
The Allen Family

People

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Address by Mrs. Myrtle Allen at Launch of Ballymaloe Cookbook, 1977.

Myrtle Allen

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ADDRESS BY MRS. MYRTLE ALLEN AT LAUNCH OF BALLYMALOE COOKBOOK
IRISH FARM CENTRE, 2ND NOVEMBER, 1977.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

FIRST I WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU MOST SINCERELY FOR COMING ALONG ON WHAT MUST BE A VERY BIG AND VERY NERVE-RACKING DAY IN ANYONE'S LIFE, IT CERTAINLY IS IN MINE. INDEED THE PUBLICATION OF THE BALLYMALOE COOKBOOK HAS BEEN AN EXCITING EXPERIENCE SINCE IT FIRST BEGAN TO TAKE SHAPE TWO YEARS AGO. WE THEN CONSIDERED THE VARIOUS WAYS IN WHICH THIS BOOK MIGHT BE PRESENTED AND WE EVENTUALLY ARRIVED AT THE PRESENT FORMULA. FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO KNOW THERE WAS A DELAY I JUST WANT TO OFFER AN EXPLANATION AND TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE. THERE WERE PUBLISHING PROBLEMS THAT WE DON'T NEED TO GO IN TO, BUT I CAN TELL YOU THAT THE FULL COPYRIGHT WAS RESTORED TO ME LAST SATURDAY WEEK AND THE FIRST COPIES OF THE BOOK WERE SIGHTED TODAY AT 4PM. I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT I NOW FEEL MIGHTILY RELIEVED. I WOULD JUST LIKE TO MAKE A FEW OBSERVATIONS ON MY STANDPOINT AND VIEWPOINT AS A COOK.

I HAVE LARGELY WORKED IN ISOLATION, COOKING MY HUSBANDS PRODUCTS WITH A COOKERY BOOK ON THE TABLE IN FRONT OF ME, GUESTS PROBABLY ARRIVING SHORTLY, AND IN THE EARLY YEARS NO POSSIBILITY OF GOING OUT TO BUY ANYTHING. THAT WAS DURING THE WAR AND THERE WAS NO CAR, NO PETROL AND PROBABLY NEXT TO NOTHING IN THE SHOPS ANYWAY. ON THE OTHER HAND I HAD THE FINEST PRODUCTS IN EUROPE ON MY TABLE AND SOME OF THE BEST WRITERS OF THE TIME TO GIVE ME COUNSEL. BUT I SOMETIMES FOUND THEM HARD TO FOLLOW - SO I DEVELOPED MY VERSION OF THEIR COOKING.

LATER I USED THIS EXPERIENCE TO WRITE FOR THE FARMERS JOURNAL AND, LATER AGAIN, GATHERING IN MANY TIPS AND ADDITIONS ALL THE TIME, I USED THESE EXPERIENCES TO START A RESTAURANT.

AS A RESULT THIS BOOK TELLS PEOPLE HOW TO COOK THE WAY WE COOK IN BALLYMALOE. FOR INSTANCE, IF WE MAKE A SAUCE WE DO NOT MELT BUTTER, STIR IN FLOUR, COOK IT AND BLEND IN THE LIQUID. WE ALWAYS KEEP THE BUTTER AND FLOUR MIXTURE READY COOKED AND MIXED FOR CRUMBLING INTO BOILING LIQUID. WE MEASURE WITH BREAKFAST CUPS: NEARLY ALL ORDINARY DRINKING CUPS HOLD JUST OVER OR JUST UNDER 8 FLUID OUNCES - FIVE OF THEM MAKE A QUART, SO IF YOU WANT TO DO A LARGE QUANTITY, MEASURE IN A QUART AND YOU AUTOMATICALLY INCREASE YOUR QUANTITIES BY 5. IF WE NEED A FATLESS LIQUID QUICKLY WE DON'T START SKIMMING IT WITH A SPOON OR SET IT TO COOL TO SOLIDIFY THE FAT, WE SIMPLY POUR IT INTO A SKIMMING BOWL AND POUR IT OUT AGAIN THE WAY WE WANT IT FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE BOWL. THESE BOWLS ARE MADE FOR US IN DUBLIN, SO I DO NOT THINK ANY OF THESE METHODS WILL PROVE AN OBSTACLE TO READERS.

WITH REGARD TO THE RECIPES, MOST OF THEM ARE MY OWN FORMULAS FOR NOT VERY STRANGE DISHES. SOME, AS FAR AS I KNOW ARE GENUINELY ORIGINAL, BUT, AS YOU ALL KNOW, IT IS HARD TO DO ANYTHING REALLY ORIGINAL IN FOOD. LOOK IT UP IN LAROUSSE AND YOU WILL FIND A NAME FOR IT. THEY DO NOT SPECIFICALLY MENTION MY BASIC SOUP FORMULA WHICH SEEMS TO WORK VERY WELL IN ALL THE EXPERIMENTS WE HAVE CARRIED OUT. NEITHER DID THEY TELL ME HOW TO MAKE AN ICE BOWL, BUT I DON'T THINK I AM THE FIRST PERSON TO MAKE ONE. HOWEVER, I'M NOT SURE.

THE OTHER AREA OF IMPORTANCE AFTER THE METHODS, EQUIPMENT AND RECIPES, IS OF COURSE THE INGREDIENTS. WE TRY TO ALWAYS USE VERY FRESH FISH. THIS IS MUCH MORE WIDELY AVAILABLE IN IRELAND THAN IT USED TO BE. I WOULD, HOWEVER, ASK YOU AS LEADERS OF THOUGHT IN THE FIELD OF FOODSTUFFS, TO BE AWARE THAT THE SUPPLIES OF FISH ARE BEING VERY SERIOUSLY DAMAGED BY OVER-FISHING. WE HAVE SIMPLY BECOME A LOT MORE CLEVER THEN THE FISH AND WE HAVE NOT ACQUIRED THE MATURITY TO CONSERVE OUR STOCKS.

I ALSO DEPEND ON SMALL SUPPLIERS FOR CERTAIN HIGH QUALITY FOODSTUFFS SUCH AS FARM RAISED DUCKS AND FREE RANGE EGGS. I HOPE THAT YOU WILL USE YOUR INFLUENCE TO KEEP SMALL ENTERPRISES OF THIS SORT ALIVE AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO CHEAP MASS PRODUCED FOODSTUFFS, WHICH OF COURSE HAVE THEIR PLACE, BUT ALSO ARE BETTER ABLE TO LOOK AFTER THEIR OWN INTERESTS.

FINALLY I WOULD LIKE TO SAY THAT I AM PLEASED TO MEET YOU IN THIS PARTICULAR SETTING AND I WILL INVITE YOU AT A LATER STAGE TO ACCEPT NOT ONLY THE COOKBOOK OF BALLYMALOE BUT THE COOKING OF THE SAME ESTABLISHMENT TRANSPORTED TO AND TRANSPLANTED IN THE IRISH FARM CENTRE.