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Did Your Cake Fall?

By Dorothy Clements

A FAMOUS birthday month suggests birthday cakes—and the most famous of them all is the "angel" cake. But, alas, too often the fand Archaeologist’s gift is not food fit for consumption, only food for thought! At the hour of drawing that heavy mass of toughness from the oven, time and feelings do not permit of analysis.

The logical time for thought is before the mixing bowls are out. But if it takes more than imagination to see each step, bring out the most colorful bowls, the egg beater and the spatula. Thinking of the finished product, select a bowl for mixing that has a smooth, round inner base, so that in the process of folding, the spatula can make a clean turn without striking the sharp edges at the base of the bowl. Poor facilities for blending make for increased toughness. The handle of the spatula should be one that turns easily in the hand as the folding process is being carried on, for to obtain proper blending with a minimum of strokes the blending agent must work quickly and efficiently.

The egg beater, grown from the egg-whisk of grandmother’s time, also plays an important part. Preferably, the blades of the beater should be thin in order to incorporate the maximum amount of air into the whites, making them fluffy and tender in a short space of time.

The basic recipe for angel cake is:

- 1 cup egg whites
- 1 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 cup pastry flour
- 2 tbsp. water
- 1 tsp. cream of tartar
- 1/4 tsp. salt

An angel cake is made in four definite steps. First, beat the egg whites until they are frothy, then add the water, cream of tartar and salt. Continue beating until the mixture will slip slowly from the partially inverted bowl. Sift the once sifted sugar over the top of the whites, slowly in small portions. Fold this in gently with a spatula. Sift the twice sifted flour over this mixture and fold in last.

When the sugar in an angel cake is not blended, the resulting product is characterized by small volume, dry tough crumbs and flat flavor. Over-blending carries the cake from its optimum volume to a small one. The cell walls are fine, close and compact and the flavor is flat. An insufficient amount of mixing of the flour into the batter produces a cake which is small in volume, tough in both crumb and crust, and coarse in cell structure.

The beating of the egg whites will vary with the individual and with the egg beater. When whites are under beaten, the cake will come from the oven with a fairly small volume. When egg whites are over-beaten, the resulting product is tough and dry. Frequently, however, when the average person thinks the egg whites are over-beaten, they are really just beaten to the right stage.

The amount of cream of tartar to use and the psychological moment at which it should be added has always perplexed some cake bakers. A cake may be baked without any acid being added, but the product is tough, has large cells and is yellowish in color. The cream of tartar may be sifted with the flour and incorporated at the last, but the structure of the cake is coarse, volume is only fair and the acid flavor is quite pronounced. Adding the cream of tartar to the egg whites is much more satisfactory, as thereby the acid acts upon the proteins of the egg whites, making them more tender.

Stove Chart Ends Worry

"IT'S the oven!" we say sadly as we behold the morning’s baking—pathetic pie crust which just wouldn’t brown, cake which crumbled up in the middle and charred at the corners and weepy custard in which curds float in the whey. But then, on second thought, perhaps pies and cakes and custards shouldn’t have been put in the oven at once. But how is one to tell? If you are one of the many who have oven worries, the following chart of cooking temperatures, pasted up beside the stove, should aid you.

- Simmering temperature for water: 180°F.
- Boiling temperature for water: 212°F.
- Soft ball stage for fudge: 223°F., 111°C.
- Soft ball stage for fondant, saucers, frostings: 236°F., 113°C.
- Firm ball stage for divinity, caramels: 248°F., 120°C.
- Hard ball stage for taffies: 270°F., 130°C.
- Crack stage for butterscotch: 290°F., 145°C.
- Hard crack stage for brittle: 300°F., 150°C.
- Hard crack stage for caramelized sugar: 310°F., 165°C.
- Very slow oven: 220°F.
- Slow oven for meringue pies: 250°F.
- Moderately slow oven for egg dishes, custards, omelets: 325°F.
- Moderate oven for cakes, cornbread, gingerbread: 350°F.
- Moderately hot oven: 375°F.
- Hot oven for muffins, 400°F.
- Very hot oven for biscuits, pie crust: 450°-455°F.

Soup and Nuts for All

THE woman who goes marketing for vinands for a club supper, a church dinner or high school breakfast must be a combined mathematician, economist and high financier. It is easy enough to plan for a family of five, but how about dishing out soup and nuts to 50, 500 or 1,000? Great is the chagrin of the cook and manager when the salad plates out half way around, or a mountain of potatoes is left from the banquet. Here, then, are a few tips for the next time that you try large quantity cookery.

One quart of salad dressing will make from 35 to 50 salads.

A quart of salad will make from 8 to 10 servings, using a number 10 disher.

One pound of coffee will be enough for 2 to 2 1/2 gallons of water.

One gallon of coffee will serve 20 people.

Five pounds of meat and bone will make one gallon of rich soup stock.

One gallon of soup will serve 20 people, or 5 gallons are necessary for every 100 portions.

In ordering meats for standard dinner or family service allow 1/2 pound per serving.

For family service allow 1/2 to 1/2 pound of meat per person.

For meat chops—allow 1 1/2 pound per person (the chops being about 1/4 or 1/4 inch in thickness).

For ground meat such as hamburger or meat loaf, allow for 5 or 6 servings per pound.

For creamed chicken allow 1 1/2 pound per person.

For roasting fowl allow 3/4 pound (raw weight) per serving or allow 1/2 pound a person if served with dressing or dumplings.

Cooking by Guesswork

She guessed the pepper, the soup was too hot;
She guessed the water, it dried in the pot.
She guessed the salt and what do you think?
For the rest of the day, we did nothing but drink.
She guessed the sugar, the sauce was too sweet.
And by her guessing she spoiled the meat.
What of the moral? 'Tis easy to see;
A good cook measures and weighs to a T.

(Selected)