

by Lydia Lovell

If any of the four seasons proves a disappointment to those living on Cape Cod, spring is most apt to do the trick. People think spring will soon come, and it doesn't and it doesn't and just doesn't. Most years it looks almost as though it really will; snowdrops nod their white heads, crocuses blossom, jonquils poke green spikes through the ground, even bloom. Eventually forsythia throws its golden glow at every doorstep. Still, looking like spring and feeling like spring are two different things.

Whatever the weather looks like and however it feels, on farms baby animals are born, cows freshen and, while an increased supply of milk has no appreciable effect on dairy product prices, we can look back to earlier eras when extra supplies of milk meant using it up because it didn't keep. Aunt Olivia's old recipes for using milk and cream when plentiful include some dishes most of us have never even heard of. One such is **Milk Soup**.

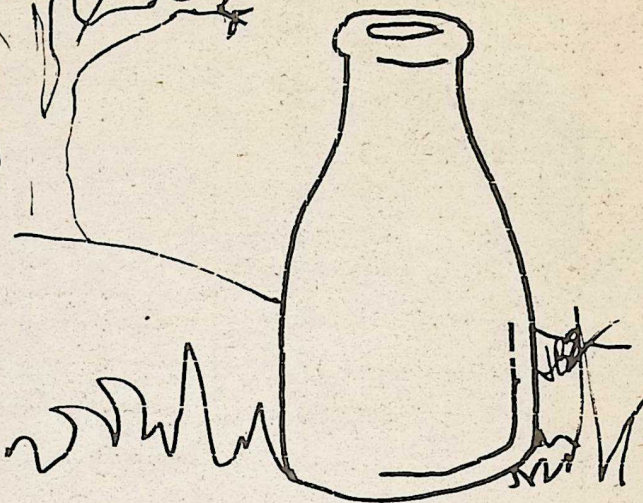
Blanch and break into pieces a quarter pound of almonds. Break up a good-sized stick of cinnamon. Put nut meats and cinnamon in a heavy saucepan with two quarts of milk and enough sugar to sweeten. Bring to a boil over low heat. Remove from fire and pour through a sieve. Return to saucepan. Toast eight thin slices of bread; remove crusts. Lay toast in the bottom of a soup tureen. Pour about a cup of hot milk over the bread; cover so slices may soak in milk. Beat the yolks of five eggs until lemon-colored. Return milk to heat and gradually add beaten egg yolks, stirring constantly until mixture thickens. Remove from heat and add to tureen. Serves 8. This recipe, according to Aunt Olivia's notes, is "better still if you use sliced baked apples instead of bread."

If Milk Soup doesn't sound quite like the best thing to serve your family for Sunday night supper, consider a dessert called **Burnt Cream** as prepared for the family of Thomas Jefferson at Monticello.

Boil one quart of milk with one-quarter of the peeling from one large orange. To 1/2 cup of sugar add the yolks of three large or four medium eggs and the whites of one egg. Stir eggs and sugar together; add about 1/2 cup of flour. Gradually add egg mixture to boiling milk, stirring with a wire whisk. When well-mixed, remove from fire and strain through a sieve. Return to heat and stir until thickened. Add one tablespoon of butter and pour into a deep 1 1/2-quart casserole. Sift powdered sugar on top and run under the broiler to glaze the sugar. Droozle a few tablespoonsful of maple syrup over each of the eight servings.

And, along with all the extra milk on hand, there was certain to be enough extra cream to make **Dish of Snow**, another dessert popular when our nation was young. (This also served to use up egg whites left over from Burnt Cream.)

Beat until stiff the whites of three eggs; whip one quart of heavy cream; fold together. Then fold in four tablespoonsful of port wine, add sugar to taste, and one teaspoon of lemon extract. Serve in a deep glass dish to 12 people (if you can gather together 12 people who are not dieting!)



Now that your curiosity is aroused (Aunt Olivia may have been a bit of a tease, but she never allowed anyone to be truly disappointed and I feel the same way), let's move into the realm of food you can prepare to feed your own family. This recipe is usually spooned over hot steamed rice, but is also good with egg noodles. Aunt Olivia called it **String Beans and Pork a la Creme**:

1 lb. fresh green beans,
1" lengths
1 medium onion, diced
1/2 lb. lean pork, ground
1/2 C. diced celery
1 T. butter

1 small can tomato sauce
1 T. soy sauce
1 T. cornstarch
2 t. sugar
Salt and pepper to taste

Cook beans about 20 minutes in boiling water; they should still be slightly crisp. Drain beans, reserving a cup of the cooking liquid. Set aside. Fry pork quickly in butter, add celery and onions, fry until golden. Drain off any excess fat. Add tomato sauce and beans. Cook gently about 10 minutes. Season to taste. In a small bowl, blend cornstarch, soy sauce, sugar and bean liquid; pour into meat mixture. Cook until sauce thickens slightly. Serves four.

Should you be looking for still another meatless dish to use as an acceptable alternative to macaroni and cheese casserole, **Noodles Romanoff** is quickly prepared and tasty. This yields enough for four; for a larger group or for leftovers, double the recipe.

Cook 5 or 6 ounces of medium egg noodles according to package directions. Drain and put into a buttered 1 1/2-quart casserole. Combine: 1 C. cottage cheese, beaten until smooth; 1 C. dairy sour cream or diet substitute; 1/4 C. chopped onion; 1 1/2 t. Worcestershire sauce; dash of tabasco (optional) and 1/2 t. salt.

Pour sauce over noodles. Sprinkle top with one cup soft bread crumbs. Dot with margarine. Bake 40 minutes in 350° oven. Hamburger patties, ham steak, frankfurters, or meatloaf are good with this, too.

While searching for just the right recipes to offer in this week's column, I rediscovered one I had misplaced several years ago. I am more than happy to be able to share **Cheese Strata** with you as a perfect brunch dish for six people.

12 slices day-old bread,
crusts removed
1/2 Lb. sliced flavorful
cheese
4 eggs, beaten

2 1/2 C. milk
1 T. minced onion
1/2 t. dry mustard
1 t. salt (or less)
1/8 t. pepper

In a shallow well-buttered pan (about 12"x7"x2"), arrange six slices of bread in one layer. Cover bread with cheese slices; cover with remaining six slices of bread. Beat eggs; add milk and remaining ingredients; blend well. Pour over bread. Let stand one hour or more. Bake at 325° about 50 minutes until puffed and browned. Serve immediately with sliced tomato and lettuce salad.

The first sure sign of spring may be discovered in the rhubarb bed where red knobby fiddleheads poke through frozen ground to fill both gardener and cook with joy. Rhubarb lends itself to dozens of desserts appreciated best this time of year. **Rhubarb Sauce**, simple as it is, is an excellent choice to follow Cheese Strata.

Choose tender, medium-sized stalks. Trim off and discard the leaves, and peel the dry skin from the bases. If you use larger, tougher stalks, you may have to peel the entire stalk. Cut to 1" lengths and sprinkle with one cup of sugar to each quart of rhubarb. Let stand 2 or 3 hours, then pour off the syrup which will have formed. Bring the syrup to a hard boil. Add a little lemon or orange juice for a nice flavor variation. Add the rhubarb pieces and cook until just tender, about 5 minutes.

Rhubarb Sauce may be served plain, with custard or ice cream, over a yellow cake, or with pork instead of apple sauce. Stalks of this fruity plant combine well with other flavors. Aunt Olivia never hesitated to use rhubarb as the season progressed with other good things from her garden. Some of her many rhubarb recipes will appear in this column until well into summer, but the ones we can use now are "good for what ails us" or, as Uncle Henry often remarked, "Rhubarb may be a bit puckery, but it's preferable to a dose of sulphur and molasses and equally as effective."