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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 1941

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QUESTION BOX

Best-fed or millions malnourished?
How well-fed are families in the United States?
Yardstick to measure meals?
Any perfect diet plan?

Answers from or
approved by
home economists of
the U. S. Dept. of
Agriculture

--ooOoo--

The recent National Conference on Nutrition for Defense called by President Roosevelt in Washington, D. C., has already started letters and questions coming to the Department of Agriculture from all parts of the country. Mothers have been writing to know what foods they should feed their families for best health. Fathers want to know how to keep strong and well for work in these emergency times. Boys and girls are interested, too, in the food that will keep them fit.

Today a few of these many letters are up for reply. The answers come from experts who took part in this recent conference.

The first letter comes from a man who says: "I have often read that the United States is the best-fed country on earth. Now recently I've read that millions of people in this country are malnourished. Please explain."

Vice-President Wallace stated at the Conference: "The people of the United States enjoy a higher average state of nutritional well-being than the people of any other large country in the world. Comparing ourselves with certain nations we find the difference so startling as to make us feel this country is truly blessed. And yet, when we study the facts cold-bloodedly and not boastfully, we find that at least three-fourths of the people in the United States do not have what can be called good diets by an reasonable standard. At least 40 million people in the United States are suffering from very bad dietsWhen

we consider the inadequacy of their meals, it is not surprising that 40 percent of the young men examined for military service were rejected because of physical disability."

Another letter asks: "Please tell me just how well fed we are in the United States."

The answer comes from food economists of the Department of Agriculture. They report: "About one-fourth of the families in the United States have diets that could be rated good.....more than a third or more have diets that might be considered fair.....another third or more have diets that should be classed as poor--at least this seemed to be the situation at the time of the last survey. Clearly the United States has not solved its food problem.

The estimates just given are based on the 1935-1936 distribution of consumer incomes and on the food-consumption patterns of families of different sizes in various income classes, as found in the cross-section study of diets.

"The proportion of families with diets that are good would, of course, shift with changes in income distribution and in food-purchasing power. But even without changes in incomes the proportion with good diets could be greatly increased if all families used their resources for food to best advantage."

Letter No. 3 comes from a mother who wants to know what foods her family should have every day for best health.

Here's the "yardstick" you can use to measure the meals you serve your family. Here are 7 kinds of food they need to have every day to be in tiptop health: First, at least a pint of milk a day for the grown-ups and if possible a quart or more for the children; second, one serving of meat--cheaper cuts are just as nutritious as expensive meats; third, one egg or a suitable substitute like navy beans; fourth, 2 vegetables, one of them green or yellow; fifth, 2

fruits, one of them rich in vitamin C like citrus fruit or tomatoes (Strawberries, raspberries and currants are other fruits in season at this time of year and rich in vitamin C); sixth, cereals and breads, either whole-grain or enriched; seventh, butter, or oleomargarine with vitamin A added.

These are the 7 foundation foods you need every day. You can add to this list any foods you please to satisfy your appetite.

The last letter today asks what the perfect diet plan is.

Food economists of the Department of Agriculture reply: "There is no one perfect diet plan. Ways of eating in the United States are not the only good food patterns. In the food habits of other countries there are many customs that families in the United States would do well to copy. For example, the dark breads and cheese of central Europe; the tender shoots, green leaves, and bean sprouts of the Orient; and the soups and stews of many lands that use the nutrients of bone and marrow and vegetable juices."

That's all the questions and answers today. More will be coming in on Thursday.

