

ONLY THE FINEST

By HARRY FAWCETT

Manager, Lake Shore C. C., Chicago

WHEN we discuss the relation of club management with food, we must ask, what is a club? We consult Webster, who answers: "a club is an association of persons for the promotion of some common subject, especially one jointly supported and meeting periodically. Membership is usually by ballot and carries with it the exclusive use of a club building or apartment." Now the essence of most club managers' difficulties is in those few words—"one jointly supported" and exclusive use. The exclusive use which most clubs promise and which by right ought to be the expectation of the member makes problems of management only to be paralleled in the private home and in no way comparable with the hotel or semi-public club with which some house chairmen have so often compared club management. "Jointly supported" is another will-o-the-wisp—scarcely ever encountered by the club manager.

If we were to have the ideal club—and I submit this in all seriousness as the solution of most small clubs' problems—hire a manager whose ability and integrity are known and at the end of every fiscal year assess each member equally for the cost of operations.

Food Sold At Loss

It is a well known fact that most clubs furnish a superior table at a price lower than commercially possible. If our club members do not know this or will not recognize it, at least club managers in the last analysis must admit its truth. Therefore, the member who uses the club's dining facilities the most benefits the most.

When I broke into this business we had one form of education. I was understudy to an old English steward—versed in the old tradition that an apprentice must be humbled. Humble me he did. Day after day he sent me to the most menial tasks. Often I peeled bushels of potatoes. Many the Saturday night I was sent to the

kitchen with the honeyed words to "see what I could do to help," only to find that I had to split two barrels of lobsters. Other nights I made Welsh rarebits, scrambled eggs for various supper dishes, in fact, did everything in the kitchen. Once, during a strike, after I had succeeded to the management of the club, I handled the range for more than three days without our members ever finding out that their beloved chef had gone.

How many men today can do it? Only this winter I have stepped in and prepared an entire banquet menu from soup to nuts because I wanted to show those working for me how it should be done. I don't enjoy the work. It's hard. I burn my fingers at times. But when I get through I know that my members are getting better food than they ever had before, and I know that to be true, not because of egotism, but because I have educated myself.

Now, how can you educate yourself? If I were starting out today I would save every penny until I could go to Cornell University, where the untiring efforts of Thomas D. Green, President of the American Hotel Association, have established the only course in America today which makes it possible for the student of hotel or club business to approximate the apprenticeship found in European countries. Here an American citizen or the son of an American hotel or club manager can learn not only the fundamentals of the hotel and club industry, but also the advanced courses.

Best Food Always

One valuable thing I acquired in the teachings was that one cardinal principle imparted to me long ago by that (now deceased) wizard of food accounting, Fred G. Baudissin—"buy only the best." The

best repays the buyer by returning the lowest food cost.

There are many who will question that statement at first listening. Perhaps I should cite a few instances. Well, 4 to 6 bacon is the best bacon produced. Don't take my word for it. The next time you buy bacon in the strip ask for a 4 to 6. If you don't find it has a more pleasing taste than the bacon you have been using, then I am wrong. However, long experience tells me you will be like thousands of others. You will be wondering why you haven't been buying that particular weight all the time. It is assumed, of course, that you are buying a good bacon, such as Armour's Star or Swift Premium.

A Lesson In Bacon

All right, let's say that you are paying 35c per pound for the same. If you buy 6 to 8 you will pay 33c per pound. Now both strips, as you know, are the same length. That is to say the 4 to 6 strip and the 6 to 8 strip both cut out the same number of slices. A 4 to 6 strip averages five pounds and cuts exactly the same number of slices as a 6 to 8 strip, which at 2c per pound cheaper averages 7 pounds at 33c per pound or at a total cost for the strip of \$2.31. The total cost of the 4 to 6 strip cutting out the same number of slices being \$1.75. This is just one example of the best being cheapest. Don't forget too, that when you are considering the above saving, that the slices from a 4 to 6 bacon are a lot more tasty and will bring you much more commendation on your food quality than those from the 6 to 8 strip.

Take butter, of which you should be more careful than any other item entering into your catering picture. What does the best cost? 45c per pound. "Too high" you say. "I can get it for 43c a pound—tub butter, but as long as I have to cook it into scrambled eggs, coffee cake, rolls, whatever it is, what's the difference? What a sap I am to pay someone 45c when I can get the same high grade butter, the difference only of being in a tub, for 2c a pound less."

All right, you take the 43c butter and I'll take the 45 and if our business is identical I will have a lower cost than you, for this reason: for many years and through many tests I have taken five pounds of 43c butter and five pounds of 45c butter, put both of them in a stone

jar in the bain marie and melted them down. After melting I have repeatedly found in tests that my 45c butter after removing the whey, cost me per pound less than than the 43c butter having a larger percentage of water. It is also true that the 45c butter usually has a finer taste or a taste more free from outside deleterious influences than the butter purchased at 43, and certainly than the butter purchased at still lower prices per pound.

There are some clubs in which it is wrong to use Virginia Hams. These memberships do not know or appreciate the difference between a Virginia Ham or a packing house ham. If it is your lot to manage such a club then your problem is to provide for them the fare to which they are accustomed. Do not waste your time if you have been used to better things trying to bring your club members' desires up to your former standards. Rather find the standard of catering to which your people are accustomed and then give them the very best that can be produced within that limitation.

It just happens that my service for the most part has been among the very wealthy, who demand the extreme in fine food. Where we expected to get but two portions from a three pound chicken most restaurants would get at least four. I was amused not long ago to read an article where a manager complained or rather explained that his control sheet showed that he had only 18 orders instead of 24 from a 12 pound turkey. I wonder if he feels any better when I tell him that we think it unusual if we obtain more than eighteen orders from a 12 pound turkey—in fact, I wonder if he has tried himself, as I have, to actually carve that many presentable portions out of a 12 pound bird.

And a Test With Eggs

I always buy the top notch eggs the market affords. Perhaps you think you can save money by buying second grade at two or three cents the dozen less. Well try this experiment for yourself and then see—take one dozen of the finest eggs that money can buy. Break them all into a container of known weight. Break now a dozen second grade eggs into a similar container and weigh them. Now take a piece of paper and pencil and divide into the cost of each dozen the relative number

of ounces of egg which you have in the two jars. It may enlighten you as it did me years ago to find that at the higher price my eggs cost me less per ounce of actual egg than the cheaper per dozen ones. Do you question that the quality was better on my eggs than on the second grade?

I once managed a large resort where our food sales ran for more than six consecutive weeks at four to five thousand dollars per day. Under the previous management the cuisine had a very low rating. In fact the resort was famous, or infamous as you will, for its poor food. I bought the same high quality of food there that I had purchased for America's finest club restaurant and what was the result? After five years I left that resort with the tribute that it had been run at the lowest food cost of any American plan resort in America and this tribute came from one of the most critical of our national accounting firms.

Shortage of Trained Help

Most of you who have been in the business long have noted the falling off in trained help. Particularly in the matter of service employees is this noticeable, although in the matter of trained cooks the situation is almost as bad. Don't fool yourself—we are facing a shortage of trained culinary help. If today you were to try and put together either a kitchen or service crew such as have worked for us in the past, you would not know where to turn to get them. The answer is—training here in America. Cornell University, and in a lesser degree, Michigan, is doing something to approximate the condition prevailing before immigration and political conditions in Europe closed that source of trained personnel to us. What they are doing is praiseworthy and deserving of the support of all of us, but it is not enough. The unionization in most large centers of our culinary help is another problem which adds to those already before us. In Chicago the unions promise a school for cooks, but their promise, while no doubt well intentioned is visionary and I personally see no immediate solution to our problem there. In fact it seems to me that unionization of restaurant labor in Chicago has served only to add to our operating costs without helping either the quality of our cuisine or the

quantity of those available for such positions.

I see that in the near future, if we are to sustain that quality of cuisine for which our clubs and hotels are world famous, the industry itself must in some way provide a school for cooks and, perhaps, for waiters. Such schools have long been the basis of the perfection of cuisine found in Europe and there is no reason why they should not exist in America. I can see profit to the clubs or hotels of America if they were to father such a movement.

America Leads France

With all its fame for cuisine unequalled in the world, France itself cannot boast of the quantity of foods that offer themselves for the American table, and some foods available only in the most limited seasons in Europe are available to our larders all year or most of every year.

You club managers are sitting in the most favored corner of the world. Do not be content to follow some stereotyped menu which you found when you took charge. Look around—make the acquaintance of those fellows in the market who are ever offering something new—try something new yourself—perhaps it's not new at all but if it's new to your community—your club—you are the fair-haired boy.

In a talk I recently made before the Wine and Food society of Chicago I decried criticism of French cookery terms on our menus. I see no basis for such criticism. If we have a dearth of truly American dishes—and we have—I see no more reason for us to decry the French names on our menus than do the English, the Italians, the Dutch or the Germans. Examine the menus of any of these countries and you will find the French terms with which we are all familiar. French—and going further back, Latin—terms clutter our legal and medical phraseology and no one seems to mind that. Whenever I personally have found an antipathy to the use of French cooking terms I have also found a profound ignorance of ordinarily good cooking. Say what you will, the nations of the world owe a debt to French culinary traditions that no amount of carping criticism on the part of those not used to the better things of life will ever

(Continued on page 64)

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(Continued from page 21)

remove. French cooking terms are not so much French as they are international.

'Know thyself' is a famous admonition. For you club managers I would substitute 'know thy food.' To do this, know your kitchen. Does your chef call you as you go through the kitchen and ask you to sample this sauce or that, to see if it pleases you? When you get a complaint from a member are you satisfied that the kitchen or the member is wrong? For six seasons in one club noted for the excellence of its food the chef stood in front of the counter and every order went through his hands before he turned it over to the waiters. Then whether he knew it or not it passed under my personal inspection before it went into the dining room.

Each Serving Inspected

Many dishes which might have been served without a complaint were ordered back for re-arranging—for sauce forgotten, for garniture misplaced or omitted. Sometimes they were re-cooked or rejected for another portion of the same item. Perhaps you will say that this is impossible, but I say to you in the small club it is not only possible—it is imperative. And after all what is there so mysterious about the cooking end of the business that you with your intellect, which has made you manager, should not after some study be able to say "this is not right"—or at least "this is not the way I want it."

Do you, just prior to the serving of an important party, go out and count the portions to see whether or not you will be over or short when all are served? Times without number my counting of portions has brought to the chef's attention that one of his crew had been careless in the count—that not enough of this or that item had been prepared—and how red your face would be if you tried to serve say 180 baked lobsters to, say, 200 members. In establishments which are noted for fine catering, hot food must be served on hot dishes—cold on cold. Do you actually feel the dishes yourself to see whether the cooks are going to so dish the food? And count the dishes too. If you are going to serve 50, 100 or 500, have dishes for each menu requirement counted and heated or

cooled as the case may be—ahead of time—and don't take anyone's word for the count. Don't think because the title of manager is attached to your name that it lowers your standing to do these things. To a real manager—one who is ever learning as a real manager will—nothing about his profession is unimportant.

Learning What Members Want

Who is better qualified to know what the members want than you? Often your chef is a foreigner. Differences in environment have brought his family life and his recreation into different channels than that to which your members are accustomed. In many cases you managers are used to the same quality and kind of cooking as your members want and appreciate. Then why not instill your ideas into your cuisine? When you go on trips or vacations do you frequent the same class of resort or hotel your members do? If not, how can you go home and prepare them the same kind of food and serve it in the way to which they are accustomed? Too expensive you say? Well, you must pay something for education if you want to fit yourself for things better.

There is no better way to educate yourself now that you are on the firing line than to find out the scale of catering and service your members are used to. Get out and go to their resorts, their hotels, even if it sets you back a little for the education you thus get. If you can't travel, read. I recommend to every member the book of that grand old man of the culinary art, Escoffier. Most of my menus are made from his recipes. Victor Hirtzler, too, wrote a very fine cook book and every man catering in the better class establishment should digest this text book. Make your own menus. It's not hard when you get into it. Do your own food buying. Don't waste your time going to the markets—that is a relic of the old days. Pick out a market you can rely on and pay them a fair price. No money has ever been made buying bargains in food.

Establish the standards best fitted for your house and have a clear understanding with your markets as to that standard. My own creed expressed in no unmistakable terms to my employees is—"We pay for the best that is in the market. We expect to get that. You are at liberty and I expect that you will return at once to



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the purveyor any article not up to that standard." Working on this principle we have had very few returns of any kind to make, in fact my usual experience is that when I have ordered something that does not happen to be in the market at its best, my supplier will call me on the phone and tell me he would rather not ship such item that day.

For the small club's daily service and even for its banquets or parties use French service. In fact I can see little excuse for the Russian or plate service at any time unless it be in a grill room, bar or some similar quick service room where it is usual to have a chef or cook serve from a side station in view of the members. Nothing shows off your fine food, the skill of your culinary crew or will reflect greater credit on your management than the tasty arrangement of food in services for more than one person. Nothing gives the well trained kitchen greater scope to show training, skill and ingenuity than French service. The French people have an old and very true saying that literally translated means that the body has two stomachs, the one we

all are familiar with and the other, "the stomach of the eye."

Showmanship In Food

I do not recommend showmanship as being the essence of fine catering but showmanship helps out and this same showmanship can be expressed in many ways. Personally, I favor creating all possible show effects with food itself. In coloring foods use only natural food colors. They are much more pleasing to the eye and if the eye is pleased your task of pleasing the palate is already won. I do not like the use of paper cases in hot food service. If you must put peas or other vegetables or garnitures in a case to be served with hot foods, use croustades and make them in your own kitchen. Croustades can be bought of course, but when I broke into the business every kitchen had one or more sets of irons and made their own. The batter is inexpensive and the result is a satisfaction to yourself.

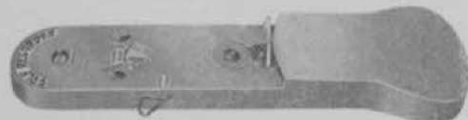
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favored few that has a club large enough to have volume similar to a hotel or downtown restaurant, and have a loss, you should be concerned. Given proper volume there is no excuse for loss. If, however, you are the average club manager having 200 to 300 members it will be hard indeed to show a profit on that department since club membership carries with it no responsibility to patronize that department except whenever it pleases the member to do so. If there is no such responsibility on the part of the individual member, he will come there when it pleases him and you find such an uncertainty of patronage that it is difficult for you to arrange your menus, your purchases and your labor to bring about that steady volume on which profit depends.

Expense Is Not a Loss

In the way of summary, keep the dining room up to the standard your board prescribes and by educating yourself to the problems of the most complex job in the world. Keep your dining room expense at a minimum. Note that I do not say dining

room loss. In the small club where dining operation cannot be otherwise than an expense insist that your board regard it no longer as a loss but an expense of operation of a department on a basis comparable with the operation of the golf course.

There is no club manager today worthy of the name who is not qualified to keep some form of food control himself. Mind you there are accounting firms who specialize in this and good ones. To those whose volume of business permit I cannot recommend too strongly the services of Horwath and Horwath, or Harris, Kerr, Forster. However, you yourself should be the man to first realize the importance of this form of cost accounting and in the smaller club you should institute and install a system. None is to old to learn the fundamentals of food control, which are simple enough for the average person to grasp in a very short time, and I know of no time that could better be spent than in the education I am advocating as a means to better fitting yourself for the position you now hold or hope to some day hold. I see many men holding jobs today who have achieved the managerial reins

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through other channels but I say to you if you want to remain in the most interesting trade in the world today, you will have to educate yourself in the food end. Just remember Webster's definition of food: "Nutritive material—for the maintenance of the vital processes."

Club Converts Basement Room Into Attractive Cocktail Lounge

AT a cost that would make rehabilitation an attractive idea at most any club the St. Charles (Ill.) CC converted a basement room into a bright and attractive cocktail lounge, installed modern steel tables and chairs, a lounge seat in the club bar-room, and added new steel furniture to both men and women's locker-rooms. The basement room has become very popular, winter and summer, for card parties and other fairly small social gatherings. A cheery fireplace, sound-deadening ceilings and walls, and convenient for speedy bar service, are among the features of the room.

A standout feature is a local product, Howell Chromsteel furniture, made by The



Modern steel furniture has transformed this basement section at St. Charles into one of the most popular clubhouse rooms

Howell Co., St. Charles, Ill. The beautiful steel furniture doesn't have the polished pipe-fittings look of so much of this sort of furniture and it stands lots of hard treatment without showing signs of wear. Comparable furniture setups to the one at St. Charles can be made for around \$500, Howell Co. officials say.

Many other clubs that have basement rooms now somewhat resembling the dark, damp spots used for solitary confinement of penitentiary prisoners can take a tip from the St. Charles job.

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