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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Release Monday, October 31, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "POISON -- CAUTION!" Items of interest to consumers, from the Federal Food and Drug Administration, Washington, D. C.

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All aboard, homemakers, for a quick swing around the country to collect news items from various Stations of the Federal Food and Drug Administration.

First, Atlanta. This Station reports the death of two people and the serious illness of two others in Miami, Florida, who ate food contaminated with rat poison--thallium acetate -- kept in a salt shaker. The salt shaker was accidentally left in the kitchen and used by members of the family.

From Kansas City station comes the story of a father and two sons at Pittsburgh, Kansas, who were made dangerously ill by eating pancakes in which arsenate of lead was an ingredient. Some one had mistaken an arsenate of lead spray compound, used on potato vines, for baking powder.

While these items were coming in from Atlanta and Kansas City, our Washington correspondent states that the newspapers were full of another poisoning case. Hagerstown, Maryland, reported the death of one person and the serious illness of 78 others who ate scrapple contaminated with arsenic. Another victim was in very serious condition, and several others were not yet out of danger.

Local police believed they had discovered the source of the poison when they learned that four pounds of an insecticide, containing arsenic, was bought in Hagerstown recently by the man in whose abbatoir the scrapple was prepared. The insecticide was used to kill potato bugs in a patch a short distance from the abbatoir. Investigators suggested that the insecticide might have been used by mistake as an ingredient of the scrapple. The poisoned batch included 284 pounds. Local health officers reported that all of it had been collected and destroyed.

Since the Hagerstown case did not involve a food sold in interstate commerce, Federal authorities were not called upon to take any legal action although an inspector of the Food and Drug Administration assisted in the investigation of the outbreak.

Now let me stop right here to remind any listener who is keeping poison in a salt shaker, or baking powder can, or anywhere else in the kitchen or pantry, or meat plant -- to get that poison removed to a safe place immediately. Poison in a kitchen is just about as safe as a loaded gun. So don't take a chance, unless you want to be included in our correspondent's "News Notes" some day when Federal or local authorities are called in to investigate a food poisoning case in your own neighborhood -- with you or somebody else in your family as the victim.

While the careless ones are removing the rat poison and the insecticides from the kitchen shelf, we'll continue our swing around the country. Next stop, New York Station. Here we shall learn about the tribulations of a Federal inspector who attempted, as a matter of routine work, to investigate a horseradish factory.

Now that shouldn't be difficult, and ordinarily it isn't. However, this particular factory was guarded by two very large, fierce, police dogs, chained across the entrance.

On his first trip, the Federal inspector failed to get inside, so the next time he enlisted the help of the New York City Health Department, and a City inspector went along.

However, the canine guards did their duty as they saw it -- and the City and Federal inspectors did not get inside the factory. Their next step was to call the nearest police station. The dogs were finally locked up, and the officers got inside the plant. They found sanitary conditions very bad, and they also found that the so-called "horseradish" consisted mostly of turnips.

Now let's go down to New Orleans. This Station reports the destruction of 1,700 boxes of unsold infested candy in this territory during August. City, county, and State officials worked closely with Federal inspectors, to see that all unwholesome candy was destroyed.

And that's all for today.

We're pretty sure to have a safe and wholesome supply of food, with city, county, State, and Federal officials continually on the job of inspecting -- whether it's candy, or horseradish, or any other food product.

There's one thing they cannot do, however -- they cannot come into our kitchens and warn us to keep poisons out of salt shakers and baking powder cans. That's up to us.

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