

September 8, 1983 VILLAGE ADVERTISER

# Leftovers

by Lydia Lovell

Once upon a time I knew a lady who never faced the problem of what to do with leftovers. Can you imagine that? Until I learned to know her very well, and until I discovered the cause, I wouldn't have believed it possible but, after enjoying her hospitality repeatedly, and after sharing delicious meals from her kitchen time after time, it was evident my hostess had effectively eliminated leftovers from her menus.

How did she do it? Easy. She served only steaks, chops, and individual portions. Never once at her table did I partake of a roast of beef, a rich tureen of lamb stew, a crusty rib-end of pork, or, with the single exception of one holiday dinner when she did produce a handsome stuffed capon roasted to succulent perfection, any other entree that was not totally consumed at one sitting.

Why did she do it? That there was nothing left for luncheon sandwiches another day troubled her not in the slightest. That there were no second helpings of meat or vegetables brought no apologies. That her husband abhorred leftovers was her reason, reason enough for her to forestall any possibility he might criticize her cooking. And so it came about that she served steaks several times each week. Or lamb or pork chops. Or moderate-sized portions of fish. Her spouse was content. Peace and harmony prevailed.

Peace and harmony prevailed in Aunt Olivia's household as well, but not because she served no leftovers. The Lovells often seemed to prefer them to first-nighters. Whether chicken, fish, pork, lamb, or beef remained after a meal, Aunt Olivia prepared tasty treats from the residue. And no edible scraps were ever thrown out or fed to the cat.

Aunt Olivia carefully removed from the carcass of a roasted bird all the meat. Large pieces she wrapped in waxed paper (I use plastic film), and stored these in the refrigerator until needed to slice for sandwiches. Small pieces in a covered bowl went into the fridge to be used for salads or in patty shells filled with creamed chicken, a dish no one could resist. Because Aunt Olivia always made a huge pan of gravy to serve with roast chicken, the family's favorite poultry stuffing, and mashed potatoes, there was usually plenty of gravy left.

For patty shells, Aunt Olivia mixed up a very short piecrust dough, rolled it out 1/8" thick on a pastry board, and cut 12 circles, each about the size of a bread-and-butter plate. These she draped over the dozen humps of an inverted cup-cake tin and, after pricking the dough with a fork to prevent puffing, she baked them in a hot (375-400°) oven for 15 or 20 minutes. Watching them carefully to make sure they didn't burn, she snatched them out when golden and allowed them to cool before removing from the tin.

Scraps and cubed bits of chicken meat were heated in the gravy, patty shells filled, and served with peas and carrots, either fresh-made or left-over, along with generous helpings of steamed remnants of stuffing. If the amount of chicken seemed a bit skimpy, Aunt Olivia would sometimes saute chopped onion, celery and green pepper in a little margarine,

or add sliced mushrooms and/or pimento. Canned tunafish, at times, when more of the usual number of places were set, could stretch the meal even further. For extra richness, or should the gravy seem thin or be in short supply, a cup of plain yogurt, or one of dairy sour cream, or even a generous dollop of mayonnaise or salad dressing increased quantity while enhancing quality.

Creamed chicken or turkey is equally relished when served over a bed of steamed rice or boiled noodles, or baked in a casserole with an equal amount of cooked macaroni topped with bread crumbs and grated Parmesan cheese.

When time came to use larger pieces of chicken meat, those were sliced thin and packed between two slices of home-made oatmeal bread, one spread with butter, the other with mayonnaise. Sometimes for lunch, because we like broccoli, Aunt Olivia made a cheese sauce, cooked a bunch of that vegetable, toasted one thick slice of bread per person, and served sliced chicken and a couple of broccoli spears on buttered toast, topping all with cheese sauce.



To make cheese sauce, measure two T. flour into the top of a double boiler, mince two tsp. onion fine, season with pepper and one T. finely-minced fresh celery leaves. Stir. Then add one cup of milk and one cup of shredded Cheddar cheese. Cook over boiling water, stirring constantly, until thick and smooth. For a richer, fluffier sauce, stir in one beaten egg just before serving. It makes enough sauce for four to six people.

We liked sliced chicken cold, with hot vegetables and a green salad; and we liked roast beef or pork, sliced cold with a little ketchup. And cold sliced lamb, too. We also tucked into savory stews made from the remains of roast beef or lamb.

Among our favorite meals were beef and lamb Stroganoff. Tail-ends of roasts often went this way. Again, a double boiler comes into play because if the sauce boils it tends to separate; it wants to be piping hot and without a trace of scorch.

If the meat was originally served rarer than well-done, slice into strips about 1/2" thick and wide. Dredge in a mixture of 2 T. flour, 1/2 tsp. salt and a dash of pepper. Melt 3 T. margarine in a skillet over medium heat and saute until transparent a small chopped onion. Then brown meat strips quickly, turning as needed. Add 1/4 lb. sliced mushrooms, a clove of crushed garlic, 1/2 tsp. dry mustard, 2 T. dry white wine (optional), and turn into double boiler top. Keep warm over boiling water. Just before ready to serve, stir in a cup of dairy sour cream. Do not allow to boil.

Serve Stroganoff over boiled egg noodles. Tossed green salad or sliced tomatoes on a lettuce bed with a choice of dressings are fine complements to this meal.

That's all well and good, you're thinking, but what did Aunt Olivia do with leftover fish? Usually she made chowder. Because all the Lovells seem to be fish-fanciers, she almost always made enough for two meals. She, and we, thought fish chowder improved with time and tasted even better the second time than the first.

Chowder begins with peeling a large potato per serving and boiling them in salted water for 20 minutes or until fork tender, draining, and cutting into 1/2" cubes. Meanwhile, saute a couple medium-sized onions, sliced thin, in 2 T. butter (not margarine) or bacon fat in the bottom of a heavy deep saucepan. Remove from fire as soon as onions are transparent, before they brown. When potatoes are done and cubed, add to onions. Stir gently. Add one cup milk and 1/2 cup half-and-half for each serving. Heat over very low fire until piping hot but not boiling; stir occasionally to be sure milk does not burn. Clean fish carefully, giving any skin and bones to the cat. Separate into flakes. Flake-size will depend on the fish, of course. Haddock, cod, and bluefish flakes are good-sized. Add fish to chowder and bring to steaming heat slowly.

After ladling into chowder bowls, float a half-teaspoon of butter on the chowder. Serve with pilot crackers to stick with old-fashioned Lovell tradition. Saltines can substitute.

If you can't stand leftovers, or live with someone who can't, serve steaks and chops, presuming the budget permits that.