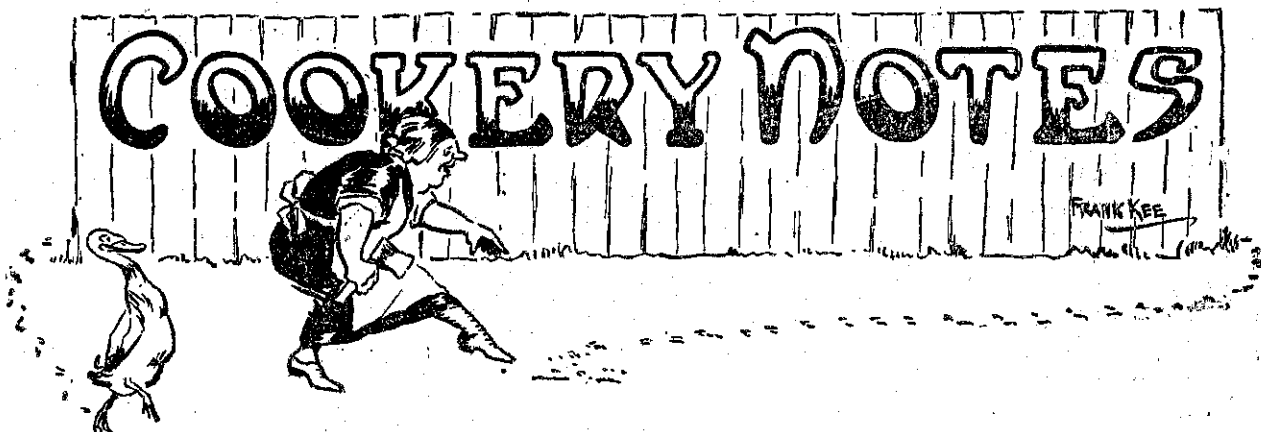


WE have pleasure in placing before listeners this unique series of articles by Mr. Frank Hilton, who has operated in Wellington City successfully for quite a number of years, at one time owning and controlling a chain of shops. He also held important positions with leading catering firms in the Old Country. Original recipes, compiled by one with the experience possessed by Mr. Hilton, are indeed rare, and we are sure they will find favour with our readers. They are, in the main, a reproduction of talks broadcast from 2YA.



THIS series of articles is to commence with the A.B.C. of cooking. The course of articles proposed to be given on domestic cooking is to be of an entirely home-made nature. Recipes will be given that could all be attempted and made quite successfully in any modern home. By the term "home-made" I mean that the mixtures are to contain nothing but what can be found in the ordinary home. No substitutes whatever will be recommended. For instance, if a recipe given says lemons, it means lemons, not something out of a bottle. If it says "pure butter," it means not a substitute. If eggs, shell eggs must be used, not egg powder or dried eggs, albumen, etc., and so on. There is a host of other substitutes that could be mentioned, but these few instances will suffice for you to understand my meaning as to pure ingredients and home-made cooking.

The art of cooking is a little different from other arts in this respect that there are many short cuts to perfection; quite different from, say, music, painting, or photography, etc. All these arts need years of practice to enable one to become proficient, but no so with cookery.

We now pass on to the question of utensils. So long as we have the necessary tools to work with, the less we have in the kitchen the better. First of all, we must have a pair of scales and weights or a correct spring balance of some kind; this is absolutely essential, as the recipes that will be given from time to time will contain very small amounts of powders, etc., and it is absolutely necessary to weigh them correctly. No capfuls or spoonfuls will ever be mentioned, as this crude method of measuring is ruled right out. Cups and spoons vary far too much in size. We also need a fair-sized mixing bowl, a paste or baking board, or a scrubbed table, as we are going to work on the bare boards. A small flour sieve is essential, about 12 inches across, and for the present we will need a rolling pin; the kind I recommend is a piece of round wood 16 inches long by 2 inches thick. There is no need for pins with fancy handles, etc. Roll the pin with the palms extended and the hands flat along the top edge. A little practice and this gives perfect results and evenness.

The Aeration Process.

BY aeration, I mean lightening or leavening process by which mixtures are made digestible. There are three methods of lightening or leavening, namely, baking powder, yeast, or eggs. For instance, you have all seen a pudding stirred. Ingredients are put into a basin, some liquid is added; the whole lot becomes compounded and does not in the least resemble any one component part; it even tastes and smells quite differently; its properties are altered, it is now digestible. It has lost some of the original qualities that went into the mixture and has taken on others that apparently were not there before the chemical process began.

Baking Powder.

NOW that chemical process is caused by the baking powder or other leavening agent in the mixture; and in order that we may commence our recipes properly here is a very simple recipe for baking powder. It will be the powder used in all the recipes to follow, and, if properly mixed it will never fail you and it is not expensive. The ingredients are:

One pound of cream of tartar and
half a pound of bi-carbonate of soda.

Both chemicals can be bought from any grocer. A good way to remember the quantities is to think of this: It is the most of the most expensive, that is, two-parts of cream of tartar to one-part of bi-carbonate of soda. These powders must be mixed by passing them through your flour sieve several times; thoroughly mixed together, this baking powder can be stowed in a jar or tin and will keep any length of time. Many of you have baking powders of your own fancy; these are quite good for many forms of cooking, but when we get along to the more intricate recipes their proportions may not quite suit or they may be too fast-working, etc., and the whole mixture may be spoilt. The powder recipe I have given is intended for the mixtures to be given later, but it will act quite well in any other mixture; so don't be afraid to use it for anything. The two other forms of aeration—yeast and eggs—will be explained when we come to recipes aerated by them.

Scones in All Varieties.

NOW for our first recipe—the humble scone. I wonder how many listeners know how many kinds of scones there really are. I have made over thirty kinds. Batch scones, date scones, grannie scones, cream scones, Scotch scones, Irish scones and girdle scones, potato scones, water scones, French scones, wheaten scones, sultana scones, Swiss scones, and oh! a host of others. I can't remember them all off-hand. All and each a little different the one from the other. Well, to-day we will just have an ordinary scone.

Take one pound of flour and put it into the sieve, add half an ounce of the cream of tartar and soda baking powder and a pinch of salt to taste. Now sieve all these together into the mixing bowl; then take quarter of a pound of butter; if it is firm work it quite soft on the board or table with your hands, then rub all into the sifted flour and powder until it is all incorporated and rubbed quite fine. This will assure your scones being of an even texture and keeping nice and moist. Then make a bay or hole in the centre of the mixture: that is, put your hand in and scoop it from the centre to the sides in the bay; put in 2oz. of sugar; pour on to that a little milk and try to dissolve the sugar or soften the grain. Then add some more fresh milk and make into a nice firm dough. Do not work or knead the mixture too much or the scones will become tough. Just mix them with your hands until all the milk is evenly incorporated.

It is useless for me to say how much milk, as some kinds of flour carry more milk than other kinds; and some ovens reach a higher temperature than others. But always remember this: for scones the hotter the oven the softer the dough. This means that a cook working with an oven at 300 degrees Fahrenheit would need a firmer dough than a cook working at 350 or even 400 degrees Fahrenheit, while both these heats will cook very satisfactorily. For best results we must remember to make our dough to suit our ovens.

However, so much for the mixing. Now we take our dough out of the bowl and lightly knead it into shape. There must be no wet patches; all must be nice and evenly mixed and put on to a floured table or board. Now we take our rolling pin and begin to roll it out, not forcing it, but gradually rolling it until we get the required thickness. If it sticks to the board we need a scraper. A good kind to have is an ordinary carpenter's piece of flat steel used for fining-up the surface of woodwork; quite an inexpensive article this makes an excellent board scraper, and you can also cut out the scones with it if you wish them square. Just flour the surface and press the scraper through the dough; the scones should then come apart quite easily and be placed into baking pans ready for the oven.

If you wish them round just cut them out with a round cutter. But remember to have as few trimmings as possible, as these if worked up too much become tough and hard; and, after all, what is nicer than a square scone? If you wish the tops glazed, brush off all the flour and paint lightly with beaten egg.



—If you haven't already heard this cooking hint over the radio, you'll welcome it now.
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