homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Tuesday, July 29, 1941.

QUESTION BOX
:Should I varnish linoleum?:
:How care for bottled milk?:
:Could I can fruit juice :
: for later jelly-making? :

ANSWERS: from home economists and milk marketing specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture

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The question box today contains some practical inquiries on household matters. Probably many of you have wondered, like our first correspondent, just what is the best way to preserve kitchen linoleum. Home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture are ready with the answer to that one. Then there's a letter from a woman who would like to save her fruit juices during the summer, and make up her jellies when she is not so busy and the weather isn't so hot. And a city homemaker asks about the care of milk at home.

The first writer lives in New Jersey. I'll read her letter. "I am buying new linoleum for my kitchen. If I put a coat of varnish over this linoleum right at first, will it make the linoleum last longer?" Evidently someone has told her that's the thing to do. But the home economists say it all depends. It makes a difference whether you get true inlaid linoleum or printed linoleum.

There's a difference in the way you take care of the printed and inlaid kinds of linoleum because there's such a difference in the floor coverings themselves. In an inlaid linoleum, the pattern goes all the way through-- from top to bottom. In a printed linoleum, the colored design is printed on the surface only.

If you buy true inlaid linoleum, do not put varnish on it-- or shellac, or clear lacquer. Instead, protect it by using self-polishing wax. That's the kind you apply, let dry, and forget. You don't have to shine it. Manufacturers

advise strongly against varnish for inlaid linoleum because the ingredients in the varnish dry out the linoleum and make it crack.

On the other hand, if you are getting what is called "printed linoleum",-- it is a good idea to varnish it. A coat of varnish right at first will help conserve the pattern. Wax sometimes softens the coloring matter and causes the pattern on printed linoleum to wear off.

Now for the second letter. "I am told that it is possible to store fruit juices at the height of the season and make them up into jelly later on. I should like to do this to reduce the time I spend in the hot kitchen in summer, and also because it will be more convenient to buy sugar in quantity a little later on. Are there any disadvantages to this plan that I should know about? Is the jelly just as good as jelly made directly from the fresh juices?"

The Bureau of Home Economics says it is perfectly feasible to can fruit juices through the summer season and make your jelly within the next 6 months. Jelly from juice stored 6 months may have as good a texture as the jelly you make from the same juice used fresh, but the color and flavor may not be quite so good. This is especially true of the red fruits.

Assuming that you know how to extract the different fruit juices, we'll start with canning them. If you don't feel sure about getting the juice properly from any particular fruit, write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture for a copy of the "jelly bulletin", Number 1800-F. Now when you've finished dripping the juice, fill it into hot sterilized glass jars without reheating it. Partially seal the jars. Place them on a rack in a water bath at 185 degrees Fahrenheit, or simmering temperature. Let the water come up an inch or two above the jars. Bring the water again to simmering temperature and hold it there for 20 minutes if the jars are of pint or quart size. Complete the seal at once and store the jars in a cool, dry place protected from light.

One advantage in saving your fruit juices in this way is that you can use them for fruit drinks if you find later on you don't want to make jelly from them. The sooner you use them, the better their vitamin content will be.

Our third question is about caring for milk. "What is the best place in the refrigerator for storing milk in bottles? Is it all right to leave milk in the new paper containers in the refrigerator, or should I pour it into something else?

The first point, of course, in connection with good home care of milk is to take the bottles in the house as soon as you can after they are delivered and put them at once into the refrigerator after wiping them off with a clean, damp cloth. If you can, provide the milkman with a box with a hinged lid on the porch, so he can leave the bottles there out of reach of cats and dogs, and out of the direct sun.

Dairy specialists say that milk and other dairy products need a refrigerator temperature of 45 degrees or even colder. Check your refrigerator with a thermometer to find where it is coldest, and where the temperature is 45 degrees or less. Never let the milk freeze, however. Keep the milk in the original container- either glass or paper- until you are ready to use some of it. Pour out what you need and put the cover back on the container, or some other clean cover, such as a cellophane cap or a small tumbler. Do not pour milk or cream that is left in a pitcher back into the bottle containing other milk or cream, but pour it into another clean bottle or jar in which it may be covered. Do not mix milk from different days, even to save space in the refrigerator. Every time milk is poured into another container, more bacteria get into it. To keep it as free as possible from bacteria keep each day's supply separately in the original container, and keep it cool and covered.

Some dairy specialists even go so far as to serve the milk from the bottle right on the table, but if this does not seem attractive to you pour out a glassful for each person just at serving time.

A word about milk bottles. Milk bottles cost the dealer money, and are figured into the price of milk. They are intended to hold milk and nothing else. So wash all milk bottles and return them promptly. The new vogue for paper milk containers eliminates this duty and often helps to cut down the cost of the milk.

Well, that's the last question for today. More questions and answers on Thursday.

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