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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE



Friday, July 11, 1941

Subject: "PEACHES." Information from Bureau of Home Economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Here we are--in the middle of July again--the time of the year when everything seems to run to extremes. The days are at their longest. The sun is at its hottest. Everyone seems to feel his laziest. And fresh fruits and vegetables are most abundant.

And of all the fresh fruits and vegetables--one of the most plentiful this month is peaches. But let me read you the official report of this year's peach crop.

"The biggest peach year since the record-breaking crop of '31 -- that's what crop reporters in the U. S. Department of Agriculture are predicting for 1941. And they fully expect this year's crop to walk away with honors of 'third largest peach crop on record.'"

Or, if figures don't impress you--just take a look at the grocery ads and you'll get the same idea. For, even by the most conservative estimates, there are going to be plenty of peaches this summer.

But so much for the reassuring news of peach quantity. Here's a note about peach quality--the food values that you get out of this juicy, luscious fruit. Here's a statement on the food value of peaches from home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

"Peaches come in white and yellow--with cling and free stones. And of these--the yellow-fleshed peaches outrank the white-fleshed varieties in food value, chiefly because they are such a good source of vitamin A. For instance, that medium-sized dish of yellow peaches that you may be having for dessert tonight will



furnish about one-third of the vitamin A that an adult needs every day. Of course, children need vitamin A as well as adults as you know. For vitamin A is necessary to good nutrition at all ages.

"However, aside from vitamin A--there's little difference in food value among peaches. So usually, personal preference and the way you intend to use the peaches is the best guide to help you choose the kind of peaches to buy."

And no matter what kind of peach you do buy--here's the way to judge peaches at the store--according to men who grade peaches for the Federal government.

"Look carefully at the complexion of the peach--the real background color of the peach skin underneath those rosy markings. Those rosy markings are pretty but they really don't tell you anything much about peach ripeness. On the other hand background peach complexion gives you a good clue.

"This background complexion should be whitish-green or yellowish. If it is dark green instead--don't buy the peach. For such a peach will never ripen satisfactorily. Instead, it will shrivel and be tough and rubbery and have very little flavor.

"And of course I don't have to tell you--avoid those obvious signs of poor peaches. I refer to such plain things to see as brown spots of peach rot, worm holes, and growth cracks.

"For most purposes, you'll want to get peaches that are firm-ripe. But if you are sure you are going to eat them right away--peaches that are soft ripe are all right. If you're buying peaches in a large quantity to use gradually, slightly underripe peaches are suitable. But make sure that their background color is whitish-green or yellowish. As you want them to ripen, leave them out at room temperature."

The favorite way to eat peaches probably always will be plain with cream and sugar. But there are plenty of good cooked dishes--such as peach pie made after

the fashion of apple pie--and peach cobbler--and peach dumplings.

And here's a comforting thing to remember--cooking the peaches doesn't change the food value of peaches enough to worry about.

For that matter--canning peaches doesn't change their food value enough to bother about either. And on the subject of canning peaches at home--let me quote again from the canning experts in the Department of Agriculture.

They say--

"Peaches are one of the easiest of all fruits to can at home. You may process them in an ordinary big wash boiler--or in a large bucket--or in any other vessel that's big enough to hold the containers and to allow for 2 to 3 inches of water above them.

"As for suitable containers--put up peaches either in plain tin cans--the number 2 or 3 size. Or use pint glass jars or quart glass jars.

"It's a good idea to cook the peaches a little bit before you put them into the cans or jars. Cook them from 4 to 8 minutes in a sirup--just enough to shrink the fruit so that it will pack down into the container better. Incidentally--when you precook the peaches--you'll cut down a little on the length of time you'll need to process the jars."

Now just a word about the sirup--the sirup I mentioned a moment ago when I spoke of precooking the peaches. Here's what the canning experts say about that--

"Suit the sweetness of the sirup to the sweetness of the peaches. You may need to use anywhere from 5 to 12 cups of sugar to a gallon of water. Boil the sugar and the water for about 5 minutes to make the sirup. And just to add flavor--put one cracked peach pit for every quart of sirup. Naturally, you'll want to strain out the peach pits before you use the sirup."

If you want to get the first-to-last story of successful home canning of peaches, you'll find it in "Home Canning of Fruits, Vegetables, and Meats,"--Farmers' Bulletin 1762 of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. You may have a copy by this time. But if you haven't you can get a single copy free by writing a card to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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