

Waste not . . . want not

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by Lydia Lovell

When Uncle Henry brought Aunt Olivia home as his bride, there was not such thing as an electric stove or a gas range, of course. Whether for heating houses or cooking, people burned wood or coal.

Tending stoves took lots of time and energy; wood had to be chopped, split, seasoned, stored and stacked in the woodshed, before being brought into the house by the armload. Coal could be ordered from a dealer who delivered it by the ton and poured it down a coal chute to the bin in the cellar. From there it was carried by the hodful, up the stairs to the stoves. Both woodstoves and coalstoves produced quantities of ashes; emptying those was as big a daily chore as keeping the woodbox or coalhod full.

Gas and electricity changed the picture rapidly. Gas preceded power, but not by much. The convenience these fuels bring to our lives cannot begin to be appreciated by anyone who never lived in a house where all meals were prepared on a coal stove, and all heat in winter came either from a coal-burning furnace in the cellar or from separate stoves in several rooms. Sometimes those stoves burned kerosene, of course; in that case, enormous bottles of oil were filled at a tank outside the house, then carried in and up-ended in the rack next to the stove. Odors of kerosene permeated the house throughout fall, winter and spring.

Modern ranges and furnaces operate at a flick of a switch. Only an infinitesimal amount of physical exertion is needed to set them going. All that's required to keep them going is payment of the monthly fuel bills. Those bills, admittedly, can become astronomical, but there are ways to help keep them within reason. Some might think the small savings involved in efficient cooking techniques not worth the trouble, but the truth is, every little savings helps. Combining several small savings can make a fair-sized difference in fuel costs. And besides saving money, efficient cooking saves the cook's time and energy as well.

In planning meals, make a conscious effort to bake several dishes at once; fill unoccupied space in your oven with additional dishes you will be cooking anyhow. If a pie or cake can be ready to bake when a roast comes out of the oven, you save fuel ordinarily needed to reheat the oven.

Bake two or three casseroles with the same energy that now cooks one. Prepare double recipes and after cooking freeze portions for quick reheating and serving next week. Most casserole foods reheat perfectly in a double boiler; if anything, freezing enhances their flavors.

Making menus for a week in advance saves in several ways; foresight allows using entrees that provide several meals and prevents serving identical left-overs. Cook a larger roast than is needed; use the balance in salads, sandwiches, or sliced cold with steak sauce or gravy. Finish off with stew or hash.

Choose for cooking together foods requiring the same baking temperatures; watch carefully the timing of each dish



and remove it from the oven as soon as done. When Aunt Olivia roasted a beef, for example, she often baked **Fruit Compote**:

1 11-oz. pkg. mixed
dried fruits

$\frac{2}{3}$ C. brown sugar

2 T. lemon juice

$\frac{1}{2}$ t. whole cloves

1 piece stick cinnamon (1")

Combine ingredients in a 1½ quart casserole. Add about two cups of water, enough to barely cover fruit. Bake, covered, in 350° oven, an hour-and-a-half. Serve warm, topped with whipped cream or ice cream. Makes six servings.

Use a pressure cooker to prepare an entire meal in one pot. Aunt Olivia's old fashioned pressure cooker was a mechanical wizard's nightmare. (Not only was it a complicated-looking device, but ones very similar to hers had been known to explode while in use, making a scrub-down of the kitchen from ceiling to floor the next order of the day.) Aunt Olivia used hers only when preserving produce from the garden. Modern pressure cookers, however, are models of efficiency, easy to use and clean, and produce excellent results safely. Try **Meal In A Pot** in yours. Serves four.

$\frac{1}{4}$ C. flour

1 t. paprika

$\frac{1}{4}$ t. each, salt & pepper

4 chicken thighs/breasts

Combine above ingredients in a paper bag and shake well to coat chicken.

Brown chicken in 3 T. hot fat melted in bottom of pressure cooker. Add: 2 scraped carrots, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. green beans, 2 pared and quartered large potatoes, and $\frac{1}{4}$ C. water.

Core and quarter 2 large apples. Place apples on sheet of heavy duty aluminum foil, sprinkle with 4 T. sugar and $\frac{1}{2}$ t. cinnamon, and dot with 2 T. margarine. Fold and seal foil. Place on top of vegetables. Cover cooker and process at 15 pounds pressure for 5 minutes. Reduce pressure instantly by removing pot from heat and running under cold water. Serve apples for dessert with whipped cream.

Another one-pan chicken meal comes easily from an electric frying pan. This one, **Chicken and Peas with Sour**

Cream, is a favorite with the Lovell family.

6 T. margarine

1 lb. small red potatoes

2 lb. frying chicken, cut in
serving pieces

1 C. sour cream mixed with
1 t. thyme, $\frac{1}{2}$ t. salt, and
 $\frac{1}{4}$ t. pepper

2 T. lemon juice

3 green onions, thinly sliced

1 10-oz. pkg. frozen green
peas

2 T. chopped parsley

Melt margarine in electric skillet; add chicken and potatoes; brown slowly on all sides; season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle chicken with lemon juice. Reduce heat, cover pan, and simmer 30 minutes. Add green onions, peas, and parsley; cover again, and simmer 10 minutes more.

Remove chicken and vegetables to serving platter; keep warm. Turn off heat on pan. Add sour cream and remaining ingredients; stir to mix well and loosen pan drippings. Pour sour cream gravy over chicken and serve. Yield: 4 portions.

Looking for more energy-saving tricks to try? You can probably think of some original ones, but these may inspire you. Thaw frozen foods (including frozen vegetables) in the refrigerator, or in the pan you will cook them in placed over the burner that vents the oven, while baking potatoes or roasting meat. Bake potatoes in aluminum foil, shiny-side-in; pierce baking potatoes with an aluminum nail for quicker baking; the nail conducts heat to the potato's interior.

To make "solar tea," place 8 teabags in a clear glass gallon jar; fill jar to top with tap water; replace lid. Set jar in sun for six hours. Voila! TEA. To make "solar prunes," follow the same procedure, using a package of prunes and two cups of tap water. No need to cook them at all.

Stir-fry such vegetables as broccoli, bean sprouts, celery, cauliflower, carrots, snap beans, green pepper, cabbage, or mushrooms. Wash, dry, and cut or slice into bite-size pieces. Heat small quantity of cooking oil in a wok or electric frying pan. When oil begins to sizzle, add vegetables, and stir-fry for three minutes. Pour small amount of liquid (chicken broth or water) down the side of pan, cover, and steam three minutes more until vegetables are crispy but still colorful. If dull-looking, they have cooked too long. This technique conserves vitamins as well as energy. (Warning: Some people object to crispy vegetables; it is no savings to serve food your family doesn't like!)

Choose pots and pans that fit surface units; bottoms should cover heating elements, but not be too large for units. Flat-bottomed, straight-sided pots with tight-fitting lids are most energy-efficient. Always turn off your oven or any electric unit before cooking is completed; they stay hot several minutes.

If Aunt Olivia had had a gas or an electric range, she would have discovered these and other ways to conserve energy . . . in her day, "waste not, want not" was a way of life.