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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, January 27, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "CUTS OF BEEF." Information from Kenneth F. Warner, Bureau of Animal Industry, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Friends, I once knew a man who could always make people laugh when he told them that his wife bought her first sausages by the yard. I suppose it was just his way of saying that women do not know as much about the different cuts of meat as they should, if they are to get best results when they serve them. And if they wish to buy thriftily. I began to wonder whether I myself, and possibly my radio listeners, did not need a little up-to-date information on the subject.

So I asked our Washington correspondent to get it for me, from the reliable specialists in the U. S. Department of Agriculture. She consulted Kenneth F. Warner, of the Bureau of Animal Industry, and he told her a good deal about beef. There wasn't time, she wrote, to talk about lamb, or pork, except that Mr. Warner said these meats come mostly from young animals and can usually be cooked by the methods used for tender cuts.

Now to quote Mr. Warner directly.

"Obtaining satisfaction from a cut of beef," he says, "depends mainly upon knowing the kind of satisfaction the cut contains. Whether cooking is done on a black-faced, wood-fired stove or on a modern electric range, there will most likely be three kinds of cooking utensils in the kitchen -- a frying pan, a kettle for stewing or simmering, and a roasting pan for the oven. Intense dry heat is used to cook meat in the frying pan and oven; slow moist heat is used to cook meat in the kettle.

"The problem of cutting a beef carcass, then, is to separate the thick, more tender portions that can be rendered tender in the frying pan and oven, from the less tender portions that must be softened by the slower process of braising or stewing.

"There is no one best way to cut beef for all requirements. Individual or trade preferences must be considered. Many rural people are dressing beef at this time of year, so a farm housewife may have the task of directing the cutting in order to have the cuts she wants. She has to consider both cooking methods to be used, and the size of the pieces which will best suit her family, her stove and her cooking utensils.

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"Some of her supply will be eaten immediately. Some will be canned, some cured by salting, and perhaps some will be stored in one of those freezer lockers. The pieces for canning will be the less tender cuts, that are to be eaten as stew and pot roasts, after being subjected to the thorough cooking necessary in safe meat canning. Since corned beef is cooked slowly, too, in water, some of the less tender cuts may be set aside for salting. Steaks, roasts, and other tender cuts may be wrapped individually, labeled for identification, and put into the freezer or, in the North, frozen in natural temperatures. Of course the pot roasts and stewing pieces can be saved in this way, also.

"A woman going into a retail meat store is in about the same situation as a farm housekeeper on the day a beef carcass is being cut up. All the cuts are before her. She can pick out the one that best suits her needs and the cooking method she means to use. She will usually find that the butcher is glad to identify the different cuts for her, and if she knows the method of cooking each cut, she makes her selection according to what she wants to spend and the time available for cooking.

"In general, the more quickly cooked cuts are the higher priced. They are in demand not only because people like the fried or roasted flavor, but also because cooking time is a consideration with many folks. However, all the less expensive cuts can be made into palatable and nourishing dishes by using the slow moist cooking methods such as braising and simmering.

"Suppose this woman in the meat store stops and thinks about the way the whole beef carcass is cut up, just as the rural woman must do. Roughly, a side of beef is composed of three sections, the underside, the two ends, and the back. The under or lower part of each side contains the shanks, brisket, plate and flank. All those cuts are thin, have considerable connective tissue, and are candidates for the simmering kettle, the meat grinder, or the corning barrel.

"Removing the thin lower cuts from the side of beef leaves the thick muscles of the shoulder, rib, loin, and round. Of these, the two ends, or shoulder and round, are less tender than the rib and loin of the back, for the simple reason that these muscles correspond to the four legs of the animal, and are made by nature to do more work than the back muscles.

"There are differences in tenderness even in the end cuts -- the round and the five-rib shoulder. The rib and arm or shank sides of the 'chuck' or shoulder are the more tender portions. The meat closer to the neck is more suitable for mincing for hamburger or meat loaf. The big muscle of the top round is normally more tender than the bottom round and both are more tender than the lower round or 'heel.' The less the natural tenderness in a piece of meat, the more need for the kettle, a little water and a slow fire.

"Another and quicker way of utilizing some of the less tender but flavorful cuts is to break up the muscles by grinding them and then cook by the methods preferred for tender beef -- broiling, frying, or roasting, as in making hamburger cakes or a meat loaf.

"After the two ends have been separated from the carcass, there remains the back. The final step is to divide the oven roast or rib from the loin, which latter is the cut best adapted of all for broiling or frying steaks."

That concludes Mr. Warner's discussion of beef cuts.

