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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Thursday, April 13, 1944.

QUESTION BOX:

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How use dried apples and currants?
How prepare asparagus for cooking?
How much soya flour to other flour?

ANSWERS FROM:

Home economists of the U.S.
Department of Agriculture

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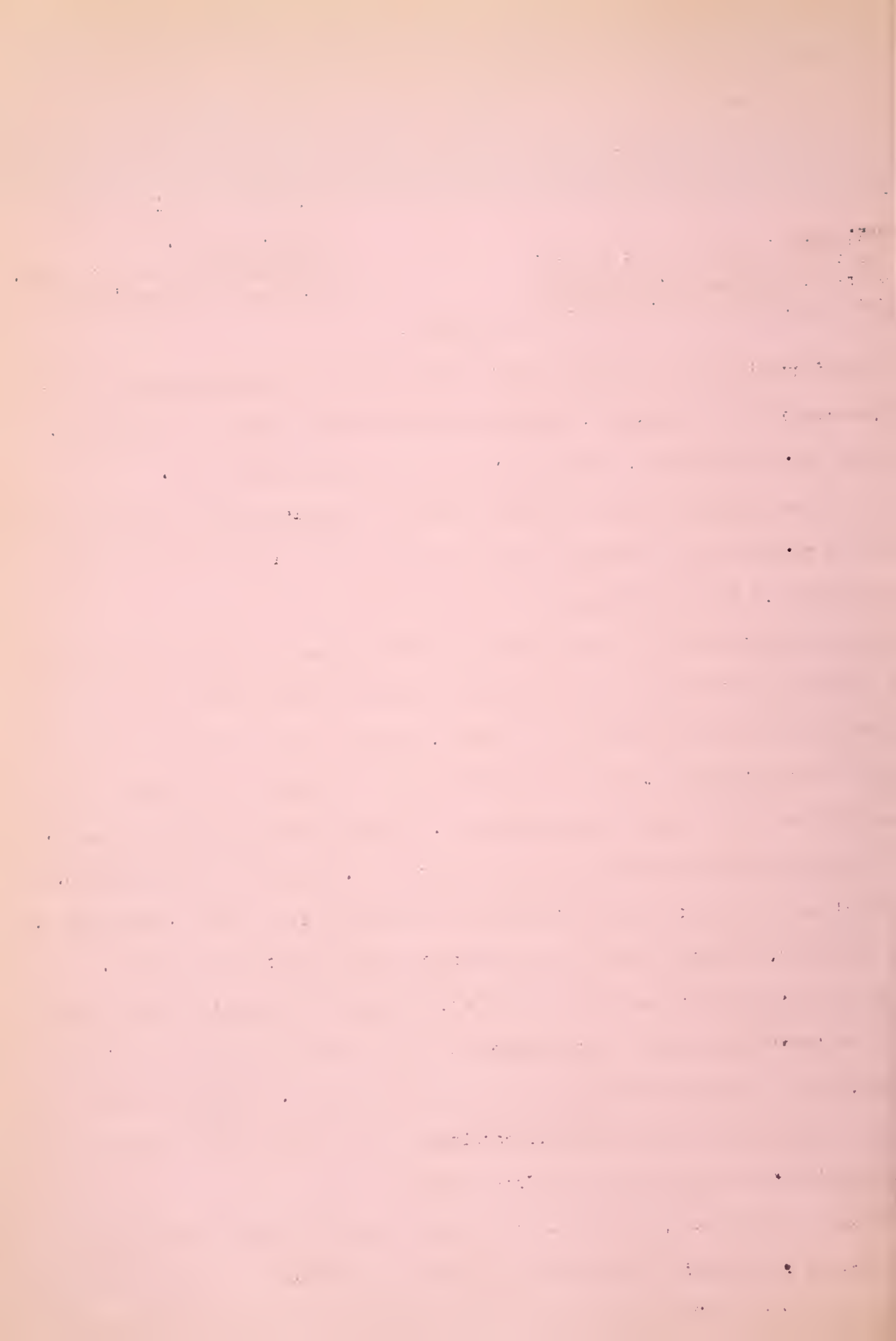
Food questions have the floor today, all answered by home economists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The questions cover dried apples and currants, asparagus, and soya flour. The answers are quite long, so let's go.

The first homemaker says: "I bought some dried apples and dried currants lately. I used the currants in cup cakes, cookies, and buns, but I have never tried dried apples before. I am wondering what to do with them."

The home economists say you can prepare dried apples in either of two general ways. It depends on how much you are going to cook the dish in which you use them. The first way is to soak them about an hour, then drain and chop them and add them uncooked to: Hot cereals. Vegetable scallops, such as apples and cabbage or apples and sweetpotatoes, or apples and sauerkraut. Or have fried apples with onions, with cooked pitted prunes added when the apples are done. Put them in yeast bread, as you would use raisins; in meat stuffings for beef rolls, veal birds, pork chops, or roast chicken. All these dishes will cook long enough to cook the apples.

The second way is to soak the apples and then cook them until tender. Serve them as stewed dried apples, or applesauce. Or drain them and add them to other dishes. Try to make some use of the liquid you drain off. For example, use it as the liquid in cooking a cereal-apple combination, or in making quick breads, or combine it with other fruit juices in fruit drinks.

To cook the apples, pour boiling water over them and let them soak about an hour---longer if the fruit is very hard and dry. Then simmer the apples slowly in the soaking water. Dried apples need a little sweetening for serving plain. Add



the sugar last--about one-fourth cupful of sugar to each cupful of dried fruit. If you like, squeeze a little lemon juice over the cooked apples, or orange or grape-fruit juice. For a spiced sauce to serve as a relish with meat, add a little vinegar and spice toward the end of the cooking. The vinegar may be sweet pickle vinegar, or the juice from a jar of pickled fruit.

Use chopped cooked dried apples in quick breads, muffins, or biscuits, in which you can also use the drained juice as part of the liquid. And here's a sort of "super-duper" French toast. Make sandwiches with drained cooked dried apples as a filling, and dip them in a mixture of egg and milk as in making French toast. Fry in a little melted fat.

Or use drained cooked dried apples in a bread pudding, or over a sweet omelet just before you roll it up. For a dried apple betty, cook the apples partly done, then make the betty as usual. So much for dried apples.

The second letter says: "What is the best way to prepare asparagus for cooking ---whole or cut up? Should I scrape it? Please give suggestions for serving it, besides putting it on toast or in salad."

Whichever way you serve asparagus, boil it first. Cook it as soon as you can after you get it. To be at its very best, asparagus should go from the garden to the table. But if you have to buy yours in a market and hold it for a few hours before you cook it, keep it cold and moist, and covered.

Wash asparagus thoroughly. It is cut below the surface of the ground, and often has grit on the stalks. On mature asparagus this grit may get underneath the scales, so you may have to scrape the scales off. Young, tender, homegrown asparagus should not need scraping.

After washing the asparagus you can cook the stalks whole or cut them into lengths of about one or two inches. When asparagus is scarce and high-priced early in the season, you can make a small quantity go farther by cutting it up and combining it with some other food like rice, spaghetti, potatoes, or eggs. Or you might

serve the cut-up asparagus in a white sauce in patty shells, or on biscuits, like short-cake. Or mix it with an equal amount of diced creamed potatoes, sprinkle the top with bread crumbs, and brown the dish in the oven. Another nice way to use a small proportion of cooked asparagus is to put it into an omelet or a souffle. And of course you can surprise the family with a delicious cream of asparagus soup sometimes. The fresh asparagus season is short, so serve this well-liked vegetable often while you can get it.

The last question is about soya flour. "I understand that soya flour adds to the nutritive value of breads, cereals, and other foods when you work it into ordinary recipes. How much soya flour do you use in proportion to other ingredients?"

The home economists explain that the new soya flour or soya grits contain the protein, vitamins and minerals of the original soybeans,---most of the highly nutritious substances. Soybean protein compares with the protein of meat, fish, eggs, or cheese, so when you use one-fourth soya flour instead of one-fourth of one of these foods, you still have a good protein dish.

When you combine soya flour or grits with corn meal or oatmeal, and cook the combination, the cooking definitely improves the quality of the protein of both cereals. And here's another point:

The thiamine, riboflavin, and niacin content of soya flour and grits is about the same as in whole wheat. So you not only improve the protein of a mixture of soya and other cereals. The soya flour or grits also adds these vitamins. You can combine 15 to 20 percent of soya grits or flakes with any of the breakfast cereals.

You can put as much as 40 percent of soya flour or grits in a dried vegetable soup made with dried beans or peas, dry skim milk, and seasoning. In quick breads and yeast breads use 5 to 20 percent soya flour or grits. You can't add much more than that, even to get greater nutritive value, because soya flour hasn't the necessary starch or gluten you need for bread making. When you add soya flour to a gravy, you need some ordinary flour for thickening, but the soya flour will help to give the gravy a good brown color.

