

## PREFACE

At all the great social centres of the modern world, the art of dining wisely and yet well is one which must be thoroughly acquired by every host and hostess who aspires to distinction.

As the result of an ever-increasing refinement of luxury, the standard of good taste in entertaining has been greatly raised in recent years, becoming at the same time a matter of international convention, accepted alike in London, Paris, and New York.

To achieve a reputation in the giving of *recherché* dinner-parties now-a-days is to become in a sense an international celebrity. Small wonder, therefore, that the subject of dinners and dining is one of absorbing interest in Vanity Fair.

But to achieve distinction in these matters, something more is required than ample means and a well-ordered household.

The successful dinner, like every work of art, must present brainwork and imagination. No matter how efficient may be the head butler or Maître d'hôtel, the old adage of 'the master's eye' holds good. If entertaining is to be really well done, if it is to possess the enduring charms of spontaneity and infinite variety, it is essential that hosts and hostesses should take an intelligent personal interest in the arrangement of every detail. They must keep themselves thoroughly posted in the latest developments of the culinary art, and in the changing fashions of table decoration and equipment.

This work is written for reference and instruction in every particular connected with the all-important *Art of Dining* and the appointments of the *Modern Dinner-Table* for all occasions.

Such important matters as the correct laying of the covers, the choice of schemes of decoration, the proper serving of the various dishes, the skilful carving of joints and birds, the decanting and serving of fine wines, the preparation of menus, all these subjects are exhaustively dealt with and illustrated in this book.

Practical experience in the arrangement of high-class dinners and artistic table decorations for every kind of function, gained during many years' work at the most fashionable and best-appointed establishments, entitles me to speak with some authority on these subjects.

Private houses as well as public establishments differ so much in their circumstances and requirements, that it is impossible to draw up any generally applicable code of rules and regulations in connection with the table service and its arrangements; but the broad principles and general hints contained in this book are calculated to be of practical value, both to those who give orders and to those who carry them out, either in a private house or public establishment.

With this book in hand, even the most inexperienced person should be able to prepare a menu and to supervise the arrangements of the table for any function with very little difficulty, and with every prospect of satisfaction to all concerned.

*J. Rey*

## CHAPTER 20

# TABLE MANNERS AND FOODS OF THE NATIONS



However bad a reputation our English climate may have with most people, English table manners are reputed to be the best in all the world, and it is a thousand pities that certain other nations do not copy our behaviour at table, or establish schools in their own country for the study of table deportment.\*

The progress of nations in refinement on matters appertaining to the table is best ascertained by a survey of the different kinds of food they relish and consume.

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\* Educated people of all nations, possessing refinement and good-breeding, are excluded from the following remarks.

Any one who has travelled leisurely through different countries and observed the *mœurs* of the inhabitants cannot have failed to be struck by the different kinds of food relished by the different nations, as well as their strange habits and behaviour at table.

Such a one, who has made these observations, can in a moment tell the nationality of a diner-out in a public restaurant by the dishes he chooses and the manner of manipulating his knife and fork.

Brillat-Savarin never penned a better truism than when he wrote, 'Say what you eat and I will tell you what you are'; and his aphorism stands good for the present generation.

Has anyone ever watched two Germans eating, seated opposite one another and discussing business?

If you have not, just ask anybody in the City who lunched before the war at restaurants frequented by German stockbrokers, near the Exchange, and listen to their impressions. They are sure to tell that by the way they flourished the knives and forks, anyone might think they were fighting a duel with swords!

One of them alone, when he is eating, makes more noise than twenty Englishmen together; and when a party of Germans is in a restaurant, the band cannot be heard while they are drinking their soup.

They like and eat 'Tartar Steak' consisting of raw meat and raw onions chopped. They consume huge quantities of 'Bismarck Pickled Herrings', *Schweinfleisch*, *Sauerkraut*, and German Sausages.

The average one amongst them when at table, if seen from a distance, might easily be thought to be conducting a band.

They talk coarsely to the waiter, eat with their knives, and are noted for being beer swillers.

The Austrians and Hungarians, though having much in common with the Germans, are of much finer type and style, and their table-manners are decidedly more refined. Viennese cookery is certainly nice.

The Russians are not yet quite up-to-date with matters concerning the table. Their Bortsch, their Caviare, and their *Charlotte Russe* are certainly excellent; but their *cuisine répertoire* is very limited. Their food consists chiefly of salt fish, smoked ham and salmon. They begin their meals with raw spirits such as Vodka, and finish with a cup of plain tea with a slice of lemon in it.

The Turks' chief food is rice cooked with very little meat cut up in small pieces. This is sometimes varied by salt fish. The Turks are on the whole temperate and eat great quantities of dry fruit, chiefly figs.

The Brazilian and the Portuguese people have much in common regarding their food. Their favourite dishes are *Bacalhao com batatas* (salt cod fish cooked with green oil, onions, garlic, tomatoes and potatoes); also boiled rice with chopped hard-boiled eggs, stewed meat with tomatoes and potatoes strongly flavoured with garlic, and their national dish *Feijoada* (baked black haricot beans served with *mandioca* flour).

They eat large quantities of tinned sardines and drink strong thick red wine for breakfast; tea or coffee is seldom taken at this repast. They are very partial to all sweet dishes and eat a good deal of jam with the spoon in the same way that people here eat porridge.

With regard to their manners at table, the less said about them the better.

The Argentine people partake of everything eatable, but have no real idea of what *cuisine* means. The population of the

Argentine Republic is composed of 50 per cent *creollos* (real natives), 25 per cent Italians, and 25 per cent German and English.

The best businesses such as the Railways, the Docks, the Electric Lighting, the Tramways and *Frigorificos*, by the way, are in the hands of the English.

The *creollos* love their native dish *Puchero*, which consists of beef, bacon, chicken, vegetables and rice, cooked together in a pot; also, *Asado con cuero* and *Bife à caballo* (a grilled steak with two fried eggs on top). They put their elbows on the table, pick their teeth freely, and carry a toothpick in their mouths long after a meal is finished.

Italians do not eat much meat, due perhaps to the hot climate in which they live, but are very fond of *Risotto*, *Menestrone*, *Polenta*, *Raviolis*, *Gnocchi*, and *Macaronis*.

They drink strong red wine (in moderation), are particularly partial to green oil and garlic in their cookery, and eat a great deal of ice-cream and sweets.

If they happen to be at table with intimate friends they are very talkative, and gesticulate energetically with their hands and whole body.

Spanish people eat hardly any meat or fish, but consume great quantities of cereals; rice, haricot beans, *garbanzos*, and peas. They also eat quantities of olives, green vegetables, salad and fruit, all of which abound in that sunny country.

Chocolate, which is made very thick, is as popular a beverage in Spain as tea is in England.

A Spanish breakfast generally consists of chocolate with *Bollos de leche*, or *Tostadas con manteca*. Their national dish is the *Puchero à la Castellana*, which is a complete dish in itself, being composed of beef, ham, chicken, and *chorizo*, cooked together

with *garbanzos* and cabbages. They love *Paella à la Valenciana*, *Olla podrida*, and in summer-time *Gaspacho* (a special bread salad flavoured with pounded almonds and garlic). They do not drink a great deal of wine (although it is very cheap there), but water with *azucarillos* and *aguardiente* or syrup, which they call *refrescos*.

France is the country of the real *cuisine par excellence*; there almost everybody lives well and partakes of everything that is eatable, including *grenouilles et escargots* (frogs and snails).

French people are most particular about what they eat, and more especially the way in which it is cooked.

The *Pot-au-feu* is considered the dish of the working-class, and their *Petite Marmite* is the soup most frequently served at the best appointed tables everywhere.

Although extremely particular about their food, they are not so about their manners at table. They talk loudly, tuck their serviette in their shirt-collar, make a great display with the *cure-dent*, and sit with their elbows on the table.

As is well known, there is a large percentage of people in France who eat horseflesh in preference to beef.

The majority of the men drink *absinthe* before their meals, red or white wine during meals, and strong black coffee afterwards.

The United States of America embraces perhaps a greater variety of people than any other country in the world. China, Japan, Turkey and all the European nations are represented there—each with a large proportion of its people. The Asiatic people's food consists mainly of rice with very little meat or fish.

The average American partakes of almost anything (even of tortoises, which he calls 'Terrapins'), but is far from being an

epicure. They like to have all the dishes placed in front of them, and then eat three or four different things at the same time. They are particularly fond of cereals for breakfast, such as Grape-nuts, Quaker-oats, corn-on-cob, hominy fritters, and buckwheat cakes with golden syrup.

Their national dishes are corned beef, planked shad, baked beans, and beef-hash; any one of them eats more salad than ten rabbits. They are noisy in the dining-room, disregard refinement, pick their teeth, spread their arms on the table, and talk boisterously.

When dining at a restaurant, they love to have a confidential chat and crack a joke with the Maitre d'hôtel in charge.

They never omit to let you know they hail from America, in case you have failed to notice their nasal twang.

Of the United Kingdom, or England, as we like to call it, much could be said with regard to food and table habits.

Ireland and Scotland, which form part of this 'God's own country', have some very appetising national dishes. 'Irish stew' was not long ago pronounced by the patrons of a large catering firm in London (who had a sort of poll for dishes) to be the favourite dish, and insisted upon the management including it every day in the Bill of Fare as a permanent *Plat du Jour*.

Scotch people are proud of their 'haggis' and 'hotchpotch', and not in a small measure of their whisky.

There is a great deal of difference in the volubility of these two while at table. The Scotchman does not talk much while dinner is going on, and does not miss much from the menu; whilst the Irishman talks a great deal and gesticulates much as an Italian does.

Of the two, the Irishman is more refined and temperate at table.



The food grown or manufactured in England is the best in the world; and with the exception of wine and tropical fruit, there is nothing that cannot be grown here. The one great drawback is, however, that it is impossible for England to produce enough for its great population.

The number of bullocks, sheep, etc., consumed in England is enormous compared with that of other nations, and it is a good thing for us that such good supplies are always forthcoming from Australia and the Argentine Republic.

The average Englishman does not care much for soup; his food is substantial and his table generally well provided with good things.

If he does not partake of a large joint, a pie or pudding, and Cheddar or Stilton cheese, accompanied by a good supply of wine or beer, he does not think he has made a good dinner.