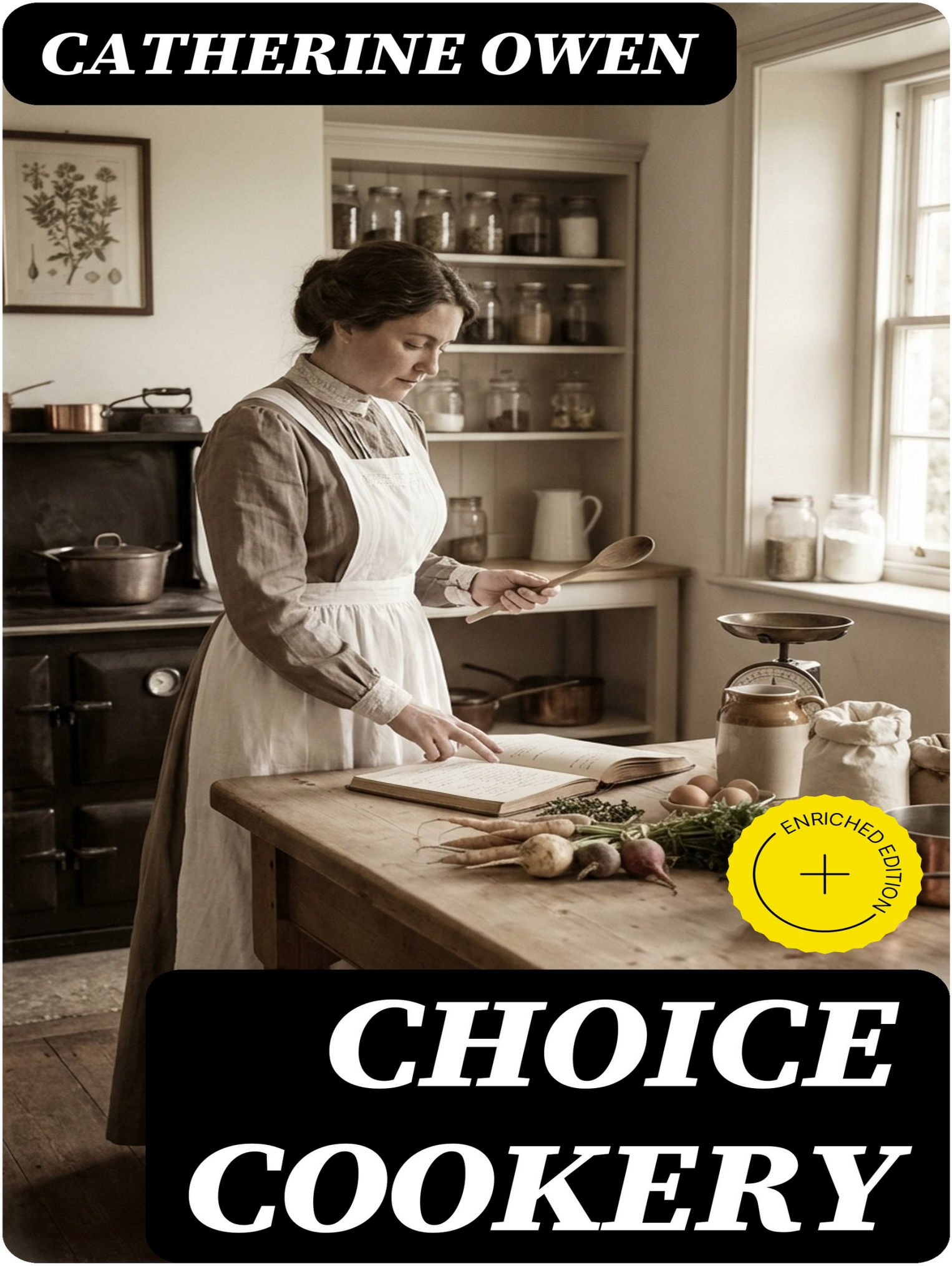
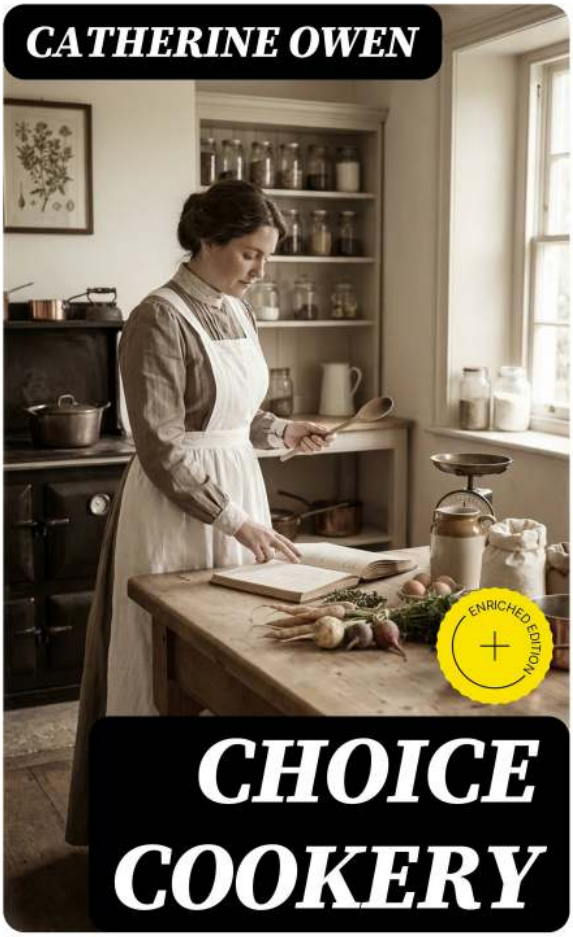
CATHERINE OWEN



CHOICE COOKERY


CATHERINE OWEN
ENRICHED EDITION
CHOICE
COOKERY

Catherine Owen

Choice Cookery

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Isla Caldwell

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PREFACE.

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CHOICE cookery is not intended for households that have to study economy, except where economy is a relative term; where, perhaps, the housekeeper could easily spend a dollar for the materials of a luxury, but could not spare the four or five dollars a caterer would charge.

Many families enjoy giving little dinners, or otherwise exercising hospitality, but are debarred from doing so by the fact that anything beyond the ordinary daily fare has to be ordered in, or an expensive extra cook engaged. And although we may regret that hospitality should ever be dependent on fine cooking, we have to take things as they are. It is not every hostess who loves simplicity that dares to practise it**[1q]**.

It was to help the women who wish to know at a glance what is newest and best in modern cookery that these chapters were written for *Harper's Bazar**[1]***, and are now gathered into a book. It is hoped by the writer that the copious details and simplification of different matters will enable those who have already achieved success in the plainer branches of cookery to venture further, and realize for themselves that it is only the "first step that costs**[2q]**."

I have to acknowledge my indebtedness to Mrs. Clarke, of the South Kensington School of Cookery**[2]**, to Madame de Salis, and those epicurean friends who have cast their nets in foreign waters, and sent me the daintiest fish they caught.

CHOICE COOKERY.

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I.
INTRODUCTION.

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By choice cookery is meant exactly what the words imply. There will be no attempt to teach family or inexpensive cooking, those branches of domestic economy having been so excellently treated by capable hands already. It may be said *en passant*, however, that even choice cooking is not necessarily expensive. Many dishes cost little for the materials, but owe their daintiness and expensiveness to the care bestowed in cooking or to a fine sauce. For instance: cod, one of the cheapest of fish, and considered coarse food as usually served, becomes an epicurean dish when served with a fine Hollandaise or oyster sauce, and it will not even then be more expensive than any average-priced boiling fish. Flounder served as *sole Normande* conjures up memories of the famous Philippe, whose fortune it made, or it may be of luxurious little dinners at other famous restaurants, and is suggestive, in fact, of anything but economy. Yet it is really an inexpensive dish.

But while it is quite true that fine cooking does not always mean expensive cooking, it is also true that it requires the best materials and sufficient of them; that if satisfactory results are to be obtained there must be no

attempt to stint or change proportions from a false idea of economy, although it must never be forgotten that all good cooking is economical, by which I mean that there is no waste, every cent's worth of material being made to do its full duty.

In this book the object will be to give the newest and most *recherché* dishes, and these will naturally be expensive. Yet for those families who depend upon the caterer for everything in the way of fine soups, *entrées*, or sauces, because the cook can achieve only the plain part of the dinner, it will be found a great economy as well as convenience to be independent of this outside resource, which is always very costly, and invariably destroys the individuality of a repast. Many new recipes will be given, and others little known in private kitchens, or thought to be quite beyond the attainment of any but an accomplished *chef*. But if strict attention be paid to small matters, and the directions faithfully carried out, there will be no difficulty in a lady becoming her own *chef*.

I propose to begin with sauces. This is reversing the usual mode, and yet I think the reader will not regret the innovation. The cooking to be taught in these pages, being emphatically what is popularly known as "Delmonico cooking**[3]**," very much depends on the excellence of the sauces served with each dish; and as it is no time to learn to make a fine sauce when the dish it is served with is being cooked, I think the better plan is to give the sauces first. They will be frequently referred to, but no repetition of the recipes will be given.

Before proceeding further I will say a few words that may save time and patience hereafter. Of course it is not expected that any one will hope to succeed with elaborate dishes without understanding the principles of simple cooking, but many do this without perceiving that in that knowledge they hold the key to very much more, and I would ask readers who are in earnest about the matter to acquire the habit of putting two and two together in cooking as they would in fancy-work. If you know half a dozen embroidery or lace stitches, you see at once that you can produce the elaborate combinations in which those stitches are used. So it is with cooking. The most elaborate dish will only be a combination of two or three simpler processes of cooking, *perfectly* done—that is a *sine qua non*[4]—something fried, roasted, boiled, or braised to perfection, and a sauce that no *chef* could improve upon; but to recognize that this is so—that when you can make a Châteaubriand sauce or a Béarnaise perfectly, and can *sauté* a steak, the famed filets à la Châteaubriand or à la Béarnaise are no longer a mystery, or that one who can make clear meat jelly and roast a chicken has learned all but the arrangement of a *chaudfroid* in aspic—will make apparently complicated dishes simple.

I go into these matters because I hope to cause my readers to *think* about the recipes they will use, when they will see for themselves that even the finest cooking is not intricate nor in any way difficult. It requires intelligence and great care about details: no half-attention will do, any more than it will in any other thing we attempt, whether it be high art or domestic art.

In making sauces or reading recipes for them it simplifies matters to remember that in savory sauces—by which I mean those served with meats or fish—there are what the French call the two “mother sauces,” white sauce and brown**[3q]**; all others, with few exceptions, are modifications of these two; that is to say, béchamel is only white sauce made with white stock and cream instead of milk; Allemande is the same, only yolks of eggs replace the cream; and so on through the long list of sauces belonging to the blond variety. The simple brown sauce becomes the famous Châteaubriand by the addition of glaze (or very strong gravy) and a glass of white wine, and is the “mother” of many others equally fine. This being so, it will be seen that it is of the first importance that the making of these two “mother sauces” should be thoroughly understood, in order for the finer ones based on them to be successfully accomplished.

It will clear the way for easy work if I here give the directions for making one of the most necessary and convenient aids to fine cooking—the above-named glaze. To have it in the house saves much worry and work. If the soup is not just so strong as we wish, the addition of a small piece of glaze will make it excellent; or we wish to make brown sauce, and have no stock, the glaze comes to our aid. To have stock in the house at all times is by no means easy in a small family, especially in summer; with glaze, which is solidified stock, one is independent of it.

Six pounds of lean beef from the leg, or a knuckle of veal and beef to make six pounds. Cut this in pieces two inches square or less; do the same with half a pound of lean ham,

free from rind or smoky outside, and which has been scalded five minutes. Put the meat into a two-gallon pot with three medium-sized onions with two cloves in each, a turnip, a carrot, and a *small* head of celery. Pour over them five quarts of cold water; let it come slowly to the boiling-point, when skim, and draw to a spot where it will gently simmer for six hours. This stock as it is will be an excellent foundation for all kinds of clear soups or gravies, with the addition of salt, which must on no account be added for glaze.

To reduce this stock to glaze, do as follows: Strain the stock first through a colander, and return meat and vegetables to the pot; put to them four quarts of *hot* water, and let it boil four hours longer. The importance of this second boiling, which may at first sight appear useless economy, will be seen if you let the two stocks get cold; the first will be of delightful flavor, but probably quite liquid; the last will be flavorless, but if the boiling process has been slow enough it will be a jelly, the second boiling having been necessary to extract the gelatine from the bones, which is indispensable for the formation of glaze.

Strain both these stocks through a scalded cloth. (If they have been allowed to get cool, heat them in order to strain.) Put both stocks together into one large pot, and let it boil as fast as possible with the cover off, leaving a large spoon in it to prevent it boiling over, also to stir occasionally; when it is reduced to three pints put it into a small saucepan, and let it boil more slowly. Stir frequently with a wooden spoon until it begins to thicken and has a fine yellowish-brown color, which will be when it is reduced to a quart or rather less. At

this point watch closely, as it quickly burns. When there is only a pint and a half it will be fit to pour into small cups or jars, or it may be dried in thin sheets, if required for soup in travelling; to do this, pour it into oiled tin pans an inch deep. When cold it can be cut out in two-inch squares and dried by exposure to the air till it is like glue. One square makes a cup of strong soup if dissolved in boiling water and seasoned. If, however, it is put into pots, it must *not be covered* until all moisture has evaporated and the glaze shrinks from the sides of the jar. This may take a month.

The most convenient of all ways for preserving glaze is to get from your butcher a yard of sausage-skin. Tie one end very tightly, then pour in the glaze while warm by means of a large funnel. Tie the skin just as you would sausage as close to the glaze as possible, cut off any remaining skin, and hang the one containing the glaze up to dry. When needed, a slice is cut from this.

Of course any strong meat and bone-soup can be boiled down in the same way, and where there is meat on hand in danger of spoiling from sudden change of weather it can be turned into glaze, and kept indefinitely. I have found glaze five years old as good as the first week.

II.
SAUCES.

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In addition to the glaze, for which the recipe is given in the preceding pages, and which will make you independent of the stock pot, there are several other articles involving

very small outlay which it is absolutely necessary to have at hand in order to follow directions without trouble and worry.

It is often said by thoughtless housekeepers that cooking-books are of little use, because the recipes always call for something that is not in the house. This is a habit of mind only, for the very women who say it keep their work-baskets supplied with everything necessary for work, not only the everyday white and black spools, nor would they hesitate to undertake a piece of embroidery which required quite unusual combinations of color or material, and to be obtained only with difficulty. Grant a little of this earnest painstaking to the requirements of the cooking-book at the start, see that the herb-bottles are supplied with dried herbs (when fresh are not attainable), the spice-boxes contain the small quantity of fresh fine spices that is sufficient for a good deal of cooking, and red and white wine and brandy are in the house, all of which should be kept in the store-closet for cooking alone, and not liable to be “out” when wanted.

The so-called “French herbs” are rarely found in American gardens, yet might be very readily sown in early spring, as parsley is; but although seldom home-grown, they are to be found at the French market-gardener’s in Washington Market, and can be bought fresh and dried in paper bags quickly for use. I say dried quickly, because unless the sun is very hot much of the aroma will pass into the air; it is, therefore, better to dry them in a cool oven. When they are dry enough to crumble to dust, free the herbs from stems and twigs, and put them separately into tin boxes or wide-mouthed bottles, each labelled. The

expense of herbs and spices is very slight, and they are certainly not neglected among kitchen stores on that account; it is merely the want of habit in ordering them. In addition to these articles a bottle of capers, one of olives, one of anchovies, canned mushrooms, and canned truffles should be on hand—the latter should be bought in the smallest-sized cans, as they are very costly, but a little goes a long way. Families living in the country often have for a season more mushrooms than they can use. In the few days in which they are plentiful opportunity should be taken to peel and dry as many as possible; when powdered they give a finer flavor than the canned mushroom, and may be used to great advantage in dark sauces.

The French *chef* classes all white sauces as *blonde*, and calls the jar of very smooth thick white sauce, which he keeps ready made as a foundation for most of the family of light sauces, his *blonde* or *velouté*. This explanation is given because directions are often found in French recipes to “take half a pint of velouté” or of “blonde.” The mistress of a private house may not find it wise or necessary to keep a supply of sauce ready made, although to one who has to supply a variety of sauces each day it is indispensable; but the day before a dinner-party sauces can be so made, and covered with a film of butter to prevent skin forming, and can then be heated in a bain-marie when required for use. Almost every *chef* has his favorite recipe for velouté, or white sauce, but they differ only in points that are little essential; the foundation is always the same, as follows: Put two ounces of butter in a thick saucepan with two ounces of flour (tablespoonfuls approximate the ounce, but weight

only should be relied on for fine cooking). Let these melt over the fire, stirring them so that the butter and flour become well mixed; then let them bubble together, stirring enough to prevent the flour sticking or changing color. Three minutes will suffice to cook the flour; add a pint of clear hot white stock that has been strained through a cloth. This stock must not be poured slowly, or the sauce will thicken too fast. Hold the pint-measure or other vessel in which the stock may be in the left hand, stir the butter and flour quickly with the right, then turn the broth to it *all at once*. Let this simmer an hour until very thick, then add a gill of very rich cream, stir, and the sauce is ready.

This is undoubtedly the best way to make white sauce, which is to serve as a foundation for others, or is intended to mask meat or poultry, the long, slow simmering producing an extreme blandness not to be attained by a quicker method. But circumstances sometimes prevent the previous preparation of the sauce, in which case it may be made exactly in the same way, only instead of a pint of broth, but three gills should be poured on the butter and flour, and a gill of thick cream stirred in when it boils; the sauce is finished when it again reaches the boiling-point.

This is the foundation for the following “grand” sauces: Poulette, Allemande, Uxelles, Soubise, Ste. Ménehould, Périgueux, Suprême, besides all the simpler ones, which take their name from the chief ingredient, such as caper, cauliflower, celery, lobster, etc., etc.

For sauces that have vinegar or lemon juice, it is better that the velouté, or white sauce, should have no cream until the last minute, or it may curdle. My object in giving the

recipes for sauces in the way I intend—that is to say, by building on to, or omitting from, one foundation sauce—is to dispel some of the confusion which exists in the minds of many people about the exact difference between several sauces differing from each other very slightly—a confusion which is only added to by reading over the fully written recipes for each, as many a painstaking, intelligent woman's headache will testify. As we progress, the exact difference between each will be explained.

Béchamel.—This sauce differs from the white sauce only in the fact that the white stock used for the latter need not be very strong; for béchamel it should either be very strong or boiled down rapidly to make it so, and there should always be half cream instead of one third, as in white sauce, and when required for fish the stock may be of fish. White sauce is frequently (perhaps most frequently) made with milk, or milk and cream, in place of stock, in this country, and answers admirably for many purposes, but would not be what is required for the kind of cooking intended in these pages.

Most readers know how "to stir," and it may seem quite an unnecessary matter to go into. Yet if only one reader does not know that to stir means a regular, even, slow circling of the spoon, *not only in the centre* of the saucepan, but round the sides, she will fail in making good sauce. Stir, then, slowly, gently, going over every part of the bottom of the saucepan till the sides are reached, pass the spoon gently round them, thence back to the middle, and so on. In this way the sauce gets no chance to stick to any particular

spot. A small copper saucepan is the best possible utensil for making sauce, as it does not burn.

The rule for seasoning is a level salt-spoonful of salt to half a pint; pepper, one fourth the quantity. This, however, is only when the stock is unseasoned; if seasoned, only salt enough must be added to season the cream and eggs.

Allemande.—Take half a pint of white sauce, add to it half the liquor from a can of mushrooms, and half a dozen of the mushrooms chopped fine. Let them simmer—stirring all the time—five minutes, then remove from the fire. Set the saucepan into another containing boiling water. Have the yolks of three eggs ready beaten, put a little of the sauce to them, beat together, then add the eggs gradually to the rest of the sauce, which must be returned to the fire, and stirred until the eggs *begin* to thicken; then it must be quickly removed, and stirred until slightly cool. Season with a saltspoonful of salt, a fourth of one of pepper, and strain carefully.

It must never be forgotten that in thickening with eggs the sauce or soup must *not boil* after they are added, or they will curdle. Yet if they do not reach the boiling-point they will not thicken. Only keen attention to the first sign of thickening will insure success. If a failure is made the first time, look upon it as the first step to success, for you have learned what the danger *looks like*. Make the sauce again as soon as possible, so that your eye may not lose the impression. It is worth considerable effort (and it is really only a matter of a few minutes each time) to make Allemande sauce well, for in doing so you also learn to make

Hollandaise and several choice sauces, as will be seen by those that follow.

Poulette Sauce.—Make Allemande sauce as directed in the foregoing recipe; add a wineglass of white wine. If sweetbreads or chicken are to be cooked in the sauce, as is not unusual, of course the eggs must be left out until the last thing. Anything served with this sauce is called *à la poulette*.

Sauce à la d'Uxelles.—Chop fine a dozen *small* button mushrooms, or half a dozen large ones; parsley and chives, of each enough to make a teaspoonful when finely chopped; of lean ham a tablespoonful, and one small shallot. Fry gently in a tablespoonful of butter, but do not let them brown. Stir these into half a pint of white sauce, simmer three or four minutes, then add two yolks of eggs, as for Allemande, and the last thing a half-teaspoonful of lemon-juice, and just enough glaze to make the sauce the shade of a pale Suède glove. This sauce is used cold to coat meats that have to be cooked in paper, and many that are afterwards to be fried in bread-crumbs, for which directions will be given in the *entrées*. Dishes termed *à la d'Uxelles* are among the most *recherché* productions of the French kitchen.

Villeroi Sauce.—Make half a pint of white sauce, which, as in the case of béchamel, may be made of fish stock when for use with fish; chop half a dozen mushrooms, and add a gill of the liquor to the sauce, half a saltspoonful of powdered thyme (or one sprig, if fresh), two sprigs of parsley, and half a bay-leaf; simmer for fifteen minutes; strain through a scalded cloth; replace on the fire; add a