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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Tuesday, April 30, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "Questions and Answers." Information from the Office of Experiment Stations, U.S.D.A.

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Questions about a number of different foods are up for reply today. Here's a letter about home-canned food that spoiled. And here's one about the vitamins in currants. Here's a question about vegetables rich in iron. And, last of all, here's a letter about cooking frozen peas.

At various State experiment stations workers have been investigating these questions recently. So the answers today come from scientists in different States and are based on their research.

The first question is from a housewife troubled because so much of her home-canned food spoiled during the winter. She writes: "I put up a hundred jars of vegetables and meat last season. And I followed the Department of Agriculture's directions for canning in the pressure canner. Yet with all this care over half of my canned food spoiled. What could have been the trouble?"

Very likely the pressure gage on the canner was out of order and did not register the pressure correctly. So the food didn't get the high temperature it needed to kill all spoilage organisms. Canning specialists now advise having your gage tested every year by your State college or experiment stations, or by the manufacturer of your pressure canner.

From two States comes evidence that faulty pressure gages cause a good deal of spoilage. A few years ago at the Nebraska Experiment Station a scientist tested hundreds of gages on pressure canners that women in that State were using. He found many gages registering wrong. So he began advising every housewife who cans



vegetables and meats to have the pressure gage tested before each canning season.

Further evidence that faulty gages are the cause of much spoilage of home-canned food comes from Arkansas. Last year the Arkansas Experiment Station made an investigation of spoiled canned food wherever housewives in that State reported it. And here again they traced a good deal of trouble to gages that registered the wrong pressure. They found 7 out of 12 gages wrong.

But they found other causes of spoilage, too. (If your home-canned food doesn't keep, these Arkansas findings may be worth your consideration.) They found considerable food spoiled because women had used worn or cracked rubber rings on their jars, or bent covers that meant leakage and a chance for spoilage to get in. Other women had been careless about leaving particles of food between the lip of the jar and the ring. Those bits of food kept the jar from sealing tight, so the canned food didn't keep. Another cause of spoilage was using too large containers for food that packs closely. One woman had put up spinach in gallon jars. Heat penetrates a large mass slowly so the food canning specialists advise that such vegetables as greens and corn should never go in containers larger than No. 2 cans or pint glass jars.

So much for the question about canning troubles. Now here's a question from a housewife who puts up a lot of currant jelly and currant juice each season. She's interested to know whether currants have other good qualities beside fine flavor and color. She says: "I'd like to know whether currants rate at all in vitamins."

The answer comes from the Massachusetts Experiment Station. And the answer is: Yes, the common red currant stands right along beside the orange, grapefruit and tomato in vitamins. Massachusetts workers tested and found fresh ripe currants, and also currant juice very rich in vitamin C, and also a good source of vitamin A. So you can serve currant juice for breakfast as a change from orange, or grapefruit, or tomato juice.



By the way, another fruit getting attention lately for its vitamin C is the raspberry. The Washington Station found that the body can use the vitamin C in raspberries as well as it can use pure vitamin C. The Texas Station has recently reported the persimmon as still another fruit rich in this vitamin.

But let's get back to the letters and questions. Here's one from a mother interested in planning meals to provide her family with plenty of iron. She writes: "I am trying to keep up-to-date on the information about iron in food. Will you tell me of any recent tests showing which vegetables are best for iron?"

Georgia Experiment Station workers have been testing a number of vegetables to see which rank highest in building red blood. Of the vegetables tested in Georgia so far, black-eyed peas and spinach stand at the head of the list for iron, with turnip greens and kale second, collards and mustard greens third, next head lettuce, and finally tender greens and leaf lettuce.

The Mississippi Station has also been interested in helping southern families get more iron in their diet. And here's the advice from this Station to the housewife: "Serve more green leafy vegetables, raw or cooked. And serve the pot liquor with the cooked vegetable. Then, every day serve one leguminous vegetable like black-eyed peas or beans. A serving of each of these vegetables every day will furnish most of the iron every member of your family needs daily. This will help prevent anemia, and keep your family well."

The last question comes from a housewife interested in cooking frozen vegetables to save all possible food value. She wants to know whether frozen peas, for example, should thaw out before going into the kettle, or whether they should go in while still frozen.

To save vitamin C in frozen peas and other frozen vegetables, cook the peas as soon as possible after they come from frozen storage. Drop the frozen peas directly into the kettle. Do not thaw or defrost first. That is the advice of both the Massachusetts and New York State Stations to everyone interested in vitamin-saving. The big loss in vitamin C comes when the frozen vegetables thaw out, not from cooking.

That's all the questions for today. More questions and answers day after tomorrow.

