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Jean Metcalf
Iowa State College

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BOWLS
With a Past
by Jean Metcalf

The ancient Romans' methods of eating may seem crude to us. We classify their habits of eating while reclining on couches, eating with their hands and then tossing the refuse to the hungry hounds as deplorable etiquette. But crude as their etiquette may have been, they passed on to us the last dainty touch which may be added to a meal, the use of a finger bowl. The ancient Romans had finger bowls which were passed after every meal, a necessary procedure.

Today railroads use finger bowls in diners and hotels use them in dining rooms. In the home, they may be used for either a formal or an informal dinner. They are especially necessary if the hostess serves finger foods, such as dinner rolls, sandwiches, small cakes, olives, celery or bonbons.

There are two different services for finger bowls. For informal service the finger bowls are brought in after the dessert course and immediately before the coffee. The bowl is placed on the dessert plate on which is set a doily. On either side of the bowl are a spoon and a fork. The guest, using both hands, first removes the spoon and fork, placing them to the right and left of the plate, and then lifts the finger bowl, with the doily, to the left and front of her plate. She is now ready to be served.

The newer service is employed at more formal dinners. The finger bowl comes on its own plate, frequently of colored glass, and is placed on a small plate at the upper right hand corner of the plate. When the meal is finished, each hand in turn should be dipped into the water, not both together. A little rubbing together of the fingertips, without stirring or splashing the water about, cleanses them thoroughly. They should then be dried upon the napkin on the knees.

For the ingenious person there are a great many possibilities for serving a dainty finger bowl. The bowl half filled with water, may have fragrant rose buds or small blossoms afloat, or the water may be perfumed.

In dusty, unpretentious antique shops, you are likely to find beautiful stained or cut-glass bowls. Those made today are usually crystal clear. Mrs. E. C. Temple of Alice Freeman Hall has six finger bowls which belonged to her husband's grandmother. They are of knobby glass in an odd changeable red and truly beautiful. As she has little use for them in any other way, she uses them for flower bowls.