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U. S. Department of Agriculture

HOUSEKEEPER'S CHAT

Monday, June 29, 1931.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Hurry-Up Meals." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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My Next-Door Neighbor's phone rang while she and I were having an afternoon cup of tea on the porch.

"Now who can that be so late on this lazy summer day?" she said, setting down her cup and saucer and going in to answer.

"Hello," I heard her say. "Yes, indeed. Why Clara King, are you in town? What a nice surprise party. Driving through, did you say? You and Fred and all the children? How perfectly lovely. Can't you come right out? What? Staying at the hotel? I wouldn't hear of such a thing. Nonsense. You are staying with me, of course. Yes, there's plenty of room for the children and I'll be delighted to see you. Please come straight up so you'll all have time for a little rest before dinner. Turn right in the block beyond the Court House and come straight up the hill. Stop at the white house with the big porch. Yes, that's right."

My Neighbor hung up the receiver and came back to the porch to finish her cup of tea. No one would have dreamed to see her that the whole King family would be appearing in five minutes or so. She was as calm as if she had planned a meal for them days ago and had the food all prepared.

"Look here," I said, "are you aware that you have invited a lot of hungry people to your house for dinner? Such a flock of impromptu guests would appal any housekeeper but you. But, really, you have a big job on hand and I would suggest that it was time to abandon tea and go at it. What can I do to help? Won't you let Uncle Ebenezer go to the store and bring out some supplies? What can I bring over from my house? Or shall I lay the table for you now while you plan what on earth you are going to feed the new arrivals?"

My Neighbor smiled and thanked me but urged me to sit and finish my tea. The dinner wouldn't be any trouble at all, she said. In fact, everything was about ready now.

"Ready!" I exclaimed. "What do you mean? Dinner ready for six hungry children? Why, you haven't even ordered extra groceries yet."

"I won't need any extra groceries. There is a supply waiting on my pantry shelf for just such emergencies--a collection kept there always for hurry-up meals like this. Come in and see it."

We went into my Neighbor's neat pantry. Sure-enough. There was her well-stocked emergency shelf. And, tacked up on the wall beside it, was a card listing menus for quick dinners--menus that could be worked out in a hurry from the supplies on the shelf. The meals were all very simple, but, my Neighbor believes in serving three or four delicious simple dishes that can be prepared quickly.

"I've tried all these menus out several times, so I know they are practical. Just watch and see. In a jiffy I'll have a dinner on the table to suit the hungriest or the most particular guest."

"Which of the dinners on this card are you having tonight?" I asked.

"The last is probably the best choice considering what a warm day this is. Don't you think so? Will you read it aloud so that I can set out the supplies we'll need?"

The last menu read: Chicken or Dried Beef or Diced Ham creamed on Toast; Combination Vegetable Salad; Cake; and Iced tea served with Fresh Mint and Lemon.

My Neighbor took down some jars of chicken.

"I always find it convenient to keep some canned chicken on hand, ready to serve with just a few minutes cooking after opening. Almost everyone likes chicken and the different ways of preparing it are endless. Just dipping each piece of chicken in flour and browning it in hot fat until crisp makes it almost as good as newly fried chicken. Beside the creamed chicken, which I am having tonight, canned chicken is excellent for chicken à la king, chicken salad, chicken with dumplings and so on. In any recipe calling for simmered chicken you can use chicken which has already been cooked in the can. Creamed dishes of all sorts are excellent for the main dish in a hurry-up meal. As the menu suggests, I often use creamed dried beef on toast or slivers of ham creamed. Creamed hard-cooked eggs are also good. So is creamed fish or creamed left-over meats or vegetables. What was the next item on the menu?"

"Combination vegetable salad."

"Another quick dish with a lot of possibilities. Tonight I think I'll combine lettuce, sliced tomatoes and cucumbers - I have some of these in the refrigerator - canned string beans, and perhaps a few canned diced carrots. These different colored vegetables arranged on the lettuce make a most attractive place. I like French dressing with this salad and always keep some mixed in a bottle in the refrigerator. I keep a jar of mayonnaise there, too.

"The upside-down cake I'll stir up right now, if you'll give me that can of sliced pineapple. I use your recipe for pineapple upside-down cake Aunt Sammy. It's especially good for occasions like this, because no icing is needed and it can be served immediately when it comes out of the oven. Of course, almost any cake would be suitable with this menu--any that a hostess could make quickly or happened to have on hand."

While my Neighbor made the cake, I went out and gathered some tender sprigs of mint and made the iced tea. When the cake was in the oven, the

table was set, the white sauce made in the double boiler ready for the chicken, the salad arranged on cool-looking glass plates and put in the refrigerator for a few minutes. Then the doorbell rang and I left my Neighbor in peace to entertain her guests.

How would you like to hear the other emergency menus on my Neighbor's list? All right. Here they are:

Menu number one:

Thin slices of tomato and crisp bacon and lettuce between layers of toast; Canned pear salad with grated sharp cheese over the top; Cocoa to drink. That's all. Just three parts. Simple, easy and quick but satisfying and well-balanced. That toasted sandwich is also excellent if dried beef browned in butter is used with the tomato and lettuce instead of the bacon.

Menu number two:

Salmon, tuna fish or canned chicken salad; Sliced tomatoes; Celery; Canned or sliced fresh fruit with cookies; Coffee or an iced drink.

Menu number three:

Purée of pea soup made with cream and, for special occasions, served with whipped cream on top; Mixed fruit salad; Crisp reheated rolls; and Tea, hot or cold, depending on the weather. The pea soup may be made of canned peas, pushed through a sieve, or from canned pea purée, which as every housewife knows, simply means strained peas. To make the soup, simply dilute this thick purée with enough cream or rich milk to make it the right consistency and then heat it. A dab of whipped cream on top and a sprinkle of bright red paprika makes a simple bowl of soup the most tempting dish imaginable. And cream pea soup is also very nourishing and makes an excellent main dish for this kind of a meal.

As for the rolls, before reheating them dip the fingers in milk and go over the top of each one. Then put them in the oven until a nice golden brown crisp crust is formed.

Now what supplies shall we choose for our emergency shelf, to be always prepared for friends if they happen to drop in some late afternoon? Here's a list for your notebook:

First, the canned foods. These may be products put up at home or those commercially canned. It's a good idea to keep on your shelf cans of different sizes to suit different numbers of guests and different needs. Now, first, there are the canned soups--several different kinds. Then, cans of fish, chicken and meat. Vegetables and vegetable combinations. And fruits, especially pineapple, peaches, pears and perhaps a few bright cherries for decoration. And canned milk. Excellent for cocoa and soups and many other purposes, and convenient when there isn't enough fresh milk. Then you'll want to keep a few jars of jams, jellies, preserves, pickles and olives on-hand. Beside these, there are other supplies in jars, tins,

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or packages,--dried beef, bacon, cheese, cocoa or chocolate syrup, mayonnaise, and perhaps a sandwich spread of some sort. Crackers in variety are always convenient. Keep them crisp in a tin or other tight, moisture-proof container. Cookies, either homemade or purchased, if packed in tin cans will keep fresh, even if kept a long time.

The refrigerator, as well as the pantry shelf, has its part in providing for emergency meals. Certain foods like mayonnaise, must be kept at a cold temperature or they will spoil.

Tomorrow: "Comfort in Little Things."

