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U. S. Department of Agriculture

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, June 21, 1933

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SUBJECT: "Summer Fruits for Salads." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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If your family is fond of salads, this is the time of year to indulge in them. Of course, salads are valuable additions to the menu at any time of year. They add color and flavor to the meal, they waken appetites, they provide minerals and vitamins generously, and they're a convenient and easy way to serve fruits and vegetables. "A salad a day" is an even better health motto than the old saying about an apple a day. But summer, the growing season, is the time when you can have salads in great variety at lowest cost. That's a point worth consideration by anyone planning economy meals. Gardens and orchards and even fields and byways will provide the makings for the salad. Fruits and vegetables are plentiful and inexpensive and at their very best right out of the garden. Another reason for serving salads at this time of year is the weather. Haven't you noticed that cold, colorful, crisp foods go to the spot on hot days? If you haven't here's an experiment worth trying. Some noontime when the sun is beating down and the thermometer is going up, serve your family a lunch of steaming vegetable stew. The next hot day, try a good-looking, salad made of the same kind of vegetables used in the stew but served ice cold on crisp green lettuce. My guess is that your family will cast a unanimous vote in favor of the salad.

Salads are a good choice for summer entertaining too. Informal company meals like Sunday night picnic suppers are pleasant ways of entertaining in warm weather. These are occasions to feature salads. A salad may even be the main dish at such meal.

So much for salads in general. Now, how would you like a few particulars about salads made from summer fruits? Fruit salad is one of the most adaptable of dishes. You can use it at almost any place on the menu. It fits in wherever you need something fresh and tart and slightly sweet, wherever you need a fruit flavor. The Californians set the style of serving a salad first at a meal. So if you like you can start your dinner with a fruit salad instead of a fruit cup or a fruit juice appetizer. Or, you can serve fruit salad along with the main course. It's especially good with cold sliced meat. Or you can serve fruit salad as a separate course at the conventional salad time.. Finally, you can serve it for dessert with whipped cream dressing. The salads made of fruits stuffed with soft white cheese are hearty enough to do as the main dish at a picnic supper or lunch. Lots of possibilities, you see.

Now some pointers about successful salads. Of all dishes, salad probably needs your artistic eye and your loving care the most. Its success depends so much on its looks as well as its taste. Nobody enjoys a wet, mushy salad. Nobody enjoys a salad with limp or wilted lettuce. Nobody enjoys a warm salad or one that

is carelessly mixed and served. Salads need to be dainty, refreshing, cold, crisp, seasoned enough but never having too much dressing. So be sure your lettuce or other salad greens are absolutely clean and very crisp. Be sure to drain the juice from the fruit, so it won't dilute the dressing and make the salad watery. Have all the ingredients cold. Keep them in the refrigerator until the last minute and mix them just before serving. Lettuce will wilt and fruit may discolor and become unattractive, if it stands long in dressing. Mix the ingredients carefully so they won't mash or break. And serve the salad with care so the bowlful or each separate plate looks perfect.

What fruits make the best salads? That depends on the fruits that are in season in your garden or are low in cost at the market. It also depends on the flavor and the color scheme you prefer. Contrast in color makes the fruit salad attractive. For example, bright colored fruits like strawberries or cherries combine well with paler fruits like pineapple, pears or bananas. Another point, firm fruits hold their shape better than those that are soft and easily crushed.

A salad to serve at the beginning of a meal should be light, simple and refreshing looking. Choose fruits that are tart in flavor. Avoid a rich dressing like mayonnaise. If you use any dressing, use a simple fruit juice mixture, and use small servings. For early summer, a tempting first-course salad is a combination of fresh pineapple, bananas, oranges and strawberries with sprigs of fresh mint for the greens. Sections of citrus fruit make delicious salad to accompany the main course of a meal because of their tart flavor. Greens may be lettuce, watercress or chicory. You may like to serve a French salad bowl--the greens and the fruit sections all mixed together in a bowl and dressed with French dressing. Cherries and firm white seedless grapes are especially delicious salad fruits. So are halves of sweet, firm but ripe peaches or Bartlett pears. If you want a main-dish salad, fruits stuffed with white, soft, cream cheese and nuts and served with mayonnaise make a hearty enough mixture. Stuffed white sweet cherries are especially good. As for dessert, use a combination of fruits, either raw, cooked or canned. You can feature the sweeter fruits here and use whipped cream for dressing. Another excellent dessert salad is fruits molded gelatin or a frozen fruit mixture.

Now about the dressing for a fruit salad. Save every bit of juice that you drain from the fruit and use it in your dressing. This adds to the fruit flavor of your salad. In French dressing you can use orange juice or lemon juice or grapefruit juice instead of vinegar. Or use the spiced vinegar left from pickles or pickled fruit. And now here's a recipe for Another inexpensive dressing which uses up the left-over fruit juices. Five ingredients:

- 1 cup of mixed fruit juices--whatever you have on hand.
 - 1 and 1/2 tablespoon of cornstarch.
 - 2 teaspoons of sugar
 - 1/2 teaspoon of salt, and
 - 1 tablespoon of lemon juice
- Once more. (Repeat).

Mix the cornstarch, sugar and salt with a little cold fruit juice. Heat the rest of the fruit juice, add this paste and stir until thickened. Then cook in the double boiler ten minutes. When cool add the lemon juice to taste. There's a delicious and inexpensive fruit salad dressing, just right for summer salads.

Now for our menu.--a salad lunch or supper, whichever you prefer. Garden fruit salad with fruit juice dressing; Hot toasted cheese sandwiches; Coffee; and tiny cup cakes with caramel frosting.

Tomorrow: "Home Economics at a Century of Progress."

