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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Tuesday, March 10, 1942

QUESTION BOX

What equipment for home fire-fighting? :
Spark protection for roof? :
Why do molasses mixtures scorch in baking? :
What temperature for honey and molasses cookery?:

ANSWERS FROM

Chemists and food scientists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture

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Today again the mailbag is open and the letters with questions are lined up here waiting for answers from the scientists.

To begin with, here are a couple of questions about fighting home fires.

The first letter says: "We've heard so much lately about the need for simple fire-fighting equipment in every home. Will you tell me what this equipment is that we should have?"

Chemists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture say that simple fire-fighting equipment is especially important in farm homes or other homes at a distance from organized fire-fighting companies. They suggest that you have at least pump-tank extinguishers or chemical extinguishers--or both. And that you have them ready at all times in places easy to reach. Also they suggest metal pails for water, and metal pails full of sand. On the farm you should have water barrels at convenient places. And then, too, you need ladders long enough and strong enough so you can get up on the roof quickly and easily, if you have to.

You'll find more information on home fire protection in a new publication from the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The new publication is called "Farm Safety for National Defense,"--once more--"Farm Safety for National Defense." It has a number, too, if you prefer to order your copy by number. It is Miscellaneous Publication No. 481. You are welcome to a free copy of this publication as long as the free supply holds out. Send a postcard to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. asking for "Farm Safety for National Defense."

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By the way, that publication gives an answer to another question in the mailbag this week. The second letter today says: "Our house has a wooden shingle roof. I often notice sparks coming from our chimney in winter when the house fires are going. I have heard so much about fires from sparks on a wooden roof that I'm worried about ours. Can you tell me any way to protect against this hazard?"

The chemists working on fire protection say you should have a spark-arrester installed in every chimney in your house. They say everyone with a wooden shingle roof should take this precaution at least. And you should have ladders handy at different places around the house so you can get up on the roof at a moment's notice if fire starts. Of course, even better precaution comes from a roof of some good non-combustible roofing.

Well, so much for the roof. And now let's turn from questions about protection against burning houses to some about protection against burning cakes and quick breads.

A housewife says: "I have been using more molasses in cooking lately, and I've been having a good deal of trouble scorching my cakes and cookies, my gingerbread, and even molasses waffles. I use the same temperature I've always used for baking other cakes and cookies so I can't understand why my foods burn."

The cookery scientists reply that your "same temperature" is the trouble. Molasses burns easily, so the temperature for baking gingerbread or other molasses mixtures should be lower than the temperature for baking mixtures made with sugar. The same rule holds in baking waffles. The waffle iron needs to be a little cooler for gingerbread or molasses waffles than for plain waffles. Cookery scientists advise a moderate oven--only 350 degrees Fahrenheit--for baking gingerbread in shallow pans, and only 400 degrees for baking gingerbread in muffin pans.

The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year. It is followed by a detailed account of the various projects and the results achieved. The report concludes with a summary of the work done and a list of the publications issued during the year.

The work of the Institute during the year has been very successful. The various projects have been carried out in accordance with the programme of work approved by the Council. The results of the work have been most satisfactory and have contributed to the advancement of the science of the country.

The following is a list of the publications issued during the year:

- 1. *Journal of the Institute*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1955.
- 2. *Journal of the Institute*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1955.
- 3. *Journal of the Institute*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1955.
- 4. *Journal of the Institute*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 1955.
- 5. *Journal of the Institute*, Vol. 10, No. 5, 1955.
- 6. *Journal of the Institute*, Vol. 10, No. 6, 1955.
- 7. *Journal of the Institute*, Vol. 10, No. 7, 1955.
- 8. *Journal of the Institute*, Vol. 10, No. 8, 1955.
- 9. *Journal of the Institute*, Vol. 10, No. 9, 1955.
- 10. *Journal of the Institute*, Vol. 10, No. 10, 1955.

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- 6. *Journal of the Institute*, Vol. 10, No. 6, 1955.
- 7. *Journal of the Institute*, Vol. 10, No. 7, 1955.
- 8. *Journal of the Institute*, Vol. 10, No. 8, 1955.
- 9. *Journal of the Institute*, Vol. 10, No. 9, 1955.
- 10. *Journal of the Institute*, Vol. 10, No. 10, 1955.

A number of other letters have come in asking about the right temperature for baking cakes and quick breads made with honey.

The cookery scientists say that in cooking with honey as with molasses, the temperature should be lower than for in cooking entirely with sugar. They give two reasons for using as low heat as possible in cooking with honey. One reason is that mixtures made with honey brown very easily. Another reason is that high heat changes the flavor of honey. The essential oils, which give honey its fine special flavor, evaporate with light heat. And the fruit sugar in the honey quickly turns to caramel. Bake honey cookies at a temperature no higher than 375 degrees fahrenheit, the cookery experts advise. And bake a loaf of honey nut bread at only 350 degrees Fahrenheit.

That's all the questions and answers today. Listen for more on Thursday.

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