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U. S. Department of Agriculture

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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, January 8, 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "FOOD RESEARCH IN 1936." Information from the Market Basket, Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Have you ever speculated, as you filled your market basket with all sorts of foods at the local store, on the scientists who stand back of the producers and distributors of those foods? They are the people who are continually working behind the scene for better kinds of foodstuffs, handled with less waste, and kept in better condition. And don't forget the nutritionists who point out the relation between good diet and physical well-being, and advise what to put into the market basket every week.

That reminds me of a recent bulletin of the Bureau of Home Economics, "Diets to Fit the Family Income." I've mentioned it several times. If you have not yet sent for a copy, I hope you will, for you will find it a guide to the best food values for the money you have to spend.

The thought I am following for today's talk is that the Bureau of Home Economics and other bureaus of the U. S. Department of Agriculture have made a number of studies during 1936, as well as in preceding years, bearing directly on the contents of your market basket. Take oranges and tomato juice, for example. The bureau's vitamin studies have shown that both these foods are important for vitamin C. Oranges, however, are two or three times richer in this necessary element than canned tomato juice. So you buy accordingly.

And when you choose your vegetables, do you judge them by wastiness as well as by appearance and food value? One study made by the bureau shows that onions, tomatoes, young carrots, and snap beans lose less than 10 per cent as waste in preparation for cooking. Potatoes, sweetpotatoes, turnips, cabbage, cauliflower, eggplant, broccoli, and squash have less than 20 per cent waste. Green corn on the cob, with 75 per cent waste, is the greatest loser, but vegetables in pods, kale and spinach, all lose about half as waste in preparation.

The bureau has tested and tasted the cooking qualities of different varieties of potatoes, of green soybeans, of fats for deep-fat frying, and of various other foodstuffs. The meat specialist would tell you, as one of many practical points developed in the cooperative meat studies, that you should cook that rib roast of beef in your basket by a constant moderate temperature, or by the quick-sear, slow-finish method, if you wish to hold the juice in and to avoid excessive shrinkage.

Practically every vegetable and fruit in your basket has at some time concerned the plant scientists of the department. Just at present the wheat that goes into your bag of flour is being given especial attention. You have bought

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peas and fresh tomatoes in mid-winter because plant breeders have found out which varieties can be grown successfully to provide a year around supply. Again, when scientists produce a disease-resistant strain of lettuce that can be grown during the winter in the mild climate of California or Arizona, and shipped to northern and eastern markets, they help to put "protective" salad greens in our cold-weather market baskets.

Perhaps you have bought some strawberries, although it's only December. The Bureau of Plant Industry has been particularly interested in recent years in breeding strawberry varieties of better quality for eating, for canning, or preserving. Seven such varieties have been introduced in the past year. They are now being grown commercially in sufficient quantity so that some of them will find their way to your spring market basket.

Notice the carton of "Government Graded Eggs" in your basket, the "U. S. Prime" stamped on your roast of beef; the "Grade B" on your canned peaches; the "92 score" of your pound of butter. These and numerous other grade markings mean that the articles have been graded by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, to inform the consumer of the quality.

Let's look at the roast of beef again. In addition to the quality grade mark, there is a little round purple stamp on it that says, "U. S. Inspected and Passed." This means that inspectors from the Bureau of Animal Industry say to it that your cut came from a healthy animal. The meat inspection work has been going on for years, but the report for this year is that there have been far fewer animals than usual condemned for bovine tuberculosis. Meat studies of the bureau eventually affect your market basket, too.

Scientists of the Bureau of Dairy Industry perfected the method of making that piece of American Cheddar cheese you have bought. During 1936 they also worked on domestic Swiss cheese and a new, mild, soft cheese called Bel Paese. (Pronounced Pi-a-sy)

Chemists of the department, engaged in food research, are the ones who anticipate the commercial developments that bring new products to the grocer's shelves. Canned grapefruit juice and canned orange juice have been greatly improved in flavor by scientists of the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils. Many other citurs by-products, such as marmalade, confections, and beverages, have been tested as uses for fruit that is unprofitable to market. This bureau is also carrying on extensive studies with frozen-pack fruits and vegetables. These have as their objective methods of storing food products when they are abundant, and keeping them in good condition for use when there's a scarcity.

The meat inspectors are not the only regulatory officers who have something to say about the good condition and quality of what goes into your market basket. Every packaged food you choose doubtless bears a statement on it giving "net weight of contents." Every label statement describing the contents must be in truthful terms, or sooner or later the manufacturer of the product will run afoul of the Food and Drug laws.

So, among the hundreds of food materials and manufactured foods that go into your market basket, there are many that are better because of research carried on during the year just ended.

