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HOW TO BE HAPPY WITH RICE

"HAPPINESS," an old saying goes, "isn't getting what you want. It's learning to put up with what you've got." Perhaps my rather wide acquaintance among rice patients has given me special opportunities to test the truth of this aphorism; but at any rate, it seems to me that it works out, negatively as well as positively.

The trick of putting up with a limited diet for a long time is easier to learn if, besides realizing the basic fact that it is improving your health, you take a little time and trouble to prepare it with imagination. I never fail to be amazed at how many variations can be played on the simple theme of rice and fruit. The rice diet may be inconvenient, but if it's monotonous, that's your own fault! Perhaps the classic example of ingenuity, a recipe which was passed around among the patients quite seriously a while ago, was for "chopped chicken livers" without chicken livers!

Of a little more practical use for everyday cooking are new ways to prepare just plain rice. Perhaps you haven't tried this one, which I learned recently when I was invited to dinner at a patient's home. She toasted and stirred raw rice under the broiler, in sufficient quantity to store some of it for future use, until it was golden brown. She washed a cupful of the toasted rice, and placed it in a covered casserole with $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups of boiling water. Baked in a 350° oven for half an hour, it came out dry and fluffy, with a brown, toasted flavor that was delicious. I think the particular advantages of this method are its simplicity and speed, combined with invariably good results.

Many patients who have progressed beyond the "basic" stage know about the steamer* which is becoming popular, but I think it is worth mention here for those who have not yet tried it. It consists of four aluminum pans which fit one on top of the other,

*Manufacturer's and retailers' names will be sent on request by the editor of the Bulletin.

with a tight-fitting lid. The bottom pan is for water; of the three others, one has a perforated bottom, and the other two are solid except for a raised cone with holes which allow the steam to enter. (See illustration on next page.)

This steamer makes it possible to prepare a full meal, completely protected from spattering by other food, on one burner. It has a particular value for patients living in places where the local water contains too much salt, since water is used only to produce steam and does not touch the food. Since I have been using the steamer, my cooking habits have changed considerably; and perhaps you would be interested in my new pattern for preparing a meal.

I first put water on to boil in the lower compartment, adding a bit of lemon to keep the pan shiny; and at the same time start to brown my meat over direct heat in the plain-bottom compartment (this can be done without oil if necessary, if you watch it and keep the heat rather low). I peel a potato, cut it in half and put it over the water in the perforated pan; then start preparing whatever other vegetable I am having. If it is carrots, squash, peas, beans, or some other bland vegetable, I like to put the vegetable with the meat. Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, cabbage, or other strongly flavored vegetables seem to me to be better off with the potato, but this is a matter of individual taste. Corn on the cob steams nicely with the potato, and tastes much better than if it is boiled.

When the meat is brown, I add my choice of lemon juice, chopped onion, black pepper, chopped tomato, herbs, wine, vermouth, or whatever else seems like a good idea at the moment, set that pan over the steaming potato, and cover the whole thing tightly. After it has steamed for about 20 minutes more, dinner is ready; but if you want to turn off the fire and leave it for a while longer, it won't be ruined. Also, it is perfectly possible to do the final 20-minute steaming at someone else's house, thus avoiding well-meant mistakes by your hostess. (It shouldn't be too much trouble to whip up a little denim carrying case, with a zipper and a top handle, if you plan to do this often.)

The steam condenses in the pan with the meat, giving you a

nice fat-free broth (if you have trimmed the meat properly) which can be thickened over direct heat with a little rice flour shaken in a screw-capped jar with water, and some additional seasoning if you like. Or you can save every bit of flavor if you put half a cup or so of dry Minute Rice beside the meat when you start to steam it. Stir and taste it about halfway through the steaming process, to decide whether you should add a tablespoon or two of hot water to the rice. (Since you can't measure the condensing steam, you will have to learn by experience how much additional moisture it needs.) Another idea is to add some half-cooked elbow macaroni to the broth in the meat compartment, five or ten minutes before the meat is finished.

Since most patients now have on their diets varying amounts of spaghetti, barley and tapioca, I have tried to find ways of using



A steamer such as this provides one convenient way of preparing the modified rice diet.

