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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, Jan. 27, 1932.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Low-Cost Food for the Children." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Bulletins available: "Food for Children" (Farmers' Bulletin 1674), "Good Food Habits for Children" (Leaflet 42.), and "Getting the Most for Your Food Money." Also, from the Children's Bureau, U.S. Dept. of Labor, "How to Spend Your Food Money."

My mailbag is full today and deserves attention. Several letters from perplexed mothers in it. So I think I'll start the day by answering some of these questions about children.

Here's a letter from Cleveland, Ohio. A mother wants to know about the right diet for her children.

Three guesses what I did first thing when I received that letter. Did I send her a bulletin? Of course, I did. I sent her two, in fact.

Which Bulletins did I send? I'm sure you've guessed already. Yes, I sent that nice, fat, new bulletin called "Food for Children" (Number 1674) and also Leaflet 42 called "Good Food Habits for Children." Any mother would find these two publications helpful on the feeding problem.

Well, I referred that letter to Mrs. Rowena Schmidt Carpenter at the Bureau of Home Economics, who, you know, is the author of both those bulletins. I asked Mrs. Carpenter if she would write this lady in Cleveland and answer her questions.

That old spinach question, for example, appeared in that letter. "My little girl dislikes spinach. Does she really need this vegetable when she dislikes it, and should I urge her to eat it?"

Here's what Mrs. Carpenter answers:

"Spinach is especially rich in iron and in several important vitamins. Other green leaf vegetables are valuable for the same reasons. That is why it is important for every child to have a green leaf vegetable three or four times a week. This need not necessarily be spinach, however. Since your child seems to have developed a prejudice, it may be that you have given spinach too often, or have made too great an issue over the matter of her taking it.

I would suggest that you omit spinach for a time, substituting some of the greens and green string beans instead. Perhaps you can vary the method of preparation somewhat, giving spinach in a buttered sieved form or in soup occasionally.

Do try to be casual in the matter of your child's eating.

I think it is always too bad to force a child to eat any food. This is likely to establish a definite prejudice against it. This sort of reaction may in time spread to other foods also. The leaflet on good food habits suggests ways to help children acquire the best food habits."

So much for the spinach problem.

Next comes the pocketbook and food problem. Lots of us are having this problem of selecting low-cost but adequate foods, for the younger generation in the family. Specialists in child welfare say: "If the family's food supply is short, look after the needs of the children first, because they suffer most if they lack the right foods."

"But," says the troubled mother, "when both food and money are scarce, how shall I divide the little we have? What are the cheapest foods? What foods do the children actually need for good health? What is the smallest quantity I can feed them to keep them well?"

To answer such questions the Bureau of Home Economics and the Children's Bureau of the Department of Labor have published a little emergency guide for feeding children whose parents may be out of work or hard pressed for other reasons. This emergency leaflet for mothers is called "How to Spend Your Food Money." and is printed on a nice salmon pink paper. Then, of course, there's that other emergency leaflet that I told you about two weeks ago, a guide to economical meals for the whole family, which by the way, is printed on green paper. This green one is called "Getting the Most for Your Food Money." You can have both the green one and the pink one if you write me.

Even when the family's funds are low, there are certain foods that the children should have every day if they are to keep healthy. I'm going to list for you the minimum standards for the child's diet, but, of course, you'll keep in mind that these are planned only for an emergency period of hard times: First, at least one pint of milk for every child every day. In better times, of course, he would have a quart a day. Second, at least two teaspoons of cod liver oil for every child less than two years old. (Three or four teaspoons are recommended whenever possible.) Third, at least one vegetable and fruit every day. (Three or four would be much better.) And finally, plenty of whole-wheat bread, whole-grain cereals and other energy and body-building foods.

The milk, the cod-liver oil, and the vegetables and fruits are protective foods. They safeguard the child against such diseases as rickets, scurvy, or pellagra, which are known as deficiency diseases because they result from lack of certain essential foods. Milk--whole, unskinned milk--says the food guide, should be the foundation of every diet and is imperative in the diet of children throughout the whole period of growth.

There is economy in using milk because it does more for the body than any other food and does it more cheaply. What if the family can't afford milk when

it's selling at from eight to fifteen cents a quart? In that case, say the experts, buy evaporated milk which costs from about six to eight cents for a tall can. A tall can, you know, when diluted with an equal amount of water, is the equivalent of a quart of fresh milk. By the way, please don't confuse evaporated milk with sweetened condensed milk. Both have their uses but evaporated milk is what we're discussing just now.

Now about cod liver oil? Is it really an indispensable food for children?

"Yes, indeed," say the specialists. It not only prevents rickets, but also protects the child in other important respects. It is of the greatest importance that the oil should be of good grade--that it really contains the vitamins it is supposed to contain. Notice on the label of the bottle whether it has been tested for vitamins A and D.

Vegetables? Well, when the low-cost diet allows only one a day, which is scanty fare for a child, then be sure to serve this vegetable raw as often as possible or to choose a vegetable that requires only a few minutes for cooking. Cabbage and tomatoes, either raw or canned, are two most valuable foods for a thrifty diet. These should be served at least twice each week. At least part of the cabbage should be eaten raw. The younger children can have their cabbage chopped fine, seasoned with salt and used as a filling for whole wheat bread sandwiches. The canned tomatoes should be heated for a few minutes only before serving. Some other good vegetables that can be eaten raw are spinach and other greens, onions and carrots. For the baby, of course the most important vegetable food is tomato juice. Potatoes? Of course, children should eat plenty of potatoes, but not to the exclusion of other vegetables.

Bread and cereals? Yes, indeed. These are useful energy foods and also contain some body building materials. Whole grain products especially. And let's include in our bread and cereal list, cornmeal, hominy, oatmeal, rice and macaroni. Then there are dried peas, beans and peanuts, which are useful for the same reason.

When it comes to sweets, there are the dried fruits. And, by the way, did you ever consider that molasses, sorgo and can syrups are better bargains than plain sugar? They contain, besides sweetness, some minerals not found in refined sugar or sugar syrups.

For energy foods there are also the fats. Butter, cod liver oil and the cream in the whole milk are the better fats for children. Other fats for low-cost menus include margarine, lard, salt pork and vegetable oil.

Eggs are very valuable for children because they are one of the body-building foods and because they contain valuable minerals and vitamins. Lean meat, especially liver, and also fish have pellagra preventing value.

That's that? Time up? And I was just about to start on the menu. I had planned to give you a day's low-cost meals suitable for children--breakfast, dinner and supper at minimum cost.

Well, if you'll listen in tomorrow, I'll give you those menus first thing. Three meals, low-cost, suitable for the children especially.

