

Not for the calorie conscious

by Lydia Lovell

From Aunt Olivia's Kitchen

Consider how life must have been before there was a telephone in every household... I can't remember that far back... probably you can't either. But we can imagine, if we try. Aunt Olivia could do better, for she was a girl when telephones first came to the village. The doctor had one and so did the general store. Anyone wanting the doctor ran down to the store, twirled the little handle, got Central, and asked her to ring the doctor's number. Central, a real live person, usually knew where the doctor had gone if he wasn't home, so if nobody answered his telephone, Central could be enormously helpful. Telephones, in early days, were used only in emergencies.

Were we to analyze the impact of the telephone upon polite society, we would undoubtedly conclude that the ladies' practice of being "at home" on certain afternoons each week to receive callers began dying out when telephones became commonplace. No longer was it necessary to dress up with hat, gloves, and high-button shoes, have the mare hitched to the surrey, and drive to a friend's house for a visit. News could be exchanged over the telephone. And nobody could see whether either caller or "callee" was still in wrapper and curling papers at three in the afternoon. Marvelous invention.

Protocol of paying calls, once an intricate procedure in which young ladies were carefully schooled lest they commit faux pas, faded swiftly. A modern matron may pay a call upon a friend, of course, but today she is well-advised to telephone in advance and make sure her visit will be convenient.

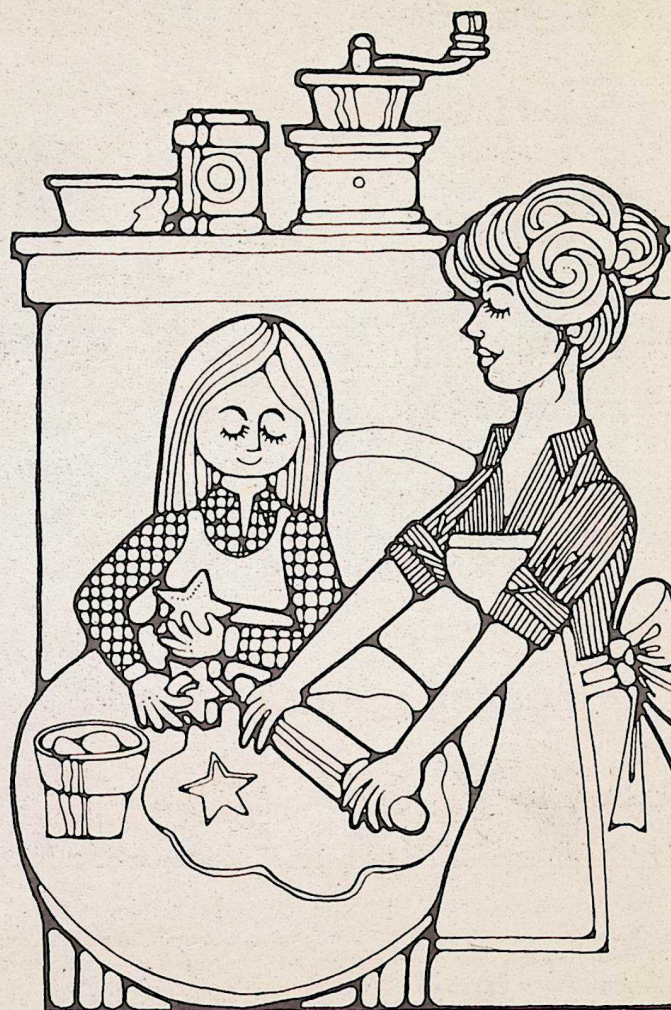
Because Aunt Olivia was brought up expecting to receive callers in the afternoon, she was always prepared to do so. That meant she always had something on hand to serve with tea. Sometimes Aunt Olivia had **Crumpets**. This rule makes eight:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| 1 pkg. yeast | 1 t. salt |
| 1/4 C. lukewarm water | 3 T. butter |
| 1 C. milk | 1 egg |
| 2 T. sugar | 2 C. flour |

Soften yeast in water. Scald milk. Stir sugar, salt, and butter into hot milk and let cool to lukewarm. Add yeast and stir; add slightly beaten egg and stir; add half the flour and beat well. Add balance of flour and beat thoroughly. Cover and set aside for 30 minutes, allowing batter to rise. Cut down. Beat for 3 minutes to create large holes characteristic of crumpets. Repeat rising. Repeat beating. Let rise a third time. Pour batter into 4" rings* placed on a medium-hot, greased griddle. Fill each ring half-full. Rings should be about 1" high. Bake 30 minutes on the griddle on top of the stove. Remove rings, flip crumpets, bake 15 minutes longer until dry. Remove to wire rack to cool. To serve, wrap in foil and heat through in a hot oven. Split and butter generously while hot. Pass tart jelly or marmalade.

*Note: Rings can be fashioned from heavy-weight aluminum foil if you can't find them in a kitchen specialty shop.

Crumpets were perfect fare served with afternoon tea, but Aunt Olivia was not one to be satisfied with serving only tea. If unexpected guests could be persuaded to stay for supper, she was delighted. For such an occasion, a casserole was quickly made, then kept cold until an hour or so before the meal when it was popped into the oven without ado. A gelatin salad (another make-ahead) completed the main course. And dessert was equally as simple.



To delight your own family or to earn a well-deserved reputation as a laid-back cool hostess (or host, as the case may be,) plan to serve **Seafood Artichoke Casserole** the next time someone drops in and stays for supper.

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1 lb. fresh crab, shrimp, or lobster meat | |
| 1 15-oz. can artichoke hearts, drained | |
| 1 4-oz. can mushrooms, drained (or fresh ones if on hand) | |
| 2 T. butter | 1 C. milk |
| 2-1/2 T. flour | 2 T. bread crumbs |
| 1/2 t. salt | 1 T. grated parmesan cheese |
| Dash Cayenne | |

Cut artichoke hearts in quarters. Place in buttered, shallow 1-1/2 quart casserole. Combine mushrooms and seafood; layer over artichokes. In a small saucepan, melt butter, blend in flour and seasonings; remove from heat and stir in milk

gradually, whisking. Return to heat, continue whisking until thickened. Pour sauce over contents of casserole. Toss crumbs and cheese together and sprinkle over top. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes.

To complement your casserole not only in color but in flavor, have **Gingery Cranberry Salad** ready to serve on a bed of lettuce.

- | |
|--------------------------------------|
| 1 12-1/2 oz. can crushed pineapple |
| 2 3-oz. pkgs. lemon-flavored gelatin |
| 1 C. ginger ale |
| 1 16-oz. can whole cranberry sauce |
| 1 2-oz. pkg. whipped topping mix |
| 1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened |
| 1/2 C. pecans, chopped |
| 1 T. butter |

Reserving syrup, drain pineapple. Add enough water to syrup to make one cup. Heat to boiling. Dissolve gelatin in hot liquid. Allow to cool. Stir in ginger ale and chill. When gelatin is partially set, blend drained pineapple and cranberry sauce together and fold into gelatin. Pour into a 9"x9" pan. Chill until firm. Follow directions on topping mix package; whip together with soft cream cheese; spread over gelatin a few hours before serving. Toast chopped pecans in butter for 10 minutes in 350° oven and sprinkle over top. Refrigerate until ready to serve cut into squares.

Dessert, like the casserole that spends 30 minutes in the oven, and salad that is ready in a shake, is quickly put together in the morning. It improves with every hour it spends in the refrigerator. This recipe is versatile. You can use it to fill a pie crust. You can line a bowl with vanilla wafers and spoon this concoction on top. Or pour the custard into six generous-sized individual dessert goblets, and pass cookies with **Banana Custard Pudding**.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1/2 C. sugar | 2 C. milk |
| 4 T. flour | 2 beaten eggs |
| 1/2 t. salt | 1/2 t. vanilla extract |
| 1 to 2 T. heavy cream (optional) | |

In the top of a double boiler, stir together sugar, flour, and salt. Gradually stir in milk. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly, and cook, stirring, until flour is cooked, about 10 minutes, and custard is very thick. Place over boiling water. Stir in beaten eggs, cover and cook one minute longer. Remove from heat and allow to cool slightly before adding vanilla. If custard is too thick, thin with cream, but do not thin too much. Slice six small or four large almost-ripe bananas into pie shell, or dessert dishes, or a pretty crystal bowl lined with vanilla wafers. Pour custard over bananas, stirring well with a fork so fruit is well-mixed with sauce.

The pudding will thicken more as it cools. Don't spoil it with whipped cream. Serve it plain. If you must do more, use half bananas and half oranges. Drain a 6-oz. can of Mandarin oranges for convenience and toss with sliced bananas for color.

Afternoon tea with buttered crumpets, followed by supper of seafood-artichoke casserole, gingery cranberry salad, and banana custard for dessert... now please don't tell me you're counting **CALORIES!** Not the Lovells... they all ran to long-and-lanky... lucky Lovells, I do declare!

Bon appetit.