

CHAPTER V

THE HOME DINNER

LESSON 22

MENUS FOR DINNER

How does dinner differ from the other meals?

“Everybody eats more at dinner,” was the answer to this question given by one member of the household arts class in the Pleasant Valley School. This may not be true always, but it is true that we usually make dinner a meal where we have soup, perhaps a meat dish like a roast, or a piece of boiled meat, more vegetables than at breakfast and supper, and some sweet dish that we call “dessert”; and even if we do not eat more, the food itself is “heartier.”

Here are three plans for dinners,

THE HOME DINNER

DINNER PLANS

I	II	III
2 hot dishes (as meat and vegetable)	Soup	Soup
Bread and butter	2 or 3 other hot dishes (as meat and 1 or 2 vegetables)	2 or 3 hot dishes
Dessert	Bread and butter	A relish (as jelly or pickle)
Relish	Dessert	Bread and butter
	Beverage	Salad
	Relish	Dessert
		Beverage

One of the hot dishes can be fish or shellfish, or baked beans; and when there are two vegetables we usually like to have potato, although rice, samp, or hominy can take the place of the potato.

It is really an art to put together dishes that belong together; so let us study this for a little time.

Why do certain dishes fit each other at one meal? Suppose we take Dinner II, and arrange it this way: potato soup, baked beans, boiled potato, boiled rice, bread and butter, rice pudding. Here is another menu: tomato soup, baked potatoes, stewed tomato, boiled greens, bread and butter, baked apples. Here is a third one: meat soup, meat, warmed-over fish, custard pudding made of eggs and milk.

Do these menus seem just right to you? Mollie Stark was sure that her father and brothers would not like any of them; and, although they might prefer the third one to the others if they were very hungry, there

seemed something wrong even with that. Miss James asked her to change them and make something better. Here is the first menu that Mollie planned: tomato soup, meat, boiled potatoes, string beans, apple tapioca pudding.

Here is another of Mollie's menus: potato soup, fish, stewed tomato, samp (in place of potato), and baked custard. Can you explain the difference between these and the first three? You may be sure that there are too many dishes of the same nature in each of those three. The first has too much starchy food; the second too much green vegetable and fruit food; the third too much meat food. We seem to crave a mixture. This is where our natural habit and desire are good. In the two menus that Mollie planned, you can see that the balance is better among the meat, the starchy, and the "green" foods. You notice that the dessert in the second menu balances better with the first than it would with a hearty dish of meat, for fish does not seem to "stay by" as meat does. Our appetite and nature agree about some things in our meals. Other things that we like, we seem to like because of some custom that has come to us from the past. When the Puritans of New England cooked their wild turkey at the first Thanksgiving, they probably made cranberry sauce from the wild berries gathered in the bog; the combination was pleasing, and we like it to this day. Some of our food habits are not so good; as, for instance, a breakfast of sausage, griddlecakes, and sirup.

Here is one simple rule that is a good one in making menus: where there is a good supply of the meat dish, then a light dessert, principally fruit, is best; but when the meat is a little short, have a dessert made with milk or with eggs and milk, or have suet pudding.

The plans given are suggestions only. Of course we do not want soup at every dinner, and if the soup has meat in it, we do not need any other meat. We should all learn moderation in eating our dinner, especially if we are very hungry at the beginning of the meal; and remember that, if there is a dessert, it is a part of the dinner. When we have eaten quite enough of everything else, and then take pudding or pie, no wonder that we find the latter giving trouble.

How much shall we have for our family? One rainy Saturday, when Mollie Stark was spending the day with Marjorie Allen, Marjorie said to her mother, "Please leave us all alone in the kitchen and dining room, and let us get dinner all by ourselves." Mrs. Allen took up a piece of sewing, glad to enjoy a quiet morning in the cheerful living room, with Grandmother. In about five minutes, open came the door from the kitchen, and Marjorie was saying, "Mother, how much tomato soup do you think we need?" Her mother laughed. Then they all had a little talk about the quantities necessary to serve of each dish. Mrs. Allen explained that in a family as large as hers it is not needful to plan so carefully for the exact amount, for left-overs can always be used; and that it saves labor and fuel to have

portions of certain dishes remaining, especially those that keep well. Marjorie remembered that, when she had visited her aunt, who lives in a small apartment in the city, it was a part of the planning of a meal to have very little left over, because the storage space was so small; whereas, in the Allens' home, and the Starks', there is the cool pantry and the large ice box.

This is the way Mrs. Allen helped the two girls to plan the quantities. There were nine people to serve: Grandmother, Mr. and Mrs. Allen, Mollie Stark, Barbara, her little sister and two younger brothers, and one man who was helping Mr. Allen. Mrs. Allen said that one learned by experience how much certain members of the family would eat of certain things, and that there was no fixed rule.

MENU	QUANTITY
Tomato soup	About $\frac{1}{2}$ pint each, 2 qts.
<i>Remarks.</i> 2 quarts enough. Grandmother does not take it.	
Pot roast	6 lb.
<i>Remarks.</i> What remained, to be used second time.	
Mashed potato	15 large potatoes
<i>Remarks.</i> If smaller potatoes, take two apiece.	
Sweet corn	2 doz. large ears of corn
<i>Remarks.</i> This might not be enough the first time that corn is served in summer.	
Bread and butter	12 or 15 slices bread. A large square of butter on each butter plate.
<i>Remarks.</i> More bread can be cut if wanted. The potato does	

not need more butter; if butter is eaten on the corn, everybody calls for more.

Apple pudding with baking powder crust.	2-quart baking dish large enough to hold eight or ten apples when sliced.
Foamy sauce.	Crust from a pint of flour.
	Double recipe for foamy sauce.
Coffee	1 pint.

Remarks. Mrs. Allen said that Mr. Allen and his helper could have a cup apiece, but it wasn't served for any one else; and Grandmother remarked that her digestion was good because she didn't take tea or coffee for dinner.

Pickles	None
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Remarks. Mrs. Allen said that the tomato was acid, and the apples slightly so; so no more acid should be taken.

Plan for cooking dinner. Then Mollie and Marjorie went back to the kitchen, and planned for cooking the dinner.

When it is time for dinner, everything needs to be ready at about the same time, so that everything can be served and everybody helped quickly. Do you think that this is an easy matter? One very wise man, who was getting his own breakfasts, said that he knew how to cook cereal, boil eggs, and make coffee, but that he never yet had been able to have them all ready at the same time! Mollie and Marjorie thought this dinner all out before they began. This is the way they planned it:

(1) See what things are already cooked, and what needs to be done to make them ready for the table.

(2) Notice what dishes take longest to cook, and start those first.

(3) Notice what food is best eaten just as soon as it is done, and what can stand awhile on the back of the stove.

(4) Notice what things you want to have cold, and see if you can put those on last.

A cook who can do all this, have everything on the table that needs to be there, all the hot dishes hot, and all the cold dishes cold, is really a very "smart" person. Here is an exercise for you: Write out the way that you think Mollie and Marjorie planned this dinner.

EXERCISES AND PROBLEMS

1. Consider the dinner that Mollie and Marjorie planned. Which food needs the longest cooking? Which the shortest? Which can be kept hot the most easily? Study the recipes. Each pupil should make a plan, and then compare notes in class.
2. Make several simple menus for dinner, and plan the cooking.
3. What are some of the most important things to remember in planning a dinner?

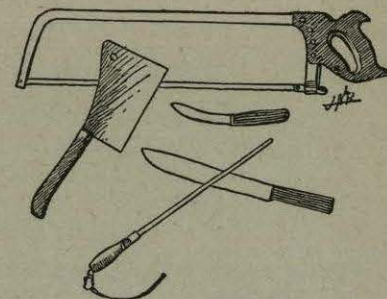
LESSON 23

MEAT AS FOOD

WHAT shall we do about meat?

The price of meat has risen so much in the last few years that this is an important question for everybody, both in the city and country.

Mr. Allen decided to study very carefully the raising of meat. He sent to the Bureau of Animal Industry, U. S. Department of Agriculture, for Bulletin No. 183, which gives very careful directions about butchering the different animals, curing and storing meat for winter, and making products like sausages and headcheese. When the other Pleasant Valley farmers talked about the matter at the Grange, they decided to follow Mr. Allen's example, and sent for this very valuable pamphlet.

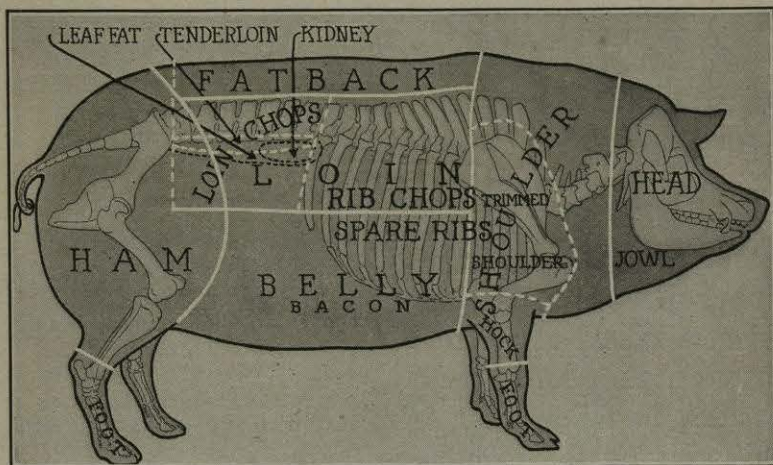


*U. S. Department of Agriculture,
Farmers' Bulletin, No. 183.*

FIG. 90. — Mr. Allen bought these tools for cutting meat.

Do we need meat as a food? When we can use milk, cheese, eggs, vegetables, fruit, and bread plentifully, there is much less need of meat than many people think. If it is our habit to eat it freely, we should not make a sudden change and leave it off immediately; but most people are much better in health when they eat meat but once a day. Meat gives us protein, fat, and mineral matter. Gelatin, which comes from the bones and tissue, is a protein, which is of use in the body. The juices of the meat which give it flavor have no food value. Some people seem to be able to digest meat more easily than the other protein foods, — fish, eggs, milk, and so on, — but this is not always the case.

When a great deal of meat is eaten, say three times a day, intestinal trouble may result, and too much acid is formed in the body. People who think that they



Courtesy of E. C. Bridgman, New York.

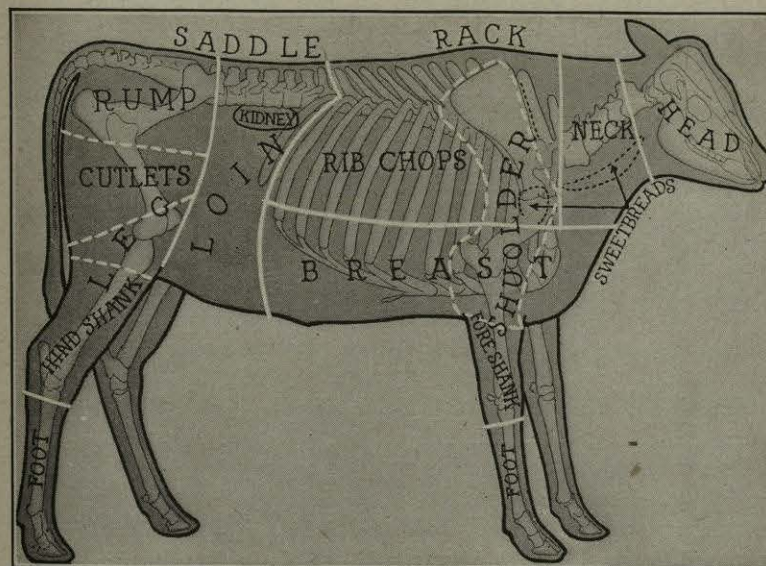
FIG. 91. — Cuts of pork.

must eat meat should drink water in large quantities and eat fruit and green vegetables.

Little children should not be given meat; for milk, eggs, and grain foods are better for growth, and the meat may take away their liking for these foods. Most people do enjoy the taste of meat, but we can learn to be moderate in its use. There are many human beings who never touch it, and who are well nourished, with bodies strong for work.

The cost of meat. Only when our meat comes from wild animals, who find their own food, is meat an in-

expensive food. Even when we kill and use our own animals, we pay for the meat in the food we give to them. The interest on the pasture land which cannot be used for other purposes, and our own labor in caring for animals,

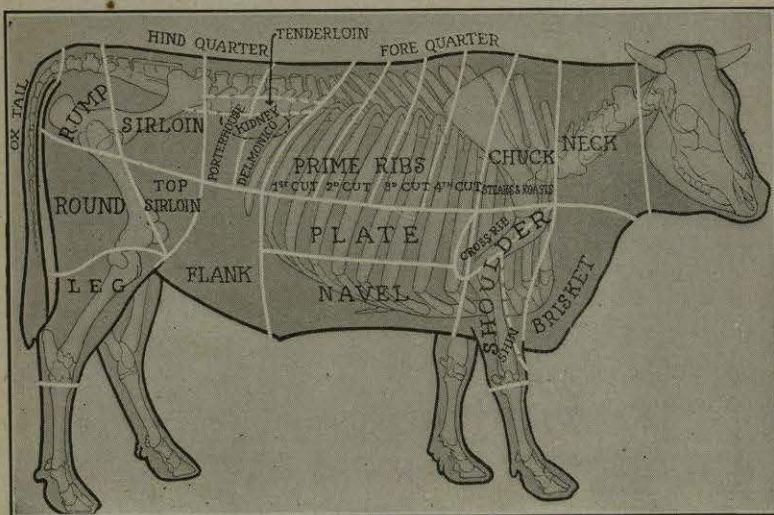


Courtesy of E. C. Bridgman, New York.

FIG. 92. — Cuts of veal.

housing them, and raising food for them, taken all together make it expensive to eat them. On the other hand, the milk, cream, butter, and cheese that they give us is a less costly food than their own flesh. This is true of beef at least. You can see that it is different with the hog, whose flesh is the only product. From the sheep we have wool as well as meat, but no other product that we can use as food. All these animals

make a return to the land, which is valuable. Taken as food to be raised, do you not see that the beef is the most costly to the farmer? Veal, the flesh of the calf, is less costly to the farmer than beef. Can you explain why? The calf should not be eaten when less



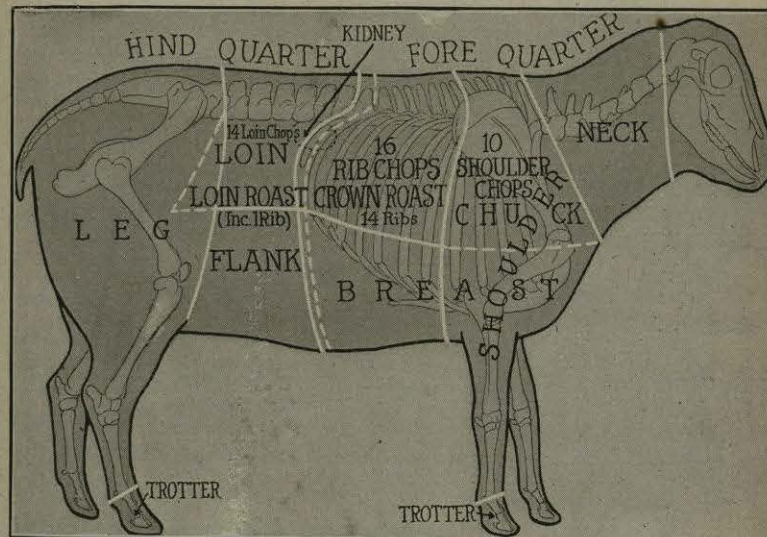
Courtesy of E. C. Bridgman, New York.

FIG. 93. — Cuts of beef.

than six weeks old. All this does not mean that we should not eat meat; but we should understand that it is not a cheap food simply because we raise it ourselves, for we pay for it in food and labor, and often can get better food value for ourselves from other things for less labor.

Look on page 170 again to see the values of eggs, milk, and beef; and you can see a little more clearly still why milk and eggs are on the whole cheaper than any meat.

What to be careful about in buying meat. Mrs. Allen was careful in explaining to Mollie and Marjorie that she bought from one butcher's cart rather than another, because this butcher was careful to buy good



Courtesy of E. C. Bridgman, New York.

FIG. 94. — Cuts of lamb and mutton.

beef, in the first place. Then, too, he had a clean place for hanging his beef, chilled by ice. His shop was very clean, scrubbed out often, and he fought flies all the time. His cart, too, was cleaned daily, screened from flies, and the meat covered from the dust of the road. The other butcher allowed flies to crawl over the meat, and his cart and shop had an unclean appearance and smell.

Miss James had talked about certain dangers from meat. If the animals themselves are unhealthy, there may be tiny living creatures in their flesh, known as



U. S. Department of Agriculture, Farmers' Bulletin 183.

FIG. 95.—Prime ribs of beef. a. Rolled roast. b. Folded roast. c. Standing roast.

parasites. The terrible disease trichina sometimes found in pork is one of these. Tapeworms come from beef. We can protect ourselves from these parasites by thorough cooking of the meat. The cooked meat should be pink rather than red and raw looking.

Another trouble, known as ptomaine poisoning, may occur when meat has been kept too long and has not been kept cold enough. The ptomaine is a poison formed by the bacteria that have developed in the meat. Then, again, the bacteria themselves injure us, and are now thought to be the cause of most of the sickness which has been called ptomaine poisoning.

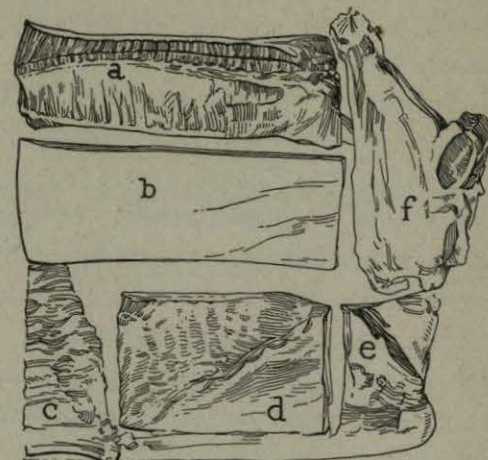
There are laws that require inspection of all meat. The Woman's Club in Pleasant Valley made a very

thorough study of this subject and worked with the local butchers until matters were very much improved.

Selecting meat for cooking. The cuts of meat vary somewhat in different parts of the country. We know that meat is either tough or tender, and that the difference is caused by the amount of exercise given to the different muscles of the animal's body. The flesh of the meat is muscle. You easily see that the muscles lying along the animal's spine and underneath the body are used

much less than the muscles of the neck and the legs. The tough cuts, therefore, come from the neck and legs, the tender cuts from the middle of the back, and the toughness increases toward the neck and the hind legs. The muscles of the abdomen give a tender and coarse-grained meat.

The tender meat is no more nourishing than the tough, but is easier and pleasanter to chew; and, as there is less tender meat than tough, the tender meat costs more



U. S. Department of Agriculture, Farmers' Bulletin 183.

FIG. 96.—Side cuts of pork. a. Loin. b. Fat back. c. Spare ribs. d. Bacon strip. e. Trim-mings. f. Leaf.

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than the tough. It is not good sense to buy porterhouse steak at 30 or 32 cents a pound, or to take it in exchange for eggs at that price. It is better to buy the round or rump steak and cook it in such a way that it loses its toughness. Can you explain why the meat of young animals is more tender than that of the full-grown creature?

How shall we cook our meat? Sometimes we wish to keep the juices in the meat, and sometimes we wish to draw out the juices for beef tea or soup, or for making gravy. If we buy a tender meat, we do not wish to make it hard by poor cooking. If the meat is tough, we should select some cooking process that will make the meat as tender as possible.

Let us try two simple experiments that will show us what to do when we wish to draw the juices out, or to keep the juices in.

TWO EXPERIMENTS WITH MEAT

Experiment A.

Chop finely a small piece of meat, squeeze out the juice with a lemon squeezer, and heat this juice in a saucepan. Notice a whitish substance that results. This is meat albumin that is affected by heat in about the same way that the white of egg is affected. We say that the albumin has coagulated.

Experiment B.

Apparatus. If possible, 2 glass beakers, 1 square wire net. If these are not available, use an ordinary tumbler and a small saucepan.

Method. a. Put a small piece of meat in a beaker with cold water, and allow it to stand.

b. Bring water to the boiling point in the beaker. Throw in a small piece of meat.

Compare the appearance of the two pieces of meat and the water in the two beakers. What has happened? You see that the juices of the meat have come out in the cold water. In the other piece you can see that the surface of the piece is cooked and that little of the juice is in the water. The heat of the water has coagulated the meat albumin just as it did in Experiment A. This has made a little crust over the meat and the juices cannot escape. A hot pan has just the same effect.

In order to understand what cooking does to meat we must know something more of the structure of the muscle. Each muscle is made up of bundles of tiny tubes held together by a strong substance that we call connective tissue. In tough meat the muscle tubes are thicker and there is more of the connective tissue. If you examine a piece of meat, you can easily find this tissue. The structure of the muscle is a little like that of an orange. Take a section from an orange, open it, and take out some of the single cells. These cells may stand for the muscle cells of meat that you can see only through a microscope. If you cut one of the tiny orange cells, the juice escapes, and this is what happens when the muscle cells are cut across. The juices will also pass through the wall of the cell when the muscle is heated and when the meat is put into cold water. When, however, we sear the outside of the meat, a crust is formed which keeps the other juices in.

Whether the meat is tough or tender, the most valuable protein stays behind in the muscle cell. The substances that we can draw out from the cells are called the extractives, because they *can* be extracted. The tough meat has as much nutritive value as, if not more than, the tender; and our problem is to soften the strong connective tissue. This can be done by long, slow cooking with plenty of moisture, which dissolves out the gelatin and softens the whole mass. A high temperature shrinks and hardens fiber, and the tenderest meat will become like sole leather, if cooked too hard and too long. This is true with tough or tender fowl.

Something more about cooking meat. In cooking pieces of tender meat, therefore, we sear the outside by using a high temperature at first, and then all that is necessary is to cook the meat at a lower temperature until it is done through. Thin pieces, like steak and chops, cook only a short time, while roasts and boiling pieces cook much longer.

Salted, corned, and smoked meats. Mrs. Allen always corns the beef for her family. She always selects solid pieces of beef, but some people like the plate beef with layers of fat in it.

Corning beef.¹

What. 100 lb. of solid meat with the bone out
 1¼ lb. saltpeter
 25 lb. of salt
 6-8 oz. of onion, chopped fine

¹This recipe is due to the courtesy of a southern butcher. In the original rule garlic was used instead of onion.

How to make. Rub each piece well with saltpeter, salt, and onion. Put the meat in layers in the barrel, and cover the top with salt. When this has stood 3 or 4 days, put a board on the top and put heavy weights on the board. This will be ready for use in 8 days. Mrs. Allen always takes it from the bottom first.

How to cook the corned beef.

Soak a piece of the right size in cold water overnight. In the morning wipe it off and put it in a kettle of cold water. Heat the water slowly and take off the scum. Let the water boil very gently for 4 or 5 hours, depending on the size. When served hot, let it stand a few minutes where it will not boil, before draining off the water.

To serve cold. Pull the meat apart with two forks, taking out poor pieces, and mixing up the lean and fat. Put it into a pan. A bread pan makes a good shape. Put another pan on top, and set flatirons on the pan. This presses the meat down, if you let it stand for several hours. When cold, it can be nicely sliced and is good for sandwiches or for a supper dish.

Boiled ham.

Ham is one of the smoked meats. A leg of ham makes an excellent dinner, and the left-over pieces can be used to the very last scrap.

Soak the ham overnight, trim, wash off, and put to soak again. Mrs. Allen always soaks hers two nights and a day. In the morning put it in a kettle of cold water, heat it slowly, and let it boil about 5 hours. A knitting needle is a good thing to test it with. When it is done, skim it, put it back in the kettle, and let it stand until cold. If you want to serve it hot, take it from the kettle, put it in a roasting pan, and let it bake until the fat begins to cook. Sprinkle it all over with fine cracker crumbs or flour, and bake it until the crust is brown.