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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

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QUESTION BOX:

How thaw frozen vegetables and fruits?

How flavor baked beans?

Ways to use citrus marmalade?

ANSWERS FROM:

Scientists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture

Three good questions have turned up in today's mail bag---how to thaw frozen products---what flavors to use with baked beans---and uses for the citrus marmalade now on the market besides spreading it on bread. Frozen food specialists and home economists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture answer the questions.

Ration points---or rather, foods that don't take ration points---have prompted two of these questions. The first homemaker writes: "Now that we can get some frozen fruits and vegetables without using ration points, I would like to have frozen products more often. Are there any special rules for thawing the fruits or cooking the vegetables, or can I just go by the directions on the packages?"

Generally the directions given by commercial packers of frozen products are all that you need. Should you get frozen foods from a local source, such as a nearby freezer locker, without printed instructions, you might need to know about thawing and cooking them. Frozen food specialists make these suggestions:

You may cook frozen vegetables and fruits without thawing them first. Or you can thaw them in a warm room or in warm water, but leave them in the sealed package. It takes 3 or 4 hours to thaw a 1-pound package of frozen food where the temperature is 75 degrees. If you immerse the sealed package in running water at 90 or 100 degrees, it will thaw more quickly. In the home refrigerator, frozen foods will thaw in 12 to 48 hours. Once thawed in any of these ways, use the food promptly.

When you want to serve frozen fruit as fresh fruit, let it thaw until not

quite defrosted. Leave a few ice crystals in frozen fruit juices, but don't add ice, as that dilutes the juice. Defrost frozen crushed fruits for sundae toppings and shortcakes, and serve frozen purees like frozen desserts or sherbets.

Now about cooking frozen vegetables: Put them on to boil or steam while still frozen or only partly thawed. Start with a small amount of water in the pan. Salt it slightly, bring it to a boil, and add the vegetable. Break the melting mass apart with a fork so the hot water can reach all parts of the food as soon as possible. Frozen vegetables will cook in about half the time needed for fresh vegetables. You can also steam them.

Some vegetables are better boiled and some are better steamed, but others may be cooked either way. Most vegetables which can be either boiled or steamed have a better color when boiled but a better flavor when steamed.

Since citrus marmalades are point free, the next inquiry comes from a woman who would like to serve them more often. She asks, "Can you suggest any other ways to use marmalade except as a spread for bread?"

How about desserts? The home economists suggest. For example, once in a while you could put a spoonful of marmalade on top of each helping of bread pudding, or serve it with vanilla sherbet, or Spanish gelatin cream, or cornstarch pudding. It would be good, too, on any custard, or on custard rice pudding.

Use it as the preserve in a "jelly" roll made with sponge cake, or as orange layer cake filling. Or thin the marmalade a little with hot water and serve it as a liquid sauce for hot puddings, such as a steamed pudding or cake-like puddings baked in muffin tins. This sirup or sauce would go well on pancakes, or waffles, or French toast.

Of course you don't want to overdo the citrus flavor in your desserts. Just use it once in a while as a change. For a somewhat different dessert, serve marmalade and cottage or cream cheese together. When you serve half a grapefruit

"in the shell" as an appetizer course, or as a dessert, put a spoonful of citrus marmalade into the cavity, and save sugar.

You can chop the bits of rind in the marmalade to flavor biscuits or muffins, and save the clear jellied part to give flavor and sweetness to fruit beverages. Thin the jelly a little before using in fruit drinks. Use a little lemon with the "drink" and cut down on sugar.

As for sandwiches, if the children are tired of plain marmalade sandwiches, try mixing the marmalade with chopped cooked prunes and a few nuts, or with cottage cheese. As the citrus marmalade will keep for some time in the refrigerator, don't serve it often enough for the family to tire of the flavor.

And now for the question about beans. "What is the best way to cook beans--- with or without tomato?"

There's no one best way to cook beans. The home economists say that in different parts of the country there are different ways of fixing beans---in fact, there are different kinds of beans used. In the West, tomatoes are often used to flavor beans, and many people like their canned beans in tomato sauce, too. The Boston way of cooking beans, rich and brown, goes back to the days in early New England, before people ate tomatoes at all. To bake beans in the Boston style, long slow oven cooking is necessary.

Here's the recipe: Wash 2 cups of beans and cover and soak them overnight in a quart of cold water. In the morning simmer for 45 minutes, or until the beans begin to soften. Score the rind of one-fourth of a pound of salt pork and put half of it in the bottom of the bean pot. Add the beans and bury the other half of the pork in the top portion of the beans, with only the scored rind exposed. Mix 4 tablespoons of molasses, 1 or 2 teaspoons of salt, (depending on how salty the pork is,) and half a teaspoon of mustard, if desired, with a little hot water. Pour this mixture over the beans, and cover them with hot water.

Put a lid on the pot and bake in a slow oven for 6 or 7 hours. Add a little hot water from time to time. During the last hour of baking remove the lid and let the beans and pork brown on top.

In Michigan the usual method is to cook the beans in water until they are completely tender, then flavor with the salt pork, molasses or brown sugar, and salt, and brown in a shallow pan.

