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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, May 24, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS." Information from the Office of Experiment Stations, United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Listeners come and listeners go but questions go on forever. That's your Aunt Sammy's Tuesday theme song. Tuesday, you know, is the day when those eternal questions come out of the mailbag for answer.

Today the first question comes from a listener who is having trouble making bread. She is an experienced bread-maker but just lately she has had bad luck. Her bread is all heavy, for one thing. But there--let me read you her letter. She writes: "Dear Aunt Sammy: Perhaps you can give me some help in bread making. I hope so because none of my cookbooks do me any good. You see, I live on an isolated farm so far from town that I have to make bread with dry yeast. All the recipes I have call for compressed yeast. Lately my bread has been poor and heavy. I don't know whether the trouble is with the yeast or with the way I mix the dough."

Answer: Perhaps you let your yeast get too old. Even dry yeast won't keep for months with good results. That is what they found out at the Wyoming Experiment Station lately in the course of a study of bread making with dried yeast cakes. The Wyoming scientists believe that the poor quality of much of the bread baked in rural homes is due to using dry yeast that is too old. Another thing--dry yeast is more or less dormant. Or you might say that the little yeast plants are half asleep. To wake them up and make them active, you must let them stand for 14 or 16 hours either in a ferment or a starch of potato flour and water, or in a sponge of flour, milk, and a little salt before mixing into dough. The Wyoming people found a temperature of from 80 to 85 degrees Fahrenheit satisfactory for the fermentation of the dough. They let the dough rise to 3 times its size in the first period, and 2 and a half times its size in the second and third periods.

By the way, I am sending this listener the Department of Agriculture baking bulletin, which gives further information about yeast and bread making. This bulletin is called, "Homemade Bread, Cake, and Pastry." It is Farmers' Bulletin 1775. You can have it by writing to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

So much for bread. Now a question about meat--about ham and bacon. "Please tell me," reads another letter--"please tell me the best way to keep ham and bacon. Should I put these meats in the refrigerator? Do they keep best wrapped in paper or uncovered?"

5/24/38

For the answer to that question, I refer you to Louise Peet of the Iowa State Experiment Station who recently studied keeping meat in the household refrigerator. (Perhaps you remember my telling you some of the things she found out in one of our chats last week.)

Here's what she learned about ham. She found that hams kept in a refrigerator at 45 degrees or below had a better odor and taste than those stored in a refrigerator at above 45 degrees. Above 45 mold formed on the surface of the ham. Although the mold could be wiped off and at first did not seem to affect the taste, after about 3 weeks it gave the cooked ham a slightly musty undesirable flavor. Hams, not wrapped in paper or covered, gradually collected salt on the surface. To get rid of this excess salt, it was necessary to parboil the slices before cooking them. Much the same thing happened to hams stored at room temperature. Those wrapped in paper became moldy and those left uncovered became dry and salty. Also the fat disintegrated slightly and drops of oil appeared on the surface. Mrs. Peet says: "A moist atmosphere caused mold to form on cured meat; a dry atmosphere caused a deposit of curing salts on the surface."

So if you keep a slice of ham for from 7 to 10 days, keep it wrapped in paraffin paper or covered and keep it at a temperature of 45 degrees or below. But if you keep it longer than a week or 10 days, or if you keep it warmer than 45 degrees, leave it unwrapped and remove the excess salt by parboiling.

As for keeping bacon, you don't have to worry much if you keep it only a couple of weeks. Sliced bacon keeps well in a refrigerator for two weeks in its original paraffin wrapping, or in parchment paper, or in a glass container. But if you want to keep it longer than 2 weeks, keep it in a glass dish at a temperature below 45, and in its own waxed-paper-wrapping if the temperature is above 45.

What about keeping bacon out of the refrigerator--perhaps on the pantry shelf, as some families do? In that case, Mrs. Peet found that it keeps best wrapped in parchment paper. But even so, the fat becomes soft and a good deal of oil seeps onto the wrapping, and mold forms on the surface. Also the bacon gradually takes on a strong, smoky odor.

Now here's a question about soy beans. "Will soybeans can successfully?" asks a housewife who is making up her canning budget for the season. She also asks whether soybeans need to be canned under pressure.

The answer to both those questions is: Yes. The Indiana Experiment Station reports that farm families in that State have been using their home-canned soybeans for some years--using and enjoying them. In Indiana they have been canning both green and dry soybeans. They find that soybeans need longer processing in the pressure cooker than snapbeans. Then, down in Alabama at the State Experiment Station they have found that the yellow and green seeded light-colored soybeans are much more attractive when canned than the dark-colored varieties.

By the way, if you want directions for canning soybeans, you will find them in the Department of Agriculture home canning bulletin. Write to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., for Farmers' Bulletin 1762, "Home Canning of Fruits, Vegetables, and Meats." The canning bulletin is free as long as the free supply holds out.

That's all the questions for today. More coming next Tuesday.

