1929

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Recommended Citation
Marnette, Margaret (1929) "Could You Carve This?," The Iowa Homemaker: Vol. 9 : No. 3 , Article 3.
Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol9/iss3/3

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Could You Carve This?

By Margaret Marnette

CARVING has been, for many years, and will be in many homes, a man's job. However, Dame Grundy tells us that it is no longer correct to carve at the table. Henceforth it will be the duty (and why not the pleasure?) of good cooks to carve their meats before sending them to the table.

Of course, to be able to carve well, one must have tools with which to carve. The first requisite of a good carving knife is that it be of the best quality of shear steel, scimitar shaped (remember the pictures in the old sixth readers of Turks with flashing scimiters? I, for one, always had a secret desire to flash one of them just to see if it would flash! I regret to say the first time Dad offered me his choice carving knife I could not even hold it properly). But to continue, the knife should be thickest just above the center of the blade, from which point it should taper slightly to the back, and to a razor edge on the cutting blade. And so to the chicken whose ribs it touches! A short knife, or one shorter than nine inches, is rather unwieldy. One longer than ten inches is considered best, since one slice may be cut in one stroke. Stag handles are favored.

Did you know that in a good knife, inch thick steel bars are hammered to the thickness of the finished steel, two sheets of different hardness are beaten into a single blade so that the crystals and fibers of steel are compacted into a solid steel which is exceedingly dense and tough. Of course, such a knife will cost quite a bit, but in our family is one which is now in the fourth generation and still graces the table on Turkey Day. The blade has been ground again and again and the temper is still as sweet (or whatever you say of steel blades) as the day my long-dead ancestor hammered it himself.

The ordinary carver is punched from a sheet of steel which has neither the density nor the uniformity necessary for a good blade. It will neither take nor hold a fine edge. By the way, one manufacturer said this summer that the "stainless" steel knives lose their sharpness much quicker than the old style knives because of the fact that the material is less dense and cannot hold an edge. That is why a stainless knife is not always a good investment—it wears down too quickly. The ordinary carvers are ground mechanically, which makes the edge a bevel from the back to the cutting edge. Sometimes, too, the handles, which are simply silver or celluloid composition over a thin base of resin, are affected by hot dishwater and when loosened it is difficult to repair them satisfactorily.

A steel or "carving rod" comes with every carving set. There is a little trick to using it. Girls who have taken the animal husbandry course (241) in farm meats, have been taught by Prof. M. D. Helser that the steel should be held at an angle of 45 degrees. The same angle is maintained on both sides of the blade. Starting with the heel of the knife blade at the top of the steel, draw down lightly until the tip of the blade just escapes the guard at the handle of the steel. It isn't difficult to learn if you have a good sense of rhythm and a steady left arm.

Next of importance to the good carver is an assistant or large fork which is about twice as heavy as the average steak fork and is about one and one-half inches between the tines. You will have to grip it tighter than anything to use it properly until you get the grasp, then you will find that it aids in keeping the roast in place.

A pair of game shears is sometimes used to carve game. They must, of course, be quite sharp, and are used chiefly for small game (squab, chickens, etc.).

A steak set is smaller than a carving set, but requires the same well-tempered steel that a larger knife should have.

In the kitchen use a cleaver or small saw to save your knives from abuse. Gristle and bone will rapidly ruin the finest blade, yet they will yield without a scratch to a cleaver.

Iron

Leola Bagby

Note: Leola Bagby is a Home Economics student at Western Kentucky State Teachers College.

(With apologies to Shakespeare)

To eat liver, or not to eat liver—that is the question;
Whether it is better for the body to suffer
The ills and horrors of an anemic person,
Or to take arms against this dreaded disease,
And by special diet end it. To eat—
To diet once more; and by this diet we mean to cure
The weakness and the many other things
that anemia is heir to—
'Tis a consummation devoutly
To be wished. To diet, to diet
To diet! even to eat liver! ah, there's
the rub:
For in that meal of liver what taste is
there if we do not like it?
But—there's the respect that makes Us eat without a word.
For who would bear the results of anemia,
the frail body, the destroyed blood cells,
When the himself might his cure
Make with a correct diet?
But who would enjoy to eat liver, spinach, etc.
But what the dread of something
Worse than this might come?
Anemia—the terrible disease
From whose grasp we might escape
Puzzles our will, and makes us rather eat
that liver we have
Than to try something else not "half so good."
Thus correct diet will cure us of it all.