PRACTICAL CARVING

BY
THOMAS J. MURREY,
AUTHOR OF
50 Soups, 50 Salads,
Breakfast Dainties,
Puddings, Entrées,
Cookery for Invalids,
Etc.

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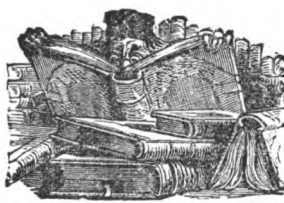
OF TWENTY YEARS' EXPERIENCE IN CARVING



NEW YORK
FREDERICK A. STOKES
SUCCESSOR TO WHITE, STOKES, & ALLEN
1887

DEDICATION.

To

My Dear Friend

W. W. STICKNEY

(with the United-States Hotel twenty-five years ago)

I Dedicate this Work,

In token of appreciation of the many hours he spent in instructing me in the minute details of carving.

THOMAS J. MURREY.

PREFACE.

FROM my earliest recollection, I was taught to consider a thorough knowledge of the art of carving an important part of my education; and the memories of my early struggles to master the art are vividly before me.

The patience that was exhausted upon me, while training my youthful hands to hold the knife properly, was certainly not appreciated by me at the time.

I could not see why it was important that my thumb, instead of the forefinger, should be placed on the back of the knife, when the latter way seemed more easy. Neither did I realize it to be an accomplishment to be able to carve with the left hand equally as well as with the right.

Now that I have arrived at a more mature age, I see and appreciate the importance of these things that seemed but trifles to me when I was young. I had often heard my father say that a young man's education was incomplete without a knowledge of carving, and his sons had every reason to believe he was serious in what he said.

CONTENTS.

PRACTICAL CARVING.

THE CARVING-KNIFE.

In the stone age, when the savage tried his best to carve with a dull stone knife, he doubtless swore mentally; and while we have advanced to a marked degree beyond the savage and his food, and his implements for dividing that food, his barbaric trait of mental swearing is still with us, and will probably remain with us until the end of time, or until our servants realize that the carving-knife was not a tool originally intended by the head of the family for dissecting kindling-wood or peeling potatoes.

Is there any thing more exasperating to a carver, at the announcement of dinner, than to find that his pet knife, which had been sharpened by an expert the day before, had that very day been used by some one to cut wire or equally hard substance?

Flashes of wit and humor may abound until the moment of carving arrives, and the jolliest family party that ever gathered around the mahogany will be enveloped in gloom by the efforts of a carver at work with a dull knife.

The grim, contorted face plainly indicates his feelings of discomfort and mental suffering. To you who are responsible for that dull knife, we would say, do you imagine the carver enjoys his task, or will enjoy his dinner?

Who does not think, with us, that a dull knife is a thing of terror? It certainly breeds dyspepsia; it makes delicious viands unsavory; and many a family quarrel has emanated from it.

After the carving-tools have been used, they should be thoroughly cleaned, and the knives should be sharpened and well rubbed with a woollen cloth on which a little olive oil has been poured, when they should be wrapped in chamois and put away under lock and key.

Knife Grinding. — Hold the knife perfectly flat against the stone, so that the blade evenly traverses the stone from point to handle. In no other way will the knife retain its edge. To spoil the knife completely, put a rounding edge on the knife.

To Steel the Knife. — The instructions issued by Curley Brothers for sharpening a carv-

ing-knife are so complete, that we take the liberty of embodying them in this work.

"A carver must be held at an angle of twenty to twenty-five degrees on the steel.

"Be careful to have the angle same on both sides, so as to sharpen instead of dulling the knife.

"Draw it on the steel from heel to point against the edge; only a very slight pressure required."

TO STAND OR SIT WHILE CARVING.

The height of chair and table has much to do with the question, To stand or sit while carving.

It is exceedingly awkward to carve when sitting in a low chair before a high table.

In this position one cannot divide the parts in neat and appetizing forms. Small dishes such as steaks, and all birds, from the cock-sparrow to the princely canvas-back, are of course carved sitting.

The carver's chair should be cushioned enough to bring the elbow of the carver almost on a line with the table.

It is a good rule to follow, that the seat of the carver's chair should not be more than twelve inches below the level of the table, as a lower seat forces the arms into an unskilful position.

BEEF.

Roast Ribs of Beef. *How to hold the Knife.* — There are two ways of carving roast beef, and the rules will equally apply to the rib roast or the sirloin roast.

First, Place the ribs on the platter with the thickest part towards you, and with the crisp, brown, fat surface up; and trim off all burnt pieces, and all the small pieces of backbone overlooked by the dealer. Insert the fork in the centre of the joint, midway between the ends and right and left sides; cut off two slices from the right-hand side, and reserve them for those who desire "well-done" beef. Now run the point of the knife along the whole length of the rib, parallel with it, and immediately next to it, and make a cut an inch deep over the rib. Hold the knife gracefully, but firmly, and with *thumb extended over the back of the knife, instead of the forefinger,* and cut thin slices down to the bone, when they will fall on the platter in neat, whole slices.

With the finger extended over the back of the knife, you do not have the same control over the knife as when the thumb is extended; and

you cannot, therefore, cut a slice that will be of equal thickness throughout. When carving small pieces of meat, game, etc., this rule is not imperative.

Second, Place the meat on the platter, as described in the foregoing, and trim it; turn it on end, with the thickest part towards you, and the crisp, brown skin, or rather fat, to your right. Insert the fork between the ribs, which are now to the left, and carve towards the left. The object gained in this mode of carving is that the juices remain in the meat instead of running out and on to the platter; and in this way the slices contain their full quota of juice, and are therefore more desirable.

Sirloin of Beef.—This joint of beef may be placed on the platter after the modes described in "roast beef." The thickest end is placed towards you, and the black and burnt outside neatly trimmed. Then run the point of the knife along the flat bone at the right, and cut in about an inch deep; then cut slices from the right side. Should the flank be too large, it is best and more economical to cut it off in one piece. The tenderloin, when not intended to be served cold, should be cut out, and each guest receive a small slice of it in addition to the sirloin. They appreciate tenderloin, and your servants might not.

Tenderloin of Beef. — Request the dealer to remove the thin membraneous sack enveloping the meat, and either lard the latter by the aid of a larding needle, or cover it with a long thin piece of larding pork. When cooked, place it on the platter, and carve across the loin, beginning at the thickest end, which should be to the right. The slices should be about twice as thick as slices of roast beef. A good gravy or sauce should accompany tenderloin, as it is a somewhat dry meat, having but little flavor of its own, tenderness being its only recommendation.

Chuck-rib Roast. — Notwithstanding the fact that this piece of beef is much cheaper than other rib cuts, it is usually avoided by housekeepers, who find it troublesome and unsatisfactory to carve. Remove the blade bone before roasting. After roasting, cut the piece of shoulder meat free from the thick, juicy part, place it on a separate plate, and carve it across the grain; serve a slice of it with each slice of the choice part; and, by pouring over it a little of the "dish gravy," it becomes quite presentable.

Miscellaneous Roasting Pieces of Beef, such as the rump, aitchbone, round, and rolled meat, should be carved *across the grain.*

Porter-house Steak. — Trim off all surplus fat, which is apt to burn while cooking, and

make an unnecessary amount of smoke. Examine the thickest end, and carefully remove minute particles of bone which may adhere to the steak and produce inflammation of the intestines, when swallowed. Do not remove the bone which separates the sirloin from the tenderloin, as it keeps the steak in shape; after broiling the steak, add to it a walnut of the best table butter, salt, and white pepper; place it on the table, and separate both pieces of meat from the bone. Divide the tenderloin into as many pieces as there are guests. Cut the sirloin into strips an inch and a half wide, and across the grain, and serve to each guest a piece of each.

Beef Tongue. — From an economical point of view, it is best to serve the tip of the tongue first, as it will dry up quickly and become indigestible if allowed to stand a few days. Trim off the ragged, thick end, and remove the little bones found therein; cut a two-inch piece from the tip of the tongue, and slice it as thin as possible.

MUTTON AND LAMB.

Leg of Mutton. — The leading silversmiths make a shank-holder which is more useful to the carver of a leg of mutton than the fork; and, when one of these is not at hand, white paper wrapped around the bone may be substituted. Cut from outer side of the leg of mutton, and lengthwise of the leg, a good-sized slice; this prevents the leg from moving about the dish whenever touched, and brings the inner or thickest part of the mutton conveniently before the carver. Hold the shank firmly, and cut into the centre of the leg to the bone. The first two slices should be slightly wedge-shaped, and should be served to those who really appreciate the "Pope's eye" of mutton. Slice from the thickest part before carving from the lower part, and with each slice a thin slice of fat should be served.

The wise carver serves the toothsome bit known as the knuckle to himself. We think he deserves this nugget of sweetness.

Shoulder of Mutton. — The blade is a "bone of contention" to the beginner in carving. Its mission seems to be the trying of one's

patience, and the destruction of the carver's appetite. I advise my readers, who cannot successfully carve this joint, to ask the butcher to give them a few lessons in boning it; after which they will have little trouble to carve it, knowing the location of the bones. Turn the shoulder on its edge, with the outside or upper part towards you, and cut slices from the top edge; the first slices which are cut from the top are nearly all fat, and are placed one side, and pieces of them served with the lean. Now cut slices from the part above the knuckle, and down to it, until the bones are exposed. Then place the joint flat on the dish, and slice from both sides of the blade-bone ridge; then remove the blade-bone, and cut the remainder of the joint across the grain.

Saddle of Mutton. — Trim off all surplus flank and fat, as it is only in the carver's way, and seldom, if ever, eaten by the guests. Press the sides well in, and wind a string around the joint, to hold it in good form. After roasting, place it on the table, with the tail end to the left.

As to how the joint should be carved, is a question decided by the number of guests and the host's idea of economy. The economical host will carve thus: Make a long deep cut parallel with the backbone, and cut away one

side of the loin in one whole piece, but let it remain in place, and cut slices across the grain, beginning at the right. Carve the other side of the loin in the same manner. If the tenderloin is wanted, turn the joint, and cut it out entire.

When the question of economy "has nothing to do with the case," the mode of carving is as follows: Make a deep cut the whole length, and parallel with the backbone, and cut long, even one-eighth-inch slices with the grain; then divide each slice into pieces not over five inches long. The carving must be done quickly, as the fat cools rapidly, in which condition it cloys on the palate.

Saddle of Lamb. — This joint is the choicest of spring meats. It comes to us at a season of the year when game of all kinds is in poor condition (even if allowed to be sold), and for private dinner parties we know of no dish that equals it. The rules for carving it are the same as those for carving the loin of mutton.

Leg of Lamb. — By this term we mean a leg having the loin attached, and called a hind-quarter, which is the cut generally sold in New York. When the family is small, cut off the loin and use it for chops, and roast the leg, which is carved much the same as a leg of mutton. It being very tender, one part of it is no more

choice than another; and the only care to be exercised is to keep in mind that cold lamb is the daintiest of cold meats. The joint should therefore be carved in as neat a manner as possible, to have a presentable cold joint for the following meal.

Fore-Quarter of Lamb. — From the fore-quarter of lamb only do we obtain those delightful little chops, and a few of them should invariably be cut from the joint before it is roasted. The breast, or brisket, is another part of the joint from which an excellent dish is made.

After roasting, place the joint on the platter, and with the breast towards you. The first cut should be the removal of the shoulder, with the blade-bone attached; and each guest should receive a dainty rib, a piece of the brisket, or, if preferred, a slice from the shoulder.

Lamb's Tongue. — These tidbits are invariably served whole; but they look more appetizing when cut in two *lengthwise*, and each half temptingly arranged on a crisp leaf of lettuce, with quarters of lemon on the sides of the dish.

VEAL.

Leg of Veal. — Aside from the excellent soups and sauces made from veal, the toothsome kidney, delicious sweetbreads, and the head, Americans are not, as a class, fond of veal; and a whole leg of veal is seldom seen upon their tables. It is a profitable joint, however, for large families, and from it may be cut the cutlets for the cooking of which the Germans hold the secret. After the leg is cooked, delightful croquettes may be made from that which is left after dinner. The carving of a leg of veal is a simple matter, after the hip-bone has been removed, which should be done before the leg is cooked. Place the leg on a large platter, the thicker end to the right, and the shank to the left. Carve slices from the thickest side of the leg-bone first, and then from the other side, to keep the face of the joint as even as possible.

I have seen carvers carve this joint the same as recommended for the carving of a leg of mutton; but too much waste was the usual result.

Fillet of Veal is a long strip of veal cut from the leg. It is the best part of the leg, in

fact. This is larded with either bacon or salt pork, and cooked and served the same as fillet of beef. To carve, place the thickest end to the right, and cut across the grain.

Shoulder of Veal. — This joint being much larger than a shoulder of mutton, I have found it more convenient to cut off the fore-leg and the blade from the ribs, which, if the breast or brisket is not removed, will be too long. They should be chopped in two before being cooked.

When the butcher neglects to separate the ribs with the cleaver, cut the meat clean from the bone, and save the bones for soup meat. If instinct will not tell the carver which way to carve the meat after it is cut from the bone, books cannot.

Loin of Veal. — A loin of veal is that part of the animal between the hip-bone and ribs. It covers the tenderloin and kidneys, and does not have ribs as declared in a recent publication.

To carve, place the joint with the thickest part towards you. Make one long cut along the backbone, separate meat from bone entirely, and send the bone from the table. Carve the meat across the grain, from flank to loin.

A small loin of veal should have the backbone separated into three-quarter-inch pieces.

When carved, a piece of bone will be attached to each piece of meat.

Calf's Tongue, either fresh or pickled, should be cut in three pieces, lengthwise.

PORK.

Sucking Pig. — This is one of the easiest dishes to carve; and yet, out of two hundred gentlemen who were on a picnic, but one of them felt competent to carve a roast pig. Send the pig to table *whole*, with the head to the right-hand, and tail to the left-hand side. First cut off the head, and split it in two. Split the body down the back, and place the parts on the dish, crackling side up.

Cut off the fore-legs, with blade attached; next cut off the hind-quarters, and divide the ribs, arranging the meat as neatly as possible on the dish. Serve a little stuffing to each guest.

A dish of small baked apples is more presentable than apple sauce.

Leg of Pork. — This is the only leg of a domestic animal which I think is improved by boning and stuffing.

Select a leg weighing not over five pounds, stuff it, and score the rind in diamonds; place it

in a pan, and dredge it with salt; place a paper over it to prevent the crackling from burning; let this remain for half an hour, then remove, and cook the joint for one and a half hours longer in a not too hot oven.

One word to those who advocate basting this joint. When the fire is too hot, the rind is very apt to burn, and then it may be slightly basted; but otherwise do not baste it, if you love crisp crackling. Should the joint receive the amount of basting recommended by some writers, a gummy rind will be the result, which nothing short of the stomach of an ostrich could digest.

To carve a Ham.—Much depends on how the ham is to be used. A family desiring fried or broiled ham should split the ham lengthwise, and then cut thin, even slices across the grain. The half with the bone in it may be boiled or baked, if the family is a small one. When a whole ham appears on the table, the cook should see to it that its appearance is improved as much as possible. It should be neatly trimmed round the edges, and the fat should be free from rust. The rind, if left on, should be scalloped at the broad end in a neat manner. To carve a whole ham, make an incision in the thickest part of the ham down to the bone, and work towards

the large end. The knife used for carving a ham should be very thin and very sharp, or the slices will be uneven, — a very objectionable feature.

POULTRY AND GAME.

The Domestic Duck. — The novice in carving quickly discovers that the domestic duck is the most exasperating fowl he has to contend with.

Twist the wings under the duck, and truss the legs close to the body and under the vent. In this way they are out of the way.

After roasting, place it on the platter, with the tail towards you, and the head from you.

The usual instructions are to "insert the fork firmly across the ridge of the breast;" but, when this is done, the tines make two unsightly grooves in four slices of the best part of the duck (two on each side of the ridge).

The author finds it easier to insert the fork in the left side, close down to the backbone, the ends of the tines penetrating the back to secure a firm hold.

First, cut three thin slices from the right side of the breast, holding the knife almost flat against the breast. Now cut off the wing, which

is only in the way, and contains "poor pickin's." Continue carving the breast until the wish-bone prevents further progress; then carve the other side in the same manner. The carver may change the position of the fork if he desires, but old carvers do not do so. After carving the breast, and having removed the wings, separate the wish-bone, or merry-thought, from the breast-bone; free it from the shoulders, which is a somewhat troublesome operation for beginners. The legs may be removed, if there is not breast enough for all; but they are not a particularly dainty cut, and most carvers leave them for the servants.

The best rule for the inexperienced carver to follow is to carve the breast in the best manner possible, and omit carving or trying to separate the joints, as there is but little to be gained.

To carve a Goose. — Much of the foregoing instructions for carving a duck apply to the goose. The breast is the choice part, and the joints are difficult to find and separate.

Cut the slices from the breast quite thin, holding the knife quite flat against the bird, as otherwise one is very apt to cut uneven slices.

The stuffing is so thoroughly soaked with goose grease, that it should not be served to any one but "day-laborers."

To carve a Canvas-back Duck. — Half a duck is considered a portion, and each guest is supposed to receive half of the plump, juicy flesh of the breast. This is the rule at banquets and at club dinners.

For private families, however, the author recommends that the breast be divided into four pieces, as otherwise the dinner would be too expensive for the average household.

To carve, place the duck on the platter, breast up, and head from you. Insert the fork through the centre of the wish-bone, or merry-thought; press firmly on the fork, which inclines slightly from you, so that the points of the fork are firmly imbedded in the back.

The position of the hand on the fork is the reverse of the ordinary manner of holding it; that is, the thumb extends towards the end of the handle. In this way a very firm grip is obtained, and the fork is out of the way of the knife. If the fork pierces the centre of the breast, it prevents the knife from working close to the breast-bone ridge, where lies a most toothsome morsel. Make the first cut along the right-hand side of the ridge, keeping very close to it, and cut down to the flat breast-bone; follow this, and free the meat from the lower part of the breast, and work up to the shoulder, and around

that side of the wish-bone. Turn the meat over with the knife, exposing the shoulder joint; separate it here, and serve. While this may appear complicated to some, it is but the work of a moment. Carve the left side in the same manner.

Red-head Duck. — Many claim there is but a slight difference between this duck and the foregoing, and that it is almost impossible to discover this difference.

Aside from the difference in flavor of the flesh, and shape and color of head and bill, there is a vast difference between these birds; and the close observing carver cannot be deceived. The red-head is carved, however, in the same manner as the canvas-back.

Teal Duck. — Select a blue-wing instead of a green-wing teal. This duck should be split in two lengthwise before it is sent to table.

Spring Chicken. — To know when a broiler is fat and juicy, one should examine the back-bone. The greater the amount of fat along the vertebræ, the fatter will be the chicken in all other parts of the body. Should the wattles and comb look dull, dingy, or of a leaden color, the bird should be rejected, as sickness is thereby indicated. A roasted chicken is placed on table with the head from you; the first cut is a

slight one on the right breast down to the wing; and, without lifting the knife, the latter is removed. Next the leg is cut off. Third, cut away the wing and leg of left side. Fourth, cut the breast in two by separating it from the back; turn the breast, and split it in two from the inside.

A large chicken is carved much the same as a turkey or capon, which see.

Boiled Capon. — A capon is at its best boiled; but, as with nearly all boiled fowls, a very sharp knife is necessary in carving the breast. A dull knife will tear the flesh, and produce unsightly slices.

Truss the fowl with twine instead of skewers, and, when cooked, place it on the platter, tail towards you, and head from you.

Insert the fork well forward in the breast, and cut away the strings, which *should* have been removed before the bird was sent to table.

First, cut a very thin slice from the right-hand side of the breast, down to, and including, the wing-bone.

Second and third, cut the skin on both sides of the second joint; press the knife gently outward, and you will quickly discover where the joint is attached to the back; separate them. Now take another fork (leaving the first fork in

the breast), and divide the drum-stick from the second joint while it is in hand. Cut the second joint in two lengthwise.

Next, cut neat, full-sized slices from the breast until the knife is obstructed by the wish-bone, which separate from the breast-bone and right shoulder only; for, should it be cut completely off, the slices of breast on the left-hand side would be smaller than they should be. Gently draw the bird over on its left side, and with one quick, sharp stroke with the knife, cut part way through the right centre of the back. Cut from the Pope's nose along the back, up to this cut, to procure the side bone. The left side is carved in the same manner as herein described.

Roast Turkey. — Truss the bird with twine instead of skewers; place the cooked bird, with the head *from* you, on a large platter. Have ready one small and one large knife, one small and one large fork. Insert the large fork through the centre of the breast, the tines astraddle of the ridge. Cut away the twine, and cut two thin slices of white meat from the breast down to the shoulder. Now divide the wing from the shoulder, which, if done before cutting the two slices, that part of the fowl and the upper ends of the slices will be

ragged. The expert will next divide the drum-stick from the second joint; but the beginner should cut above the second joint down towards the back, then cut on the lower side, press the joint gently outward with the knife, and with the point of the knife neatly, and seemingly without effort, divide the joints.

Now use the small knife and fork to separate the drum-stick and second joint, and also to divide the latter while in hand. Slice off the breast in wide, long, and not too thin slices. Cut off the Pope's nose, and the side bone, as described in article on capon. The "oysters" on the back belong with the side bones, and should not be detached from them. The wish-bone should be separated from the breast-bone and shoulder; and a quick stroke will separate the collar-bone from the breast; another will give you the shoulder blade, around which is fair "picking." The left side is carved the same as the right side, and it is considered quite an accomplishment to be able to carve with the left hand as well as the right.

Squab. — When a dinner consists of many courses, and guests are surfeited, a roasted squab, or even a broiled squab, may be split in two; but, under all ordinary circumstances, each guest should receive a whole bird.

English Pheasants. — These birds are quite plentiful, but dear during winter, and are quite frequently met with at private dinners.

Owing to the long sea voyage, they are quite strongly flavored, or rather gamey, by the time they reach our tables; and we advise that only the breast be served. Each side of the breast may be divided into two slices.

The legs and thighs should only be served to those who advocate "high game."

Prairie Chicken. — Lard the breast neatly with a larding needle, or place a thin slice of larding pork over the breast, and secure it when trussing the bird. When roasted, remove the twine, insert the fork on the left-hand side, and place the bird with its head from you. Cut both legs from the body; and, if intended for two persons, carve the breast from the right side in one whole piece by cutting close to the ridge first, then slipping the knife along the breast-bone down to the shoulder, and removing the wing at the same time. Carve the left in the same manner.

FISH.

The flounder, the English sole, and the small chicken halibut are carved thus: Divide the fish lengthwise down to the bone, run the fish-knife along the sides from head to tail; then divide each half in three-inch pieces if the fish is a thin one, and two-inch pieces if a thick one.

Remove the bone as soon as exposed, and divide the under side in the same manner.

A shoulder of cod, or a piece of salmon, is served best if the fish is divided, and the upper piece placed on the dish, then divided into portions. The bone is then removed from the lower piece, and it is divided into portions.

To divide the top piece into portions, as is usually done, we find, that, no matter how careful in serving, the lower part of the fish is bruised.

SERVING SAUCES WITH MEATS.

Do not pour a sauce over a portion of meat unless you have some special object in view; for instance, should you find a slice of roast beef too rare, pour the hot gravy over it, and it will look "medium" done. If the beef is very dry, as is apt to be the case with frozen meats, pour a little of the sauce or gravy on the dish first, and then add the meat. It will look juicy, and the gravy on the dish will look as though it had run out of the meat.

When boiled mutton is too rare or too well done, pour the sauce over the meat, and then strew over it a few capers.

When the meat is just as ordered, either send the sauce to table in a boat, or serve it on one side of the meat.

REMARKS ON BONING MEAT.

Many writers recommend the removal of all bone before cooking the meat. They say "it facilitates carving." Perhaps it does; but "boned meat" does not possess the same delicious flavor as meat cooked with the bone.

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