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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, March 2, 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "KITCHEN QUESTIONS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Problems this week seem to center on the kitchen. At least, kitchen questions are in the majority in the mailbag. So many problems this week -- almost everything from a scratched sink to inconvenient cupboards and so on. Pack up your questions, listeners, and come on out to the kitchen while we try to find the answers.

First, about that sink -- that ailing sink. One listener reports that just lately the enamel surface of her kitchen sink has felt rough in spots and is becoming more and more difficult to keep clean. What is worse, her bathtub is also showing the same symptoms. She wonders if the plumber who installed this equipment gave her poor quality enamel instead of the good finish she paid for.

More likely she has been scratching the enamel herself by using rough scouring powder. Even the best sink surface can't stand up forever under a coarse abrasive. And once the scouring roughens the enamel, it will absorb stains and soil easily and clean with difficulty. The only safe cleaning powder to use is very fine, like whiting, so won't scratch. For both porcelain and enameled iron fixtures, kerosene and whiting together make a good cleaning team. The kerosene cuts the grease and the whiting supplies a safe abrasion. Some of the cleaning preparations on the market contain scourers so gritty that they soon damage the surface of enamel or porcelain.

Second question. Another listener wants to know how to clean the painted walls in her kitchen. Answer: Usually a jelly made from milk or neutral soap is the best cleaner for painted walls. One method found satisfactory is to have a bowl of water and a bowl of soap-jelly standing side by side. First, dip the cloth into the water and then into the jelly and apply it with an up and down stroke to the walls. Overlap these strokes to prevent streaking. Wash a small space at a time. Rinse with a second cloth and clear water. Wipe dry with a clean soft cloth. A brush is a help when the surface is rough.

Here again be careful not to use coarse scouring powder, for it will remove the top surface of the paint and make the faint soil much more quickly than before. Strong alkali of any sort is bad for the paint also. Avoid strong soaps, because they tend to discolor the paint.

Question Number 3. A listener inquires for some ways to make kitchen cupboards more convenient. That is a rather large question. Of course, you know that convenient cupboards fit the equipment and also the kitchen. This listener told me nothing of her kitchen or equipment. However, there are a few general rules for making shelves and cupboards convenient which I can pass along. One is to make shelves fit the articles they are to hold. You know how it is with most cupboards. The shelves are all of the same width, are arbitrarily spaced, and are stationary -- not adjustable. So you have to place at least 2 rows of small articles on one shelf. That usually means reaching in back of one set of dishes to get others, or moving things in front to reach things in back, and so on. All very annoying. Platters and large plates usually stand in the back and you have to tip them out carefully or run the risk of knocking other dishes. Then, most shelves are wasteful of space -- too much space between them. And the high shelves are wasteful of energy and temper because they are hard to reach.

Convenient cupboards, on the other hand, have every article where you can reach it with one direct motion. To do this, the wide articles need to have wide shelves to fit them and the smaller articles need narrow shelves which you can place just above the larger articles and use all vertical space.

Racks on cupboard doors are convenient for very small articles like salt-shakers, spices, extracts, and the like. When the cupboard door closes, these door racks will fit into the space left by the narrow shelves that are against the wall.

As for platters and trays and other large nearly flat articles like pie and muffin tins, they are most conveniently kept if they stand upright across wide shelves with partitions to hold them separated. (The edge of the platter is then within easy reach.)

As for mixing bowls, instead of keeping them altogether in a "nest", the usual way, you'll find them much handier if they stand separate, arranged according to frequency of use on the upper shelves.

Other conveniences are knife racks on the wall in easy reach of the work table and lid racks near the stove.

One last suggestion for making the cupboard comfortable is a light-colored, smooth, washable paint-finish instead of shelf paper for the inside of cupboards. This makes cupboards lighter and articles easier to see and it makes shelves easy to clean.

So much for cupboards. Now here's a perennial question -- how to clean copper. If you want a dull finish, make a paste of rottenstone and linseed oil and apply it with a soft cloth. Then wash and rinse and dry the metal. Now for a bright finish. Use a mixture of fine whiting and denatured alcohol and then wash and rinse and dry. Or remove the tarnish on copper or brass with vinegar and salt, and wash thoroughly afterward.

Last question -- one on food rather than kitchens. A listener wants to know whether skim milk and buttermilk have as much food value as whole milk. Answer: Skim milk and buttermilk don't have the milk fat (cream) and the vitamins which are removed with the cream or butter, but they have practically all the mineral values, much of the protein, the milk sugar, and vitamin G.

