1-1-1962

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Réchauffé - Polite Name for Rehash

By MARY LOU PAUL

Although every housewife tries to serve fresh foods, she often has food left over from the family meal. Rather than waste this food, she will reheat it for another meal. This reheating of food is necessary to prevent waste, but freshly cooked foods are, of course, to be preferred from every angle for nutrition, flavour and appearance.

The dictionary defines réchauffé as meaning a reheated dish or rehash, so although you may not realise it, each time you serve up a dish containing reheated food, you are serving a réchauffé.

In making one of these réchauffé dishes, it is essential that the food be not recooked but only reheated. This is partly because recooking destroys the vitamin value and nutritional value generally, and partly because it renders flavourless the food so treated. Also, since the food is already cooked, it is obviously unnecessary for it to be cooked again. Digestibility is also reduced by recooking.

As a rule, reheated dishes need added moisture and flavouring, but with a little knowledge and a good dash of imagination, réchauffé dishes may be nutritious and tempting to the appetite, as well as being an economical method of disposing of the cooked left-overs.

Almost anything in the meat, vegetable, or cereal lines can be used and in an almost infinite variety of ways, since almost any cooking method may be employed in reheating food. For example, they may be heated in a sauce, deep or shallow fried, or even baked. But since the food is only to be reheated and not recooked, it stands to reason that all food included in the dish be previously cooked and in the case of meat and fish, in a state by which reheating it is made easier and quicker, that is, finely sliced, flaked, or minced.

To make these reheated foods as nutritious as the freshly cooked foods, it is necessary to be fairly liberal with the parsley and lemon juice. Herbs, spices, lemon, onion, bacon, and similar ingredients can often be added to improve the flavour.

Many of these dishes are very old favourites with the family, one of the oldest and greatest favourites, especially for the children being "Bubble-and-Squeak", which is simply all those cooked left-over vegetables chopped up together and heated in the frying pan until brown and piping hot. Bubble-and-Squeak plus a fried egg or two is just what is needed for a tasty and quickly prepared breakfast which is a little out of the ordinary.

Some ideas for incorporating cooked foodstuffs into réchauffé dishes are:

Fish and Meat

Cooked fish may be used for fish cakes, kedgeree, fish pies, fish mayonnaise, and similar dishes where cooked fish may be combined with other previously cooked ingredients for the purpose of reheating.

Meat which may have been left over from the weekend roast or left from other meals may be made into curries, rissoles, shepherd's pie, or fricassées. For curries, it is a good idea to slice up the meat or otherwise reduce its thickness, then soak the small pieces in the sauce in which they are to be reheated for about half an hour. This allows the moisture—and incidentally the flavour—to soak through into the meat so that it does not become dry and unappetising. But however the meat is reheated, it is important that it should be minced or sliced or otherwise reduced to a small size in which it is easily and quickly reheated.
Rice

Leftover cooked rice is often very useful in an emergency. After heating over a pan of hot water it can be added to a curry, or it may be used for a rice custard, for kedgeree, or for savoury rice. If an unexpected visitor arrives and you have some cooked rice left it can easily be added to the evening’s stew to give the stew a new and unusual flavour, and also helps to “spread it further” and ensure that everyone has plenty of stew. In these and many other ways can “cold” cooked rice be used by the imaginative housewife.

Potatoes and Vegetables

Leftover potatoes are just as useful. They can be easily incorporated into such dishes as potato puffs or balls, potato scones, fish cakes, and potato pies. Leftover vegetables can always be chopped up together and heated to make the old favourite “Bubble-and-Squeak”, or when this is unacceptaible, almost anything can be put into fried rice.

Some Basic Rules

These are just a few examples of the variety of ways of reheating foods to make tasty dishes. There are plenty of others, but whatever the dish it is wise to follow a few basic rules when reheating food:

(1) Foods to be reheated must be used as soon as possible, while still fresh.

(2) It is essential to combine only cooked ingredients, or foods which do not require cooking—food must not be recooked.

(3) Foods lose flavour in the first cooking and, therefore, need seasonings and fresh flavours, such as herbs, lemon, spices, and so on added.

(4) Reheating dries food and destroys vitamins; hence the addition of extra moisture and also parsley and lemon juice is necessary.

(5) When reheating meats in a sauce, cook any raw ingredients before addition to the dish; also allow meat to steep in the cold sauce for a time, then quickly heat it through. This is done when making a curry using cooked meat.

(6) Add crispness by serving sippets or toast with the dish. Many reheated foods are served on buttered toast.

(7) Serve fresh or freshly cooked foods at the same meal (such as salads, fruit, vegetables) to make up for any loss of nutrients in reheating.

POTATOES WITH LIVER STUFFING

This is an unusual recipe from Vienna which is suitable for a one course meal and is quite inexpensive.

4 large potatoes (cooked in jacket).
1 calf’s liver.
1 small onion.
3 tablespoons butter.
salt and pepper.
½ cup sour cream.
grated cheese.

Cut potatoes lengthwise in halves, scoop out centre.

Stuffing:

Finely cut up liver. Heat butter in a frying pan. Fry onions, then add liver, stir and fry for three minutes. Mince, season with salt and pepper. Fill potato shells, arrange on an ovenproof dish. Pour cream over each half potato and sprinkle with grated cheese. Bake in a hot oven (400° — 425° F.) for 10 minutes or until well heated through and nicely browned.

“KEDGEREE”

1 cup cooked fish.
2 cups cooked rice.
1 teaspoon curry powder.
1 teaspoon jam.
1 tablespoon tomato sauce.
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce.
1 onion.
Dripping.

Fry the onion until browned. Add other ingredients. Heat thoroughly, then serve hot with toast or fried bread.
**POTATO PUFFS**

2 cups mashed potato.
1 egg.
salt and pepper (if necessary).
1 tablespoon flour.
flavourings, e.g. chopped parsley, chopped onion, grated cheese etc. if desired.
fat for frying.

Combine ingredients together, then drop in teaspoons into deep hot fat till puffed up and brown.

A variation of this is to use a little flour to form the above mixture into balls which are then dipped in egg and rolled in breadcrumbs before being fried. This variation is known as “Potato Balls”.

A second variation is “Duchesse Potatoes” in which the extra flavourings are omitted. The mixture is piped onto a tray and then brushed with a thin egg glaze. The fancy shapes are then browned in the oven and served hot.

**HINTS ON USING BUTTER**

Light, particularly bright sunlight, spoils the flavour of butter, so keep it in the dark. Butter absorbs odours readily, so store it away from strongly-flavoured foods, or in a plastic bag if you must put it in a refrigerator with fruit or vegetables. Butter should be stored in the refrigerator, but a day’s supply should, except in very hot weather, be kept in a cool spot in the kitchen so that it is readily spreadable when you come to use it.

The Australian Dairy Produce Board gives the following hints on handling and using butter:

1. Store butter in its wrapper in a cool, dark place. If you have no refrigerator, keep in a covered earthenware dish or butter cooler.
2. If you want the paper to come away from the butter quite cleanly, hold the packet under the cold tap for a few minutes before unwrapping it.
3. To prevent a skin forming on sauces that are to be re-heated, put a piece of butter on top and stir it in just before serving.
4. Chocolate icing won’t turn dull when it sets if you put a tiny piece of butter in it when mixing.
5. When making jam add a knob of butter to reduce foaming and the formation of scum.
6. A few dabs of butter added to fruit in a pie will prevent the juice from boiling over. Similarly, it will discourage the water from boiling over when cooking rice or pasta.
7. A little piece of butter melted and added to pancake batter just before using makes the pancake a nicer colour, improves the flavour, and prevents it from sticking to the pan.
8. The addition of butter to plain bread dough mixtures ensures longer keeping qualities.
9. Keep the parchment wrappers from your butter, and use them for making souffle cases, greasing moulds and tins, and placing over the breasts of oven birds.

Vegetables take on a new zest when cooked the butter way. Cut vegetables finely, toss in melted butter in a pan. Then with 1 tablespoon of water added let them steam gently with the lid on till just tender. With salt and pepper to taste they’ll brighten up the most flagging appetite at the dinner table. (And incidentally—with no water to drain off, no goodness is poured down the sink.)