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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Tuesday, March 31, 1942

QUESTION-BOX

Roast lamb from low-cost cuts?
What cuts for lamb stew?
What location for planting fruit?
Cut wood now to burn next winter?

ANSWERS FROM

Scientists of the U. S.
Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Here's question-and-answer day again. And here's the one day of the year that's supposed to be like a lion or a lamb—the day March goes out. Well, the mailing today has no letters about lions but it has several asking about lamb.

One question comes from an economical housewife. She says: "Our market often has special low prices on breast of lamb or lamb shoulder cuts. I should like to take advantage of these low prices, but I don't know how to cook these cuts. Can I roast them in the oven like leg of lamb?"

Yes, meat cookery specialists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture say, lamb shoulder and breast are both excellent for roasting. If you buy lamb shoulder, have the shoulder boned first, and then fill the opening with stuffing. There are two ways of boning lamb shoulder. One way makes it a roll; the other, a cushion. The cushion holds more stuffing than the roll, so goes farther and is very plump and attractive. Make a well-seasoned breadcrumb stuffing, flavored if you like with mint leaves. Stuff the boned shoulder, sew it up, and roast it as you would leg of lamb, on a rack in an open pan. Add no water to this roast, of course. And cook it in a moderate oven at about 350 degrees Fahrenheit from start to finish.

A shoulder of lamb weighing 3 to 4 pounds will need about 2 and a half hours in a moderate oven. Turn the shoulder occasionally so it will cook evenly top and bottom. The meat will be tender and juicy, and the stuffing with it makes a savory combination. As for carving, there's nothing easier to carve than a boned roast.

Breast of lamb makes a dressy little stuffed roast, too, especially if you serve it with stuffed onions around it on the platter.

You'll find complete directions for cooking both shoulder and breast of lamb in a free leaflet published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. Write and ask for "Lamb As You Like It," Leaflet No.28. Address your request to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.

A second letter in the mailbag asks which cuts of lamb to buy for lamb stew. The answer is: Buy inexpensive cuts of lamb for stew. The inexpensive cuts are shoulder, breast, flank, neck, and what the butcher calls "trimmings." (That free leaflet on cooking lamb gives directions for making lamb stew.)

So much for the questions about cooking. Now let's turn to questions about gardening.

Here's a letter from a woman who wants to start some berry bushes or fruit trees to supply her family with fruit. She wants to know the best location for growing fruit.

Plant scientists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture offer a few general suggestions. They say: The planting should not be in a low area but should be on moderately elevated land or on a slope where frost won't settle. The soil needs to be reasonably fertile and well-drained. Avoid planting where the soil stays wet long after a rain. Heavy soils are best for currants and gooseberries. If you're planting fruit trees, be sure they have full exposure to sunlight. Don't plant them near woodlots or shade trees.

Another gardener asks whether it is true that the proper time to weed the garden is right after a rain.

Plant scientists say: Not right after a rain, but as soon as the soil is dry enough after a rain, and of course only when the garden needs weeding. There's no benefit to the garden from stirring an already cultivated soil that is free of

weeds. But, of course, you want to keep weeds under control all the time, and you want to do it with thorough but shallow cultivation or hoeing. Don't cultivate vegetable crops too deeply because of the danger to the roots that grow near the surface. Weeds that take root again readily after hoeing or pulling better be carried way out of the garden.

The last question is about wood to burn next winter. A housewife wants to know whether wood cut now will be cured enough by next winter to burn well.

Wood experts of the U.S. Department of Agriculture say 9 months to a year is a good time to allow for curing wood. They say green wood has 10 to 35 percent less heating value than wood cured from 9 months to a year. And wood seasoned under favorable conditions for only 6 months is better for burning than freshly cut wood. Well cured wood ignites easily, burns rapidly, heats uniformly and makes less smoke. So cutting wood now on farm woodlands to cure for next winter is wise preparedness. Wood may be especially valuable if the war makes difficulties in getting other fuels for domestic purposes.

Pines give a quicker hotter fire and burn up in a shorter time than hardwoods like birch and oak. But most hardwoods give a more intense flame and a very steady heat.

That's all the questions for today.

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