homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Wednesday - July 2, 1941.

Subject: "KEEPING GOOD MILK GOOD". Information from the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Good health in every glass - milk has been called the most nearly perfect food. It is nourishing, delicious, and economical - a "must" for every child and fine for grown-ups. Those few folk who somehow don't like to drink milk should have it in some other form - ice cream, milk drinks, puddings, creamed vegetables, and so on.

The Officials of the U. S. Department of Agriculture urge farm security families to keep a cow, and say "two are better than one." Today these officials report to us on methods they suggest on caring for milk on the farm.

You see, milk may be the most nearly perfect food but it may also be the most perishable food and the most easily contaminated. Mother Nature made a nice little skin for the apple, and a hard shell for the nut, but she seemed to forget about milk. So we have to devise ways to protect it ourselves. The three "C's" may be as good a method as any - keep it clean, cool, and covered.

These warm summer days it's hard to take care of milk anyway -- unless you have ice or a refrigerator, which many farm folks don't. So milk "turns" or gets "blinky" and we wrack our brains to know what to do about it. The Departments' Dairy scientists tell us that cleanliness and proper cooling are the best remedies, or preventives, for early souring. They say the cleaner the milk, and the quicker it is cooled, the longer it will keep and the better quality it is. Starting with the cow and the milk utensils, they say have a clean cow and a clean place to milk. The cow shed or cow lot is a little food factory and should be kept free from dust and dirt.

Be sure to have a small top milk-bucket. You know what a small-top milk bucket is, don't you? It's one of those pails with a hood or rounded cover about two-thirds over the top. Or if you have some favorite milk pail that is open-type, you can probably take it to a tinner and have him solder a hood on it quickly and cheaply. The reason a partly covered milk pail is so important is that most of the dirt getting into milk gets in at milking time. The whole pail should have smooth rounded seams and be easy to clean.

All milk utensils should have smooth seams and rounded surfaces. If possible they should be made of heavily tinned metal and not have any rough edges or rusty places, or square, sharp corners. Just one open seam could hold millions of bacteria which might contaminate a lot of good milk. Earthenware crocks or jars are not good milk containers because they are porous, and milk soaks into the pores and is hard to clean out. Old milk or cream that lodges in these tiny pores make fresh milk and cream sour quickly and may give it a bad flavor too. Wooden utensils aren't recommended either because they are hard to clean.

The Agricultural Extension Service in North Carolina recommends using ordinary milk bottles for keeping milk. Had you thought of them? There are really a lot of advantages - even if you have only one or two cows. You can use a small amount of milk at a time for cooking without disturbing the other milk, you can serve milk directly from the bottles, and you can conveniently draw off cream.

If you use milk bottles, the procedure is to strain and cool the milk, bottle and cap it. Place the bottles in the icebox or refrigerator at once if you have one - or, if not, set them in a bucket or tub of cold water which should be changed two or three times a day, and let the bottles stay in it until you're ready to use the milk.

This business of cooling is very important, particularly in summer when the weather is warm. It makes the milk stay sweet longer, increases the amount of

cream that rises, and maintains the flavor. First strain the milk, and then cool it as quickly as possible. (You can make a fair strainer from one or more thicknesses of fine cheesecloth, or better yet, sterile cotton between layers of cheesecloth.)

Some people use what is called a "shot-gun" can to cool milk and cream in. A shot-gun can is a deep, straight-sided can usually about 8 inches across and 12 to 20 inches high. The taller and narrower the can, of course, the quicker the milk will cool when set in cold water. Stirring helps too - stir the water at least every five or ten minutes for the first half hour.

Keep the can covered to keep out dust and flies. Then set the milk in a clean, cool place. If you haven't a "milk house," or a spring to set a box in, or some other suitable storage place, you might make a "milk pit". To make one, you simply choose a shady spot, dig an oblong hole about 2 by 4 feet, and 2 feet deep, reinforce the sides, put about six inches of gravel in the bottom, and make a neat board top. Every morning and evening pour a little water over the gravel when you set the milk in to cool.

Some people wrap a milk can or bucket with a heavy, wet cloth and set it in a shallow vessel of water in a shady place where there is a draft of air. Of course, let the cloth extend into the water. This way the cloth will stay wet as long as there is water in the vessel and the evaporating moisture will help keep the milk cool.

One of the most popular types of coolers on an "iceless" farm is the barrel cooler. This is easy and inexpensive to make, and Extension agents in your county can doubtless give you directions. The principle of the barrel cooler is a watertight barrel or box with a close-fitting lid, piped so water runs through from a pump and then into the stock watering trough. The cool water flows in at a point near the bottom and pushes the warm water out in the overflow. Some people use a

cement trough, or a half-barrel set partly in the ground and arranged between the pump and watering trough.

Never keep milk or cream in a cellar or basement unless the place is very well-ventilated. Also, remember not to store milk in coolers, ice boxes, or other places where there are strong-flavored foods, or it will absorb these flavors. Always keep milk covered to prevent dust, dirt, and insects from getting in.

Along with cooling, be sure to keep milk vessels absolutely clean. First rinse them in cold or lukewarm water - not **hot** water - then wash them thoroughly in water as hot as you can bear. Add a little common soda to the water - preferably not soap or soap powders - and scrub the vessels with a brush. Never use a dirty cloth or dish rag. Then rinse and put every utensil in boiling hot water, or better still, steam a few minutes. Shake the water out and let the vessels dry themselves. Invert them on a rack or in a suitable place, preferably in the sunlight and away from flies and dust. Leave them until time to use them again.

If you must use a strainer cloth more than once, be sure to wash it thoroughly and boil it each time. Hang it in a light airy place to dry. Milk, you see, is one of the most valuable of foods, and it must be kept pure and wholesome.

Let's resolve to keep good milk good this summer by taking every precaution of cooling and cleanliness.

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