

♦ Food Is Fun ♦

Especially At The McKeldins

The French — internationally known for their cuisine — have a notion that we Americans do not know how to enjoy our food: that we do not regard a good meal as a work of art. Sometimes, however, 50,000 Franchmen CAN be wrong — especially when they haven't had the fun of dining with Governor and Mrs. Theodore R. McKeldin in Maryland's Government House.

Yes, "fun" is the right word. Food is fun — at the home of the Governor and the First Lady of Maryland. Of course, Maryland has been famous for its fine food since the 17th century when the pioneer settlers, having solved their immediate problems and overcome their difficulties, proceeded to make Annapolis the leading Colony. Royal governors were the order of the day then, and many were the sumptuous feasts built around the food peculiar to the "Province." But — fun? — Well, that's the word one associates with the Governor's mansion today rather than with the protocol and formality of royal entourages.

When Governor and Mrs. McKeldin came to Annapolis, they brought warmth of welcome, a comfortable "homey" atmosphere, and a Maryland dinner that definitely is a work of art.

Dining with McKeldins

Suppose you are dining with the McKeldins tonight. Here's the kind of evening you will spend. You will be greeted — cordially but informally — by a most gracious hostess, and a genial host calculated to put you immediately at ease with his natural, friendly manner and sparkling conversation. Then in the living room, you will be handed a glass of ice-cold tomato juice or fruit juice (the McKeldins do not serve alcoholic beverages). After you have chatted awhile with your host and hostess and their other guests, dinner will be served.

Have you ever tasted Beef Marrow Soup — with stacks of cornbread on the side? If you haven't, it would be no use attempting to describe it; if you have, you have never forgotten it. In either case, curb your appetite, for there's a great deal to follow. After the soup, you will have Terrapin Stew — two or three servings if you like, then Stuffed Lobster, or some peculiarly Maryland dish, with baked spiced glazed tomatoes,



MRS. MCKELDIN enjoys a bit of the cooking which has made the Government House dinners famous. (Photo. by Stanley Stearns)

green vegetables, and Maryland Beaten Biscuits pounded in the First Lady's own kitchen. Then will follow sliced sugar-cured Maryland ham, and vegetable salad with roquefort dressing; and, finally, delicious ice cream in various intriguing shapes: tiny baskets of flowers or miniature fruits, together with any amount of assorted small cakes — baked Maryland style.

Coffee and Stories

As you sip your after-dinner coffee back in the living room, we guarantee you will not only feel at peace with the world, but will be keenly interested in the stories of old Maryland that are almost bound to creep into the conversation — particularly those surrounding the food you have just eaten. Here are two, just to whet your appetite: for stories, of course — not more food!

Did you know that terrapin was once so plentiful in Maryland that the Colonists fed their slaves almost exclusively on it? The slaves became so unutterably weary of it that a law was passed making it illegal for masters to give their slaves terrapin more than once or twice a week.

If, however, having just eaten terrapin stew, you cannot find it in your heart to pity those slaves bear in mind that even terrapin would become monotonous if it formed your main diet — Sunday through Saturday! Since the time of the slaves' unhappy predicament, there has been an acute terrapin shortage so that many people have never even tasted it. Now, however, it is coming into its own again and is considered a real delicacy.

The Dragon Shrimp

The second story, although it is not one of old Maryland, does concern the special stuffed lobster typical of Mrs. McKeldin's excellent table. On one occasion when this happened to be on the menu the Governor was entertaining a Chinese dignitary. "Ah!" exclaimed the distinguished visitor as the main dish arrived, "here comes the dragon shrimp!" Terrapin was a new dish to the guest but in China lobster are known as dragon shrimp.

This is Maryland. This is the Capital City. This is the gubernatorial mansion, where the Governor and the First Lady are friendly "homey" people — and food is fun.