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U. S. Department of Agriculture

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Saturday, March 13, 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "NEWS NOTES FROM WASHINGTON." Information from the Bureau of Animal Industry, United States Department of Agriculture.

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This week's news letter from Washington answers a question which many listeners ask and also tells about a new -- and free -- leaflet which you will probably want to order for your kitchen files. The new leaflet is about cooking pork -- but there. Let me read you our correspondent's letter which tells all about it.

She writes: "If you have been wondering why meat experts and cooking experts and health experts have all been saying so much about cooking pork thoroughly, you will find a complete answer in a little leaflet just published by the Bureau of Animal Industry here in the Department of Agriculture. Safety and flavor are the 2 good reasons which this leaflet gives for thorough cooking of pork -- with special emphasis on all forms of fresh pork.

"Pork is a favorite meat with most American families. And it is important in the diet because it is savory and nourishing. If you want food-value details, the nutritionists will tell you that it is rich in protein, fat, and vitamin B. Most American housewives are interested in knowing how to cook it so it will be both healthful and delicious. The experts agree that thorough cooking not only makes it wholesome but also develops its rich flavor.

"Pork, like a good many other foods, needs safety measures in preparation. Milk, for example, is pasteurized to destroy harmful bacteria. And water is often treated in some special way to make it wholesome for drinking purposes. And fruits and vegetables are washed or peeled to make them 'clean' for eating. Processing with heat in canning is another hygienic precaution for making foods safe for eating. Instead of pasteurizing or treating in other ways, the precaution for pork is the very simple one of cooking through and through -- cooking until 'done', as housewives say.

"The meat experts explain that sometimes parasites known as trichinae (pronounced trick-eye-nee) get into the flesh of hogs. These trichinae are too small to see except under a microscope but they can cause serious trouble just the same. Once they land in the human body, alive and kicking, so to speak, they can start a painful illness. Oddly enough, some hogs may harbor these parasites without seeming to 'suffer much inconvenience,' as the meat experts express it. You see, some animals which survive an attack of trichinae don't show what ails them and the meat from them doesn't show it either, except by a special microscopic examination. But thorough cooking of the meat will destroy the trichinae, and then they are no more dangerous than the dead bacteria in pasteurized milk or canned vegetables. But if such meat is not well cooked or is eaten raw -- then comes the danger.



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"How serious an attack of trichinosis a person has depends on how many of these live parasites happen to be in the pork he eats. If all but a few are killed by cooking or if the meat contained very few in the first place, then they may pass unnoticed or cause only slight illness. But if a good many were in the meat, they can bring on a painful and sometimes fatal disease. I won't go into the details of this disease. I'll leave that to the leaflet. However, you may be interested to know that it most commonly occurs among persons of foreign origin or descent who continue to eat some of the native European dishes that call for raw pork or imperfectly cooked pork; but many Americans have suffered from it as a result of careless cooking. And though outbreaks of the disease occur all during the year, they are most common in winter and during the holidays when many families are eating pork that has not been properly cooked.

"The meat experts report that beside fresh pork and sausage, and smoked hams and shoulders, and bacon that may not be thoroughly cooked, such products as smoked sausage, boneless loins, capicola, coppa, and forms of dry or summer sausage that have not been prepared under Federal meat inspection or other competent inspection are the main sources of trichinosis in this country.

"Meat experts say that there is no practical system of inspection to protect people who eat uncooked pork from trichinae. You can see that the inspectors could not possibly go over every inch of pork with a microscope. But in establishments operating under Federal inspection, pork products of any kind that are frequently eaten without cooking have special processing to destroy trichinae, so they are safe.

"As for safe cooking of pork at home, one point to remember is that large pieces need more cooking than small ones because the heat penetrates slowly to the center of the meat. Large pieces that are well cooked on the outside may still be partly or entirely raw at the center. Pork chops need cooking thoroughly to the bone. Before taking them from the heat, make a small cut with a knife next to the bone to see that the meat is done all through. For roasts like hams and shoulders, a meat thermometer is a sure guide to thorough cooking. If you haven't a meat thermometer, allow 30 minutes of cooking to the pound for large thick cuts of pork. Of course, frozen meat or very cold meat needs longer time in cooking than meat of ordinary temperature. As for processed sausage, that always needs thorough cooking unless you know that it has had special processing under Federal supervision or other equally competent supervision.

"So far I've only reported thorough cooking for safety. But the meat cookery people say that thorough cooking also is valuable to give pork a fine rich flavor. And they advise using moderate cooking temperature after the surface of the meat has been browned to develop rich flavor. The ideal way to cook pork, they say, is to have it well done right through the center yet keep the outside from becoming hard and dry.

"By the way, did I tell you the name of the new leaflet, in case you want a copy? It is called 'Cook Pork and Its Products Thoroughly.' If you want a copy, write the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. It is free as long as the supply lasts."

That finishes our Washington news letter for today. Once more, the new leaflet goes by the name of "Cook Pork and Its Products Thoroughly." And you get it by sending a postcard to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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