

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

JUL 6 1931
U. S. Department of Agriculture

8-16-2
1.9
u 3.HH
Housekeepers' Chat

Monday, May 25, 1931

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Food Fears." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics,
U. S. D. A.

"Where have you been, all dressed up in that perky green Sunday-go-to-meeting dress?" I heard Uncle Ebenezer's voice inquiring. Uncle Ebenezer was at that moment out in the front yard putting up my window boxes--a job he's been promising to do for over six weeks.

"To a luncheon, Uncle Ebenezer."

That was the voice of the little bride who lives across the street.

"Well, why don't you come over and tell your neighbors all about it?"

By the time I reached the front door, Uncle Ebenezer had laid down his hammer and quite forgotten the window boxes. He was carefully putting a cushion on the porch steps for the bride to sit on. Alas for window boxes when young ladies with green dresses come by. Tomorrow I'll have to start agitating that job all over again and no telling when I'll get my petunias in.

That reminds me that one of these days we must have a chat about window boxes and what to grow in them. If the menfolks in your family are as--well, let's say deliberate about odd jobs as some in my household, you and I will be getting our boxes started about the same time.

"Where was the luncheon party?" Uncle Ebenezer asked.

"At Ida Frame's. She was giving it for her guest from San Francisco. Oh, dear. Poor Ida." I'm glad I wasn't the hostess at that party."

"What happened?"

"Speaking of embarrassing moments, Aunt Sammy, that luncheon was the most embarrassing affair I ever attended."

"Bless us," said Uncle Ebenezer. "What on earth was the trouble?"

"The guests were the trouble, if you ask me. Ida made the mistake of inviting the Bates sisters and if ever there were two women filled with food food fears and food prejudices and odd notions about diet, those two are the ones. They are perfect scare-cats about what they eat, and they haven't an ounce of real knowledge about nutrition. They don't dare eat this and won't touch that. And they both look undernourished and anemic. I'm afraid

[Faint, illegible handwriting at the top of the page, possibly a header or title area.]



Mrs. Bates didn't bring up her daughters to eat what was set before them and be thankful. If they dry up and blow away some day for lack of nourishment, it will serve them right."

"Hum. Rather strong and serious opinions this young lady in green has," said Uncle Ebenezer.

"I feel more than serious after seeing the way Betty and Bertha spoiled a perfectly good luncheon party. You know that Ida can't entertain very much. But when she does give a party, she tries to have it perfect. Everything was set for a perfect luncheon. Her house looked charming, filled with bowls of spring flowers. Her table was lovely, set with her great-grandmother's beautiful old china and silver. Her food was cooked to perfection and delicious. Everything should have gone off beautifully. But the trouble began when the first plate was set down in front of Bertha Bates. Scalloped crab-meat, buttered new peas, hot crusty rolls and crisp celery. But Bertha and Betty couldn't possibly touch the scalloped crab. Mercy, no. Fish and milk together! They knew better than to eat that.

"Then came tomato and cucumber salad. More embarrassment. Betty never touched acid food like tomatoes. Acid was so hard on the system. And Bertha raised her eyes in horror at the thought of eating cucumbers. She also suggested that cucumbers and milk was a deadly poisonous combination. As for crabmeat and tomatoes--even worse.

"You can imagine what a state the poor hostess was in by this time. She began to blush at the first mention of the dangers of fish and milk. But by the time the discussion of cucumbers was in progress, her face was a brilliant crimson. I did my best to change the subject, but it was no use. The Bates girls, quite unconscious of their bad manners, held the floor. When it was time for dessert Ida actually looked scared to serve the beautiful fresh strawberry tarts she had made. I never felt so sorry for anyone in my life. Sure enough. Bertha and Betty never touched strawberries. They gave them a rash.

"By the time the meal was over, everyone was uncomfortable and unhappy. The discussion of food had spoiled our appetites, so none of us had eaten much. And I could see that the remarks of the Bates sisters had put finicky notions in the heads of several other of the guests present. They began to be afraid they had been eating dangerous foods all these years.

"Now tell me, Aunt Sammy. What about that luncheon? Was there anything unwholesome in that menu? And were any dangerous food combinations served?"

"What was the menu again?"

"Scalloped crabmeat; Buttered new peas; Celery hearts; Hot crusty rolls; Tomato and cucumber salad; and Strawberry pie."

An excellent meal, in my opinion. So good, in fact, that I took it down on paper and plan to serve it to my family tomorrow night. Food prejudices and fears some people suffer from are much more dangerous than

any food combination I know of. Many of them are superstitions handed down in families and are now quite without reason. Any two good foods may be eaten in the same meal safely. The dangers arise from over-eating or in eating food badly prepared or not absolutely fresh. Eating when one is tired or upset emotionally may also cause trouble.

I have a friend who was once very fond of lobster. One day he indulged in an extremely hearty meal. Course after course of rich foods he ate and when the lobster was served he took an extra helping. He topped it all off with a rich dessert. Later, in the midst of considerable pain, he wondered what food had poisoned him. Then he thought of that lobster.

"Never again," he groaned, "never shall I touch lobster again."

The innocent lobster, you see, got all the blame for his gluttony. As a matter of fact lobster, when it is fresh, contains perfectly good protein with very little fat and it should be easy enough to digest. But it was impossible to convince the hero of this story of that.

Lobster and ice cream is another combination that many people are afraid of. It happens that lobster and ice cream together often spell a party. Too much food, late hours and weariness may all combine to bring on nightmares and digestive trouble. Most food fears begin in just this way.

Tomatoes still suffer from that old prejudice against acidity. In former days when all sorts of complaints were laid to too much acid in the blood, tomatoes headed the tabooed list. We know better today. An acid taste is no guide to the food's reaction in the body. Tomatoes and oranges and many other acid foods have an alkaline reaction when absorbed and counteract acidosis. Tomatoes are too valuable a food to be omitted from the diet. They are the most important source we have, next to oranges, of the anti-rachitic vitamin. As this vitamin is present in tomatoes whether raw or cooked, fresh or canned, in season and out of season, tomatoes are a very inexpensive way to provide it and they should be eaten by every normal person, from the infant to the aged.

There are, however, a few unfortunate people who have a special sensitiveness to certain foods. Some people really cannot eat tomatoes, or cucumbers, or strawberries without suffering a distinct reaction. But these people are the exceptions.

Before you let an unfounded fear rob you of any good food, remember that a varied diet is one of the ways to supply good health. A limited diet, on the other hand, may be the cause of many of the ills that come from food lacks.

Once more now our menu for today: Scalloped or creamed crab; New green peas buttered; crisp celery; hot crusty rolls; tomato and cucumber salad; and fresh strawberry pie.

My watch says that the time is up and I wanted to give you that recipe for strawberry pie. It is something new and very delicious. Well, I'll give it tomorrow, if you will remember to provide yourself with a pencil.

Tomorrow: "Garden Questions".

