



FOOD

The European Way

Margret Wallace, junior home management major, spent last summer touring Western Europe with a group of young persons. Her itinerary included the Netherlands, France, Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries where she sampled cooks' specials from soups to French pastries.

"**V**EGETABLE SALAD for breakfast. You're not serious!"

Little did we know. We were seeing Europe by the motto "When in Rome, do as Romans do," and eventually we become more or less accustomed to such food habits.

Feeding the 19 people in our party three times a day takes time, especially in Europe where people don't believe in rushing at meal time. At first it was irritating to have to take three hours of an already full day — just to eat. But we gradually learned that we could find out a lot about a country just while we ate.

It is a continental habit to eat slowly and to linger long over the last cup of coffee. In fact, in England and occasionally in the Scandinavian countries, coffee was never served until dessert was finished. Our waitress in the hotel dining room in London was a timid little thing who will probably remember the rest of her life the time one of the girls in our party asked for coffee with her dinner.

"Oh, but Madam," she said, "coffee isn't served with dinner."

"Well, then, can I have it with my dessert?"

"Oh, no, ma'am. It isn't done. After dessert, ma'am."

It was obvious that waiters thought us abnormal when we wanted water with our meals. In France they refused to believe that they understood correctly, and we often ended up with hot water, mineral water or a finger bowl.

Europeans never serve soup as the main dish for lunch, although they have it at least once a day as

the first course for dinner. I liked the Dutch and Belgian soups best. They were perfectly seasoned and many times contained barley, rice or tapioca.

Naturally we looked forward to French pastries. In fact, the first place we went when we reached France was a pastry shop. We weren't disappointed. Seemingly there's limitless variety — ones with fruit fillings, oblong ones with cream or custard fillings, cakes with ground nuts between the layers and a chocolate dot on the top. Evidently the French just let their imaginations run wild on pastries, for I don't think I ever saw two alike all the time we were there.

A French omelet in its home territory is worth a second look. One place where we stayed several nights was noted for its omelets. The kitchen opened onto the street and passersby would drop in and watch omelets being made. They contain nothing but eggs, beaten to a froth and cooked in vast quantities of butter. The frying pan has a six foot handle and is placed over an open fire. I'm sure there isn't a more delicious omelet on the face of the earth than the kind at Madame Poulard's.

French Salads

French food is highly seasoned. Their salads, mostly limited to tomatoes and lettuce due to the food shortage, were marinated for hours in vinegar and garlic. Much as we enjoyed it, it was a relief to reach Switzerland and feast on ham, cheese and milk. Swiss food was not exciting, but it was certainly good.

Then we met the Danes who never go anywhere without a sandwich. And if our sandwiches were like theirs, I'd cultivate the same habit. They put almost anything in them — or rather on them — for they are open-faced. They can be ham garnished with radishes, chard and tomatoes, or sardines with onions and beets, or anchovy paste, or salad complete with mayonnaise.

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but they're still called sandwiches. One Danish woman told me proudly that neither the Danes nor the Norwegians would think of having the Swedish kind of smorgasbord. She said, "They don't use bread. I don't think that's a good idea at all."

It was in Sweden that we had vegetable salad for breakfast. That with soft cooked eggs and tomatoes make quite a change from the breakfasts of France, Belgium and Switzerland. Petit dejeuner, as the French call it, consists of rolls, butter, jam and coffee or tea. No one on that side of the Atlantic had ever heard of having fruit juice for breakfast.

English Breakfasts

Breakfast in England is a somewhat more important affair. Porridge comes first and no Britisher ever turns it down. I found it gluey and completely unsalted, as was all their food. But perhaps their reason for doing that is just to let each person salt it to his own taste.

While we were in Edinburgh our waitress would recommend the best local dishes to us. This was where we were introduced to haggis, which is made of ground liver, seasoning, barley and breadcrumbs in a sausage skin.

Steamed puddings are an English specialty and their chefs certainly know how to make them. Moist and tender with a wonderful flavor, they are usually covered with stirred custard, made from dried eggs — a war necessity.

Black and White Coffee

We got a jolt in England the first time we ordered coffee. The waitress inquired, "White coffee or black?" They don't have coffee with cream. Either it is very black and very strong or half hot milk, and buff colored.

Obviously we were far from starving wherever we went. In some countries, shortages were apparent, but tourists don't feel it as the residents do. People in other countries, chiefly England, apologized frequently for their food, but after being plied with delicious meals we decided that the main difficulty was lack of variety rather than lack of food. Altogether, eating in Europe was full of delightful surprises.

Stop In . . .

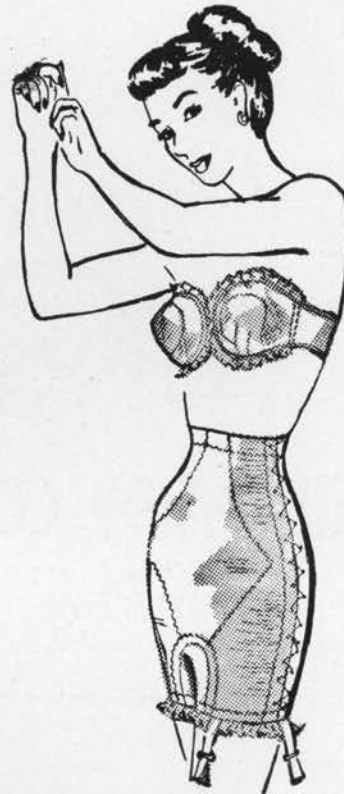
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