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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Thursday, June 18, 1942

ANSWERS FROM: LIBRARY
Scientists of the U. S. Department
of Agriculture

★ JUN 17 1942 ★

U. S. Department of Agriculture

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In 3 Hh

QUESTION BOX:

- Explain stamps on meat?
- How get rid of ants?
- How **take** out berry stains?

This week the letters have brought in a number of questions concerned with food. One on meat, another on keeping ants out of food, and a third on taking out fruit stains, a food question in reverse, you might say.

Speaking of meat, a woman asks: "Please explain the purple marks stamped on meat at the market. Incidentally, is that purple coloring harmless?"

Answering your second question first, meat inspectors and meat graders of the Department say the stamping is done with an absolutely harmless coloring. Now as to "purple marks stamped on meat." There are two kinds. Meat that is sold from one State to another is inspected for wholesomeness by a Federal inspector. This meat is then stamped "U.S. Inspected and Passed", and the stamp bears a number telling which concern it came from. This stamp protects you from unwholesome meat.

The other kind of meat stamp that is growing in popularity is the stamp showing quality grade and use on beef, veal, and lamb. It is not obligatory for dealers to have their meat graded and stamped, but they can request this service from the Agricultural Marketing Administration of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Careful housewives have learned to choose grades that suit their needs. Beef is graded as "U. S. Prime", "U.S. Choice", "U, S. Good", "U.S. Commercial," and "U.S. Utility" in descending and prices should correspond. If you compare two pieces of beef and one is graded "Good", the other "Commercial", you ought to pay less for the "Commercial" grade. At the same time, "Commercial" grade beef may be entirely

satisfactory for your purpose if you want to have a stew or a pot roast.

Now let's take that question about ants. "How can I get rid of black ants that come in great numbers into my kitchen?"

That's a question for the entomologists, of course. They say that all methods of control of ants are based on the way ants live, in nests or colonies. The queens live in the nests and are fed by the worker ants, the ones you see running about looking for food. The secret of getting rid of ants is to locate the nest and destroy the queen and the young ants. When you do that, the worker ants do not live very long.

Follow the trail of the ants back to where they disappear. Try to inject a little carbon disulphide, kerosene, or gasoline into the opening with an oil can or small syringe. And, by the way, these are inflammable materials; don't smoke or have any fire nearby while you use them.

If you can't find the ant colony, try poisoned sirup as bait. Or sprinkle sodium fluoride powder along the edges of the kitchen floor. And of course, sweep up all crumbs promptly and keep your food supplies in tight containers. If you've had trouble with ants getting on cakes and other foods before you could put them away, there's an old-fashioned way of protecting your kitchen table when you want to use it for cooling foods. Stand the table legs in small saucers or jars containing a little kerosene. Keep the surface clear of dead ants or the live ones will use them as a bridge to get over and crawl up the table legs.

There's a free government leaflet which tells some other ways of getting rid of ants, and gives formulas for several poisoned baits. Why not send for a copy? Write to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and ask for Leaflet 147 on House Ants.

One last question - how to conserve table linen and cotton dresses by taking out berry stains, - raspberry, blackberry, and blueberry, especially.

If the article that is stained is white, or fast-colored, the home economists of the Department say the "tea-kettle" or boiling-water method will probably do the trick. But act promptly, before the stain sets.

Stretch the stained part over a wide bowl and tie it on. Then pour boiling water on the stain from a tea-kettle held 3 or 4 feet above the bowl, so the water strikes the spot with some force. This usually works at once. But if there is fruit pulp in the stain, you may need to rub the spot between your hands after you use the tea-kettle, and then try the boiling water again. Bleach the wet material still further by hanging it in the sun. If you have a very persistent stain which doesn't respond to the hot water treatment, try rubbing it with lemon juice, then putting the piece out in the bright sunlight.

Don't use soap on fresh fruit and berry stains. Some stains are set by the alkali in soap. There's a free bulletin on stain removal which you can get by writing to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

That's the last question for today.

(Written by Elna H. Wharton)

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