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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Thursday, September 3, 1942

QUESTION BOX:

Why some canned tomatoes don't keep?
Cooking with evaporated milk?
How prepare frozen foods?
Wood-burning stoves obtainable?



ANSWERS FROM:

Home economists and market
specialists of the U. S.
Department of Agriculture

Homemakers are still canning tomatoes in many parts of the country, and our first question is from one of them who reports that some of her jars keep and some don't. Other questions today are about evaporated milk, frozen foods, and wood-burning stoves. Quite a variety. Scientists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture have answered these questions.

Here's the first question: "Why do some of my canned tomatoes keep and others sour when all come from the same patch? I can my tomatoes by the open-kettle method."

The home economists say that some of your jars may not be packed hot enough. Or they may not be sealed perfectly. There are lots of reasons for canned foods spoiling. If the jars are not sterilized thoroughly and filled promptly spoilage may result when open kettle method is used. Some jars may not have cooled rapidly or some may have been put away before they were cooled.

The home economists recommend canning tomatoes this way: Select firm ripe tomatoes of medium size and uniform shape, free from spots and decay. Put them into trays or shallow layers in wire baskets and dip in boiling water for about a minute, according to ripeness, to loosen the skins. Then plunge quickly into cold water, drain, peel and core promptly. Pack into the containers as closely as possible, either whole or quartered. Fill with hot tomato juice, and add 1 teaspoonful of salt per quart. If you pack them raw, process 45 minutes in a boiling water bath.

You only need to process the tomatoes 5 minutes if you heat them to boiling and then pack. But be sure the solid pieces as well as the liquid are heated to boiling.

Next question: "Could I make cream soups and gravies with evaporated milk if I have no fresh milk on hand?"

Certainly, the home economists say. Just dilute the evaporated milk with an equal measure of water and use it as you would fresh milk. For most cream vegetable soups, you blend 2 tablespoons of butter or other fat with the same quantity of flour, and gradually smooth in 1 quart of milk, stirring until the mixture is hot and thick and free from lumps. Add about 1 cupful of the cooked vegetable that gives the soup its name--carrots, turnips, peas, spinach, or whatever vegetable you are using. Chopped spinach is generally added raw and cooked in the milk. Many cream vegetable soup recipes call for a tablespoonful or so of chopped onion. If yours does, cook the onion in the fat a few minutes before you blend the flour with it.

You make cream or white sauces in the same general way as cream soups, but use more flour and fat in proportion to the milk. Allow from one and a half to 3 tablespoons of both flour and fat to a cup of milk, depending on how thick a sauce you want. When you make a milk gravy for meat or chicken, you use the drippings from the meat as the fat, and make it as thick or as thin as you like.

Now for a question on cooking frozen foods. "Please send me information on how to prepare frozen foods when you take them out of the locker."

The chief thing to know about using frozen foods, the home economists say, is that you use them promptly after they have been thawed. Defrost meat and poultry before you cook them, but cook frozen vegetables without thawing them, in as little water as possible. The time required for cooking frozen vegetables is shorter than for the same vegetables fresh. Use the same cooking methods for defrosted meat as for fresh, chilled meat.

Another correspondent is worried about keeping warm this winter. She writes: "We have plenty of timber growing on our woodlot but have only used wood for the fireplace up to now. Could we use it for cooking and heating the house, and if so is it likely we can buy wood-burning stoves?"

Yes, an ample supply of wood-burning stoves has been assured by the War Production Board for any critical areas that can't get fuel because of transportation difficulties. You can buy wood-burning heaters and cooking ranges without priorities if the dealers have them in stock. Because of transportation shortage, farm families especially are urged to substitute wood for coal or other fuel if they can. In the hardwood and hardwood-pine regions of the Northeastern, Southern and North Central states burning wood may come to be very necessary. Sometimes stoves intended for coal or oil can be converted into wood-burners.

That will be all the questions we have time for today. More war-time questions next Tuesday.

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