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Grad Tests for Your Taste

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OPERATION PARIS

grad tests for your taste

by Rosalie Riglin
Technical Journalism Graduate

"OPERATION PILLSBURY"—this is the name Rosalie Riglin, home economics journalism graduate ‘46, gives her job as Pillsbury Mills’ Paris representative. Miss Riglin is working on Pillsbury’s European Recipe Service where she collects and tests European recipes which later appear in the Pillsbury advertisements for the benefit of American homemakers. The following is her personal letter about her work:

In June Pillsbury Mills, Inc., Minneapolis, established an office in Paris for the purpose of collecting the best European recipes for American homemakers. To staff the office they hired Faith Shipway, who has lived in Paris all her life and has travelled extensively on the continent, and me. We collaborate in collecting recipes and stories about them—how old the recipe is, how it came to be invented or if it’s a specialty of a certain restaurant or region.

Then I test the recipes, converting grams and liters to American cup measurements and substituting American ingredients for European ones when necessary. For instance, European flours are different than American flour, so 100 pounds of Pillsbury’s Best had to be shipped over to Paris. (Also a flour sifter, since the French use a sieve—if they bother to sift at all—and that takes too long.)

Test and Retest

When the recipes have been worked out, sometimes after as many as seven tests, they are sent to Mrs. Ruth Andre, director of the Ann Pillsbury Home Service Center. She and her staff retest them, make improvements and finally select the recipes that are to appear in the ads. Then back to Paris come these recipes, along with photographs, for another testing session to make sure the recipes, after being simplified, are still authentic and have retained their European flavor. So those five recipes now appearing in Pillsbury ads in leading women’s magazines are not only well-treated—they’re well-travelled too!

Behind the testing in the Paris branch of Pillsbury’s Home Service Center have been some interesting sessions with French chefs. In order to get a “speaking acquaintance” with such standbys of European cooking as Soubisse Sauce or Glace Royale, I’ve had many cooking sessions at the Corden Bleu. My favorite chef there worked with the famous Escoffier at the Carlton in London. (Those of you in Catering 464 will appreciate what an experience it is to learn how to flip a crepe from such a teacher as this!) Other French chefs—at the Ritz for example—have allowed me in their sacred precinct, the kitchen, in the interests of “Operation Pillsbury.”

To Market, to Market

And marketing for groceries—how different that is from the American supermarket system where you fill up your basket with enough food to last all week. In France, refrigerators are small, if they exist at all; so marketing is a daily occurrence and quite a social event. The women chat with each other and with the various shopkeepers as they fill their baskets with meat, fruit, vegetables, a long loaf of crusty French bread, and lastly a bunch of flowers, which they perch on top of the baskets like flowers on a hat.

All this takes awhile because one shopkeeper has the fruits and vegetables; another the butter, cream, cheese and eggs; a third keeps the bakery; and a fourth the meat. If you want beef, you go to one butcher shop with its marbled lined shelves; if you want pork—it’s another. If you happen to need orange extract, you go to the pharmacy, while yeast is sold at the bakery. My first few shopping expeditions in Paris were a little like a game of hide and seek.

But it’s been fun, and we think American homemakers will enjoy trying out Quiche Lorraine or Swedish Chocolate Torta just as much as we have enjoyed developing these recipes for them—both in the kitchen in Minneapolis and in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

Rosalie Riglin examines foreign cooking utensils during the Pillsbury Food Fashion Show at the Ritz Hotel in Paris.