Farm and home

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THE housewife will readily appreciate the value of dried fruits in helping her to provide variety at mealtimes, especially in districts where fresh fruits are not readily available. Apart from this aspect, dried fruits, with their concentration of flavour and sugar, make welcome and fairly economical additions to the bill of fare. Many of the health-giving properties of fresh fruits are retained in the dehydrated products—iron and laxative elements being two of the more important.

The larger types of fruit such as apricots, pears, peaches and apples are mainly used as substitutes for fresh fruits, but the smaller varieties (raisins, dates, currants, sultanas) are more frequently used to add flavour and variety to cooked dishes. Prunes fall into a class of their own between these two groups and are usually marketed in a semi-dried state.

Most people make the mistake of adding too much sugar when cooking with dried fruits and so destroy the distinctive flavour. When fruits are dried, only the water is removed and the natural sugars present become concentrated. Some of the water is replaced by cooking or soaking but the sugar content is still higher than that of fresh fruit. This applies particularly to prunes which require very little extra sugar.

To cook dried fruits, soak them in cold water for 24 hours. Stew gently for 10 to 15 minutes, or until tender, in the soaking water. Where most of this has been absorbed by the fruit, a little more may need to be added. Dried fruits may be cooked without the previous soaking provided that plenty of water is used and they are cooked 30 to 45 minutes with the lid on the pan.

Just before the fruit is cooked add the sugar allowing ½ cup to each pound of dried fruit. A few slices of lemon added while fruit is stewing improves the flavour.

If prunes are very fresh and fairly soft they can be prepared simply by pouring boiling water over them and allowing them to stand overnight. The same result can be obtained by covering the prunes with cold water, just bringing them to the boil and leaving them to cool in the water. Sugar can be added to taste if required.

Badly-cooked or badly-prepared fruits are most unappetising. Any grittiness in the fruits is due to insufficient washing and cleaning. Where the fruit is not required to be used in a dry state, or if it can be left for two or three days to dry out again, it should be thoroughly washed before using. Place the fruit in a strainer or collander and hold it under a running tap, at the same time moving the fruit around to free dirt and loose stems; or stand the strainer in a basin of water and move the fruit around so that the dirt falls to the bottom of the basin. Dry the fruit by rubbing it in a clean cloth and spread to dry on a plate in a warm place.
Tough fruit is due to insufficient cooking while a mushy pulp is the result of over-cooking.

**DRIED FRUIT RECIPES**

Try some of these puddings on the family.

**Bread Pudding**

- 2 cups of milk.  
- 4 cups of bread crumbs.  
- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine.  
- 4 tablespoons sugar.  
- 2 eggs.  
- ½ cup of chopped raisins.  
- pinch salt.

Heat the milk to boiling point and pour this over the bread crumbs. Allow to cool. Beat the eggs, add the sugar, raisins, salt and melted fat. Add this mixture to the soaked bread crumbs and stir together. Pour into a greased pie dish. Bake in a moderate oven for 40-50 minutes or until the mixture will leave a knife cleanly.

**Plum Duff**

- 1 cup brown sugar.  
- 3 tablespoons butter, margarine or good fat.  
- 2 cups cooked prunes.  
- 2 eggs.  
- 1 cup flour.  
- 1 teaspoon baking soda.  
- pinch salt.

Beat the eggs, add the melted fat and the chopped and stoned prunes. Sift the flour, salt and baking soda and stir this into the egg mixture. Pour into a greased basin and steam for one hour.

**Raisin Pie**

*Pastry*—sufficient short pastry to line and cover an 8in. pie or tart plate.

*Filling—*

- 1 ½ cups of chopped raisins.  
- 1 ½ cups of boiling water.  
- 2 tablespoons sugar.  
- 2 tablespoons flour.  
- ½ cup chopped nuts.  
- Grated rind and juice of 1 lemon.

Line the plate with the short pastry. Cook the raisins in the water until they are soft. Mix the flour and sugar together and stir this mixture into the cooked raisins. Stir over a low heat until the mixture thickens and boils. Remove from the heat and stir in the nuts and lemon rind and juice.

Pour this hot mixture into the lined plate and cover with another layer of pastry.

Bake in a hot oven 30 to 40 minutes or until the pastry is cooked and a golden brown.

**Upside-down Pudding**

*Topping—*

- 2 tablespoons brown sugar.  
- 1 dessertspoon butter.  
- 1 dessertspoon lemon juice.

*Batter—*

- ½ cup sugar.  
- 2 tablespoons shortening.  
- 1 egg.  
- ½ cup milk.  
- 1 cup S.R. flour.  
- Pinch salt.  
- A few drops of flavouring.

Melt the butter in the baking dish. Add the brown sugar and lemon juice and mix together. On top of this mixture place a layer of cooked fruit—prunes, apricots, peaches. To make the batter beat the fat and sugar together and then add the egg. Add the sifted flour alternately with the milk. Pour this mixture over the layer of fruit in the baking dish. Bake in a moderate oven ¾ to 1 hour. Turn onto the serving plate and serve with the layer of fruit uppermost:

**Rhubarb-Raisin Pie.**

- 8 oz. good short pastry.  
- 1 tablespoon butter.  
- 3 tablespoons sugar.  
- 1 egg.  
- Grated rind and juice of an orange.  
- 1 ½ cups raw, chopped rhubarb.  
- 1 cup chopped raisins.

Line a tart plate with the pastry. Beat the fat and sugar together. Add the egg and lemon rind and juice. Stir in the rhubarb and raisins. Pour this mixture into the lined plate. Cover with a pastry top. Bake in a hot oven until the pastry is risen and set and then in a moderate oven until the filling is cooked (30 to 40 minutes).
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Steamed Devon Pudding

1 good tablespoon butter.
3 level tablespoons honey.
1 egg.
3 tablespoons milk.
6 oz. self raising flour.
Flavouring essence
3 tablespoons chopped sultanas.
1 tablespoon chopped nuts.

Beat the butter and honey together until soft. Add the beaten egg and beat again. Add the milk, flavouring and chopped sultanas and nuts. Lastly stir in the sifted flour. Pour the mixture into a greased basin and steam for 1½ hours.

Fruit Betty

2 cups dried fruits.
½ cup sugar.
1 cup fresh bread crumbs.
2 tablespoons butter.
A level teaspoon cinnamon.
Rind and juice of a lemon.

Partly cook the dried fruit and drain thoroughly. Mix the breadcrumbs, sugar, cinnamon and lemon rind. Place the fruit and breadcrumb mixture in alternate layers with small pieces of butter dotted between them in a greased pie dish, finishing with a layer of breadcrumbs. Add the lemon juice made up to half a cup with fruit juice or water. Cover the pie-dish with greased paper. Bake in a moderate oven 30 to 40 minutes. Remove the paper and replace the pudding in the oven until the top is brown. Serve hot or cold with cream or custard.

Vienna Custard

1 cup milk.
1 egg.
2 tablespoons sugar.
1½ cups diced bread.
3 tablespoons sultanas.
2 tablespoons chopped peel or the rind of a lemon.
2 tablespoons cream.
2 tablespoons sherry.

Beat the eggs and sugar, add the milk, cream, sherry, and fruit. Pour this mixture over the diced bread and allow to stand for an hour. Pour into a greased basin and steam for 1 hour. Serve with a sauce flavoured with wine or brandy.

SAVOURIES

Delicious savouries can be prepared quickly using prunes as the main ingredient.

Choose soft, fleshy prunes and remove the stones. Fill the cavities thus made with cream cheese, peanut butter or a savoury egg mixture. If these are being prepared in any quantity it is much easier to fill them with a forcing bag and nozzle as used for cake icing. Prunes can also be rolled in bacon and grilled or baked slowly with the bacon is just cooked. Use tooth picks to hold the bacon in place or thread the rolls on a skewer.

JAMS

Dried Apricot Jam

2 lb. dried apricots.
8 pints water.
5 lb. sugar.
¾ cup blanched almonds.

Wash the apricots and soak for 24 hours. Cook gently until soft. Add the almonds and the sugar and cook until the jam will “jell.” Bottle while hot and cover.

Apricot and Passionfruit Jam

2 lb. dried apricots.
8 pints water.
5 lb. sugar.
1 cup passionfruit pulp.

Follow the directions for the above recipe, adding the passionfruit pulp just before the sugar.

Fig and Rhubarb Jam

4 lb. rhubarb.
1 lb. sugar.
1½ lb. dried figs.

Cut the rhubarb into pieces and place in a basin sprinkled with about half the sugar. Allow to stand overnight. Strain off the liquid and add the rest of the sugar. Bring to the boil. Add the chopped rhubarb and boil for half an hour. Add the cut up figs. Boil further until the jam will “jell”.

545

Journal of agriculture  Vol. 5  1956
CAKES AND BISCUITS

Fruit Fingers

Biscuit mixture—
8 oz. flour.
4 oz. butter or margerine.
2 oz. sugar.
1 egg yolk.
pinch salt.
flavouring essence.

Filling—
4 oz. dates.
\( \frac{1}{4} \) cup water.
\( \frac{1}{4} \) cup chopped nuts.
1 tablespoon lemon juice.

Cream the butter and the sugar. Add the egg yolk and flavouring essence. Add the sifted flour and salt to make a stiff mixture. Use half of this mixture to line a baking tin.

Chop the dates and place in a saucepan with the other ingredients. Cook over a slow heat until the dates are soft. Cool and spread over biscuit lining.

Roll out the other half of the paste to cover the date filling. Bake in a moderate oven 10 to 15 minutes. Cut into fingers immediately.

Rice Cookies

2 oz. butter or margerine.
1 oz. sugar.
1 egg.
5 oz. ground rice.
3 oz. plain flour.
1 teaspoon baking powder.
3 oz. sultanas or other dried fruits.
1 oz. chopped lemon peel.

Sift the rice, flour and baking powder. Rub in the fat until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs. Add the fruit, peel and sugar. Add the beaten egg to make a stiff mixture. Use a little milk or water if the egg liquid is insufficient. Toss on a floured board. Roll out to \( \frac{3}{4} \) in. thickness. Cut into bun shape. Brush with milk and place strip of lemon peel across each one. Bake in a hot oven 10 to 15 minutes.

Wheatmeal Fruit Bread

4 cups fine wheatmeal.
1 teaspoon salt.
4 teaspoons baking powder.
2 tablespoons good dripping.
\( \frac{1}{2} \) cup golden syrup.
1\( \frac{1}{2} \) cups chopped dried fruits.
water or milk to mix.

Mix the wheatmeal, salt and baking powder. Rub the fat into the flour. Soften the golden syrup with two tablespoons of hot water. Add enough milk or cold water to make up one cup. Make a well in the middle of the flour and pour in this liquid. Commence stirring in the flour adding more liquid as required to make a stiff batter. Pour the mixture into a greased tin. Bake in a moderate oven for one and a half hours.

Currant Rice Fritters

\( \frac{1}{2} \) cup milk.
2 eggs.
2 tablespoons currants—other dried fruits.
1 tablespoon flour.
2 tablespoons cooked rice.
1 dessertspoon sugar.

Sift flour into a basin. Add one egg and then the other and beat together. Add the sugar, and beat for 10 minutes. Stir in the fruit and the rice. Drop in dessertspoon heaps into hot fat (deep) and cook gently until a golden brown. Drain and roll in a mixture of castor sugar and nutmeg or cinnamon.

Fruit Lace

Scone dough—
2 cups selfraising flour.
2 teaspoons fat.
1 cup milk.
1 dessertspoon sugar.

Filling—
1 cup dried fruits—chopped finely or minced.
1 apple chopped or grated.
1 tablespoon marmalade.
2 tablespoons brown sugar.
Grated rind of lemon.
1 tablespoon lemon juice.

Cook all the ingredients for the filling together over a gentle heat for two or three minutes. Allow to cool.

To make the scone dough sift the flour into a basin with a pinch of salt. Rub in the fat. Add the sugar and then the milk to make a soft mixture.
Roll the scone dough to a rectangle about ¼in. thick. Lift onto a greased tray. Spread the filling mixture down the centre of the oblong. On either side of the filling make 3in. cuts about 2in. apart through the dough, making the same number of cuts on each side. Take one strip from each side and cross them over the filling into a mock plait, pulling the strips down and keeping the ends inside. Continue lacing the strips, tucking the last two under. Bake in a hot oven 15 to 20 minutes. When cold, ice with lemon flavoured icing.

COLD WATER STARCHING

By BRENDA CLEEVE

With the current vogue for bouffant skirts, cold water starching has once more returned to the laundry routine. For really successful stiffening of full-skirted petticoats, cold water starch, or "raw starch," as it is sometimes called is required. This gives a much stiffer result and one which lasts longer than that obtained with boiled starch. When garments are stiffened in raw starch the heat of the iron actually cooks the starch into the material and it is this which gives the increased stiffness. Even after the garment is washed, quite a lot of stiffening is left so that it is not necessary to re-stiffen in the raw starch each time.

This starch is also used to stiffen beach hats and the cuffs, collars and fronts of evening shirts.

To make Cold Water Starch mix together:

3 tablespoons of starch and
1 pint of cold water.

Rub a cake of washing soap around the bowl until a light lather is obtained.

For successful stiffening, the garment must be completely dry and with any previous boiled starch rubbed out. Mix the starch around just before placing the garment in it. Make sure the fabric is thoroughly moistened with the starch. Rub the garment between the hands so that the starch is forced into the threads. Squeeze out any surplus moisture and, if the garment is a large one such as a petticoat, hang it up until some of the excess moisture has evaporated.

Raw-starched garments should be ironed while they are still fairly wet. Before ironing, rub the garment again to rub in the starch and wipe it over with a slightly damp cloth to remove any surface starch. If this starch is left on it will stick to the iron or leave white patches on the surface of the material.

Where possible iron one layer of the fabric at a time. On beach hats, cuffs, collars or shirt fronts where this is not possible iron very lightly on the wrong side and then on the right side. Stretch the garment into position before attempting to iron, as once the starch has been set into position the placement of the threads can only be altered by washing the garment and starting all over again.

Use a hot iron and work slowly so that the material is thoroughly dry before you move onto the next piece. If this precaution is neglected you will be disappointed with the results. If the material dries out while you are ironing, brush it over with a damp cloth to keep it moist.

After the starching has been completed there is no need to discard the starch, as cold water starching is quite extravagant on this ingredient. It can be used up by adding boiling water to make boiled starch for ordinary use. Alternatively, allow the starch to settle, pour off the water and dry the starch paste which remains. It can then be powdered up and used again.
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