too wet a dough means the addition of too much flour in the rolling, and a tough pastry. If the day is hot, cool the pastry before rolling, and do not handle it any more than can be helped. Roll with a light touch. Always bake it in a very hot oven.

"WHY DOES MY CUSTARD CURDLE?"

Because you have cooked it too long or at too high a temperature. Always cook a custard over hot water, and never let the water boil; keep it hot, but not boiling. Cook it until it coats the back of the spoon. For a baked custard, bake it in a pan of hot water, and see that the water does not boil in the oven. Try it with a knife to see if it is done, and if the knife comes out clean, it is, though it may not be brown.

Stir a soft custard constantly while cooking, and do not flavor it until it is cold. Never forget to strain a custard; this takes out the little hard cord which holds a yolk in place.

"WHY IS MY SPONGE-CAKE POOR?"

Perhaps it is baked in too hot an oven; this cake requires a very slow oven. Do not grease the pan for a sponge-cake, and bake it until it leaves the sides of the pan slightly. When you take it out of the oven, turn it upside down on a sieve, and do not take it out of the pan until it is cold.

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