Dinners & Their Objective Points.

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Dinners influenced by the caprices of fashion.

Man's feeding in the savage stage.

The ancient dinners

Roman dinners

Dinners of our forefathers

Points to be considered.

Knowledge of the nutritive value of foods a necessity.

Simplicity.

Selection.

Preparation.

Dinners and Their Objective Points.

The time for taking food, the selection, preparation, and proper distribution of it in appropriate meals are questions of considerable importance, notwithstanding the fact that they have ever been influenced by the caprices of fashion and the artificial habits of man. How much they have had to do with the modification of the human species and even the extinction of whole races of men is certainly a problem of much interest.

Man in his savage condition, feeds with great irregularity. When he finds food plentiful, he eats

from morning till night and knows no other pleasure than that of eating drinking and sleeping. When food is scarce he is contented with one meal a day. In both case the quantity of food consumed is always excessive.

Among civilized nations, and until comparatively recent times, there were but two meals per day; namely, dinner and supper. These were the meals of the Romans. The prandium, or dinner, being for the most part a light refreshment eaten while standing. It was taken about nine o'clock in the morning, and generally consisted of the cold remains of yesterday's supper.

The great meal of the day was supper, or coena which was taken about three or four o'clock in the afternoon and to which friends were invited. This was the ceremonious meal for which the wealthy and high families of Rome exhausted the resources of luxury and art.

The sums of money expended by the wealthy Romans upon their meals were enormous. Vitellius is said to have spent as much as four hundred sestertia on his daily supper, and the celebrated feast to which he invited his brother, cost no less than five thousand sesterti. It consisted of two thousand different dishes of fish and seven thousand of fowl, with other equally enormous meats. It is said the deserts of Libia, the shores of Spain, and the waters of Carpathian were diligently searched for the dainties to supply his table; and had he reigned long, he would, say Josephine, have exhausted the great opulence of the Roman Empire. Such is an example of the luxury and extravagance of the ancient dinner. It was one of the ancient Gods.

Hardly less extravagance was the dinners of our forefathers, who in many ways, copied closely, the

luxurious habits of the Romans. Even so late as the time of Holinshed, the famous chronicler of the sixteenth century, the manners of England were the subject of some comment. He tells us that "in the number of dishes and changes of meat the nobility do most exceed. There is no day that passeth over their heads wherein they have not only beef, mutton, veal lamb, kid, pork, cony, capon pig, or so many of them as the season yields, but also some portion of the red and fallow deer, besides great varieties of fish and wild fowl, and many other delacies". To have dined with one of them and to have tasted every disk must have been to yield to a conspiracy with a great deal of meat for the speedy suppression of natural health rather than the use of a necessary meal as a competent repast to sustain the body. Every fresh dish acted as a stimulus to whip the appetite on. The sense of satiety might come and go a dozen times,

We smile at the accounts given of the gormandising power of the nations of the artic regions and the savages of South Africa; nor reflect on the habits of our forefathers and their great variety of foods at one meal, eating as a source of pleasure merely with its great temptation to over eat. But we, as a people of a far more advanced age, are scarcely less preposterous.

Simplicity of diet should be a point of first consideration, as the simplest foods are, as a rule, the most healthful. Variety is needed but the tendency is to supply our table with too many kinds, and to prepare each dish in a most elaborate manner, and thus in many homes the cooking of food has come to be the chief end of life.

In the selection of provisions the "best is generally the cheapest". But how little attention is paid to this part of our preperation for eating. A half pound of good meat may be worth three times the amount

of an inferior quality. It is not surprising that it had so long a question with the cook "what to prepare" for the meal and is still a question with so many housekeepers.

Something of a knowledge of the nutritive ~~food~~ elements that are contained in the different articles of diet is necessary if we are to be able to select wisely. The purpose of food is to supply force and heat, to furnish material to repair the wastes that are constantly taking place in the body; and in childhood and youth the highest purpose of food is to promote a healthy growth of both body and intellect. The great diversity in the character of the tissues of the body makes it necessary that food should contain a variety of elements in order that each part or organ is replentished and nourished. Each of the different groups of elements have a particular work to perform; so it especially necessary that our food should contain some of each kind of elements. It is thus

apparent that great care should be made in the selection of our food materials, and that a careful study of the nutritive values of the various foods is a matter of first importance in the selection of food.

That a great work has been done in the immediate past and is being done at present in right direction by those who have turned their attention to the cultivation and better development of this art or science, need scarcely be asserted.

The scientific world has been making and is making, and is making valuable contributions to the non-scientific. The result of these investigations and analysis made of these food products in the last thirty years, are constantly changing their grounds and the investigations, like all scientific investigations — not without opposition and warfare, has recognized principles and proved

theories that were formerally discredited and unknown. The object of these analysis has been to determine the proportion of nutrient and non-nutrient element in all foods and by the aid of this knowledge to better our system of diet.

A knowledge of the proper preparation of foods is likewise essential since the fitness of a good material for body building depends upon its digestibility, its palatability, and its adaptability to the needs of the users, as well as their nutrition value. Past and present experience teaches us that "the first step in a reform is the recognition of the cause of a distress. Do we as Americans realize to the the extent that bad cooking is a source of harmfulness and great wastefulness? Are we men and women with more or less dyspepsia? Gravy is an important adjunct to meats. A good rich gravy

is like a strong savory broth,
both nourishing and palatable.
But by a rich gravy is not meant
a superabundance of fat. Grease
is not necessarily gravy. In fact,
some of the finest and most savory
gravies are prepared from the
leanest meat and extracts of
beef devoid of fat. Marion Harland
said some years ago, and it as
emphatically be said in many instances
still, How often have I wished from
the depths of my loathing stomach
that certain well meaning house
keepers at whose board I have sat
as guest or boarder — who fry
beefsteak in lard and send ham
to the table swimming in fat; upon
the surface of whose soup floats
spheroids of oil; the sauce the
spoon with blubber, and coat
the lips and tongue of the eater
with flaky scales — that these
dear souls that believe in the old
fashioned cookery understood this
simple law of digestive gravy.

Hundreds of us have dyspepsia but do not recognize it. With bad breath with nerves that are upset, by any little sound, the buzzing of a fly, the crying of a child, the blowing of the wind, how irritable we are! Such is the condition of a vast number of our people to day; breaking down in the prime of life.

To dine tastefully, both in regard to our food and surroundings is a consummation wished by all and because good dinners demand skillful preparation a great impetus has thus been given to scientific cookery.

Notwithstanding great care should be exercised in selection, preperation and the taking of food, a man should not be too thoughtful for his health when he is satisfying his hunger. It has been said "Every thing agrees with you until it disagrees with you". Most dishes are especially wholesome for the eater, if their wholesomeness-

is taken for granted. But the best fare will avenge itself on the person who regards it with suspicion. Enjoyment at the table so far as food is concerned, is not possible without proper confidence in the caterer and the cook. The man who has formed a habit of ever mistrusting them is travelling on a road that leads downward, and may perhaps end in madness. "Of all monomaniacs, there is none more truly pitiable than the few wretched people who sniff poison in every culinary savory and fear death from a sauce."