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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

TUESDAY, June 27, 1933

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

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Subject: "Food Care for Health and Economy." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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Such a lot of different things to consider when you're economizing on food, especially in summer. First, you have to plan the family meals carefully to be sure they include all the necessary kinds of foods yet are not expensive. Second, you have to be as wise as Solomon when you go to market. Third, you have to prepare and serve meals so well that the family will enjoy every dish and let nothing go to waste. There are three man-sized jobs that every thrifty housekeeper has on her hands. But that isn't all. Another especially important consideration in warm weather is good care of food at home--keeping every item that comes from the grocery as well as every dish of left-overs in the best condition. The housekeeper has the job of protecting the family's health and appetite and its pocketbook; of preventing waste from spoilage and keeping foods fresh, appetizing and wholesome.

Now about this matter of spoilage, Of course, you know that several different kinds of spoilage occur in foods. Some foods change their texture so are less attractive to eat. Some foods lose their flavor. Still others become actually harmful to health after spoilage has set in.

One case of this change of texture, which makes foods unattractive to eat, occurs in green vegetables. Fresh green vegetables not properly looked after soon wilt because they lose their moisture. To keep them fresh, store them in a covered but ventilated container, that will hold the moisture in, in a cold place. On the other hand, crackers and cookies, which we like crisp and dry, often become soft and limp because they take up moisture from the air. To keep them dry, crisp and fresh, store them in a tight tin box that moisture can't penetrate.

Spoilage generally causes foods to lose their pleasant flavor. Enzymes in the presence of light, air and heat may cause loss of flavor. Light, air, and heat hasten the ripening of fresh fruits and vegetables. And they make fats and oils rancid.

By far the most troublesome causes of spoilage are bacteria, yeast and molds. These microscopic forms of life exist almost everywhere and develop rapidly under certain conditions. As you know, some of these organisms causing spoilage are very dangerous to health.

So take the precaution of washing all fruits and vegetables that you eat raw. Cooking usually destroys these organisms. And a sufficiently cold and well-ventilated storage place, like a good refrigerator, retards their growth. As we mentioned last week, a good refrigerator helps ^{prevent} spoilage and waste and keeps foods fresh and appetizing. The low temperature in the refrigerator also checks the ripening of berries, tomatoes, peaches and other fruits.

Now what are the best ways of handling the different kinds of food at home? Let's talk first about those foods that spoil most easily. Meat is one of these. How to take care of fresh uncooked meat at home? Just as soon as it comes from the market, unwrap it and lay it on a clean, dry plate. Set it in the coldest part of the refrigerator. If you have no refrigerator, don't buy the meat until just before you use it, for meat of any sort spoils quickly in warm weather and is dangerous after it has begun to spoil. By the way, perhaps I'd better mention that liver, Kidneys and other edible organs as well as all sea foods spoil more quickly than other kinds of meat.

Now let's consider the cooked foods that you will want to keep at least from one meal to the next--the left-over meats or gravy; the dishes made with cream sauce; the custards; cooked salad dressing; soups and bouillon; and sandwich fillings. How to keep these foods safe until you are ready to use them? Well, cover any cooked meat loosely with waxed paper to help prevent its drying out too rapidly and set the meat in the refrigerator. Better not slice it until just before serving so the slices won't become dry. Uncooked meat belongs in the very coldest part of the refrigerator but cooked meat should have a place in the next coldest part.

All moist cooked foods--particularly those made with meat or meat stock, milk or eggs-- need careful handling to keep them safe. In a good refrigerator with a temperature inside from forty to sixty degrees Fahrenheit, these foods will keep safely for days. Of course, they belong on the coldest shelf. If you have no refrigerator, the safest rule is to cook only enough food for one meal at a time and avoid left-overs. At least, plan to use these left-overs as soon as possible and be sure to boil them before serving. Simply warming up isn't enough. They need thorough heating. Many times food, that has spoiled yet has no taste or odor of spoilage has been served cold and caused serious poisoning.

Now about that very important food, milk and how to care for it? The Bureau of Dairy Industry is constantly studying the best methods of getting clean, high-quality milk to us consumers. But because milk is such an extremely perishable food, the responsibility doesn't end when the milkman delivers the bottles at our door. We must continue the care of milk in our homes if we want to keep it sweet and fresh. Milk keeps best in the bottle, just as it comes. Bring it indoors as soon as possible after delivery, wash the bottles and place them in the coldest part of the refrigerator. Keep the caps on even after you have used part of the milk from the bottle. If you have no refrigerator or if you are out camping, you'll find evaporated and dry milk useful in summer. Evaporated milk comes in cans small enough to use up at once. Dry milk, sold in 1 pound cans or larger, will keep for days after you first open the can if you keep it tightly closed so air and moisture can't get in.

Most foods, except fresh meats keep better if covered, whether in the refrigerator or out. Milk, green vegetables--especially salad greens, butter and other fat, and most cooked foods all keep in best condition in covered containers or covered with waxed paper in the refrigerator. For dry foods the best protection is an airtight container such as a covered tin or glass jar.

Tomorrow: "How to Make Molded Ice Creams."

