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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Monday, December 6, 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "NEWS NOTES FROM THE F.&D.A." Items of interest to homemakers, from the Federal Food and Drug Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Homemakers, do you remember our last-April report about the trailer laboratory of the Food and Drug Administration?

I'm pleased to state that I myself do remember that report -- probably because in the same letter our Washington correspondent included a recipe for scalloped crab meat. I never forget a good recipe.

As the poet said:

"My mind lets go a thousand things,
Like dates of wars, and deaths of kings,"

but a recipe -- that's something I can remember. Especially if it's one I've tried, and found good.

But to get back to the trailer laboratory, which belongs to the Eastern District of the Food and Drug Administration. It is equipped for both chemical and bacteriological tests, and as you may recall, the men who took the trailer South last spring went down to examine crab meat. In their new laboratory on wheels, the Government bacteriologists could examine the cooked crab meat just as soon as it was packed in cans, and offered for shipment in interstate commerce.

In the words of a Food and Drug official: "The new laboratory more adequately protects consumers from occasional unfit consignments which because of rapid distribution must be promptly apprehended. Ordinarily, a bacteriological test on cooked crab meat, to prove whether it is clean and wholesome, requires from 24 to 48 hours. But if the bacteriologist who makes the test is right there at the source of production -- as he can be in a mobile laboratory -- he can examine samples as soon as the crab meat is packed, and wire his report ahead to the Federal Food and Drug Station in the city where the crab meat is going. And if the Government bacteriologist finds that the packed article is not fit for consumption there will be time to set the machinery of Federal seizure in motion before it is too late.

"Before the time of the traveling laboratory, Government inspectors had to use whatever laboratories they could find, no matter how far removed from the source of food production. Sometimes they used high school laboratories."

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Now let's see what happened to the trailer which spent the summer working on crab meat. In September, according to today's report, the Philadelphia Station of the Food and Drug Administration converted the trailer into a chemical laboratory.

Quoting our official correspondent: "For three weeks Government officials carried on road patrol operations in the vicinity of New Brunswick, New Jersey. Inspectors sampled trucks of fruits and vegetables from New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania, as they passed the junction of the two main highways at New Brunswick, on their way to the New York metropolitan area. Through the use of the trailer laboratory, results on samples of fruit and vegetables collected were available before the trucks reached their destinations, and the New York Station was able to effect seizures of fruits bearing excessive spray residue.

"This road patrol," according to the Philadelphia Station, "the first conducted with the use of the trailer laboratory, was most successful in effecting the removal of excessively-sprayed fruit from the market."

So much for the trailer laboratory.

The next item in today's report is entitled: "Warning Pink Color Added to Arsenicals."

Quoting directly: "The housewife who carelessly uses lead arsenate or calcium arsenate instead of flour in cooking will have no excuse in the future except that she is color blind, for manufacturers of these insecticides have decided to color them a distinctive pink."

"Many cases of accidental food poisoning occur because arsenicals are stored in pantry shelves alongside flour, soda, baking powder, and similar white powdered foods. The arsenicals are likewise white powders, and have no distinctive odor to warn the careless cook.

"Calcium arsenate is used widely for spraying and dusting vegetables for pest control, and lead arsenate is used for fruits.

"For years the Federal Food and Drug Administration has warned the public of this danger -- of mistaking these poisonous white powders for food -- but reports of food poisoning continue to appear in the papers. Only a few weeks ago several persons working in a mining camp in a western State were seriously stricken after eating flapjacks in which an insecticide was used instead of flour.

"Regardless of the precautions of manufacturers," says W. G. Campbell, Chief of the Food and Drug Administration, speaking of the plan to color arsenicals pink, "arsenicals and other dangerous insecticides should be kept out of the reach of children. The garage or shed is the place for insecticides, not the pantry shelf."

And that concludes today's report from the Federal Food and Drug Administration, Washington, D. C.

