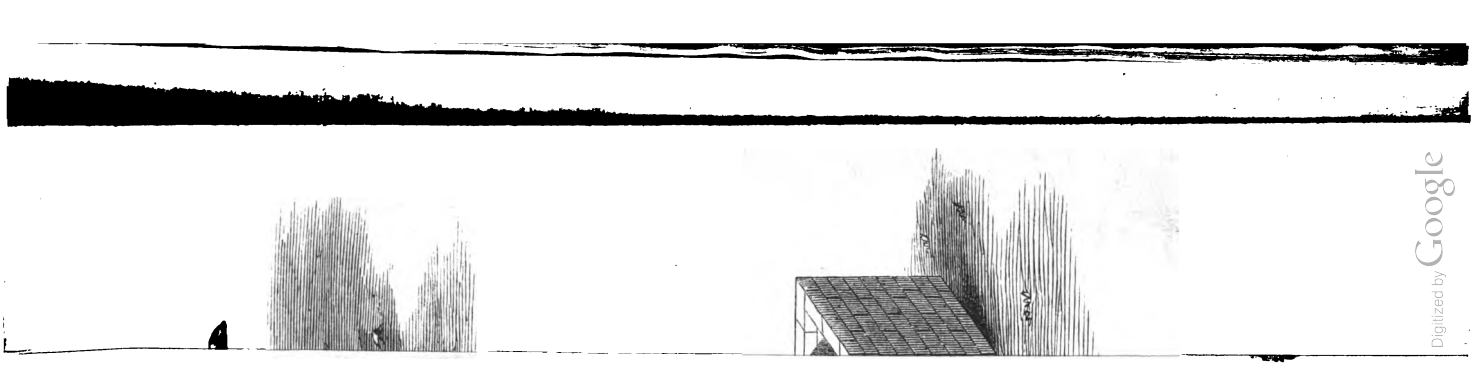

CAMP FIRES AND CAMP COOKING;

OR

CULINARY HINTS FOR THE SOLDIER:

INCLUDING

RECEIPT FOR MAKING BREAD IN THE "PORTABLE FIELD OVEN" FURNISHED BY THE SUBSISTENCE DEPARTMENT.

BY

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CAMP FIRES AND CAMP COOKING.

In making up the following receipts, the author has been actuated by a desire to aid the efforts of those of his countrymen who, with the best intentions, lack the knowledge to utilize them; and having personally assisted in the concoction of the various dishes he treats of, using only camp fires, camp kettles, and soldiers' rations, he knows that a little attention on the part of any sensible man—and none other should ever attempt to cook—will produce the most savory and gratifying results.

CAMP COOKING AND CAMP KETTLES.

The utensils and means furnished by government to the soldier for preparing his food are of the most primitive character. The former consist of camp kettles, made of iron, with a handle, and varying in size from four to seven gallons, (they should be made so as to have one slide into the other, in nests of four,) and mess pans, also of iron, about 12 inches in diameter, and sloping to the bottom. The latter consist of a certain amount of wood per diem, which is to be consumed as taste or ingenuity may dictate. The usual and most simple mode is to dig a trench 18 inches wide, 12 inches deep, and from four to six feet long. At each end plant a forked stick of equal height, with a stout sapling, from which to suspend the kettles, extending from one to the other.

[See Diagram No. 1.]

This, however, is neither the best nor most economical mode, as it consumes much fuel, wastes much of the heat, and causes great inconvenience to the cook. An improvement can be effected by casing the sides of the trench with brick, adding a little chimney at one end, and, in place of the forked sticks, using iron uprights and cross-bar, to which half a dozen hooks for hanging kettles are attached.

[See Diagram No. 2]

In a clayey soil, the plan adopted by the salt boilers of New York is perhaps the neatest, most economical, and most convenient that can

be devised. They dig a hole about three feet square and two feet in depth, generally in the slope of a hill. On one side they run a shaft laterally, about one foot square and six feet in length, and one foot from the surface of the ground. At the extreme end they sink a shaft vertically, and form a chimney; and at equi-distances they pierce three holes of sufficient diameter to prevent the kettles from slipping through. By this mode the kettles can be placed over the fire to boil—or on either side, to simmer—with less difficulty than by any other means.

[See Diagrams Nos. 3 and 4.]

Besides the allowance from government, however, the company cooks should be furnished, from the "Company Fund," with two large iron spoons, two large iron forks, two stout knives, one tin cullender, and one yard of flannel; also a false tin bottom, closely fitting the kettles; for all of which the cook should be responsible.

THE RATION.

No army in the world is so well provided for, in the shape of food, either as to quantity or quality, as the army of the United States, and very little attention on the part of the cook will enable him to lay up a liberal amount weekly to the credit of the Company Fund. No one man can consume his daily ration, although many waste it; and a systematic issue will, in a great measure, prevent unnecessary extravagance.

THE COOK'S CREED.

Cleanliness is next to godliness, both in persons and kettles: be ever industrious, then, in scouring your pots. Much elbow grease, a few ashes, and a little water, are capital aids to the careful cook. Better wear out your pans with scouring than your stomachs with purging; and it is less dangerous to work your elbows than your comrade's bowels. Dirt and grease betray the poor cook, and destroy the poor soldier; whilst health, content, and good cheer should ever reward him who does his duty and keeps his kettles clean. In military life, punctuality is not only a duty, but a necessity, and the cook should always endeavor to be exact in time. Be sparing with sugar and salt, as a deficiency can be better remedied than an overplus.

KITCHEN PHILOSOPHY.

Remember that beans, badly boiled, kill more than bullets; and fat is more fatal than powder. In cooking, more than in anything else in this world, always make haste slowly. One hour too much is vastly better than five minutes too little, with rare exceptions. A big fire scorches your soup, burns your face, and crisps your temper. Skim, simmer, and scour, are the true secrets of good cooking.

BEEF SOUP WITH DESICCATED MIXED VEGETABLES.

The Americans, as a rule, are not fond of soups, unless of the thicker kind; but in no form can meat and vegetables be served together more profitably and more nourishingly. As a matter of economy, it admits of no argument, because every portion is useful, both bone and flesh; and, when properly made, it is wholesome and palatable. On fresh-beef day, if among the rations there are some choice bits—such as sirloin, tenderloin, or rump steaks—cut them into neat slices, and use for breakfast, broiling them if it can be done; if not, fry them. Save all the bones, if large cut them in pieces and distribute equally among the kettles. If the company numbers seventy men or less, use one large kettle and two smaller ones. Fill them nearly with pieces of meat, from one to three pounds each, not too closely packed; then add water enough to cover it, and place it over a brisk fire, throwing in a large handful of salt to each kettle. As soon as the water begins to boil, and the scum begins to rise, deaden the fire, and skim, carefully and faithfully, every ten minutes, and be very sure that the water does not again come to a boil—*it should only simmer;* for when the meat is boiling hard the pores of the flesh are immediately closed, the essence of the meat, and all its impurities, are retained within, no scum arises, the meat becomes hard and tough, and the soup thin and watery. If it is only permitted to simmer, the pores are kept open, the blood is drawn out, the juices are extracted, the meat is rendered tender and wholesome, and the soup rich, nutritious, and palatable. In one hour and a half—carefully skimming all the while—the meat should be done; but if it has only simmered, two hours will be better. Then take the meat out, leaving only the bones. An hour previous to this, however, break up a tablet of desiccated

vegetables as small as possible, and divide them into as many portions as there are kettles of soup. Place each portion in a separate pan, and fill with fresh clean water, standing them near the fire until thoroughly saturated with water. When the meat is taken out, put the vegetables in, and let them boil gently two hours longer, during that time carefully skimming off all the fat which rises to the surface. Then season with pepper and salt, and a tablespoonful of vinegar, and serve out.

Both the French and American desiccated vegetables come in tablets. The former being twice as large as the latter, it will therefore be necessary to use one of the French or two of the American tablets for a company, which will be found amply sufficient, as they swell up to sixteen times their bulk in a compressed state.

The fat taken from the soup is valuable—first for selling, next for frying, but principally because you don't swallow it in your soup.

PORK SOUP WITH VEGETABLES.

This soup is good for a change, and quite economical. Take four pounds of clear pork, without rind or bone; cut it into pieces about one inch square; put into a pan a little fat, which must be as hot as possible, and throw in enough pork to cover the bottom, which is to be fried quite brown, and turned into another pan whilst the balance is being fried. Have three camp kettles filled with clean water; boil it, and add to each kettle one-third of the fried pork, with a handful of salt. Let it boil moderately for fifteen minutes, and in the meanwhile, having soaked the desiccated vegetables, add one-third to each kettle, and continue boiling, not too fast, for one hour and a half. Season with pepper, salt, and a little vinegar, and if there is any stale bread to be had, three or four loaves should be cut into pieces two inches square, or less, and divided equally in the three kettles. After fifteen minutes' slow boiling the soup is ready to serve. Whatever fat floats on the top, before the bread is added, should be carefully removed.

PEA SOUP.

For some unexplained reason, this article is by no means popular with the troops, and large quantities are constantly returned to the

commissary as company savings. This, it is believed, would not be the case if the proper mode of cooking them was known, as they are not only quite as nutritious as beans, but have always been considered by epicures much more delicate.

To use them properly, they should first be washed; then boiled for at least one hour, in a kettle with a false bottom. For a company, seven or eight quarts should be boiled in double the quantity of water. In default of a false bottom, they must be constantly stirred, to prevent scorching. When quite soft, strain off the water, divide them into three or four portions, according to the number of the kettles, and add them to the pork soup, previously described, instead of the desiccated vegetables, adding at the same time two large onions, sliced, to each kettle. Let it boil slowly for two hours, skimming now and then; and before serving out, season liberally with black pepper, some salt, and a dash of vinegar. They should be well mashed with a pounder before serving.

BOILED PORK AND BEEN SOUP.

Never serve beans until they have been soaked over night. At eight o'clock in the morning, put eight quarts into two kettles, and fill up with clean cold water. Boil constantly, over a brisk fire, for an hour or more, during which many of the beans will rise to the top. At the end of this time, take the kettles off the fire for fifteen or twenty minutes, and then pour off all the water, replacing it with fresh clean water. Add to each kettle a pound of parboiled pork, without rind, and boil continuously for an hour and a half longer.

At quarter past eight o'clock, fill three kettles loosely with pieces of pork weighing from three to five pounds, cover with water, and boil briskly for one hour; then pour off all the liquid, and fill up with clean *hot* water, and boil for one hour and a half longer; then take out all the pork, and lay it aside. Take out also one-half of the beans from the other kettles, placing them aside for breakfast next morning, and add to the remainder the liquor in which the pork was boiled. To each kettle add also two onions chopped or sliced, with plenty of black or red pepper, some salt, and a tablespoonful of vinegar. After fifteen minutes' longer boiling, mash the beans with a wooden stick made for the purpose, and serve, with a slice of pork, in a separate dish.

If onions are plenty, mince fine eight or ten of them, fry them in a pan with a little flour and fat, with half a pint hot water, and the same quantity of the liquor in which the pork was boiled. After cooking five minutes, add pepper, salt, and half a glass of vinegar, and pour over the slices of pork.

BEANS FOR BREAKFAST.

The beans left from the soup of the day before should be put in pans and warmed over the fire, care being taken to prevent them from scorching. In the meanwhile a few onions—say three or four—should be chopped fine and slightly fried, and then strewed over the beans, with pepper and salt, and a tablespoonful of vinegar. In this way they make a first-rate dish for breakfast or supper with bread and coffee.

TO BOIL HOMINY.

Whatever be the size of the kettle, fill it half full of hominy, covering it with water so as nearly to fill it to the top; throw in a handful of salt, and boil it, over a *very moderate* fire, for at *least* an hour, stirring it constantly to prevent scorching.

TO FRY HOMINY.

Should you have too much of it boiled for one meal, place the balance in shallow dishes—mess pans being the handiest—and let it grow cold. When it is to be used, cut it into slices about half an inch thick and three inches long; have your fat as hot as fire can make it; then slip your slices into it, and fry it until it obtains a golden brown color on both sides. When you take it out, lay it on cloths, and let the fat drain off; and, when serving, sprinkle a little salt over it.

BEEF STEW.

Take the pieces of beef reserved for frying or broiling, and cut them into pieces about two inches square and one inch thick; sprinkle them with pepper and salt, and put them into frying pans, with a little fat; place them over the fire until half cooked; then turn them into camp kettles, adding a handful of flour and six onions cut in quarters to each kettle, with just enough cold water to cover

the meat; add also to each kettle two dozen potatoes pared and cut in quarters. Stew slowly over a moderate fire, skimming every now and then, for three hours and a half; then stir in each two tablespoonsful of vinegar, and serve smoking hot. All kinds of vegetables—such as leeks, carrots, parsnips, and turnips—can be added to this stew with advantage.

BUBBLE-AND-SQUEAK.

This is an old and favorite mode of getting rid of bits of corned beef among good housewives at home, and can be advantageously introduced into camp. Any pieces of cold corned or salt beef that may be on hand should be cut into slices and sprinkled with pepper; then put them in a pan, with a little grease or fat, and fry them slightly. Boil some cabbage, and squeeze it quite dry; then cut it up very fine, and serve a piece of beef with a spoonful of cabbage, first seasoning it with pepper, salt, and vinegar.

BRAZILIAN STEW.

Take shins or legs of beef; cut them into slices or pieces two or three ounces in weight, or about the size of an egg; dip them in vinegar, and throw them into a kettle, with a dozen onions sliced, *but no water*. Let it stand over a very slow fire from three to four hours; then season with pepper and salt, and serve hot. Some boiled potatoes, sliced or quartered, will be a great addition; but the principal thing to be observed is that the fire be a moderate one.

CORNED BEEF AND CABBAGE.

The salt beef furnished the army is of the very best character; rather too highly impregnated with salt, perhaps—a fault easily remedied, however, by soaking in fresh water over night. When about to boil it, renew the water, which should be clean and cold, and place it over a moderate fire for three hours and a half, skimming it carefully every fifteen minutes. By this means only can the salt and blood be drawn from it, and the meat rendered tender. After it has been on the fire at least two hours, add as much cabbage as will fill the pot to each kettle, taking out a portion of the water, so as to be able to get in enough for the whole company, or dividing the meat into more

kettles if necessary. Boil gently for an hour and a half after adding the cabbage.

TO COOK BACON.

Bacon should be well washed and scraped and put to soak all night. In the morning, put it to boil slowly; simmering is better. After it has once boiled, throw the water off and fill up with fresh water; then let it simmer for three hours. When thoroughly done, the rind comes off easily, and the meat tastes fresh and sweet.

FRYING BACON.

The great secret in frying is to have the fat as hot as fire will make it before putting the article to be cooked into it. The object is to close up the pores of the flesh at once, and prevent the fat from penetrating it, rendering it greasy and indigestible. After the bacon is well soaked, cut it into thin slices, and fry it crisp. If it is cold bacon, slice it into a pan, cover it with bread crumbs—stale bread grated—add very little fat, and put it over a quick fire for four or five minutes; then turn it, and cook the other side.

BACON, GERMAN STYLE.

When the bacon is parboiled, clean it thoroughly, taking off the rind and all the bones; put it into clean pans, cutting it into strips, with enough water to cover the bottom of the pan, place it in the oven, and let it bake until the top is browned, basting it with the liquid in the meanwhile to prevent its burning or becoming dry.

BOILING POTATOES.

Every cook thinks he can cook potatoes, but the number that can cook them well is very small. Put the potatoes, with their skins on, into the kettle, first washing them; then fill it with cold water, throw in a handful of salt, and put it on the fire. When the water boils, throw in a little cold water to check it; do so two or three times. When the potatoes are very nearly cooked, pour off *all* the water, and stand the kettle over the fire until the steam evaporates. If this does not make them mealy it is the fault of the potatoes. The potatoes should always be picked out of uniform size for each kettle, as they boil more equally.

FRIED POTATOES.

Cut the vegetable into thin slices and throw them into cold water for half an hour; then put them into fat *hissing hot*, and fry them until they acquire a golden hue. Some persons cut them only into quarters, but they are not near so crisp and nice.

TO BOIL RICE.

Fill a camp kettle one-third full of rice, well washed and cleaned, and add water enough to fill within an inch of the top of the kettle; let it boil gently, stirring constantly until the rice is quite soft. If a false bottom for the kettle is used, all danger of burning the rice will be avoided; if not, great care must be taken *to keep it from scorching by constant stirring*. When the rice is cooked, turn the contents of the kettle into a cullender or coarse towel, and pour rapidly through it a couple of pails of fresh cold water. Let it strain, and then put the rice in a clean kettle, which is placed near the fire until the rice is quite dry. Serve hot or cold, with molasses, as may be most convenient.

TO PREPARE COFFEE.

Of all the articles of diet afforded the soldier none is more important or popular than his coffee. The open tin pans used for roasting it are singularly unfit, wasting, even when regularly burnt, the fragrance or aroma, which forms the chief virtue of the drink. To obtain a small roaster, coffee-mill, and strainer, should be the first effort of the cook, and the best outlay of the company fund. If, however, circumstances prevent that, use what is given to the best advantage. In roasting coffee, great care must be bestowed to prevent its burning. To avoid this, some use a little fat, and others add a tablespoonful of sugar; and all stir it constantly, over a very slow fire. When well browned, cover immediately with a damp cloth, and allow it to cool; then grind it, passing it through the mill twice. The kettles in which it is to be prepared should be perfectly cleaned, and scoured inside and out with ashes and hot water, scalding them before using. The water should be fresh and perfectly clear. Fill the kettles very nearly to the top, and place them over a brisk fire to boil. Whilst boiling, throw

in the coffee, which should be slightly moistened before with warm (not hot) water; and, stirring it into the water, let it boil up briskly for two minutes; then dash in a cup of cold fresh water, and take it off the fire immediately. Let it stand five minutes, to allow the grains to settle, and then pass it slowly through a flannel strainer into another kettle, from which it is served. By this mode alone can the coffee be prevented from being impregnated with the dust formed by grinding it, and make it palatable and wholesome. Whatever number of men may have to be served, measure out carefully so many rations of water, adding five for lee-way, so that it may lose nothing in strength or quantity.

TO MAKE TEA.

Have the kettles as clean and as bright as they can be made, and let the water be free from all impurities; boil it over a bright, clear fire, and, when it boils briskly, add the tea, which should, one minute previous, be slightly steeped in boiling water, in a perfectly covered vessel. Let it remain on the fire one minute, covering the kettle with a clean pan, bottom upwards, or a close-fitting cover with a very small hole in it; then remove it, and stand it near the fire five minutes before serving.

TO MAKE BREAD IN THE "SHIRAS OVEN"—THE PORTABLE FIELD OVEN FURNISHED BY THE SUBSISTENCE DEPARTMENT.

It generally happens that every regiment numbers among its men one or more bakers; but fearing this may not be universally the case, I add a receipt written by a practical baker—Frank M. Lockwood, of the 23d regiment New York volunteers—whose bread has been frequently praised by the general commanding the division, as well as many other officers to whose notice it has been brought.

When on hand for distribution, any regiment can obtain three "Shiras ovens" on requisition to the chief of the commissariat, which will be found amply sufficient to do the baking for 900 men. These ovens are very simple, and can be quickly placed and easily removed. The furniture and utensils necessary for kneading, &c., are: one dough-trough and cover; one pin board; one peel, or wooden spade; one sieve; one brush, short handled; two common knives, large size; two large camp kettles; one yeast tub; two wooden pails; and one stove,

which can be made in the ground sufficiently convenient to answer the purpose. Of course a tent or hut must be erected, wherein to work and keep the sponge warm.

To produce good bread requires good yeast, without which all efforts are in vain. To effect this, your tubs must be faultlessly clean and well scalded, and all your tins and kettles carefully scoured and free from grease, using them, in fact, for nothing else.

TO MAKE YEAST.

Fill your kettle three-fourths full of clean, clear water; place it over a brisk fire, and, when it boils, add three good handsful of hops; then put into your yeast tub four pounds of flour, and strain into it, from the kettle, enough of the hot "hop-water" to make a paste, working it until it is perfectly free from lumps. By this time the hops in the kettle will be sufficiently boiled, and must be strained into the yeast tub and stirred with a wooden paddle until thoroughly amalgamated. Let it stand until it cools a little—about blood heat—and add three pints of cracked malt and two quarts of stock yeast, mixing it all well together to prevent any lumps remaining, and setting it away in some quiet, warm place, where it will remain undisturbed for fifteen hours; then it must be strained before using. Care must be taken *always* to keep enough on hand for stock for the next making.

TO MAKE BREAD.

The first process is to prepare the *ferment*. This is formed by boiling thoroughly a peck and a half of potatoes, with their skins on, which you place in a barrel kept exclusively for that purpose, adding six pounds of flour, and mashing them well together. This is called "scalding the flour." Then add cold water until it is cool enough to enable you to put your hands in, and break up the potatoes as fine as possible, so as to obtain all their virtue. Then add about six pailsfull of warm water and six quarts of yeast. Stir it well together, and place it in a warm spot, where it will not be disturbed. Two good-sized tubs, made of salt or sugar barrels, would be the best receptacle for it, as it requires space to work in. This should be made at night, and will be ready for use in the morning after it is carefully strained.

The second process is making the dough. This is done by sifting

into the trough a barrel and a half of flour, one-third of which is pinned or blocked up at one end by the "pin board" or wooden slide. To this you add three and a half pounds of salt and three and a half pailsful of "ferment," with four pailsful of hot water—not so hot, however, as to scald your ferment—(in summer cold water is used instead of hot,) and mix well together, kneading thoroughly and faithfully, adding to it gradually all the flour in the trough until it is of one consistency. It must then be placed at one end of the trough, and again pinned in by the slide, leaving space enough, however, to allow it to prove. To effect this requires at least two hours, when it will be ready to "work off," which is done by "throwing" it out of the trough, in masses, on to the table or cover on the other side of the room or tent. It is then cut into pieces and weighed, or "scaled off," and immediately moulded into shapes or loaves. This requires one man to scale, one to form into loaves, and a third to "pan it away," where it remains for at least forty minutes before placing it in the oven. In the meantime the ovens are heated, the coals and ashes drawn out, and the interior thoroughly swabbed out, top and bottom. If too hot, wet the swab and dampen the oven. The pans containing the dough are then set in, by means of the peel, or wooden spade, the doors closed, and the hot coals and ashes placed against them, in order to heat all sides equally. Fifty minutes is the time generally required to bake the regular sized army loaves; if larger, a longer period will be demanded.

The amount of ferment made in accordance with this receipt will be sufficient for three batches of 288 loaves each. The first batch will require four hours in preparing and baking; the second and third two hours each.

Potatoes, hops, and malt should always be kept on hand, and a portion of the yeast invariably retained for stock. To commence with, it will be necessary to obtain brewers' yeast; but, after making the first essay, you can always be independent.