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LEFTOVERS *WITH IMAGINATION*



EXTENSION SERVICE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
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LEFTOVERS WITH IMAGINATION

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The leftover presents a continuous challenge to the homemaker. When the original enthusiasm for the Sunday roast, the Christmas turkey, or the favorite chowder has palled, she is faced with the problem of how they should make their "second appearance" on the family table.

Many cookbooks today are written for the inexperienced and almost anyone can follow the recipe directions. But it takes a real enjoyment of food, imagination and experimenting to produce the family favorite from a little of this and that which accumulates in the refrigerator. "Disguising" them is no longer in vogue. It is more than that. Leftovers can and should attract attention, arouse interest and stimulate the desire to eat.

Rather than being the problem children of menu planning, leftovers can become smash hits at the table. All it takes is originality and courage to try the unusual. Perhaps these suggestions will help spark the imaginations of the homemakers with whom you work.

Seasoning Is Important

In preparing leftovers, seasoning is especially important, for herbs, spices or flavoring can transform a lowly dish to a dramatic one. However, it does require experimenting and tasting. If a new flavor is being introduced, it is wise to go gently. Curry is an example. To the inexperienced a little goes a long way, but when a taste for it has been developed, the amount can be increased until the dish really is a curried one.

If the homemaker would try what three young men did in their bachelor setup, some real gourmet dishes might be developed. These men experimented with both herbs and spices, adding just a little to various dishes, eliminating the ones not liked and in some cases increasing the amounts or combinations, until all agreed the results were perfect.

Accompaniments for Juices, Soups or Cocktails

A bit of leftover pie dough--rolled with sharp or blue cheese added--can be cut in straws or rounds, or rolled and cut as pinwheels. Bake and serve, or store in a tight tin container for future use.

When making pie dough, save the extra dough and to this add celery seed and blue cheese, onion juice or any other seasonings your fancy may dictate.

Cinnamon, grated orange or lemon rind, and a bit of sugar will make an appetizing addition to the pastry rounds to serve with fruit juices.

A slice or two of leftover breakfast bacon chipped and added to the jar of peanut butter will prove a quick and tasty spread for crackers, bread or toast...or chip and add it to a salad.

The bit of leftover fish--really too little to use as a main dish--can be used for a delicious canape. Mash fish with mayonnaise, a little lemon or orange juice, and a dash of Tobasco or Worcestershire sauce. Spread on rounds of bread, split biscuits or crackers, and serve cold, or brown under the broiler for a few minutes and serve hot.

Flaked leftover fish with chopped pickle and mayonnaise will make a good salad stuffing for a tomato. Serve either hot or cold.

Soups

Many soups are improved by aging for a day--especially chowders and soups made from meat stock. Vegetable soup can be strained, the clear stock reseasoned (perhaps a bouillon cube added) and made into jellied concomme. Don't throw away the strained-off vegetables for they can be used, chopped fine, to stretch the hamburger or meat loaf, or blended and added to a bit of gravy, or a can of mushrooms to make a sauce for the meat.

Cream soup provided a very good sauce for vegetables, either as a creamed vegetable or in a scalloped dish. A cream of celery, onion, mushroom, corn or tomato, for instance, is an excellent sauce for casseroles or a base for souffles. Warm the leftover soup, add sharp cheese and use as a sauce for asparagus on toast. Other vegetables, especially those of the cabbage family, can be used in place of asparagus.

Make your own cheese spreads by adding cheese to a warmed thick cream soup in the top of a double boiler, adding pimentos, chopped olives and chives. Pack in jars in the refrigerator for future use. The spreads can be better in flavor and are cheaper than those purchased ready-mixed.

Meats

With leftover meats the possibilities are almost limitless. With the price of meat as high as it is, it is wise to see that none is wasted. Some families like a roast and feel that although the initial cost is high, it goes farther than steaks, chops, or even hamburgers or stew meat.

Hash need not be "low man on the totem pole" of menu planning. With proper handling it can become a far more sophisticated dish than cartoonists or comedians would have us believe. It can be just well-seasoned, dry minced meat, or it can be moistened with leftover gravy, milk, cream (even sour cream), cream sauce or soup--with or without onions, peppers, potatoes, or chopped vegetables.

A piece of soup meat or some leftover stew can emerge as a good-to-look-at and good-to-eat dish if it is ground, seasoned, moistened with gravy or soup, and used to fill the center of a straight-sided baking dish or casserole which has been

buttered and lined with cooked rice or fine noodles. Bake in a moderate oven until well-heated. Turn out on a platter and sprinkle with chopped parsley or chives. Serve with leftover gravy, tomato or mushroom sauce poured around the mound of meat and rice (or noodles).

Another variation is to make the ground meat--and it need not be just one meat; it can be a combination of meats, or meats and vegetables--into pastry rolls or pinwheels. Use either pastry dough or a biscuit dough. For the rolls: Roll the dough into a rectangle. Shape the chopped meat mixture into a roll about one and one-half inches in diameter. Place it along the edge of the rectangle of dough and roll dough until the meat is covered by the crust. Cut into desired lengths. Place on a greased pan and bake until the crust is browned. The pinwheels are made and cut like a jelly roll. Spread the dough with the meat mixture, roll up, cut in slices about one inch thick, place on greased cookie sheet or pan, and bake. Serve with stewed tomatoes, catsup, gravy or mushroom sauce. Pieces of meat from the bone of a roast can be added to a spaghetti sauce or ground and made into a sandwich filling. Bits of minced ham, chicken or veal are delicious added to an omelet, scrambled eggs, or cut in small strips and added to a tossed salad.

Meat pies from stews, with pastry, biscuit or mashed potato topping, are always popular. Try a well-seasoned meat turnover in a lunch box in place of the usual sandwich.

Vegetables and Fruits

Vegetables reheated are apt to be unattractive, lacking in flavor, and will lose vitamins in the process. Try a casserole by adding freshly boiled, diced celery and onion to the leftover vegetables and top with an undiluted can of cream soup--chicken, tomato or mushroom--or grated cheese and bread crumbs.

Leftover broccoli, brussels sprouts or cauliflower can be placed in a shallow dish, topped with a cheese spread and browned under the broiler. Placed on a slice of boiled ham or cold chicken, this combination will be a main course easily prepared and a welcome change from the usual fare.

Cold vegetables well marinated with a French dressing and served with lettuce or added to a mixed salad will take the place of separate servings of vegetables and salad. Freshly diced tomato added to this dish increases its taste- and eye-appeal.

Almost any combination of cooked or cooked and raw vegetables can be blended and used in soups or sauces. Finely chopped, they may be added to salad dressing, meat loaf, croquettes or hamburgers. Again they might be reseasoned--onion, celery seed, chives, parsley, Worcestershire, a bit of herb such as tarragon--and a little stiff cream sauce added. Shape as croquettes, dip in egg and crumbs, and bake or saute...thus giving the leftover a new personality.

For stuffing peppers, tomatoes, squash, egg plant or cabbage leaves, the combinations of vegetables, crumbs, rice and meat are limited only by the cook's imagination. As in all leftovers, if it tastes good before it is cooked, it will taste better afterward. Tasting is important all along the line.

Salads pose a problem only when prepared as a large salad. A small amount of tossed or chef's salad is often left over. This is good chopped and added to mayonnaise when serving a sliced tomato, cucumber or potato salad. The portion of tossed salad also can be mixed with a sandwich spread, or even added to a soup (French dressing included).

A tomato aspic is just as delicious served hot as a soup. If necessary, stretch with a beef or chicken consomme or bouillon cube. It also can be added to a vegetable soup.

If some mixed fruit salad is left over and cannot be used attractively in a fruit cup, it can be stewed with added sugar and used as a tutti-frutti sauce--or cooked until thick and used as a jam for toast or as filling for a cake. Grated lemon or orange rind will improve the flavor of any fruit combination. Cooked cut-up fruit may be added to mincemeat or a cranberry-raisin-apple combination for harvest pie.

Desserts

A loaf cake which has become too dry can appear as a party dessert. Slice and toast or crumb the cake. Place in a dish, add a custard sauce, chill and top with jam, whipped cream or coconut. Fruit may be combined with the crumbs.

A crumb crust for a pie is delicious when made from cake or cooky crumbs, either white, spiced or chocolate. It is easier to crumb cake or cookies when they are not too dry. Place on paper napkins in a shallow pan and dry thoroughly in a slightly warm oven. Sift or roll well for an even crumb and store in the refrigerator or a cool, dry place.

A more elaborate dessert is easily made using angel food or sponge cake. If there is only a piece or two left, use it in individual molds. Make a pattern of fruit in the bottom of the mold using sliced peaches, canned pineapple, cherries, grapes, orange sections or just well-drained fruit cocktail. Cover the fruit with broken pieces of cake. Pour over this a warm ready-mix or a gelatin mix made from fruit juices. Place in the refrigerator to chill. Unmold and serve with cream, custard sauce or cut-up fruit.

Fruit Bettys made with crumbled cake instead of bread will cut down on the sugar and butter needed.

Cake crumbs with a little brown sugar and cinnamon added are good for topping on an open-faced fruit pie.

Fine, sifted white cake crumbs with white sugar and grated lemon rind, sprinkled lightly on a lemon chiffon pie, is a change from whipped cream and is kinder to the figure and the purse. When used as a topping, chocolate crumbs, nuts, and a bit of cinnamon give a pleasing texture combination to cornstarch puddings and pies.

Frequently, when making pies, there will be a little left over filling. If it is of a pudding or custard type, it can be baked without a crust so that a member of the family who cannot eat pastry can still enjoy the dessert.

If there is a little leftover pastry dough, cut it in rounds with a large cookie cutter, bake and store to use another day to top either a stew, stewed fruit or apple-sauce.

A little extra pie filling, such as lemon meringue or any of the pudding-type fillings, may be thinned with either fruit juice, milk or cream and put into sherbet glasses for another meal or used undiluted as a cake filling. It is good to remember desserts eaten with a spoon should be less stiff than those eaten with a fork. A little leftover fruit from pie-making can be used in a turnover or a tart, or sometimes saved for use in filled cookies.

Too many times a little fresh fruit is allowed to spoil when it might be used. Cook it for a sauce or a jam, use it in fruit whips, in a gelatin dessert, or add it to griddle cakes, waffles or muffins.

Leftover griddle cakes spread with jelly or jam, rolled up, reheated in the oven and served with powdered sugar or a lemon sauce will be enjoyed for dessert.

Bread

Leftover bread is perhaps the most wasted item of food in many homes--yet it has innumerable uses. If bread puddings are not popular with members of the family, the bread can be used for any number of fruit Bettys.

Fine crumbs (made by drying the bread in a warm oven, then putting it through the food chopper) are handy for breading chops. Crumbs, salt, pepper and a generous amount of paprika is a good combination to use for breading meats.

Fish, sliced liver, sliced egg plant brushed with melted fat and then dusted with this crumb mix may be baked quickly in a hot oven (500°) for 12-15 minutes. This combination emerges looking and tasting better than when done in a frying pan; Furthermore it is much less greasy.

Bread cut into tiny squares, or crumbed, dried and mixed with herbs and stored, saves time when stuffing the holiday bird. Again, cut the crusts from not too dry, thinly-sliced bread and make waffle toast in the waffle iron. Complete drying in the oven and store for use with soups and salads, using it as a melba toast.

What to Do With Odds and Ends

The small piece of cheese may be shredded and added to a salad, either tossed, green, vegetable or Waldorf. Add it to a little cream sauce, scalloped potatoes or onions, or grate it and add it to the dough for an apple pie.

A little pickle, chopped olives--ripe or green--and shredded cheese added to baked beans make them "Italian Baked Beans."

An extra egg white with a glass of tart jelly beaten very stiff is a delicious quick cake frosting. An egg white beaten with applesauce is a simple dessert.

An extra egg yolk may be added to mayonnaise, cream sauce, scrambled eggs, custard, quick breads. It also can be dropped into simmering water, cooked and chopped into salads or sandwich spreads.

Suggestions for the use of sour cream are given in many cookbooks. It is delicious (slightly sweetened if desired) served with fresh fruit or fruit pies. A dab on a bowl of tomato or beef soup lends a finishing touch to the soup course.

Leftover whipped cream may be dropped by spoonfuls onto a pan and quickly frozen, then removed and stored in the freezer for future use.

Use fruit juices from canned fruits in fruit punch. Add one strip of cucumber peel to punch to give a delightful fresh taste. Lemon juice is usually needed to make the punch less sweet. Carbonated water or ginger ale may be added for pep and sparkle.

Leftover cereals (rolled oats, grits, cream of wheat, rice), finely chopped spaghetti and noodles are good extenders for meat loaves and croquettes.

Chop and save green celery leaves. Store them in a jelly tumbler in the refrigerator to add to vegetables, salads and meats.

Dry parsley and celery leaves by placing them on paper towels in a very low oven. When dry, rub through a coarse sieve and store in a tightly closed jar--preferable a brown glass jar--in a dark cupboard to avoid fading. Both add much flavor to soups, salads, meats or vegetable dishes. Be sure to remove all stems--even small ones--from parsley before drying.

Ideas for transforming a plebeian leftover into an aristocrat are virtually without number. The important thing is that today's homemaker needs to be encouraged to give full rein to her imagination. By lifting leftovers out of the mundane and dramatizing them, she will no longer be "disguising" them; she will be creating works of art. She will learn the sense of satisfaction which comes from being an "explorer of food."

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