

by Lydia Lovell

You've heard people say, referring to some pleasant incident, "That just made my day!"

Well, while reading through one of Aunt Olivia's oldest and most well-worn cookbooks, I came upon a recipe I'd forgotten I ever knew, but in memory I hear Aunt Olivia's gentle laughter and Uncle Henry's quiet mirth whenever she served an old English luncheon dish I savoured as a child but have never eaten since. Discovering the recipe for **Bubble and Squeak** made my day.

In a large saucepan, boil a head of cabbage, cut in quarters, about 25 minutes until very tender. Drain in a sieve and press out as much extra liquid as possible with a wooden spoon. Turn drained cabbage into a trencher (a wooden chopping bowl) and use two knives to cut quite fine. Set aside.

In a 12-inch frying pan, melt half a stick of butter (or margarine). Into the melted fat stir a small jar of chipped beef and saute gently for a few minutes; then put the chopped cabbage with the beef, season with a bit of black pepper, and heat through. Serve on toast.

Alternatively, instead of adding cabbage to beef, put a gill (two cups) of milk into the beef, thicken with two tablespoons of flour. Reheat cabbage and heap on toasted bread; then spoon creamed beef over cabbage. Either way, Bubble and Squeak makes a satisfying lunch for three or four people.

Although it's doubtful you'll ever want to make your own sauerkraut, no harm is ever done by knowing how. Years ago, Aunt Olivia either put down a crock or two or watched the heads of cabbage rot. She prepared **Sauerkraut** in earthenware crocks, the same type she used for dill pickles.

Chop or grate cabbage very fine as if for cole slaw. Strew bottom of crock with a handful of salt, then a layer of cabbage about two inches thick, then another handful of salt, then more cabbage, alternating layers until the crock is nearly full. With a potato masher, pound the cabbage down until it is compressed tightly. Lay over the cabbage an ironstone plate that fits closely inside the crock and place a heavy weight on top to keep the cabbage under the brine. (The weight may be a clean-scrubbed rock or a jug of water.) Do not disturb until after cabbage has fermented. Then take up with a slotted spoon as much as is wanted for a meal. Rinse, drain and cook the sauerkraut with caraway seeds, whole peppercorns, and juniper berries if these flavors appeal.

The Pennsylvania Dutch (who are, in fact, not Dutch at all but of German descent) use cabbage in great quantities, both fresh-from-the-garden and as sauerkraut. A casserole called **Knabrus** may be baked in a slow oven or, if you use a metal pan or Corningware, steamed on the stovetop.

In a well-buttered casserole, layer one large head of fine-chopped cabbage alternately with onion slices. Dot with two tablespoons of butter. Cover tightly and place over low heat



(or in a 300° oven) for about an hour. Season with salt and pepper. Serve hot.

To serve **Sauerkraut** as an Amish family might, melt two tablespoons of butter in a large saucepan. Add a half-cup of chopped onions and cook until golden. Stir in a quart of drained sauerkraut, and cook for 10 minutes. Pare and grate one potato; add to saucepan with one teaspoon caraway seed (optional), two unpeeled, cored, and sliced red apples, and two cups of boiling water. Cook uncovered over low heat for half-an-hour. Cover and continue cooking another half-hour. Yields six to eight servings.

Where Aunt Olivia obtained her finest recipe for using sauerkraut, we may never know because I have yet to find it written down among her collection of file crads or to read it in any of her many cookbooks. Perhaps she made it up, or perhaps she was shown how and didn't bother to write it down since **Pork Loin with Sauerkraut** is such a simple dish to prepare she saw no reason to record the directions. In fact, it is so simple I remember watching her make it this way.

Over the bottom of a large, fairly shallow pan... a broiler pan is perfect if you expect six or eight at your dinner table... spread one cup of dark brown sugar. Over the sugar pour a one-lb. plastic bagful of sauerkraut together with its juices. Spread sauerkraut evenly over bottom of pan. Arrange six or eight loin pork chops, cut 3/4" thick, on top of sauerkraut. Salt and pepper pork chops. Bake uncovered three hours in 300° oven, turning chops once after an hour-and-a-half. Salt and pepper meat again after turning.

Baking potatoes will cook at that temperature, too, if put in the oven two hours before the meat will be done.

Succotash is the vegetable of choice to serve with Pork and Sauerkraut, Succotash, of course, is lima beans and corn. You can buy it canned or frozen, or you can make it yourself. An old-fashioned way to fix **Succotash** is a bit more complicated than stirring the two cooked vegetables together and heating them up, but the result is worth the extra effort.

Cut the corn from the cobs and set aside. Break up the cobs and put them into a big cooking pot with the lima beans. Use only enough water to cook the beans; keep the pot covered. Watch to be sure beans do not burn. When beans are tender, add the corn kernels. Cook five minutes. Remove and discard the corn cobs. Thicken succotash slightly with one tablespoon of butter rubbed together with one tablespoon of flour. Add half-a-cup of milk, season with salt and pepper to taste, simmer another five minutes, and serve piping hot.

Aunt Olivia knew many a little trick that proved useful when she faced some of the kitchen chores that are usually done for us today. If you've ever attempted to cut kernels of corn from the cob, for instance, you've discovered what a messy procedure it can be. I remember Aunt Olivia making short work of it. When husking the ears, she left an inch or so of stem on each cob. Using an angel cake pan, the round one with steep high sides and a tube in the center, she placed the stem of each ear upright in the tube hole and, with a sharp knife, sliced the kernels from the cob, all around, down into the cake pan. The milky juice ran down into the pan, too, wasting not an iota of the corn's goodness. And, yes, she did toss the stripped corn cobs into the pot she cooked the beans in and discarded them when the beans were done. But Aunt Olivia removed the corn cobs before adding the corn kernels to the cooked beans.

For dessert, after a meal of pork and sauerkraut with succotash, choose fruit. This time of year, melons are superb. If serving cantaloupe, quarter it, remove seeds, and scatter a few blueberries in the cockpit. If honeydew is on your menu, a wedge of lime to squeeze over the melon adds zest. Or slice the meat from two or more varieties of melon and stir them together with a cup of blueberries, a cup of raspberries, and the juice of half-a-lemon. So pretty served in crystal dessert bowls!

Bon appetit.