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Housekeepers' Chat

Wednesday, November 21, 1928.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "School Dresses for Little Girls". Information from Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletin available: "Dresses for Little Girls."

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Every once in a while, when I get tired of sweeping, and dusting, and picking up after the various members of my family -- every once in a while, when housework grows monotonous, I leave home. I run away from the humdrum atmosphere of cooking, and washing dishes, and let my family fend for itself, while I do something different -- if it's only a self-conducted tour through the city's largest department stores.

The last time I ran away from home I spent most of my time in the children's section of a store on F street. The first dress I looked at was a soft blue flannel, with the cleverest design you ever saw -- pen points, and spatters of ink, in red. Are you laughing at me? You wouldn't if you had seen the pattern. Of course it was more or less conventional, and at first glance, you couldn't tell that the pattern was pen points and spatters of ink. The dress was simply made. It fastened down the front, had a roll collar, and a red leather belt. The only trimming was a triangle-shaped red pin, at the V-shaped neck. The pin would appeal to any little girl, for it had part of the multiplication table written on it -- 2×2 are 4, or something like that.

"Just the thing for Aleen," I said to myself. Aleen is a chubby nine-year-old who comes to visit me sometimes. She likes pretty dresses, too, and she has a wise mother, who knows how to dress a little school girl.

There were other clever dresses in the department store -- more charming flannels, with modern designs. You'd be surprised, how well multiplication tables, primer lessons, pens, pencils, and so forth, lend themselves to designs on little girls' school dresses.

While I was looking at the dresses, and thinking about Aleen, whom should I see, but Aleen's mother!

"Come here, quickly!" I called. "Wouldn't this blue flannel, with this design in red pen points and spatters of ink, be pretty on Aleen, with her rosy cheeks and blond hair?"

"Well, I declare!" said Aleen's mother. "What will our modern designers think of next! Yes, it is pretty -- after one gets used to it. I know Aleen would be tickled -- to wear a school dress like that. What else have you seen, in dresses for children, Aunt Sammy?"

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I showed Aleen's mother the school dresses I'd been looking at, and she was just as much interested as I.

"Do you know," said Aleen's mother, "I don't believe there's anything which gives a mother more real enjoyment, than selecting and making dresses worn by her small daughter. Sometimes the mother herself feels once more like a little girl, with a doll to dress. And sometimes she takes so much pleasure in planning her 'doll's' wardrobe that she allows her imagination to run riot. The little girl may have her own ideas, too, about frills and ruffles and fancy decorations she has seen on other children's clothes. The result may be an elaborate, over-trimmed, impractical set of dresses, which were hard to make, and are hard to 'do up.'"

"I'm glad that Aleen doesn't like dresses which are too fussy or too fragile for everyday wear; they would keep her from indulging in normal active play, and might make her too conscious of herself, and her appearance. Frocks which make a little girl look like a dressed-up doll are not really in good taste, except for 'dress-up' occasions. If worn to school the child is likely to be criticized, rather than admired. Such dresses are soon dirty and draggled, and much less pleasant to look at than plain, sturdy play suits.

"Did you know," continued Aleen's mother, "that the Bureau of Home Economics has been interested in designing little girls' dresses which can be easily made and laundered, that are comfortable to wear, pleasing to look at, and easy to put on and take off? Even a 3-year-old can learn to dress herself if the fastenings are few in number, with large, easy-to-find buttons placed in front. It isn't necessary to choose dull, uninteresting colors, for there are many gay, fast-colored prints that any little girl would like. This winter I'm making Aleen some warm washable challies, in pretty designs. Plain colors, too, are good in such materials as cotton broadcloth and cotton poplin.

"There's one thing I must always keep in mind, when selecting patterns for Aleen's clothes; that is the fact that she grows continually, in all directions. Raglan sleeves are the most satisfactory, for allowing for chest expansion. I lengthen her dresses by means of wide hems, tucks that can be let out, and loose finishes at neck, wrists, and knees. Waist bands on bloomers, or the line where a waist and skirt join, should be loosely fitted at first."

Perhaps I should have told you before this that Aleen's mother works in the Bureau of Home Economics, in the same building with the Recipe Lady, and the Menu Specialist, so of course she keeps up with what the Bureau is doing. There's a most attractive leaflet, published just recently by the Bureau, called "Little Girls' Dresses." This leaflet is free.

Let's see -- where was I? Oh, yes, in the department store, talking to Aleen's mother. After she left me, I looked at Christmas gifts for a while, and decided what to get for Fred, my 17-year-old brother. I think I'll get him a bath-towel. He said the other day that he had never seen a bath-towel which was big enough for a fellow his size. I saw some heavy, well-made towels -- really enormous size -- with jazzy decorations on the borders. That ought to please him.

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By the time I started home I had forgotten all about being bored with housework, and I was really enthusiastic about planning dinner for my family. Perhaps part of my enthusiasm was due to the fact that I was hungry. Shopping always makes me hungry.

Here's what I had for dinner, in case you're interested: Spare Ribs and Sauerkraut; Brownd Parsnips; Cornbread; and Gingerbread with a Cream Cheese Filling.

I used one quart of sauerkraut, and two spare ribs. Would you like to write this, in the form of a recipe? For Spare Ribs and Sauerkraut, strange to say, all you need is spare ribs, and sauerkraut:

2 spare ribs, and
1 quart sauerkraut.

Select well-padded ribs. Wash the ribs. Then cut them into pieces suitable for serving. Cook with the sauerkraut, in enough water to cover, for about one hour. When tender, drain from the liquid, and serve.

There's another recipe you might like to have, and that's the Cheese Filling, for the Gingerbread. In the Radio Cookbook, there are recipes for Cornbread and Gingerbread, and also for the Cheese Filling. However, I'll broadcast the recipe for the Cheese Filling, for Gingerbread, because this is an extra special dessert, and if you want to try it right away, you must have the recipe today. Five ingredients, for Cheese filling for Gingerbread:

2 Neufchatel or cream cheeses	1/2 teaspoon salt, and
2 cups chopped dates	Cream
1 cup chopped nuts.	

Five ingredients: (Repeat)

Mash the cheese. Mix with it enough cream to give it the consistency of a soft filling. Add the dates, nuts, and salt, and mix well. Split open a thick loaf of hot gingerbread, spread the cheese mixture on the lower half, replace the upper part and press it down lightly. The quantity of cheese filling I gave you is enough for a loaf of gingerbread about 8 by 10 inches. Serve the gingerbread while still hot.

Once again, the menu: Spare Ribs and Sauerkraut; Brownd Parsnips; Cornbread; and Gingerbread with a Cream Cheese Filling.

Tomorrow: "Care of the Furnace."

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