

9-1938

EC9918 Company Dinners

Mabel Doremus

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Company Dinners



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE EXTENSION SERVICE
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COOPERATING

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Acknowledgment is made to Miss Matilda Peters, Associate Professor, Foods and Nutrition Division of the Home Economics Department of the University of Nebraska, for her assistance in the preparation of this circular.

Company Dinners

MABEL DOREMUS

THE sharing of food has been a pledge of friendship from ancient times down to the present. Company for dinner can mean fun and a pleasant long-looked-for visit with some very dear friends. It is unfortunate that to some homemakers, company means only much worry and work and results in overwrought nerves and a stormy disposition. There is no doubt that every homemaker wishes to entertain easily, whether plans have been made for company or whether the dinner is necessarily impromptu, as when her husband unexpectedly brings a friend home for dinner.

Unexpected entertaining is often the most delightful if the homemaker is ready to meet the situation. The secret of this seems to be that the hostess herself enjoyed the occasion and had a good time. Possibly the reason she had a good time was that she had not become exhausted beforehand with preparations. One author tells us that if the hostess has trouble enjoying her own impromptu dinner parties she should make believe she has just walked in on someone else's party and hasn't a care in the world.

Many traits of a charming hostess spring from within, but a homemaker who feels the lack of some of these desirable talents can cultivate them. Foremost in her mind, of course, is consideration of the happiness of others. This is becoming easier in this present age, characterized by increased simplicity. When there is present an air of genuine hospitality, radiating from a gracious hostess who is calm, poised, and friendly, elaborate table appointments are unnecessary. The homemaker can learn to make the most of what she has. Deficiencies in linen, silver, and dishes can be overcome more easily than lack of genuine friendliness, generosity, and kindness.

Another sensible present-day trend is to serve a simple well-balanced selection of foods. *It is no longer considered fashionable to serve long menus of heavy foods.* More to be desired is wholesome food well cooked and well served, in an attractive but unpretentious manner. Most successful are the dinners carefully planned and served to appeal to the guests present. The company dinner is not the place to test new dishes.

The meal hour is often the only time the family is together in these days when there are so many outside interests and distractions. Let us make the meal hour a real social get-together, a time to relax and enjoy family associations.

There is a good opportunity here, too, for training younger members of the family to assist in meal preparation and service. The eight-year-olds often develop real enthusiasm when allowed to help beat the eggs for the cake or arrange the sandwiches on a plate. Even younger children are deeply interested in food preparation, and this is one of the times that participation in household activities is a joy and a privilege.

Children a bit older delight in having their home open to their friends. The wise mother who aids such hospitality sees more of her own children, enjoys her children's friends, and renews her own youth. In the home where there is a wholehearted welcome and perhaps the lure of food, one often finds happy groups gathered. Here they have wholesome entertainment and friendly companionship. Such occasions enable the children to become familiar with small courtesies performed by host and hostess and to cultivate proper poise.

Company dinners should be very little different from ordinary family dinners except possibly for more careful menu planning and table setting. Some families have practice company dinners with only the members of the family present. They set the table and use the same appointments they would for company. This helps children to become familiar with certain dishes and silver which may not be used every day and saves embarrassment when company is present.

Lita Bane, chairman, Department of Home Economics, University of Illinois, says "If a family has insisted upon good standards of food, conversation, and manners as everyday habits, expanding the family group to include guests causes added work, to be sure, but not worry."

Good taste, good sense, and simplicity govern the use of our rules of etiquette. Custom also has its influence. If sincerity of words and actions tops all of these, we can't go far wrong.

Invitations

An invitation should be in keeping with the occasion. For informal entertaining, invitations may be telephoned or written, or the guests may be personally invited. If the invitation is telephoned, the conversation is natural and gracious. If it is impossible to give invitations either personally or by telephone, a note may be written. There are occasions when a homemaker might by telephone issue an informal invitation the day of her dinner. This would necessitate immediate acceptance or regret. Of course, every invitation carries with it the obligation of a prompt and definite acceptance or regret, if possible, within forty-eight hours. Invite to your home dinners, groups of congenial people with similar interests.



Introductions

The purpose of an introduction is to promote friendly relations among people. A gracious correct introduction proves helpful in enabling people to feel welcome and at ease. Always present a gentleman to a lady, an unmarried lady to a married lady, and a younger person to an older person.

Formally, the words most suitable are "May I present?" and the acknowledgment or response preferred is "How do you do?" Example: "Mrs. Doe, may I present Mr. Goodrich?" In an informal introduction the names may just be mentioned as "Mrs. Martin—Mrs. Wood," or one may say "Sally, I want you to meet Mr. Smith." If one does not hear the name spoken, it is proper to ask the person introducing to repeat it. This would be unnecessary if we could all learn to make unhurried introductions with names pronounced distinctly.

A brief word concerning the person being introduced often eases the situation. For example one might say: "Mother, I want you to meet Betty Jones, who has just joined our club." If one is seated when introductions are made one rises when introduced to an older person or in deference to a guest. A gentleman always rises when introduced to a lady.

Men usually shake hands with each other upon an introduction. A woman may shake hands with a man if he is someone she is particularly glad to meet, an elderly man, or a special friend of a member of the family whom she wishes to know. When two women are introduced they may shake hands unless they are at a distance from each other. In that case nod, repeat the name, and do not rise. A person coming into a group and being presented to them does not offer his hand first. A very young man presented to an older one waits for the older man to take the initiative, which the older man should do instantly. It is courteous to shake hands with a hostess upon leaving.



The Hostess

When the time for the dinner arrives, the house is in pleasing order and the hostess ready to greet her guests at their arrival. It is important that the hostess take time to rest before the dinner. She will then be alert and interesting. If the hostess has planned her meal carefully she will be able to welcome the guests at the door herself. She is not hurriedly finishing the meal preparation in the kitchen, leaving someone else to act as hostess. At all times the hostess needs to appear to be getting as much pleasure out of the occasion as anyone else. It is much easier if the hostess' smile is not just assumed. If she considers hospitality a gracious privilege,

she is never bored. She herself should enjoy the meal, the planning for it, the anticipation of it, and the event itself.

At informal meals the hostess leads the way to the dining room. The hostess directs the guests where to sit and makes the motion to be seated. She leads the conversation into suitable channels, taking care to include everyone present and to avoid unpleasant topics. Topics should be of general interest to the group.

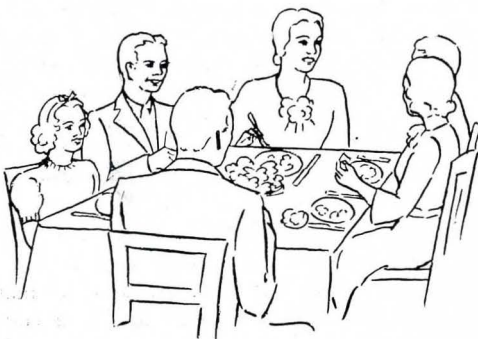
The Host

The host may welcome the guests as they arrive and introduce them to the other persons present. He has need of certain very definite qualities. The friendly host has the interests of his guests uppermost in his mind and is thoughtful and considerate of them. Adaptability enables a host to fit into any occasion. Tact is the expression of kindliness, the desire to please, trained to appropriate expression. When the hostess is occupied with last-minute preparations for the meal the host has an opportunity to cooperate by seeing that the guests are entertained and put at ease. The host assists lady guests near him to be seated. At the table the host has a joint responsibility with the hostess for the conversation.

The Guest

When one accepts an invitation to dinner he has assumed certain obligations. Among them are punctuality and an effort to enter into the spirit of the dinner and "fit in."

The popular guest has perfect manners, is well groomed, and has enthusiasm and vivacity without being boisterous. He can contribute in some way to the entertainment of all if only by being agreeable. One should stand behind the chair at the table until the hostess indicates that it is time to be seated and



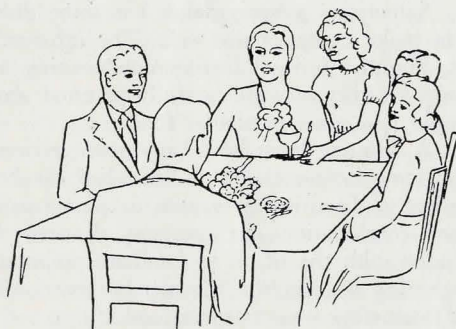
then be seated from the left side of the chair. It is courteous to eat some of all foods which are served. A guest might comment about some dish that he especially enjoys, but the meal table is not the place to talk mainly about food. Enter into the conversation but never monopolize it. Remember that successful conversation includes listening interestedly to what others say. Never notice any irregularity in the workings of the household that might cause embarrassment to the host or hostess.

When the meal is finished, place the napkin on the table unfolded if you are a guest for one meal, folded if a guest for a longer period. Arise from the table, from the left side of your chair, when the hostess gives the signal for doing so.

The Children

If the older members of the family are well-mannered when company is present, but are careless and thoughtless in courtesies when the family is alone, proper behavior is made to appear unimportant. In order that good table manners do not appear artificial to children, the family needs to live them every day.

Whether they are guests or members of the family, children should be given the same consideration as grown-ups. It is advisable to include them in the introduction. Children should not monopolize the conversation or constantly interrupt elders at the table. Neither should they be asked to sit at the table without speaking at all.



A child who is constantly nagged is rarely well-mannered. If you would have courteous children, always speak to them courteously.

At the table, if the mother wishes, the children, either boys or girls, may assist with the serving. This saves the homemaker many steps, allows her to enjoy her guests, and is valuable training for the children. Such participation in helping to serve the family meals is often decidedly an important factor in personality and character development. When serving, the child who waits on the table places his or her napkin partially folded at the left side of the plate and rises quietly. The children may be seated at the table next to some congenial person or another child. A son or daughter who is assisting with the serving could be seated at the left of the hostess to be near to receive directions. A young child who needs to be helped could be seated near a parent or an older child.

The Menu

A successful company dinner menu is planned to permit some early preparation. If some parts of the meal can be prepared the day before, the hostess is freer to enjoy her guests when they arrive. Preparations that could well be done the day before the dinner include such tasks as cleaning the silver, filling salt and pepper shakers, checking over linens, and preparing ice-box rolls or desserts. The day before the dinner it is advisable to do all the food preparation that can be done. When planning a menu, be careful not to include too many foods that require last-minute preparation. Many homemakers find a written plan of great value in making sure no part of the dinner is forgotten. This plan may include the guest list, menu, grocery list, and schedule of work. Such a plan may often save the worry and fear that something is forgotten and is often a means of avoiding confusion and foreseeing emergencies.

The dinner itself, which is neither too meager nor too lavish and has a touch of originality that tempts the appetite, will be sure to please. The popular hostess has probably acquired her popularity in part by noticing and remembering dishes which her friends especially like. Some homemakers keep a memorandum of these dishes in a book and refer to it when planning meals for friends.

Sometimes a homemaker has some dish in which she specializes and can make exceptionally well. The informal dinner is a good time to use it. Slightly unusual foods are interesting but a simple meal may become more distinctive with carefully planned accessories or an individual touch applied to some particular food.

A "dinner guest book" or menu section in a card file proves practical for some homemakers. A loose-leaf notebook will serve the purpose excellently. In this are written or pasted especially palatable and attractive food combinations for company dinners. Sometimes recipes are also included with the menu to facilitate preparation. When the homemaker is expecting a guest she consults her notebook or scrapbook for suggestions of interesting ways to serve food.

Compare the two menus which follow from the standpoint of the hostess' convenience when entertaining company:

I.

Broiled T-Bone Steak
Mashed Potatoes
Buttered Fresh Asparagus
Lettuce, Tomato, and Cucumber Salad — French Dressing
Parker House Rolls — Butter — Apricot Marmalade
Orange Shortcake — Whipped Cream
Coffee

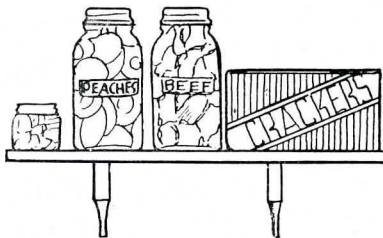
II.

Swiss Steak or Beef Balls en Casserole
Scalloped Potatoes
Parsley — Buttered Carrots
Perfection Gelatin Salad — Mayonnaise
Whole Wheat Dinner Rolls — Butter — Conserve
Pineapple Orange Ice Cream — Angel Food Cake
Coffee

Emergency Meals

Many homemakers have learned from years of experience to be prepared at all times for the unexpected guest. Friends who drop in without a special invitation because they enjoy coming are usually the friends most welcome. Impromptu entertaining is not formal, and has a distinct charm. We may offer "pot luck" but actually there may be very little

luck about it when an ingenious homemaker prepares a hurried menu from



carefully planned supplies which she has on hand to meet emergencies. The modern homemaker strives to avoid being helpless in an emergency and equips herself to be completely efficient for all occasions.

Different names have been given to the supply of foods which has possibilities of company dinner menus lurking in its midst. Some homemakers call it a hospitality shelf or cupboard, some an emergency meal shelf. Some of the foods that prove invaluable on this shelf are crackers, jellies and jams, relishes and olives, canned fish, canned beef, canned vegetables, tomato juice, peanut butter, canned soups, canned frankfurters, baked beans. The more perishable foods such as bacon, cheese, and eggs find a place on the emergency shelf in the refrigerator. There may be many canned foods on this hospitality shelf that can be prepared from home-grown foods such as fruits, vegetables, meats, and specialties. The homemaker might add to her special shelf jars of particularly luscious spiced peaches, an unusually clear sparkling jelly, or some tender young peas. It would be well to keep this emergency shelf in mind as the home canning is being done. Be sure to replenish the "unexpected company" cupboard as foods are used so that it will be ready when another occasion for its need arises.

Buffet Meals

The buffet meal has a delightful informality which is most desirable. It makes possible the entertaining of more people at one time than the homemaker could otherwise manage. It is an economical method of entertaining because of the type of food that is served, and it is convenient since much of the food can be prepared in advance.

Food may be placed on the buffet or dining table or the two together may be used, from which guests are asked to help themselves. For buffet meals small tables may be placed about the house for the convenience of guests. If one prefers not to use tables, the food may be served on trays. If the meal has two courses, the guests may return to the table and serve themselves again or the hostess may pass the second course to the guests.

Company Dinner Menus

Menu I

	Chicken Fricassee *
Normandy Carrots *	Potatoes on the Half Shell
	Pineapple Finger Salad *
Twin Rolls —	Butter — Conserve
Orange Cream *	Macaroons
Coffee	Milk

Menu II

	Tasty Meat Balls *
Escalloped Potatoes	Spiced Peach
	Mixed Vegetable Salad
Cloverleaf Rolls	Butter
	Fruit Tarts
Coffee	Milk

* Recipes for starred dishes appear in following pages.

Emergency Meals**Menu I**

Country Ham with Horse-radish Sauce
 Candied Sweet Potatoes
 Spiced Crab Apples
 Vegetable Salad Bowl
 Bread — Butter — Conserve
 Apricot and Graham Cracker Delight *
 Coffee Milk

Menu II

Canned Meat Turnovers and Gravy *
 O'Brien Potatoes
 Buttered Peas and Carrots
 Pear Salad
 Bread and Butter Pickles
 Rolls — Butter — Jelly
 Chocolate Sponge Roll *
 Coffee Milk

Buffet Meals**Menu I**

Tuna Fish and Corn Casserole *
 Radishes Celery Curls
 Fruit Salad in Lettuce Cups
 Refrigerator Rolls Strawberry Preserves
 Gingerbread Frosted with Cream Cheese
 Coffee

Menu II

Chicken Loaf with Mushroom Sauce *
 Orange Glazed Yams * Relish Plate
 Molded Cranberry Salad
 Rolls — Butter — Preserves
 English Toffee Ice Box Pudding *
 Coffee

Recipes**Chicken Fricassee**

1 3-lb. chicken	1 egg yolk
2 T. butter or lard	3 cloves
1 c. chicken stock or water	1 bay leaf
1 T. flour	3 whole allspice
½ c. milk	Salt and pepper

Cut up the chicken as for stewing. Brown in pan with butter or lard. Cover with chicken stock or water, add seasonings. Simmer until the fowl is tender, strain the cooking liquor and add the flour mixed to a paste with a little cold water. Add milk and cook until thickened, stirring constantly. Add the beaten egg yolk, which has been mixed with 2 T. cold milk. Heat and pour the sauce over the chicken and serve.

Normandy Carrots

2 c. carrots cut in 2-inch slivers	2 T. butter
½ c. sugar	¼ t. salt
½ c. vinegar	¾ T. cornstarch

Parboil the carrots in salted water until tender; remove and drain. Stir the cornstarch into the vinegar, add the sugar and salt, and boil five minutes. Add the butter, stir until melted and reheat the carrots in the mixture.

Pineapple Finger Salad

1 can long sliced pineapple
 1 pkg. cream cheese
 Maraschino cherries
 Lettuce

Soften cheese with syrup from the pineapple until of spreading consistency. Spread drained long pieces of pineapple with cheese. Arrange two on each serving. Divide each slice into three sections with cherries. Serve choice of salad dressing separately.

Orange Cream

2 eggs
 6 T. sugar
 5 T. orange juice
 2 t. lemon juice

Speck of salt

Separate yolks from whites. Beat yolks slightly, add sugar, orange and lemon juice, and salt, and cook as a soft custard. Fold in stiffly beaten egg whites and chill.

Tasty Meat Balls

2 lbs. ground beef
 1 c. stale bread crumbs
 2 eggs
 $\frac{3}{4}$ t. salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ t. pepper
 Few grains nutmeg

Mix together and make into balls about two inches in diameter. Fry out $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. of fat salt pork and add 4 T. of flour, stir until well blended. Then add $3\frac{1}{2}$ c. meat stock or $1\frac{3}{4}$ c. meat stock and $1\frac{3}{4}$ c. tomato juice. Season with salt and pepper and when boiling add meat balls. Cover and bake at 350° for $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 hours. Veal may be substituted for beef. Tomato sauce may be poured over these.

Apricot and Graham Cracker Delight

3 c. graham cracker crumbs
 2 c. cooked and sweetened dried apricots
 or canned apricots and juice
 6 T. whipped cream

Crush graham crackers. Arrange in sherbet glass in layers with apricots. Top with whipped cream.

Meat Turnovers

1 recipe for biscuit dough
 2 c. canned meat
 1 T. fat
 1 T. minced onion

Melt fat in pan. Add onion and cook 5 minutes. Add meat and heat thoroughly. Pat out biscuit dough to $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thickness and cut into about 4-inch squares. On one-half of each, place a generous spoonful of meat. Fold over the other half of the dough. Seal the edges. Bake in a hot oven (450° F.) 12 minutes. Serve hot with gravy made by adding the left-over meat to a white sauce.

Chocolate Sponge Roll

4 egg whites
 $\frac{3}{2}$ c. sugar
 4 egg yolks
 1 t. vanilla
 $\frac{1}{3}$ c. cake flour
 $\frac{1}{4}$ c. cocoa
 $\frac{1}{2}$ t. baking powder
 $\frac{1}{4}$ t. salt

Beat egg whites, add sugar gradually, and continue beating until well mixed. Beat egg yolks until thick. Add vanilla. Sift flour, cocoa, baking powder, and salt together twice. Combine whites and yolks and fold in the flour mixture. Line pan with waxed greased paper and spread cake mixture evenly. Bake 12 to 15 minutes at 375° F. Turn immediately onto slightly dampened cloth; remove paper and quickly trim off crusty edges with a sharp knife. Roll like a jelly roll and wrap lightly in damp cloth until partly cool. Unroll, spread with whipped-cream filling, and roll again.

Whipped-Cream Filling

Whip 1 c. cream and add to it 3 T. sugar and $\frac{1}{2}$ t. vanilla.

Tuna Fish and Corn Casserole

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 No. 2 can whole-kernel corn | 6 T. butter |
| 1 7-ounce can tuna fish | $\frac{1}{2}$ c. flour |
| $1\frac{1}{2}$ c. bread crumbs | 2 c. milk |
| 1 t. salt | 1 t. ground mustard |
| $\frac{1}{4}$ t. pepper | 1 egg |

Make a white sauce using the $\frac{1}{2}$ c. flour, 4 T. butter, 2 c. milk, and salt and pepper. Take from stove, beat in the egg, the ground mustard, and half the salt. Butter half the bread crumbs and add to the white sauce. Turn into a well-buttered casserole and sprinkle buttered crumbs over the top.

Chicken Loaf with Mushroom Sauce

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 4 c. chicken (dark and light meat) | 1 t. salt |
| 1 c. fine bread crumbs | $\frac{1}{4}$ t. paprika |
| 2 T. chopped pimento | $\frac{1}{8}$ t. pepper |
| 4 eggs | Dash celery salt |

2 T. minced onion

Chop the chicken fine or put it through a food chopper. Add bread crumbs, pimento, and well-beaten eggs. Add salt, paprika, pepper, celery salt, and onion. Taste mixture and if desired add extra seasoning; the amount will depend upon how much seasoning was used in the stock when the chicken was cooked. Mix well and put into a well-greased bread pan or square baking dish. Brush top with egg and dot with bits of butter. Place in shallow pan of hot water. Bake in hot oven (400° F.) for about one hour. Baste occasionally with chicken stock or with melted butter and water, half and half. Serve with mushroom sauce.

Mushroom Sauce

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|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 c. canned mushrooms | $\frac{1}{2}$ c. chicken stock |
| 2 T. butter | $\frac{1}{2}$ c. mushroom stock |
| 2 T. flour | Salt and pepper |

Drain mushrooms, slice, and sauté in butter. Add flour and mix well. Add chicken and mushroom stock and bring to boiling point, stirring constantly to prevent lumping. Season with salt and pepper.

Orange Glazed Yams

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 6 yams or sweet potatoes | $\frac{1}{4}$ c. orange juice |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ c. brown sugar | 4 T. butter |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ c. granulated sugar | |

Wash the yams and boil until nearly done; drain and peel. Cut them into thick slices and lay them in a buttered casserole or shallow baking dish. Make a sauce by mixing the sugar and cornstarch, adding the orange juice, and cooking, stirring constantly, for about 5 minutes. Add the butter and when it is melted, pour over the potatoes, and bake for 25 to 30 minutes in a moderate oven. Honey may be used for sweetening if desired. If decoration is desired, place orange sections, freed of membrane, over the top of the potatoes.

English Toffee Ice-Box Pudding

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 2 c. powdered sugar | 1 c. chopped walnut meats |
| 2 T. cocoa | 1 t. vanilla |
| $\frac{1}{4}$ t. salt | $1\frac{3}{4}$ c. vanilla wafer crumbs |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ c. butter | 2 eggs |

Sift sugar; measure and sift with cocoa and salt. Cream butter; add mixture and cream. Add unbeaten egg yolks, nuts, vanilla, and egg whites. Put wax paper in bottom of a pan. Put in layers of mixture and crumbs. Chill and serve with whipped cream.

Dressing up Everyday Foods

Use the ring mold for changing the appearance of salads, vegetable-meat combinations, or one-dish meals with rice and macaroni.

Butter servings made into balls provide a different touch to meals. These may be shaped with two spoons and a fork print may be put on afterwards, if desired.

When serving buttered carrots and peas an attractive platter or oval dish arrangement may be made by placing the carrots in the center and heaping peas at both ends of the dish.

Cut biscuits and meat-pie biscuits in rounds, crescents, and diamond shapes.

The biscuits for strawberry shortcake may be cut in three graduated sizes. They may be arranged in a tier, the smallest on top, with strawberries between biscuits.

Grated cheese is delicious served on top of a piece of hot apple pie.

Melted butter served with waffles is a convenient variation.

Instead of serving salad on a separate salad plate, vary the service by using a bowl with fork and spoon. There are lovely wooden salad-bowl sets that one may purchase. This method of serving is especially suited to shredded lettuce and raw vegetable salads.

The next time you serve soup, drop a few crunchy croutons on top of each serving.

Have you varied the breads you serve recently? Not only can one make delicious yeast breads such as raisin, graham, rye, plain rolls, and orange rolls and coffee cakes, but also there are numerous interesting quick breads. Try cheese biscuits, piping hot muffins, popovers, or cornbread.

Notched cucumber slices add novelty to an ordinary salad. To make these, cut lengthwise grooves in the cucumber before slicing crosswise.

Radish roses are a decorative touch on the salad plate.

Some of the most refreshing fruits during the warm weather of late summer are melons. Make balls of muskmelon or watermelon and serve in a stemmed sherbet glass with a sprig of mint.

In strawberry season, surprise the family with a breakfast plate of luscious red berries with the stems left on arranged in a circle around a mound of powdered sugar.

Individual fruit pies or tarts with or without whipped cream are interesting changes from ordinary pie. Don't forget the latticed crust for variety also.

An attractively arranged plate of two or three varieties of cheese with small round crackers brings in a foreign touch as a dessert.

For breakfast oranges are appetizing when broken in sections and arranged petal-fashion around a spoonful of powdered sugar.

Slice apples, soak in lemon juice, and spread with soft cheese. These make a tempting salad when placed in a crisp lettuce cup and served with a tart dressing.

Another salad of unusual flavor is one made of slices of well scrubbed carrots, cut to paper thinness, crisped in ice water and spread with peanut butter. Dot each slice with a tiny round pimento or sweet pickle.

Stale cake served with tempting butterscotch, fruit, or chocolate sauce makes an economical and tasty dessert.

References

For information on table service and etiquette, see Nebraska Extension Circular 951, Table Service in the Home, by Miss Florence J. Atwood. Suggestions in the preparation of this circular have been secured from the following:

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When We Entertain, by Lloyd V. Church, Iowa Agricultural Extension Service, Ames, Iowa.
Your Meals and Your Manners, by Roberta Hershey, Michigan Agricultural Extension Service, East Lansing, Michigan.
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