

THOMAS TRYON'S *A BILL OF FARE OF SEVENTY FIVE NOBLE DISHES*

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Seventeenth-century Britain was very much a nation of meat-eaters. The wealthy ate meat in vast quantities and an increasingly affluent middle class aspired to follow suit. In cities, fresh vegetables were hard to come by and they were often treated with disdain; root vegetables particularly were considered to be food fit only for animals or the desperately poor. It was however, a time of radicalism, and it was during this period that modern vegetarianism began to find its feet.¹

Thomas Tryon (1634–1703) was a prolific writer whose work covered mystical, political, social, domestic and even childcare issues. He gave advice to 'gentlemen-planters of the East and West Indies' on the better treatment of their slaves;² as well as to farmers on 'A new method of ordering horses & sheep so as to preserve them both from diseases and casualties, or, to recover them if fallen ill.'³ Domestically, he espoused 'A new method of educating children, or, Rules and directions for the well ordering and governing them during their younger years',⁴ and 'cleanness in meats and drinks of the preparation of food, the excellency of good airs and the benefits of clean sweet beds'.⁵

One of his main preoccupations appears to have been health, and the acquiring and maintenance of good health through a vegetarian diet. His approach covered multiple perspectives, with concerns for animal welfare – 'Refrain at all time such Foods as cannot be procured without violence and oppression'⁶ – as well as those of abstention and self-denial: 'Desire not variety of Meats nor Drinks for fear the Soul be overwhelmed in the dark Clouds of Wrath and Sorrow'.⁷

Although today much of Tryon's work seems puritanical, this ardent vegetarian continued to influence thinkers and other

vegetarians well into the next century. He may even be credited with writing the very first vegetarian recipe book, *A Bill of Fare of Seventy Five Noble Dishes*, published in 1691. This forms the second half of a longer work which contains many rules for leading a healthy and fulfilled life. The full title gives some indication of the scope of Tryon's ambition:

Wisdom's Dictates: or Aphorisms and Rules, Physical, Moral, and Divine; For Preserving the Health of the Body and the Peace of the Mind, fit to be regarded and practiced by all that would enjoy the Blessings of the present and future World.

To which is added, A Bill of Fare Of Seventy five Noble Dishes of Excellent Food, far exceeding those made of Fish or Flesh, which Banquet I present to the Sons of Wisdom, or such as shall decline that depraved Custom of Eating Flesh and Blood.

The book contains a long list of rules which range from the religious and mystic to practicalities of health and diet. The dietary advice is often founded in common sense, although a little dogmatic for modern tastes: 'Let your Food be simple, and Drinks innocent and learn of Wisdom and Experience how to prepare them aright.'

The recipes from Tryon's *Bill of Fare* would suggest mealtimes are not meant to be excuse for gastronomic pleasure: 'let the Food be what it will, is to be preferred before those that are eaten with Salt, Vinegar and Oil; especially for Women, and all Constitutions that are subject to generate sower Humours, and windy Diseases'. None the less, he is prepared to contradict his own austerity by suggesting recipes based on wine and ale, one of which 'is a noble comforting sort of Food, or rather a rich Cordial, which does wonderfully replenish Nature with both dry and moist nourishment' and contemplate a life beyond mere feeding with aphorisms such as, 'If Men will Feast and make Merry, then let their Tables be spread and environed with Philosophical Discourses.'

Looking at the actual text of the *Bill of Fare* printed in the pages which follow, there may be some ideas you wish to try. Number 69, a bread pudding made with fruit and spices, would have my endorsement, but on the other hand, I'd have reservations about serving the seventy-fifth and last item in his list to any guests: 'Bonniclabber is nothing else but Milk that has stood till it is sower, and become of a thick slippery substance.'

NOTES

1. *The Heretics Feast: A History of Vegetarianism*, Colin Spencer (Fourth Estate, London, 1993).
2. *Friendly advice to the gentlemen-planters of the East and West Indies*, Thos Tryon (Andrew Sowle, 1684).
3. *The country-man's companion, or, A new method of ordering horses & sheep so as to preserve them both from diseases and causalities [sic], or, to recover them if fallen ill*, Thos Tryon (Andrew Sowle, 1684).
4. *A new method of educating children, or, Rules and directions for the well ordering and governing them during their younger years*, Thos Tryon (J. Salusbury and J. Harris, 1695).
5. *A treatise of cleanness in meats and drinks of the preparation of food, the excellency of good airs and the benefits of clean sweet beds*, Thos Tryon (L. Curtis, 1682).
6. *Wisdom's Dictates including a Bill of Fare of Seventy Five Noble Dishes*, Thos Tryon (Tho Salisbury, 1691).
7. Ibid.

A Bill of Fare Of Seventy five Noble Dishes of Excellent Food, far exceeding those made of Fish or Flesh, which Banquet I present to the Sons of Wisdom, or such as shall decline that depraved Custom of Eating Flesh and Blood.

Of several Excellent Dishes of Food, easily procured without Flesh and Blood, or the Dying growns of God's innocent and harmless creatures, which do as far exceed those made of Flesh and Fish, as the Light doth Darkness, or the Day the Night, and will satisfie all the wants of Nature to the biggest Degree; which Banquet I present to the Sons of Wisdom, and to all such as shall obtain that happy Condition, as to decline that depraved Custom of killing and Eating their Fellow Creatures, and whose desire is to live according to the innocent Law of Nature, and do unto all Creatures as they would be done unto; for the highest degree of Sanctity and Religion, is to imitate God, who is the Maker and Preserver of all things: Consider also, that thy Life is near and dear to thee, that like is to be understood of all other Creatures, as I have at large demonstrated in our Way to Health, Long Life, and Happiness.

1. Bread and Water hath the first place of all Foods, and are the Foundation of dry moist nourishment, and of themselves being wisely prepared, makes a good Food of an opening, cleansing Nature and Operation, viz. Take Oatmeal and make it into a Gruel, as we have Taught in our Monthly Observations of Health, then put Bread into it; also take Water and good Wheat Flower, and make it into a Pap, and put Bread into it, and season it with Salt; this and Bread, with a Glass of Water, a Man may live very well, which a Friend of mine, of no mean Quality, have done for near two Years, eating neither Flesh, nor any of their Fruits,

neither does he wear any Woollen Garments, but Linnen.

2. Bread and Butter, Bread and Cheese, being eaten alone, or with Sallad Herbs washed, without either Salt, Oil or Vinegar makes a most excellent Food, of a cleansing exhilarating Quality, easie of digestion; the frequent eating thereof, sweetens and generates good Blood, and fine Spirits, and prevents the generation of sower Humours, also keeps the Body open; and all Herbs thus eaten, let the Food be what it will, is to be preferred before those that are eaten with Salt, Vinegar and Oil; especially for Women, and all Constitutions that are subject to generate sower Humours, and windy Diseases.

3. Bread and Butter eaten with our thin Gruel, wherein is only Salt to season it; the best way of eating it is to bite and Soop, as you eat raw Milk and Bread; this is a most sweet and agreeable Food to the Stomach, of easie Concoction generates good Blood and causes it to Circulate freely, and it is the most approved way of eating Water gruel with Butter.

4. Bread and Milk as it comes from the Cow, or raw, as they call it, is a most delicate Food, and Milk eaten thus is not only the best Food, but the most; the frequent eating thereof does sweeten the Blood, prevents sower Humours, carries Wind downward, and causes it to pass away freely without any trouble or molestation to Nature, maintaining Health and good Complexion, and it is to be preferr'd before all other ways of Eating or Preparations, especially than boiled Milk, for boiling of Milk does fix or stagnate the fine volatile Spirits, and makes it of a tough Nature, by which the Stomach cannot so easily separate it, neither does it generate so fine Blood or Spirits; for this cause, if you boil Milk, and then set it to Cream, it will not separate, or afford more than a thin Skin; but remember that you do not eat your Milk before it be cold, not hot from the Cow as most incline to; the particular Reasons I have demonstrated in our Good Housewife made a Doctor.

5. Bread and Eggs, or Bread and raw Eggs, as they call them is an excellent Food, and it hath the first place of all Meats made of Eggs, being easier of Concoction, generates finer and better

nourishment, it naturally cleanseth the passages, and the frequent eating of Bread and raw Eggs preserves the Lungs, the Bellows of Life, cheers and warms the Stomach, and frees it from obstructions; but remember that you break both ends, and suck both the White and Yolk [which] contains the Spirits, and therefore they being eaten together, are both wholsomer than asunder and more agreeable unto Nature; a little Custom will render them very pleasant and delightful to most, or all Constitutions.

6. Eggs, Parsley and Sorrel, mixed or stirred together, and Fried in a Pan with Butter and a little Salt, and when done, melt some Butter and Vinegar and put on them, but you must not put too great a quantity of Herbs, for then it will render it more heavy and dull in Operation; this is a Noble and most delicious Dish and it affords a good nourishment, provided you eat not too much in quantity.

7. Eggs beaten together and Fried with Butter, and when done, melt some Butter and Vinegar and put over them is also a delightful and pleasant Dish, being much better and easier of Digestion, than the common way of Frying Eggs, as being lighter and more tender.

8. Eggs Poached, and some Parsly boiled and cut small, and mixed with some Butter and Vinegar melted, makes a very fine Dish and gives great satisfaction to the Stomach, supplying Nature with Nourishment to the highest degree, and is very grateful to the Palate.

9. Eggs boiled in their Shells, and Eggs roasted, the last being the best, and eaten with Bread and Salt, or with Bread, Butter and Salt, is a good substantial Food; also Eggs broken and Butter'd over the Fire, is a good Food, being eaten with store of Bread.

10. Eggs being mixed with various sorts of Fruits, with butter and bread made into Pies, is a sort of delicious Food, that a Man may give himself the Liberty to Eat now and then to great satisfaction, and not detriment to Nature, provided it be not too often.

11. Eggs Poached, and eaten with a Dish of boiled Spinnage Buttered, is a good Food, and affords agreeable Nourishment, being eaten with plenty of good bread.

12. Eggs with Flower and Water made into a Pap on the Fire, as we have directed in the forementioned Book, The Good Housewife made a Doctor, is a Noble Food, affording a brave clean nourishment, being eaten either alone, or with Bread.

13. Raw Eggs, broke into our thin white Water gruel, and Brewed well together, with some Salt to season it, and then eaten with Bread, or Bread and Butter, makes a most exhilarating Food, being of a warming Quality, and agreeable unto the Stomach, generates good Blood, and fine brisk Spirits; this Gruel is very good for all young People and Women, for the frequent use of this, and others of our Spoon-Meats, do naturally sweeten all the Humors, and prevents the generation of sower Juices, frees the passages from Windiness, and Griping pains.

14. Milk, Water and Flower, makes a brave substantial Pap or Food, this affords a strong nourishment, and such as eat frequently of it, shall not be subject neither to the gripes of the Stomach nor Bowels, and cuts off the generation of Wind in the bud, makes the Spirits brisk, the Body plump, fat and of good Complexion, also it allays heat and drought, this being as friendly a Food to Nature as any Composition made by Fire with Milk.

15. One Egg broke into a Pint of good Ale, and Brewed well together, and eaten with Bread makes a brave Meal, and it hath a vigorous and quick operation in the Stomach; in the summer you may drink or eat it cold with Bread, but in the Winter warm it.

16. Take a Pint of Ale, or good Beer, sweeten it with Sugar, then put it on the Fire, make it boiling hot, but not Boil, then take one or two Eggs, beat them with a little Water, then brew them well with your hot sweetened Ale or Beer; this is a noble comforting sort of Food, or rather a rich Cordial, which does wonderfully replenish Nature with both dry and moist nourishment.

17. Rice and Water, boiled and buttered, is a friendly Food, and easie of Concoction, and affords a good nourishment.

18. Rice and Milk is also a noble Food affording a substantial nourishment, especially if you put Sugar in it, and remember in what Spoon Meats soever you put butter, let no Sugar come and where you put Sugar let no Butter be.

19. An Egg or two beaten and brewed in a Pint of raw Milk, as they call it, either cold or warm according to the season of the year, is a noble substantial Food, affording a most excellent nourishment; the frequent eating thereof, prevents the generation of sower windy Humors, (which are the original of many cruel Diseases, more especially in Women and Children) and gives all good healthy Complexion.

20. Milk made boiling hot, and then thickened with Eggs, is a brave substantial Food, of a friendly mild Nature and Operation, agreeable to most or all People.

21. There is also made of Milk, several other sorts of Foods, viz. Cheese-Cakes, Custards, White-Pots, all which are much of one Nature and Operation, they nourish much, and are substantial, but are not to be eaten too frequently.

22. Spinnage boiled, or stewed, and buttered and eaten with Bread makes a brave cleansing Food, easie of Concoction, and generates good Blood, and sweetens the Humors, moves and opens Obstructions.

23. Spinnage, and the young buds of Colworts boiled in plenty of good Water, with a quick brisk Fire, and eaten only with Bread, Butter and Salt, is fine pleasant delightful Food, affording good clean nourishment.

24. Spinnage, boiled with the sound tops of Mint and Balm, seasoned with Salt and butter; and eaten with Bread, makes a Noble Dish of a warming Quality, and gives great satisfaction to the Stomach, affording an excellent nourishment.

25. Spinnage, Endive, and young Parsley, boiled and eaten with Bread, Butter and Salt, is a brave friendly exhilarating Food, generating good Blood, and fine brisk Spirits, cleanseth the Passages, and loosens the Belly.

26. Boiled Cabbage, Collyflowers and Colworts, being eaten with Butter, Vinegar, Salt and Bread, the last of the three being the best, for they loosen the Belly, purge by Urine, and are easie of Concoction, but remember that you boil them in plenty of good Water, with a quick fire, and not too much, which is to be observed in all the preparations of Herbs and Grains.

27. Asparagus, boiled and eaten with Bread, Butter and Salt, is a most delicious Food, they afford a clean nourishment, and are friendly to the Stomach, opens Obstructions, loosens the Belly, and powerfully purges by Urine.
28. Artichokes boiled, and eaten with Bread, Butter, and Salt are an excellent Food, and generates a substantial nourishment; a Man may make a noble Meal of them.
29. Green Beans, boiled and eaten with Salt, Butter and Bread, is a most pleasant Food, they gently open the Belly, affording a good nourishment, if you eat temperately of them, for they are an enticing Food. Let all People, subject to windy diseases, eat them sparingly.
30. French, or Kidney-Beans boiled in plenty of Water with a brisk Fire, and eaten with Bread, Butter, and Salt, makes a brave delightful Dish of Food, of a cleansing opening nature and operation, they purge by Urine, and gently open the Belly, affording a good nourishment, provided they are eaten temperately; which is chiefly to be regarded in all green Foods.
31. Green Pease boiled, and seasoned with Salt and Butter, and eaten with Bread, makes a most pleasant Dish of Food; their nourishment is not strong, they are windy if not sparingly eaten.
32. Dry Pease being boiled in plenty of good soft Water, being seasoned with Salt and Butter, makes a substantial Dish of Food, and affords a strong nourishment, and are good for all strong labouring Men.
33. Boiled Turnips make a very good Dish of Food, being seasoned with Salt and Butter, and eaten with Bread, especially for all young People; they open and cleanse the Passages, and are easie of digestion, and may with safety be eaten plentifully; their colour declares their excellent Virtues.
34. Parsnips boiled in plenty of good Water, seasoned with Salt, Vinegar, Butter and Mustard makes a brave substantial hearty Dish of Food, and are friendly to most Constitutions.
35. Carrets boiled and seasoned with Salt and Butter, and eaten with good Bread, is a fine Dish of Food, very pleasant and wholsom, and are of easie Concoction; the deep red are best.

36. Roasted or boiled Potatoes eaten with Butter, Salt, and Vinegar, makes a pleasant Dish of Food, very grateful to the Stomach, and are easie of digestion; now and then a Meal of them may do well.

37. Apple Dumplings eaten with Butter, or Butter and Sugar, hath the first place of most sorts of Puddings; they are easie of Concoction, and afford a friendly nourishment.

38. Plain Dumplings made very small, viz. with good Flower, Milk, Eggs, and a little Butter mixed or work'd up in them, and made thin like small Cakes, about as large as a Crown Piece, and put into boiling Water, which will be boiled in a little time; this is a noble substantial Food, very sweet and pleasant, of a warming nature, of an easie friendly operation.

39. Plain Puddings made with Eggs, Flower, and Milk, well boiled and buttered, makes a firm Food, agreeable to the Stomach, being eaten temperately is both wholsom and healthy.

40. Boiled Dumplings made only with Flower, Milk, or Water, with a little Ginger, which is the best Spice for Puddings, with Yeast or Barm, and when done buttered, is a very good wholsom Food, and of easie digestion; of this alone, a Man may now and then make a good Meal.

41. Boiled Puddings made with Flower Milk, and Eggs, and Raisons or Currans, and buttered, makes a pleasant Food, and a Man may now and then, give himself the liberty to make a Meal thereof without prejudice.

42. There are also several sorts of light Puddings made of Bread, and various sorts of ingredients, which are pleasant to the Palate, and not ungrateful to the Stomach, if sparingly eaten.

43. Rice Puddings both plain and made of Fruit, which for the most part are a pleasant sort of Food, easie of digestion, and may be freely eaten.

44. There are also several of Baked Puddings, which to most young People are delightful, they afford a good strong nourishment, and are best for such as Labour.

45. Apple Pies made with Fruit, that is neither too green or unripe, nor too cold or far spent, are a very good Food, especially

for young People; they afford a good nourishment, and are friendly to Nature.

46. Pear Pies being full, ripe, makes a fine, gentle, friendly Food, of easie Concoction.

47. Rhadishes and Bread and Butter is a very good Food and a Man may now and then make a good Meal thereof; this affords a substantial nourishment far exceeding a Flesh Dinner.

48. Parsley and Bread and Butter, makes a noble exhilarating Food, agreeable to Nature, nothing more friendly to the Stomach, breeds good Blood, and fine Spirits.

49. Sorrel and Bread and Butter, makes a brave, brisk Food easie and quick of digestion, cleanseth the Stomach, and opens the belly, and generates good Blood.

50. Balm and Bread and Butter, makes an excellent Food, of a chearing warming Quality; no sort of Food makes a better nourishment.

51. Sage and Bread and Butter, makes excellent Food, afford a good nourishment; its particular operation is, it warms the Stomach, and expels Wind.

52. Milk Pottage, viz. half Milk and half Water, mix it, and put it on our Fire, when boiling hot then take it off the Fire, and brew it with some Oatmeal, ready tempered or mixed with a spoonful of cold Water or Milk, season it with Salt, and eaten with bread, makes a very good substantial Food, affording a good nourishment, agreeable to the Stomach: But remember that it be made thin, and full half Water, otherwise it will be heavy on the Stomach, especially if it be for weakly Consumptive People.

53. There is also a brave sort of Food made of Wheat and Milk, called Furmity; some make it plain, and others add Fruit to it; the plain is the best, but they are both very good, affording a firm substantial nourishment, of a mild friendly operation: The frequent use of this is a grand enemy to the generation of sower windy Humours.

54. Boiled Wheat buttered is a noble Dish, and with this alone, a Man may make a better and more satisfactory Meal, than with Princely variety; it affords a sweet, friendly, and most agreeable

nourishment, easie of concoction, and generates fine thin Blood.

55. Take good white Pease, boil them, when near done, add green Sage and Onions cut small, then season it with Salt and Butter; but in the Winter, when green Sage is not good, then take that which is dried according to our Directions in the Way to Health, long Life and Happiness, which is to be preferred before green. This is a brave strong and substantial Pottage, very grateful to the Palate, and agreeable to the Stomach.

56. Directions to make several sorts of Herb Pottage, viz. Take what quantity you please of good Water, make it boiling hot, then have our Herb or Herbs ready washed, not cut as the usual custom is; put them into your boiling hot Water, let your Vessel continue on the Fire till your Liquor begins to boil, then take it off the Fire, and let your Herbs remain in our boiling Liquor two or three Minutes; after which, take your Herbs out, then brew your hot Infusion with a little small Ground Oatmeal, which you must have ready, tempered with a Spoonful or two of cold Water, adding Salt and Butter to it, which ought to be brewed with your Oatmeal. This Pottage or Gruel, you may eat with Bread or without, as you find most agreeable to your Stomach; all Herb Pottages made after this method, are far more commendable, for all good purposes, than that made the common and usual way, for the hot Liquor, in a moments time, draws forth all the fine, spirituous Virtues, and strength of the Malt; for in most, or all Infusions, the fine spirituous qualities separate, and do first give themselves into any proper Minstruum, or Liquor.

57. Smallage makes a Pottage or Gruel of a cleansing quality, it purifies the Blood, opens Obstructions of the Liver and Spleen; this Pottage alone eaten twice a day, is an effectual Remedy against all Consumptive Humours.

58. Sellary does also make a brave Physical Pottage, it warms and comforts the Spirits, affords a good nourishment, and is an admirable Remedy against Windy Humours.

59. Leek Pottage is not only good Food, but it is also profitable against short windedness, and other Obstructions of the Uriners, and it good against short windedness, and other Obstructions of

the Breast, and affords a good clean nourishment.

60. Onion Pottage; this eaten with good Bread, Butter, and Salt, makes a brave Meal of itself; it is also good against difficult breathing.

61. Garlick Pottage is chiefly good for full Bodied Corpulent Men, and such as are troubled with Coughs, the Stone and Gravel.

62. Parsley Pottage warms the Stomach, cheers the Spirits, and is very agreeable to the Stomach, being eaten with Bread, Butter, and Salt; a Man may make a very good Meal thereof.

63. Mint makes a noble exhilarating Pottage, the frequent eating thereof, does not only prevent windy Humours in the Passages, but it mightily strengthens the Retentive Faculty of the Stomach.

64. Balm makes a Pottage of a warming comforting quality, and is a gallant Food, affording excellent nourishment; this alone makes a noble Meal, to the highest satisfaction of the Stomach.

65. Water-Cresses made into Pottage being eaten with Bread, Butter, and Salt, is not only a good Food, but the frequent use thereof cleanseth the Blood, and prevents Fumes and Vapours from flying into the Crown.

66. Sweet Charwell makes an excellent Pottage, being eaten with Bread, Butter and Salt, is not only a brave Food, but it warms cold Stomachs, and is a friend to the Lungs.

67. Take Currans, boil them in your Water, when almost done, mix a little small Oatmeal with two Spoonfuls of cold Water, stir it in, and let it boil a little; when done, season it with Salt, adding Sugar with it: This eaten with Bread makes a good Meal. You may add butter as most good Houswives do, but I must tell them that it makes it heavy on the Stomach, and apt to send Fumes into the Head.

68. Boil your Raisins in Water, as is mentioned before of Currans, when almost done, then stir your tempered Oatmeal in and let it boil a small time, when done, add Salt, Sugar, and Bread; you may add Butter, especially if the Eaters thereof be strong working People; this Pottage affords much nourishment, and a Man may sometimes make a very good Meal of this alone.

69. Take Raisins, Currans and a few Pruans boil them in good Water, when near done thicken it with white Bread, adding

Spice, Sugar, Butter, and Salt; This is a rich Pottage, affording a great nourishment, and therefore it must be eaten the more sparingly.

70. A piece of good Bread, and a Pint of good Ale or Beer, makes a very gallant Meal, it warms the Stomach, is easie of digestion, generates good Blood, and it has a quick and pleasant Operation.

71. Bread and half a Pint of good Canary Wine, a Man may make a noble and most delightful Meal, even to the highest satisfaction of Nature.

72. Bread and a Pint of good Cyder, do also make a good Meal, it breeds good nourishment and makes a Man full of Life and Spirit.

73. Bread, and Half a Pint of Cherry Wine, Gooseberry Wine or Currans Wine, with this alone a Man may make a brave Dinner, it affords a noble brisk spirit and nourishment.

74. Flummery is an ancient Food the Britains used to eat, and the use of it is still continued amongst the Welsh: The Britains, and those that now eat this sort of Gruel, had, and have various ways of eating it, viz. to mix Ale with it, and so eat it with Bread, others Milk, Cream, and the like; which mixtures do very well. This Gruel I commend to all weak Stomach'd People, and especially to such whose Breasts and Passages are furred, and obstructed by sweet tough, and phlegmy Matter, it being an excellent remedy against all such infirmities.

75. Bonniclabber is a sort of Milk Meat, and though last spoken of, deserves the first place for its excellent Virtues: Bonniclabber is nothing else but Milk that has stood till it is sower, and become of a thick slippery substance; this is an excellent Food being eaten with good Bread in hot Seasons, especially for Consumptive People, and such as are trouble with any kind of stoppages of the Breast, it naturally opens the passages, its easie of concoction, and helps to digest all hard or sweeter Foods, it also cools and cleanseth the whole Body, and renders it brisk and lively, quencth Thirst to admiration: And with this, or any of the forementioned Dishes of Food, any Person may make a hearty Meal thereof with great satisfaction.