

History of the Kitchen

by

Flora E. Ballou.

Outline.

A. Introduction.

B. Early.

1. The Kitchen of Past Generations.

2. Early English Kitchen.

3. An Old-time Fireside.

4. England from 1066 to 1216.

C. Later.

I. Foreign.

1. England.

2. A Royal Kitchen.

3. France.

4. Italy.

5. Norway.

6. Spain.

7. China.

8. Belgium.

9. Germany.

10. Cuba.

II. Domestic.

1. Miscellaneous.

a. A Ship's Kitchen.

b. Electrical Kitchen.

c. An Ideal Kitchen.

History of the Kitchen.

At what period in the world's history man began the cuisine, the most learned are unable to determine. Hardly in that Paradise from which all tribulation was excluded for there is no doubt that many ills, digestive or otherwise came in with cooking.

The word kitchen is found in many languages and means a cooking room; it is derived from the Latin word meaning, to cook. The kitchen is the heart of the house; out of it come the issues of life, not only in a literal physical sense but also in a spiritual sense, to a far greater degree than we are apt to remember. It may be called the engine of the household.

Dr. Talmage has said, "The kitchen is the most important end of the household. If that goes wrong, the whole establishment is wrong. It decides the health of the household and health settles everything. The kitchen knife has cut off the brightest prospects; the kitchen gridiron has consumed a commercial enterprise; the kitchen kettle has kept many a good man in hot water. It will never be fully known how much of the history of the world was effected by good or bad cooking." As the songs of a nation show what a nation is, so in lesser or greater degrees do the kitchens.

The Kitchen of Past Generations.

The front door was never opened except on marriages, funerals, New Years' days, the festival of St. Nicholas or some such great occasion. As to the family, they always entered in at the gate and most generally lived in the kitchen. To have seen a numerous household assembled around a fire, one would have imagined that he was transported back to those happy days of primeval simplicity which float before our imaginations like golden visions. The fireplaces were of a truly patriarchal magnitude, where the whole family, old and young, assembled, master and servant, black and white, nay, even the cat

and dog enjoyed a community of privilege and had each a right to a corner.

English Kitchen of Early Times.

When Caesar came to Britain, the Britons lived in a single room which was half underground. Little cooking was done in this, the open air serving better than the shut-up half-tent room. As the Britons learned lessons of a form of elegance from their conquerors, they improved their kitchens, though so slowly that it was in the middle ages before the kitchen had been raised to the dignity of an established apartment, which, with its pantry and buttery was regarded as an important part of the house. It was separated from the hall, which was the chief room of the house, by a screen. In those old times, nearly all the castles had several kitchens. The old English kitchens had uses unknown to modern times. The beasts used for food were skinned and dressed in the kitchens. Then, too, the kitchen was a sort of repair shop for ploughs or wheels, as in the kitchen was found a fire fit for a blacksmith shop, such a fire as was needed by a cook when quantity, not quality, was the aim.

An Old-time Fireside.

There was a brick oven and ash pit with swinging iron doors. The whole rested upon huge stone abutments which filled a large space in the cellar beneath and formed a fit support for the mass resting upon it. In the fireplace hung the crane and from ~~the~~ ^{it} swinging the pot hooks or hangers on which the pots and kettles were suspended over the fire. Frying pans or skillets, covered frying kettles for doughnuts, iron saucepans and the like, all had slender little legs so that they might stand over small beds of coals raked to one side of the hearth for the purpose.

The mantel over the fireplace was very high and over it and ~~over it~~ and around it were all sorts of utensils. Besides the tongs, shovel,

bellows, brushes, etc., which stood against the fireplace, or hung on the jamb hooks, there was a long iron which looked like a poker and was often used for that. Hanging near the mantel one would see the long-handled warming pan with perforated brass cover, which, when filled with hot coals, was used to iron over the beds on cold nights to bring their temperature a little above the freezing point for their occupants. The lantern of pierced tin was here also and tin moulds, in which candles were run. On hooks over the fireplace were poles on which hung strings of dried apples, rounds of pumpkins, onions, red peppers, and possibly some bunches of seed corn and a few herbs. Near the fireplace was the wooden "settle" and spinning-wheels.

England 1066-1216.

Much of the cooking might be done in the open air; the kitchens were often temporary structures and the kitchen utensils would be among the most important furniture that the travelling household carried with its train. In the ordinary kitchen built of timber, the fire would, of necessity, be in the middle of the room. The kitchen seems also to have been the slaughter house and the meat was either eaten in summer perfectly fresh from the knife of the butcher, or formed part of the store which had been salted down for winter use.

Modern England.

There is an air of home-iness about an English house which assures one immediately that the kitchen is well-planned and well ordered. The kitchen department of a good house at the present time consists of several rooms, usually basement, even in the country. There is a generous room, the kitchen proper, with its range at one side, a long centred table where the servants eat, tables at two sides for work and carving, if, as in many instances, the meats are carved before being served. On the wall hang platters and

other dishes, making rather a picturesque appearance. The refrigerator, which is so common in the United States, is quite unusual in England, practically unknown outside of the cities and rare then.

Occasionally one finds a gas stove, very rarely a kerosene stove and never any kind of electric appliances. To the kitchen belong the scullery where the dishes are washed, the buttery and the store rooms. Even in small houses there is a kitchen, a scullery and a buttery; while large country houses have rooms also for cooking the food of cattle and sometimes of the servants all work for them being carried elsewhere than where the meals for the family are prepared. An English kitchen will often have as much floor space as a small flat. This space, and the many rooms are the survivals of the customs in regard to the first kitchens. The English city kitchen is even more depressing than the American basement and the burning of soft coal makes an eternal conflict with saucepans.

A Royal Kitchen.

In England, even at the present time, an open fire is largely used for roasting meat, poultry, game, etc., it being placed on a spit and slowly revolved during the process of cooking. This plan, in fact, is made use of in the kitchen at Windsor Castle where the joints and roasts for the royal table are cooked.

The kitchen is an enormous affair where a staff of from twenty-five to thirty-five cooks are engaged in the preparation of the King's dinners. The cook stands by the open fire with a long ladle in his hand from which he occasionally pours the drippings from the pan, over the various roasts on the spits. The products of combustion as they pass up through the chimney operate a fan wheel which is connected by gears and belting to the spit before the fire, causing it to slowly revolve. It is seldom that the

inside of this great kitchen is seen by the tourist, as it requires the formality of an introduction to the steward to be able to visit it.

France.

The Paris kitchen is just large enough to allow of limited movement. Often it is unlighted, save from another room and it has absolutely no space for storage of any sort. The chief feature is the great chimney with the tiled table or framework, in which from four to six various shaped openings for the charcoal fire are found. There is no need to think of baking, since the baker sends every form of bread and roll known to his craft; there is no demand for a great fire by which a joint might roast, since a joint is not a part of a civilized menu. One result of the tiny kitchens and the absolute absence of space for stores, is that nothing is kept on hand.

French economy has not yet taken hold of the problem of using heat without waste. Two thirds of the heat supplied by the soft coal goes up the chimney without doing any one or anything the slightest good. Where stoves are used they have the tiniest coal-box and the cook uses just enough fuel to cook the articles in hand, carefully watching every bit of coal, adding it piece by piece. The favorite material for cooking utensils is copper for the kettles and the brown earthenware for bake pans.

Italy.

In such a kitchen the fireplace is of the purest order of Italian architecture; in other words it is quite invisible for the smoke which rises from a fire built on a stone platform three or four feet high, big enough to roast an ox, if need be, about which all the family gather in chill autumn evenings, since this is the only point where warmth is to be had. One can cook ~~by~~ by this fire, it is true, but the demand upon it, by its owners, is of the slightest, and a formal dinner or supper evolves itself with difficulty.

Norway.

The kitchen is a separate house, as indeed are some of the other offices, all grouped about a central one. One side of the kitchen has beds for the servants; in the corner is a stone range, overshadowed by a low roof, which carries off the steam and flame of cooking. There is a sort of tin tub for baking bread and great vats for boiling. Another house is devoted to preserved meats, smoked and salted, reindeer ham and tongues being a specialty.

Spain.

In every kitchen of the middle classes and in all cottages of the peasantry will be found a solid brick structure, built against the wall and with a flat top. Toward the hollowed center of this, from the interior sides extend little apertures, perhaps eighteen inches deep, with openings a foot square. A round hole from four to six inches in diameter is cut from the top of each of these pigeon-hole-like compartments, called hornillas. Charcoal is lighted in the hornilla, fanned to a white heat by wisps of rushes or by tiny bellows and all food is thus cooked, chiefly in cumbrous earthenware ollas or pots.

Another kitchen has a long range with its coal-bin built into one end and would seem to indicate that a great amount of cooking could be done, but the fire-box is small. The kitchen is almost bare of utensils with which to cook. Patent conveniences such as flour sifters, raisin seeders and measuring glasses have never been heard of. Even rolling pins and bread boards are unknown for the bread and pastry are furnished from the bakery every morning.

A Chinese Restaurant.

We pass into the kitchen which opens from the inner room. All is confusion and noise. The cooks shuffle about upon their queer two-story

slippers preparing various extraordinary messes and stirring sundry concoctions in queer looking pans upon the red hot stoves. There is a row of brick ranges which radiate a fierce heat and here and there is an iron cooking range also red-hot. Back of this is a big pile of kindling wood reaching half way to the dingy ceiling. Mixing tables and odd kitchen paraphernalia fill the room and dishes of onions and various less familiar condiments lie on the tables. Over a chopping block hang rows of fowls and ducks dressed in some curious way, so that they shine as if they had been varnished. A whole pig hangs beside the fowls having the same curious, shiny, brownish appearance which seems to distinguish the Chinese mode of meat cooking. The place is not overclean, to speak mildly.

Belgian Kitchens.

The kitchens of Belgium are usually small and light. Instead of closed cupboards for cooking utensils, there are shelves for these, which shine as if they were merely objects of beauty. It is not far wrong to call them this for the copper and tin reflect everything. Other dishes are of Delft, or of blue lined with porcelain and the colors with the tiled sides and floors and the reflections of lights make a bit of still life that appeals to the artistic housekeeper. One excellent feature in these kitchens which ought to be adopted everywhere is that of tiled floors and walls. The stove is always set with tile bricks, or their equivalent, beneath and back of it, and this explains why the fire rate is so low in European countries. Tiles form the floor of the kitchen; sometimes the walls are entirely of tiles but this seldom, the cost preventing, but often tiles are half the height of the room. This method of finishing is cleanly, keeps out all manner of crawling things as well as dust, is easily washed off and prevents fires.

These kitchens are sometimes fit to be called the "Housekeep-

ers Delight". One in Ghent, a tiny room not much larger than a New England pantry, had flooring of blue and white tiles, the same forming a background for the stove and a dado all around the room. Above the blue and white were the plain white and against these, on shelves, shone out the kettles of copper, tin and porcelain, the baking dishes, coffee-pot etc., of Delft. At the many paned windows were muslin curtains, and in the window a geranium. There are others less elaborate, but the main features of all are the same. Some have many Yankee contrivances but these are the Belgian kitchens whose mistresses know something of life in America and like to be up-to-date.

With the larger houses there is a sort of a second kitchen which serves as a wash room. Often it is the lower part of the court which is made by building the house with a square opening the height of the house, which gives all the rooms light. This room is not always roofed, though it often is. It is not used for cooking but the washing is done in it, the waste food is put in it and it is a general "catch-all" room, though not in any untidy sense. This has also a floor of tiles and more than that, sometimes it has a drain to carry off the water, so that the maid who washes this has but to put on her wooden shoes, take a long-handled scrubbing brush and use it vigorously as a broom, sweeping toward the drain and all the dirt is washed away.

Germany.

The German kitchen has a tile floor. The walls are hung with copper vessels of all sorts and sizes, glittering like ancient armor. There are racks full of clean beautiful blue and white ware; ranges and charcoal fires and rows of long tables line the room.

Cuba.

Charcoal is mainly used for cooking and the kitchen is ideal except in regard to ovens, which are sadly missing. If anything is wanted baked,

it is sent to the bakeshop, but the cost is more than most of us would wish to pay. Some houses have ovens not unlike those in New England called bake-ovens.

A Ship's Kitchen.

In the cheaper city dwellings, the kitchen is small, too small for good ventilation and for the heavier kinds of work, as washing; but for cooking a very small kitchen can be so arranged as to answer every purpose. Any one who has seen a ship's kitchen can understand this. The cook as he stands before his range is within reach of all his stores for rows of drawers and shelves literally line the walls from floor to ceiling. Nothing is left down on shelves or in drawers which may hang on hooks; even the platters and serving dishes are made to hang, there being a loop-hole at one end for this very purpose. Little tables for pastry or cake-making are drawn out of the wall and every inch of floor and wall space is used to the best advantage. This cook would tell you that he did not want a larger kitchen - he would only lose time running about in it.

What the ship's kitchen loses in size is made up in the number of store-rooms; things of the same kind are kept in the same division. There are three kitchens besides a serving room. Soups, fish, meats, and vegetables are prepared and cooked in one room, the bread and pastry in another, while the steerage has a kitchen to itself in which all the cooking is done by steam. The range for the meats fills nearly one side of the small room and half of it is given over to the soups and pots for the boiling articles. The soup kettles are enormous and hold many gallons.

There is something all housekeepers could learn from the ship's methods for their own advantage and that is the saving of time, strength, and labor by having things near together and also the gain in drawing the supplies

from the store room at one time for one day. The tables and stoves where the men work stand high enough to make continual bending unnecessary.

An Electrical Kitchen.

Among the numerous things which electricity, generated at Niagara Falls, furnishes, is an electrical kitchen on the Canadian side of the river. In this kitchen there are an electrical combination range and three electrical ovens. The heating surface of this range is six feet square and each square foot of surface is controlled by a separate switch, so that full or half heat may be turned on. Of the three ovens, two have three compartments each. On the door of the large oven there is a thermometer. By this means the cook can make no error, as the time at which the oven is at baking or roasting heat is well defined. In the small ovens bread can be baked in eighteen minutes. In the butler's pantry are three five-gallon urns and a chafing dish all electrically operated. One urn is used for tea, one for coffee and the other for boiling water to supply the tea and coffee urns.

After having seen what the kitchens of the different countries let us combine some of their good features into a kitchen of our own. Below I give a plan and description of one such as I would desire; it is a kitchen for a farmhouse.

It should be large enough to be comfortable as to temperature and ventilation, yet not large enough to necessitate too much moving about, following out, to a certain extent the plan of the ship's kitchen. The various articles of furnishing should be so placed as to be as convenient as possible. A good size is 14×14 or 12×12 ; one of the most essential things is plenty of light, furnished by windows which move up and down easily.

If I could afford it, I would follow the plan of the Belgians and have the walls and floor of tiles; a second choice would be to have the lower

part of the walls finished with tiles, up a distance of four or five feet. This would be expensive at the beginning but the first cost is the only outlay; the tiles would outlast the house and therefore would not be an extravagant finish. The rest of the wall should be finished in a smooth coat of plaster, which is painted or papered with tile paper, both of which may be easily washed. The floor is to be of hard wood oiled as also is the other woodwork, all being plain with no grooves to hold dust and moisture.

On one side is a porch, where, on hot summer days, the mistress may go to prepare vegetables, etc., or to rest; this had best be screened all around with ordinary galvanized window screening. Adjoining the kitchen and easily accessible is a closet for cleaning appliances and outdoor garments. Next to this will be a small room, in which the men, coming from the field, may prepare for mealtime. In this is soap, towels, mirror, comb and brush, clothes brush, wash basin, water pail and slop pail, or better still, a sink with water pipes leading to and from it.

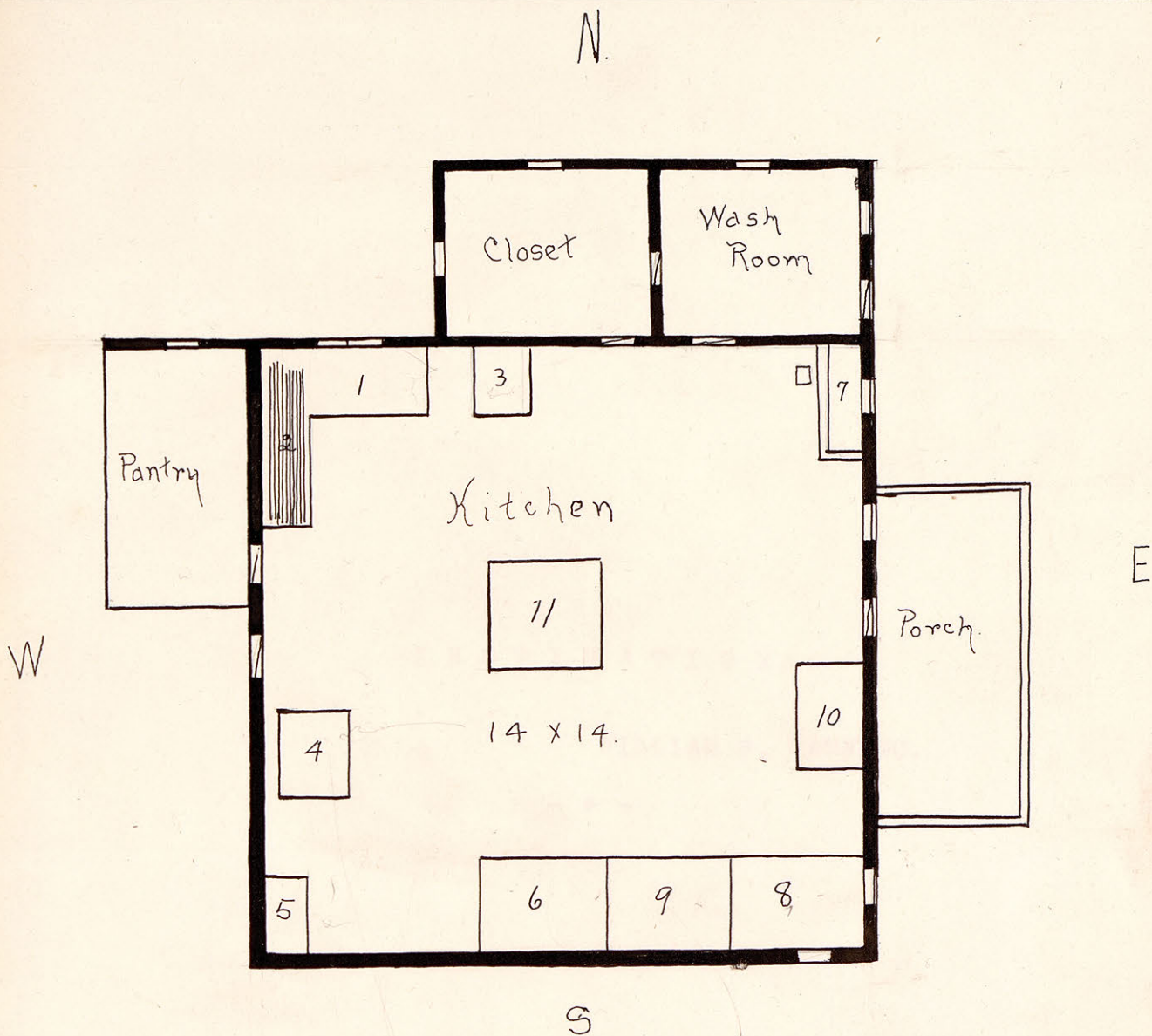
The range and sink should be quite near together and the sink with its drain board should be near the pantry door. Near the sink it would be well to have a stationary wash bowl - this and the sink to be of marble or other stone, or porcelain lined. Over the range there is a hood for carrying off the vapors and odors of cooking. Back of the range may be placed a narrow shelf for holding various small articles used in preparing a meal; near the stove should be a coal-bin or wood box, arranged, if possible, so that it may be filled from the outside. On the wall near the range place a rack for holding the wet dishtowels and dish cloths.

At one side of the kitchen and as near the range as convenient, is a cupboard for the cooking utensils. Another smaller cupboard, or set of drawers, holds the towels and other pieces of linen needed in the kitchen; for

there may be a place reserved in this for articles not used often.

Near a window is placed the work table, with a flour bin and supply chest at one end, so constructed that they may be taken out and aired. Over the work table is a shelf for baking powder, soda, etc. It would be a good plan to have a small table on rollers to be used when extra work is to be done, as for instance, on baking day, it may be pushed up near the work table and the articles to be baked placed on it and then rolled to the range. Some part of the room should be reserved for a "cozy corner" where there is to be a chair or two, one an easy chair, a shelf for books, papers, and a clock; if space permits a lounge may be added.

With a kitchen arranged after some such plan as this, it should be one of the most pleasant duties to work here. Were more kitchens planned and arranged with idea of comfort and convenience, cooking would not be the "bug bear" that it is to so many. George Eliot has said, "I think, after all, I like a clean kitchen better than any other room." Some one else has well expressed the necessity of a good kitchen in the following, "A kitchen, however metamorphosed, will be, must be, and cannot be otherwise than a kitchen still. These considerations mark out the kitchen, in the plan of household salvation, as the most important room in the domestic economy of home making."



- 1 = sink.
- 2 = drain board.
- 3 = stationary wash-bowl.
- 4 = range.
- 5 = wood-box or coal-bin.
- 6 = cupboard for cooking utensils.
- 7 = "cozy-corner."
- 8 = work-table.
- 9 = flour bin and supply chest.
- 10 = cupboard for linen.
- 11 = table on rollers.