

CIVIL WAR RECIPES

*Receipts from
the Pages of
Godey's Lady's Book*

LILY MAY SPAULDING AND JOHN SPAULDING

EDITORS



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Codey's Lady's Book*

COMPILED AND EDITED BY

LILY MAY SPAULDING AND
JOHN SPAULDING



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DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF

SARAH MAYO MOXLEY

(1868-1969)

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❧ PREFACE ❧

LILY MAY SPAULDING

My interest in the culinary arts stems from my childhood in the 1920s. When I was nine I made my first pie (Vermont currant), which ultimately slid through a pie holder bottom side up on the kitchen floor. My mother was my baking teacher, and she in turn was taught by a pastry chef at the Woodstock Inn in Woodstock, Vermont. But her expertise extended beyond baking. In the early 1920s she made her own packaged potato chips (Green Mountain Potato Chips) and wild strawberry preserves which she sold to the Farm and Garden Shop in Boston. So, much of my interest in cooking came from her. I have always treasured her old recipes and continue to use many of them: mincemeat, mustard pickle, graham yeast bread, and boiled cider pie, to name a few.

Over the years I have been looking for an old English plum pudding recipe like the one my grandmother used to make and send to us each Christmas. It was, of course, an English pudding, as her original home was in Coventry, England, and her family did not emigrate until 1887. My son John acquired an 1863 *Godey's Lady's Book* and began searching through it. This led to our quest for other issues of *Godey's* from the Civil War period. We then realized how much it would mean to others with similar interests to preserve some of these fascinating recipes and the methods of cooking associated with this period in history. And so this book was born.



SARAH JOSEPHA HALE



INTRODUCTION

JOHN SPAULDING

The recipes included here were selected from *Godley's Lady's Book* in the period of the Civil War, the 1860s, when the magazine was at its zenith. *Godley's Lady's Book*, perhaps the most popular magazine for women in the nineteenth century, existed in various forms for sixty-eight years, from 1830 to 1898. Unlike most American periodicals of the time, *Godley's* had a national rather than regional readership and reached its highest circulation of some 150,000 copies during the 1860s. Now famous for its hand-colored fashion plates, *Godley's* also included sections on domestic architecture, sewing patterns, fiction, science, editorials, poetry, and activities for youth, in addition to a "Receipts" column. The magazine was founded by Louis Godley, and it achieved its widest readership during the tenure of Sarah Josepha Hale, who served as editor from 1837 to 1877.

Hale began a career as an editor when she was in her forties. A remarkable woman, she was responsible for initiating the campaign to establish Thanksgiving as a national holiday and was an ardent supporter of the rights of women. She was among the first to advocate women as teachers in American public schools, and she started the first day nursery in the United States, championed the fight for retention of property rights by married women, advocated medical education for women, founded a society for increasing women's wages, and coined the term "domestic science" as part of her fight to elevate housekeeping to a profession. She established many departments in *Godley's*, including the recipe section, which appears to have been the first such section in an American women's magazine. Among her many publications are at least two books of recipes and other aspects of domestic science.

The magazine targeted women in the expanding middle class of the mid-nineteenth century. These were the wives not only of doctors, lawyers, ministers, bankers, newspaper editors, teachers, merchants, prosperous farmers, and storekeepers but also of master craftsmen such as carpenters, blacksmiths, and ironmongers, middle managers in factories and large stores, and even skilled craftsmen such as journeyman machinists and patternmakers. The middle class included up to 40 percent of the population and owned perhaps half the wealth. The average middle-class family might own their own house and have one servant (Rorabaugh, 1987).

The American middle class was in transition between the self-sufficiency of the family in the first half of the nineteenth century and the changes wrought by the economic expansion and industrialization of the second half of the century, which allowed women more leisure time. Middle-class women had been taught as young girls to draw, play the piano, crochet, and design "female elegancies" that could be displayed around the house (*Godey's* published many patterns for the latter). In the first half of the century, many women had, of course, woven cloth and sewn clothes for their families (Clark, 1987). They were now just beginning to aspire to more "cultivated" pursuits, to pay more attention to fashion, etiquette, home decoration, and cuisine — pursuits that would come to fruition in what we now think of as the style and the excesses of the Victorian age.

Meats and baked goods predominated in the average American diet of the mid century. Although meat was scarce in the South during the war, beef and pork were heavily favored, as is reflected in the number of beef and pork recipes here. (The largest number of meat recipes found in the magazine during this decade are for beef, followed by pork, then veal, wildfowl, chicken and turkey, lamb, and wild game.) In rural areas people grew their own vegetables—potatoes, cabbages, onions, turnips, and others. Fresh vegetables were not usually available in the winter (vegetables were dried or kept in root cellars), and the diet typically included little fruit except apples. Although the North had dairies, milk consumption nationally was less than

half a pint a day (McIntosh, 1995). The alcoholic beverage favored by Americans in mid-century was beer, followed by whiskey and wine (Rorabaugh, 1987).

As the following quotation from the magazine makes clear, the recipes of *Godey's* were intended for the family meals of middle-class households, not for banquets or exhibitions of *haute cuisine*: "Our *Lady's Book* receipts deal less with grand dishes for high-company occasions, and more with the common dishes of every day. . . . The dinner may be of scraps, but those scraps must be savory; and certainly the receipts and directions for turning stale crusts into delicate puddings, morsels of cold, dry meat into delicate entrees, leave cooks and wives without excuses for 'laxtyan days' or hungry dinners. No one can read the *Lady's Book* receipts without being struck by the good sense that pervades them as a general rule" (January 1863: 88).

Many of the recipes appearing in the magazine were contributed by its readers; others were probably contributed by Hale. Possibly because they were readers' favorites, many were repeated over the years. Because *Godey's* was a national publication, there is every reason to believe that the contributed recipes came from every region of the country; however, since the magazine was published in Philadelphia, it is unlikely that during most of the 1860s there were many contributors from the South. Nonetheless, there are certainly southern recipes here, and, taken as a whole, the recipes reflect the varying tastes and differences characteristic of the nation in mid-nineteenth century before the "melting pot" and improved communication and

transportation homogenized our regional differences. The German or French potato soup had not yet become the American vichyssoise, English puddings retained their local differences, and a "Bengal recipe" for watermelon sherbet was still an exotic wonder.

The flavor of the immigrant nature of our country in the 1860s is present in the names of the recipes themselves; the following countries are specifically mentioned in recipe titles: England, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Scotland, and Westphalia. Although we were a nation of immigrants, we were primarily from northern European countries and, even more specifically, the British Isles, whose cuisine tends to dominate here, reflecting the ancestry of most immigrants. It is clear, however, that French cooking was highly esteemed (a reflection of the nineteenth-century middle-class emulation of the upper-class preoccupation with French culture [McIntosh, 1995]), since several recipes and culinary terms given here are French.

The remarkable diversity of these "receipts" is also owing to the fact that the readers were rural women (albeit primarily from the middle class) because the nation during the Civil War period was primarily rural. A rural life implies that most of the meat consumed by the family came from animals killed on the premises. Of necessity, the cook had to use as much of the animal for meat as she could—sweetbreads were not a luxury, and tongues, brains, and feet had to be cooked well and served nicely. The master of the house (or sometimes the neighbors) also contributed to the table by hunting and fishing. There was, of course, a great abundance of

game readily available in rural America, and this accounts for the large number of fish and game recipes. Overall, the meat diet was far more varied in the nineteenth century than it is today. The many recipes for fish and seafood testify to their abundance in the waters off the coasts and in rivers and streams.

The country cook was also a frugal cook, particularly when the nation was at war, and this explains not only the dishes for various animal parts but also the good number of recipes for leftovers and for seasonal produce; for example, several desserts were made with fresh fruits. That Hale's readers during the war years were not particularly wealthy is also suggested by the fact that, although cast-iron cooking ovens were introduced before 1850, she assumed her readers used a fireplace rather than a stove, for a spit and a hob are referred to in the roasting of poultry, for example.

Salads, as we know them, seem to have been relatively foreign to the palates of Hale's readers, for they do not commonly appear in the recipe column until the late decades of the century (the exceptions here are chicken salad and lobster salad). Gravies (broths) and sauces were very popular and were added to most meat dishes, soups, and even some fish dishes. Lemons also seem to have been in favor; their juice, rind, and gratings were all used. Cayenne pepper was popular, and unusual herbs and spices were frequently added to recipes, as were wines or other alcoholic beverages, often functioning as tenderizers or preservatives. The culinary trivia buff might note that, according to some

sources, potato chips were invented by a chef in Saratoga, New York, in the 1880s (and called "Saratoga chips"), but a recipe for potato chips appeared in *Godey's* in 1865. Also, the terms "canapes" and "cottage pudding" may have appeared in print for the first time in the pages of *Godey's*.

The work involved in some of these recipes appalls those of us used to frozen foods and microwave ovens. The "Christening Cake," for example, calls for the cook to separate sixteen eggs, whisk the whites (perhaps with a pine whisk) to a complete froth, beat the yolks a full ten minutes by hand (perhaps with a three-pronged fork), and then beat the whole cake mixture for half an hour or longer. We have reproduced these recipes in their original form rather than adapting them for today's kitchens, in part to preserve them as social documents but also to provide the reader with the original recipe should he or she choose to follow it exactly, as well as to preserve the colorful and descriptive language: "Roll it up in the manner of a collared eel," "Take some grated toast and strew over it," "Suffer a few drops of vinegar to moisten them." Of course, in modern recipes the quantities of ingredients are usually given in volumes, not in weights as here. For the convenience of those who would like to try the recipes, an equivalent guide to proportions and weights is provided, and a glossary of less familiar ingredients and procedures can be found at the back of the book.

A good description of the cookware stocked in a typical middle class American kitchen during the Civil War

period can be found in Ellen M. Plante's *The American Kitchen* (1995). Plante notes that cookware was usually cast iron or tin and that copper pots and pans were expensive and therefore found only in the homes of the well-to-do. The following list of items was typical for the American kitchen in the period 1840-1869:

Large pots and pans: long, oval fish kettle (as a preserve kettle); at least four saucepans of various sizes; several skillets; waffle iron; bread pans; toasting iron; tea kettle



Small tin items: cake pans; pie pans; oil can; candle box; funnel; egg boiler; scoops; dippers; colander; bread boxes and cake boxes



Woodenware: breadboard; spice boxes; salt box

Earthenware jars with lids for butter, salt, and pickles

Baskets of various sizes for gathering fruit, vegetables, and eggs. [Plante 1995: 51-52]

In selecting the recipes for this volume, we sought to provide a wide sampling from the magazine during the Civil War period, but at the same time we made a special effort to include recipes that would fall into the categories usually found in the cookbooks of today. Some sections may be underrepresented or perhaps even nonexistent here (e.g., shellfish or salad recipes) because of the scarcity of such recipes in the magazine.

Much of the terminology in the recipes differs from modern usage. Puddings were not necessarily puddings as we know them but were tied up in a "cloth pudding

bag" and either boiled or steamed for many hours. They were a very common dessert, as were the many custards, creams, and fruit desserts, especially apples, which must have been the most plentiful of fruits and probably kept the best. "tarts" were what we usually call "pies" and were often baked in a crock with only a pastry lid. It seems to have been customary during the nineteenth century to have several desserts in one menu. "Biscuit" refers to what we call a "cookie," and this volume contains one of the first uses of this word in its American sense. The term "cake" was used interchangeably for breads and cookies. The word "gravy," so frequently used, usually meant stock.

The dates in brackets mark the year the recipe appeared in *Godey's*. The footnotes are our editorial comments. A few of the illustrations are from *Godey's*; the remainder are from contemporary sources.

In compiling and editing these recipes, we aimed at more than providing a historical curiosity piece. All of these recipes are worth preserving in their own right, and many deserve to be used by twentieth-century cooks. Needless to say, we have used many ourselves. Some recipes we recognize as dishes our grandparents or great-grandparents, nineteenth-century immigrants from England, made on their Vermont farms in the 1920s and which we had all but forgotten. Although a few might turn a weak stomach, others are mouth-watering (such as Lemon Cheesecake, Madeira Cream Pudding, Lobster Salad, Beef Podowies, or even Since Kababi, which is an earlier version of our Shish Kebab). Naturally the task of selecting and eliminating was most

difficult because every one seemed to hold some point of interest and wonder. Yet we believe we have included not just those that will prove to be fascinating reading to those interested in the home front during the war years but also those that can be used today with delightful results—thanks to Godey and Hale.

THE BATTLE FRONT

Although *Godey's* had a very high circulation during the Civil War, the magazine's pages never included editorials or discussion of the war, for it was assumed that politics and social questions were not suitable for female readers. Indeed, if one read only *Godey's* for information on this period, one would never be aware of the bloody conflict raging outside the covers of the magazine. There were only two small exceptions. One letter to the editor alludes to the jobs that will be available to women after the war (because so many men will have died): "Many of the occupations which have heretofore been monopolized by men, but which are suited much better to the strength and ability of women, will be open to women. Work of all sorts will be necessary and *fashionable*" (January 1863: 93). In a later issue, about the time of Lee's surrender, Godey noted that subscription clubs had been received from the Union Army, and he commends the army for being refined and well behaved (March 1865: 284).

As in any war, life during the Civil War was difficult for the men and their families on both sides. Supplies of

food were often limited, and the quality of foods that could be had was often poor. Needless to say, these shortages affected cooking and eating on both the battle front and the home front.

Food shortages were much more acute in the South than in the North, in part because of the blockade of southern ports that was ordered by President Abraham Lincoln just four days after the fall of Fort Sumter and remained in effect for the duration of the war. In addition, the South, although an agricultural region, was unable to organize its transportation system effectively enough to move food supplies quickly from storage areas to places where they were needed. The industrialized North not only had a more effective transportation system but could also make good use of its infant canning industry so that perishable items could be kept for many months. For example, the Union commandeered the entire output of Gail Borden's new condensed milk factory (Root and de Rochemont, 1976). As the war continued, large agricultural areas in the South were destroyed by Northern troops. Consequently, the cost of food rose dramatically. In 1864, for example, while potatoes were selling for \$2.25 a bushel in the North, they cost \$25 a bushel in Richmond.

Confederate forces were frequently without adequate food supplies, and one source noted that food was often the prize of battle: "The inability of the [Confederate] government to furnish supplies forced the men to depend largely upon their own energy and ingenuity to obtain them. . . . The Confederate soldier

relied greatly upon the abundant supplies of eatables which the enemy was kind enough to bring him, and he cheerfully risked his life for . . . what he called a 'square meal' " (McCarthy, 1882: 63-64). Food certainly was a determining factor in the outcome of the war. When Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant, he reported that his men had been without food for two days and asked Grant to supply his men with provisions. Lee's forces reportedly sent up a rousing cheer at the sight of the wagons of food that Grant provided.

Although on paper, rations were varied and sufficient, in actual fact this was almost never the case. For the most part rations consisted of corn bread and bad beef, with corn bread being the most constant. Supplies of vegetables, salt, and coffee were often short. But beef was also scarce or, more likely, rotten, so that in 1861 the commissary general recommended that rice and molasses be used as an occasional meat substitute (Moore, 1896), and mule meat was issued as standard ration in 1863 (Wiley, 1943). There are many reports of men existing for days on handfuls of parched corn or field peas. In addition to food shortages, the Confederate troops also frequently lacked adequate cooking ware and eating utensils (Wiley, 1943).

Poor food supplies led to the creation of new dishes. One dish, known as "cush" or "slosh," was made by putting small pieces of beef in bacon grease, then pouring in water and "stewing it." Next corn bread was crumbled in it, and the mixture was "stewed" again until all the water was cooked out. Another "stew" was

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