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# HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE  
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Thursday, September 7, 1944

QUESTION BOX:

- How to treat shoes with oil?
- How to buy cotton shirts?
- Raisins from Concord grapes?

ANSWERS FROM

Bureau of Agricultural and Industrial  
Chemistry and Bureau of Home Economics  
and Human Nutrition

Not shoes and ships and sealing wax, but shoes and shirts and raisin grapes are the topics in today's mailbag. And here are the answers from scientists in the United States Department of Agriculture.

First, we have a question from a homemaker whose 10-year old son has been getting a lion's share of the family's shoe ration coupons. She writes to ask if there's any way she can treat the shoes with oil or greases to make them last longer.

The answer is yes. Chemists in the Department of Agriculture tell us that a reasonable application of the right oils or grease will make shoes wear much longer than they otherwise would.

And castor oil is one of the best materials for greasing shoes. Or you may use tallow or wool grease. Brush the soles and uppers to remove dust and dirt. Then warm both the shoes and the oil, taking care, of course, not to let the shoes burn nor to let the oil get any hotter than the hand can bear. You can use a swab of wool or flannel to apply the warm oil or grease, but you'll probably have better luck if you rub it into the leather with the palm of your hand. It's possible to waterproof the shoes if you take special care to work the oil in where the sole is fastened to the upper. After you've worked the oil or grease in the shoes, let them dry in a warm but not hot place.

Buying children shoes that will last longer is a major problem for most homemakers these days. Of course, your ration board will issue an extra shoe coupon for your child if it's necessary. That is, if you have no ration stamps in your family

(More)



which can be spent for his shoes and he has less than two wearable, repairable pairs.

You'll want to get shoes that are worth the money and the ration point. It's more important than ever that you get comfortable durable shoes that conform to the natural shape of the foot. Better take your time about buying them. Then care for the shoes to assure longer wear.

Our next question comes the bride of a soldier who is soon to receive a medical discharge. She writes, "My husband has asked me to get him some nice shirts for business wear. Except for the size, I don't know what I should look for. Can you give me some pointers on buying men's shirts?"

Home economists in the Department of Agriculture say the main thing to keep in mind when you're buying men's and boys' shirts are the details that stand for long, hard wear. Shirt styles, after all, don't change very much. But there's a big difference in the quality of materials, in the accuracy of cut, in the workmanship and in the comfort of fit.

And so, young Mrs. Homemaker, you'll want to keep an eye on these details. First, look for a firm, smooth fabric with a high yarn count. That's for longer wear. Shirtings that feel smooth, silky and firm are easy to launder too. When you iron them, they have a well-tailored appearance.

Then check to see that all parts of the shirt have been pre-shrunk. A man can lose his shirt...or at least a good part of it. ...through shrinkage. Read the labels carefully. If the label says "full shrunk" without reference to any part of the shirt, then the shirt should not shrink at all when you wash it.

If you're buying colored shirts, take a note whether or not they're labeled "vat-dyed". That means the color is fast to light and washing.

The experienced homemaker looks for other details of good construction - the button holes, the design of the collar, the pockets, the stitches. She examines the cut of the shirt. And every wise wartime shopper looks for and asks about the



ceiling price.

If you need further information on buying shirts, send for the bulletin "Cotton Shirts for Men and Boys". You can get it by writing the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Our final question is from a homemaker who says that her grape arbor is loaded with fruit this year. She'd like to try some home dried raisins and she wants to know if Concord grapes make good raisins.

Food scientists in the Department of Agriculture say that the Concord grapes are not generally recommended for drying because the skin is too tough. Muscat and Thompson Seedless varieties make better raisins.

However, there are many other ways in which Concord grapes may be used. If you have enough sugar for it, Concord grape jelly is delicious. They also make good grape juice and grape butter. And Concord grapes may be frozen and kept in the freezer for use later in desserts.

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