

# To Make Starch

## Ingredients

Allow 1/2 pint of cold water and 1 quart of boiling water to every 2 tablespoonfuls of starch.

## Method

Put the starch into a tolerably large basin; pour over it the cold water, and stir the mixture well with a wooden spoon until it is perfectly free from lumps, and quite smooth. Then take the basin to the fire, and whilst the water is actually boiling in the kettle or boiler, pour it over the starch, stirring it the whole time. If made properly in this manner, the starch will require no further boiling; but should the water not be boiling when added to the starch, it will not thicken, and must be put into a clean saucepan, and stirred over the fire until it boils. Take it off the fire, strain it into a clean basin, cover it up to prevent a skin forming on the top, and, when sufficiently cool that the hand may be borne in it, starch the things. Many persons, to give a shiny and smooth appearance to the linen when ironed, stir round two or three times in the starch a piece of wax candle, which also prevents the iron from sticking. 2392. When the "things to be starched" are washed, dried, and taken off the lines, they should be dipped into the hot starch made as directed, squeezed out of it, and then just dipped into cold water, and immediately squeezed dry. If fine things be wrung, or roughly used, they are very liable to tear; so too much care cannot be exercised in this respect. If the article is lace, clap it between the hands a few times, which will assist to clear it; then have ready laid out on the table a large clean towel or cloth; shake out the starched things, lay them on the cloth, and roll it up tightly, and let it remain for three or four, when the things will be ready to iron. 2393. To be able to iron properly requires much practice and experience. Strict cleanliness with all the ironing utensils must be observed, as, if this is not the case, not the most expert ironer will be able to make her things look clear and free from smears, &c. After wiping down her ironing table, the laundry-maid should place a coarse cloth on it, and over that the ironing-blanket, with her stand and iron-rubber; and having ascertained that her irons are quite clean and of the right heat, she proceeds with her work. 2394. It is a good plan to try the heat of the iron on a coarse cloth or apron before ironing anything fine: there is then no danger of scorching. For ironing fine things, such as collars, cuffs, muslins, and laces, there is nothing so clean and nice to use as the box-iron; the bottom being bright, and never placed near the fire, it is always perfectly clean; it should, however, be kept in a dry place, for fear of its rusting. Gauffering-tongs or irons must be placed in a clear fire for a minute, then withdrawn, wiped with a coarse rubber, and the heat of them tried on a piece of paper, as, unless great care is taken, these will very soon scorch. 2395. The skirts of muslin dresses should be ironed on a skirt-board covered with flannel, and the fronts of shirts on a smaller board, also covered with flannel; this board being placed between the back and front. 2396. After things are mangled, they should also be ironed in the folds and gathers; dinner-napkins smoothed over, as also table-cloths, pillow-cases, and sometimes sheets. The bands of flannel petticoats, and shoulder-straps to flannel waistcoats, must also undergo the same process.

UPPER AND UNDER NURSEMAIDS. 2397. The nursery is of great importance in every family, and in families of distinction, where there are several young children, it is an establishment kept apart from the rest of the family, under the charge of an upper nurse, assisted by under nursery-maids proportioned to the work to be done. The responsible duties of upper nursemaid commence with the weaning of the child: it must now be separated from the mother or wet-nurse, at least for a time, and the cares of the nursemaid, which have hitherto been only occasionally put in requisition, are now to be entirely devoted to the infant. She washes, dresses, and feeds it; walks out with it, and regulates all its little wants; and, even at this early age, many good qualities are required to do so in a satisfactory manner. Patience and good temper are indispensable

qualities; truthfulness, purity of manners, minute cleanliness, and docility and obedience, almost equally so. She ought also to be acquainted with the art of ironing and trimming little caps, and be handy with her needle.

2398. There is a considerable art in carrying an infant comfortably for itself and for the nursemaid. If she carry it always seated upright on her arm, and presses it too closely against her chest, the stomach of the child is apt to get compressed, and the back fatigued. For her own comfort, a good nurse will frequently vary this position, by changing from one arm to the other, and sometimes by laying it across both, raising the head a little. When teaching it to walk, and guiding it by the hand, she should change the hand from time to time, so as to avoid raising one shoulder higher than the other. This is the only way in which a child should be taught to walk; leading-strings and other foolish inventions, which force an infant to make efforts, with its shoulders and head forward, before it knows how to use its limbs, will only render it feeble, and retard its progress.

2399. Most children have some bad habit, of which they must be broken; but this is never accomplished by harshness without developing worse evils: kindness, perseverance, and patience in the nurse, are here of the utmost importance. When finger-sucking is one of these habits, the fingers are sometimes rubbed with bitter aloes, or some equally disagreeable substance. Others have dirty habits, which are only to be changed by patience, perseverance, and, above all, by regularity in the nurse. She should never be permitted to inflict punishment on these occasions, or, indeed, on any occasion. But, if punishment is to be avoided, it is still more necessary that all kinds of indulgences and flattery be equally forbidden. Yielding to all the whims of a child,--picking up its toys when thrown away in mere wantonness, would be intolerable. A child should never be led to think others inferior to it, to beat a dog, or even the stone against which it falls, as some children are taught to do by silly nurses. Neither should the nurse affect or show alarm at any of the little accidents which must inevitably happen: if it falls, treat it as a trifle; otherwise she encourages a spirit of cowardice and timidity. But she will take care that such accidents are not of frequent occurrence, or the result of neglect.

2400. The nurse should keep the child as clean as possible, and particularly she should train it to habits of cleanliness, so that it should feel uncomfortable when otherwise; watching especially that it does not soil itself in eating. At the same time, vanity in its personal appearance is not to be encouraged by over-care in this respect, or by too tight lacing or buttoning of dresses, nor a small foot cultivated by the use of tight shoes.

2401. Nursemaids would do well to repeat to the parents faithfully and truly the defects they observe in the dispositions of very young children. If properly checked in time, evil propensities may be eradicated; but this should not extend to anything but serious defects; otherwise, the intuitive perceptions which all children possess will construe the act into "spying" and "informing," which should never be resorted to in the case of children, nor, indeed, in any case.

2402. Such are the cares which devolve upon the nursemaid, and it is her duty to fulfil them personally. In large establishments she will have assistants proportioned to the number of children of which she has the care. The under nursemaid lights the fires, sweeps, scours, and dusts the rooms, and makes the beds; empties slops, and carries up water; brings up and removes the nursery meals; washes and dresses all the children, except the infant, and assists in mending. Where there is a nursery girl to assist, she does the rougher part of the cleaning; and all take their meals in the nursery together, after the children of the family have done.

2403. In smaller families, where there is only one nursemaid kept, she is assisted by the housemaid, or servant-of-all-work, who will do the rougher part of the work, and carry up the nursery meals. In such circumstances she will be more immediately under the eye of her mistress, who will probably relieve her from some of the cares of the infant. In higher families, the upper nurse is usually permitted to sup or dine occasionally at the housekeeper's table by way of relaxation, when the children are all well, and her subordinates trustworthy.

2404. Where the nurse has the entire charge of the nursery, and the mother is too much occupied to do more than pay a daily visit to it, it is desirable that she be a person of observation, and

possess some acquaintance with the diseases incident to childhood, as also with such simple remedies as may be useful before a medical attendant can be procured, or where such attendance is not considered necessary. All these little ailments are preceded by symptoms so minute as to be only perceptible to close observation; such as twitching of the brows, restless sleep, grinding the gums, and, in some inflammatory diseases, even to the child abstaining from crying, from fear of the increased pain produced by the movement. Dentition, or cutting the teeth, is attended with many of these symptoms. Measles, thrush, scarlatina, croup, hooping-cough, and other childish complaints, are all preceded by well-known symptoms, which may be alleviated and render

*Source: Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management (1861)*

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