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Housekeepers' Chat

Monday, June 16, 1930.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "A Pill-Box Trap for Red Ants." Information from Bureau of Entomology; menu and recipes from Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletins available: "Home Baking." Mimeographed circular on jelly-making.

--ooOoo--

First and foremost on our program this morning is an S O S from a housekeeper in the East.

"Will you please tell me right away," she asks, "how to rid my house of little red ants?"

After receiving this note I consulted the entomologists in the United States Department of Agriculture. They told me how to make a trap, out of an ordinary pill box. Converting a pill box into a trap for red ants requires no mechanical ability whatever. Take an ordinary pill box, remove the top, and cut out four small square holes from the inner collar. Then pour a thin layer of hot paraffin inside the box to make it water-tight. When in use, the top of the box is partially raised, to expose the holes and allow the ants to enter. Poison baits attract the ants to the trap, where they either die at once, or carry the poison away and spread it among other ants.

Now you want a good homemade bait. One kind of bait is made by rubbing a small quantity of tartar emetic into small bits of bacon rind. Another bait, which gives excellent results, is made by dissolving 4 ounces of sugar in one-half pint of water, to which is added 30 grains of sodium arsenate, and a little honey. Heat to boiling, and strain. The best plan is to have the local druggist prepare this and other baits which contain violent poisons.

If you use a sirup bait, fill the box partially with small bits of blotting paper, and pour the sirup on the paper. When not in actual use, the lids should be pushed all the way down on the boxes, and they should of course be put away where children and pets can not get to them.

When properly made and baited, the pill-box trap is unusually satisfactory for breaking up colonies of the little red ants, which are so fond of sugar.

The next question is about tea: "Should tea be boiled? How much tea should be used, per cup?"

I'll tell you what Mr. Hutchinson, tea examiner stationed at New York City for the Federal Food and Drug Administration, says about brewing a social cup of tea.

In the first place, while the amount of tea to use will depend on the individual's taste, Mr. Hutchinson says that about a teaspoonful to a cup is a good average. Use boiling water, or the leaves will not open fully and impart their full strength and flavor to the beverage. But tea should never be boiled, nor should the leaves stand in the water longer than five or six minutes, in Mr. Hutchinson's opinion. Use an earthenware pot. After the leaves have steeped five or six minutes, pour the liquor into another container, or if you use a tea ball, it can be removed.

Mr. Hutchinson puts the tea into an aluminum strainer, puts the strainer across the top of the teapot, and pours boiling water through the strainer until the pot is full, covering the body of the strainer. After it has drawn for three or four minutes, he takes the strainer out and has a cup of tea that is just to his liking.

Now what next, in the question line? Here's a letter from the South: "I want to ask a question about jelly. Is there anything I can do to make it jell after it has been cooked and then gets cold? I made some dewberry jelly. After it was cold, the jelly was stringy, like sirup. If you can tell me what's wrong, I surely will thank you. I used one cup of juice to two-thirds cup of sugar. Is that too much sugar, or did I cook it too long, or not long enough?"

Let's look into this matter carefully. One reason for your trouble with the dewberry jelly may have been that you added too much water, in extracting the juice. Dewberries are very juicy in themselves, and only a little water, say one-fourth cup to one pound of fruit, or no water at all, should be added when the fruit is cooked. Another reason may have been that the fruit juice and sugar were cooked beyond the jelly test, or the fruit may have been over-ripe. If the fruit was over-ripe, the addition of lemon juice would have helped make the jelly jell. It might be worth while for you to try cooking over a glass or two of your jelly. When you cook it over, add one tablespoon of strained lemon juice to each cup, and boil rapidly for about two minutes. The proportion of sugar you used in the first place was probably all right; it was certainly not too much.

Another way to get good jelly might be to add two to four tablespoons of liquid pectin extract to a glass or two of your jelly, and cook for a few minutes. It is very hard to say how to make jellies behave, after they have once refused to jell. It is just a case of experimenting, until you reach the proper proportion of acid, sugar, and pectin. I am sending you some printed directions on jelly making, which may be of help.

Now let's write our Monday menu -- Cold Sliced Tongue for Monday -- that sounds good. The menu, complete, is: Cold Sliced Tongue; Fried Potatoes; Beet Greens, with Hard-Cooked Egg; Dill Pickle; and for dessert, Waffles and Maple Sirup, or Honey.

The Radio Cookbook tells how to prepare the tongue -- page 29 I think it is. Directions for making waffles are in the Home Baking bulletin -- I don't remember the page. By the way, have you ever served waffles for dessert? They're mighty nice. To repeat the menu: Cold Sliced Tongue; Fried Potatoes; Beet Greens with Hard-Cooked Egg; Dill Pickles; and Waffles and Maple Sirup or Honey.

I see here's a request for an Oatmeal Bread recipe. I'll have that ready tomorrow.