

I take it that we are in general agreement that nothing in this life, viewed from a material angle, is of greater importance than Food. Not only is this true from the standpoint of bodily nourishment, but also when considered as a contributing factor to the joy of living. Food, then, to be of value in the promotion of health, must necessarily be pure, fresh, properly preserved and of good quality. For if these elements do not obtain primarily, no amount of culinary skill can make up for their loss.

This first step is a problem of the purveyors; those whose duty it is to provide the foods. The public is justified in demanding that these purchase only such foods as are wholesome and of standard grade. It has been no uncommon thing to see many a meal prove disappointing because some of the dishes composing it were prepared from products that were far below the grade to which the patrons were accustomed.

With more science in agriculture, more skill among the raisers of cattle, sheep and hogs, and the increase in knowledge among manufacturers and preservers of food products, it is becoming easier to meet the Public's demands for foods that leave nothing to be desired in nourishing qualities or eating pleasures.

Repeating then, it will appear that our first problem is the preserving of health-giving, nourishing, pleasure creating foods to satisfy one of the Public's demands in food.

PREPARATION OF FOOD

Having procured appropriate foods of the right quality, we now move on to their preparation.

I do not think the kings of the earth, or the otherwise great, have had more paens of praise in their honor than have those humble artists whose studies are the kitchens and whose productions make their appeal, not to the eye or ear, but to the palate.

The tremendous increase in the number of hotels, restaurants, dining cars, wayside eating places and high class passenger steamships, attests the great growth of the eating public. Those whose work consists of preparing the food in many of the establishments enumerated above, know just how discriminating and exacting is the public taste.

Here arises a perfectly fair question relating specifically to our group. Are we meeting fully the cooking demands of this discriminating and exacting Public? I wish it were possible for me to say, without any mental reservations, that we are. But I fear that heretofore we have been satisfied in far too many cases, in merely "getting by." Nor have we looked upon the science and art of cookery as constituting a profession comparable in dignity and importance with those of medicine, law or any other of the so-called learned professions.

Mr. Washington, who was so closely identified with the conception, organization and early work of this League, used to emphasize in his own inimical manner, how dignity could be attached to any kind of labor; that whatever was worth doing at all, had a right to all we possess in the way of intelligence, energy and interest.

Now to meet the Public demand in the preparation of food, our present cook needs to know much of the relative values of foods; nutrition, the effect of heat on certain foods at various temperatures; the principles underlying and the reasons for boiling, baking and frying, sanitation, the fine art of seasoning and a working knowledge of what is being done elsewhere in the field of cookery, sufficient to keep him abreast of the times. He should be imbued with the spirit of progress, keeping always in mind that perfection in every line, is the human goal, always lying just beyond that to which we have attained. He will not be a guesser; but every food production of his will have its ingredients as carefully selected and measured as a Doctor's prescription for some bodily ailment. Above all, he himself, and his bodily surroundings, will be scrupulously clean, for he will be aware that this is a Public demand as relates to food that is becoming more and more insistent.

Summarizing; our cook will know much about the various kinds of foods and their relative values; he will be able to prepare many palatable tempting dishes; he and his surroundings will be scrupulously clean; his work will be carefully and intelligently planned, and executed with judgment and fidelity; he will be more cheerful and progressive; in short, he will be more than an artisan; he will be an artist.

SERVING THE FOOD

Having selected the foods of quality, purity and appropriateness, and having prepared them in a wholesome and appetizing manner to meet the Public's demands, we now come to the final act in the drama—serving.