

Dining/Entertaining

From Miss Beecher's Domestic Receipt Book:

On Setting Tables, and Preparing Various Articles of Food For the Table

To a person accustomed to a good table, the manner in which the table is set, and the mode in which food is prepared and set on, has a great influence, not only on the eye, but the appetite. A housekeeper ought, therefore, to attend carefully to these particulars.

The table-cloth should always be white, and well washed and ironed.

When taken from the table, it should be folded in the ironed creases, and some heavy article laid on it. A heavy bit of plank, smoothed and kept for the purpose, is useful. By this method, the table-cloth looks tidy much longer than when it is less carefully laid aside.

Where table napkins are used, care should be taken to keep the same one to each person, and in laying them aside, they should be folded so as to hide the soiled places, and laid under pressure.

The table-cloth should always be put on square, and right side upward. The articles of furniture should be placed as exhibited in figures 7 and 8.

The bread for breakfast and tea

should be cut in even, regular slices, not over a fourth of an inch thick, and all crumbs removed from the bread plate. They should be piled in a regular form, and if the slices are large, they should be divided. The butter should be cooled in cold water, if not already hard, and then cut into a smooth and regular form, and a butter knife be laid by the plate, to be used for no other purpose but to help the butter.

Small mats, or cup plates, should be placed at each plate, to receive the tea-cup, when it would otherwise be set upon the table-cloth and stain it. All the flour should be wiped from small cakes, and the crumbs be kept from the bread plate.

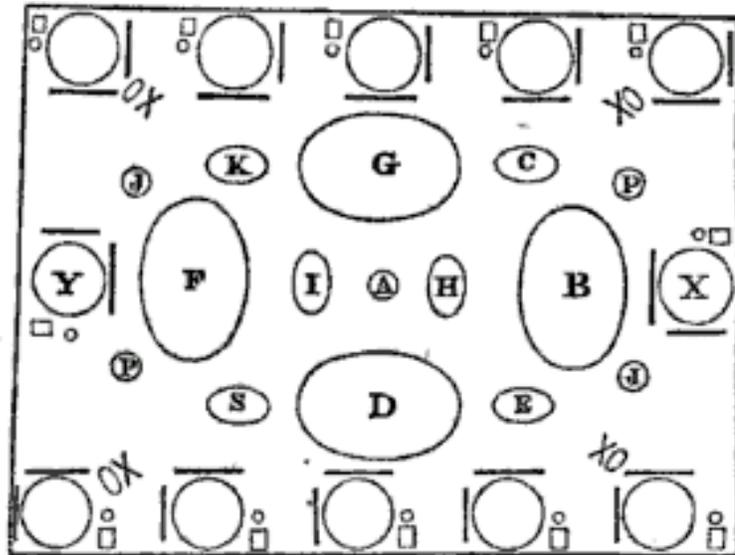
In preparing dishes for the dinner-table, all water should be carefully drained from vegetables, and the edges of the platters and dishes should be made perfectly clean and neat.

All soiled spots should be removed from the outside of pitchers, gravy boats, and every article used on the table; the handles of the knives and forks must be clean, and the knives bright and sharp.

Cucumbers, when prepared for table, should be laid in cold water for an hour or two to cool, and then be peeled and cut into fresh cold water. Then they should be drained, and brought to the table, and seasoned the last thing. In winter, the plates, and all the dishes used, both for meat and vegetables, should be set to the fire to warm, when the table is being set, as cold plates and dishes cool the vegetables, gravy, and meats, which by many is deemed a great injury.

The water should be drained thoroughly from all greens and salads.

Fig. 7.



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| A, Castors. | F, Scolloped Oysters. | K, Parsnips. |
| B, Boiled Turkey. | G, Boiled Ham. | PP, Pickles. |
| C, Oyster Sauce. | H. Potatoes. | JJ, Jelly. |
| D, Roasted Ducks. | I, Turnips. | X, Host. |
| E, Gravy for Ducks. | S, Celery. | Y, Hostess. |

There are certain articles which are usually set on together, because it is the fashion, or because they are suited to each other.

Thus with strong-flavored meats, like mutton, goose, and duck, it is customary to serve the strong-flavored vegetables, such as onions and turnips. Thus, turnips are put in mutton broth, and served with mutton, and onions are used to stuff geese and ducks. But onions are usually banished from the table and from cooking, on account of the disagreeable flavor they impart to the atmosphere and breath.

Boiled Poultry should be accompanied with boiled ham, or tongue.

Boiled Rice is served with poultry as a vegetable.

Fresh Pork requires some acid sauce, such as cranberry, or tart apple sauce. Jelly is served with mutton, venison, and roasted meats, and is used in the gravies for hashes.

Drawn Butter, prepared as in the receipt, with eggs in it, is used with boiled fowls and boiled fish. Pickles are served especially with fish, and Soy is a fashionable sauce for fish, which is mixed on the plate with drawn butter.

Thus, in preparing a dish of fricasseed fowls, or stewed fowls, or cold fowls warmed over, small cups of boiled rice can be laid inverted around the edge of the platter, to eat with the meat. There are modes of garnishing dishes, and preparing them for table, which give an air of taste and refinement, that pleases the eye.

Sweetbreads fried brown in lard, and laid around such a dish, give it a tasteful look.

On Broiled Ham, or Veal, eggs boiled, or fried and laid, one on each piece, look well.

Greens and Asparagus should be well drained, and laid on buttered toast, and then slices of boiled eggs be laid on the top, and around.

Hashes, and preparations of pig's and calve's head and feet, should be laid on toast, and garnished with round slices of lemon.

Curled Parsley, or Common Parsley, is a pretty garnish, to be fastened to the shank of a ham, to conceal the bone, and laid around the dish holding it. It looks well laid around any dish of cold slices of tongue, ham, or meat of any kind.

The proper mode of setting a dinner-table is shown at Fig. 7, and the proper way of setting a tea-table is shown at Fig. 8. In this drawing of a tea-table, small-sized plates are set around, with a knife, napkin, and cup plate laid by each, in a regular manner, while the articles of food are to be set, also, in regular order. On the waiter are placed the tea-cups and saucers, sugar bowl, slop bowl, cream cup, and two or three articles for tea, coffee, and water, as the case may be. This drawing may aid some housekeepers in teaching a domestic how to set a tea-table, as the picture will assist the memory in some cases. On the dinner table, by each plate, is a knife, fork, napkin, and tumbler: on the tea-table, by each plate is a knife, napkin, and small cup-plate.

