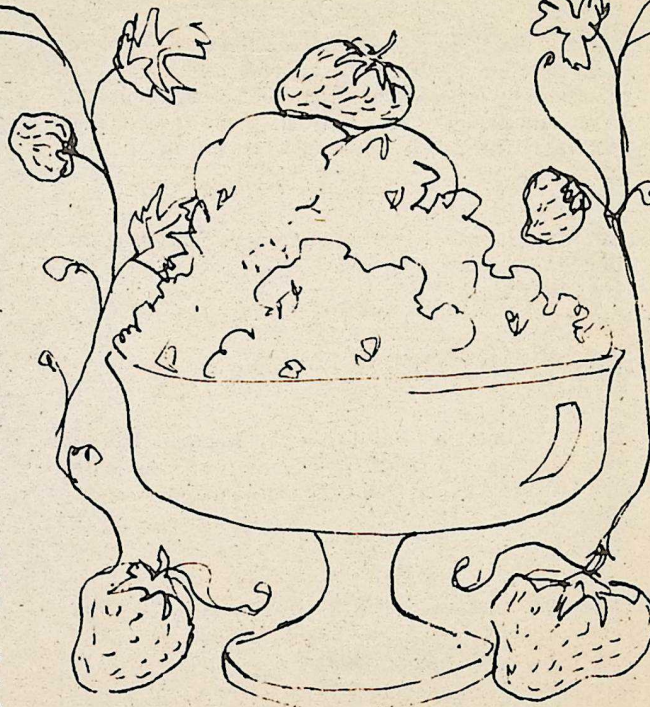


Strawberry Patch

by Lydia Lovell



Ice cream today is a common commodity...so common, in fact, we've grown accustomed to eating stuff we call ice cream that tastes no more like the old-fashioned kind than chalk tastes like cheese. Unless you restrict your purchases of this confection to those Cape shops that specialize in making their own ice creams (of which there are several) your taste buds may detect a strong similarity to candle wax in much of the so-called ice cream available in supermarkets.

No so in Aunt Olivia's day. When she made ice cream, a good deal of work went into it, but the result was superb. Especially when she made strawberry! In June, the only time of year strawberries were available, we ate them in every way possible. The season was short and no one's appetite grew jaded although the succulent berries came to the table meal after meal. Native strawberries were a treat. Strawberry ice cream stood high on our list of favorite desserts; for some, perhaps, strawberry shortcake held the edge, but given our druthers, both Uncle Henry and I opted for ice cream. Should you choose to make your own, you'll have a true experience in nostalgia.

For the finest ice cream of all, a good ice cream freezer is absolutely essential. They come in two varieties: old-fashioned hand crank or modern electric. Either does a creditable job. It's even possible to make ice cream in your refrigerator-freezer, but no matter how often you freeze, then beat the cream, that method cannot deliver quite the same texture you obtain using a real freezer. June is the month to make **Strawberry Ice Cream**.

1 qt. milk
1 C. sugar
6 large eggs, separated
1 pt. heavy cream
sweetened w/1 C. sugar
1 qt. strawberries

In the top of a large double boiler, combine milk, 1 C. sugar, and the egg yolks, slightly beaten. Cook, stirring, over boiling water until thickened to a smooth custard consistency. Strain through a sieve into the freezer can and set aside to cool. Wash and hull the strawberries. Mash through a medium sieve or run through your blender. Beat whites of eggs to a soft foam. Into the cooled custard stir heavy cream sweetened with a cup of sugar, the mashed strawberries, and the beaten eggwhites.

Assemble the freezer, pack with rock salt and chipped ice, and grind away until ice cream "makes;" if using a hand-crank type, whoever turns the handle will grow weary, but the promise of licking the dasher will be inspiration enough to finish. Whenever the ice gets low, add more and more salt, pouring off the brine that forms as the ice melts. When the handle turns so hard it will barely budge, the ice cream is done.

Shortcake is another matter entirely. You'll find at the supermarket those sponge cakes that some people substitute for shortcake. You can make a fair-to-middling shortcake from biscuit mix. Or you can whip up something scrumptious like Aunt Olivia's **Cream Shortcake**.

1 pint heavy cream
1 qt. fresh strawberries
1/3 C. sugar
4 C. flour
1 t. salt
1 t. baking soda

Prepare berries by washing, hulling, and cutting them into quarters. Heap them into a bowl and sprinkle with sugar. Set aside for at least 30 minutes. Into a medium bowl, sift flour, salt, and soda together. Quickly stir in one cup of heavy cream. Mix only to moisten; don't worry about lumps. Have ready a hot griddle, lightly greased with cooking oil. Use half the batter to form a cake about 10 inches in diameter and half-an-inch thick. Brown one side on the griddle, flip and brown the other. Repeat with the rest of the batter. Allow cakes to cool before heaping half the berries between the two layers, then topping with whipped cream and the rest of the berries. Shortcake? Yes, indeed.

A 10-foot-square strawberry bed located in a sunny spot produce plenty of strawberries for family use with enough to share with the neighbors if you can keep the blue jays and chipmunks from beating you to the harvest. Or you can

spend a few hours at one of the pick-your-own gardens that advertise strawberries this month.

One enthusiastic family came home from a Falmouth farm with 45 quarts of strawberries. Although they shared generously, ate ravenously, and froze frantically, they still ended up with an excess which yielded a year's supply of **Strawberry Jam**.

Begin by washing and hulling about 10 quarts of fruit. The weigh it. Pour the berries into a large kettle and add an equal quantity, by weight, of sugar. Bring to a boil over medium heat; lower heat and simmer, stirring gently, until sugar dissolves. While stirring, try not to break berries. Skim froth from surface as it rises. Allow to cook about an hour until fruit looks clear. Fifteen minutes before jam is done, pour in half-a-cup of grapefruit juice for improved flavor. Ladle into sterilized jars and seal.

If, by chance, you (like the family that found itself with 45 quarts of ripe strawberries) have more than you can use within a reasonable time, Uncle Henry might recommend making **Strawberry Wine**.

For eight pounds of fruit which he had bruised well with a wooden potato masher, he used two gallons of water in a large kettle. After stirring thoroughly, he strained and pressed the mixture through several layers of cheese-cloth into a three-gallon glazed pottery crock. To the juice in the crock he put six pounds of sugar, covered the crock with a linen tea towel, and let the mixture work for three days. Except for skimming off any scum or foam that rose, and stirring the mixture well after each skim, Uncle Henry left it undisturbed.

In the corner of his root cellar where Uncle Henry kept the crock stood three small wooden wine barrels. One was "ready; another, aging; a third, cleaned and ready, waited to start a new batch. Into the waiting barrel he measured the juice at the end of the three-day rest period. After keeping track of the amount of liquid he put into the barrel, he divided the result by eight. If he had eight quarts of liquid, he added one quart of fine brandy; if 10 quarts, he poured in one quart plus a cup. Then he waited two full weeks, during which time the liquid was not stirred nor disturbed in any way, before bunging down the barrel and allowing the wine to mature for two to three years.

Uncle Henry's sweet wines were unbelievably delicate and fine. Their color was clear, their bouquet rich, their consistency smooth. Although Lovells are particularly aware that alcoholic beverages should not be used daily by any healthy person, Uncle Henry's strawberry wine made every holiday and special occasion delightful.