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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Thursday, January 27, 1944

119
In 3 Hh
Cap. 1

QUESTION BOX

How organize school lunch?
Why canned goods release?
Chicken for civilians?

ANSWERS FROM food distribution officials
of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Y

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
One home-

Digging into the mailbag...we find questions on several topics. One homemaker asks about the school lunch program. Another wants to know why the government has been releasing canned goods. And the third has a question about chicken. Officials of the Food Distribution Administration supply the answers.

Here's the first question: "I've heard a great deal about the school lunch program, but my neighborhood doesn't seem to have one. Is there anything I can do about it?"

Yes, there's a lot you can do about it. Though FDA pays back part of the cost of the food, school lunches are essentially a community activity. So you'll want to get others in your community interested in the idea. Talk with teachers... parents...local groups...and tell them how important school lunches are. Then think over the details. You'll need a place for serving the lunch...you'll need some equipment...and you'll need people to plan, buy, cook, and serve the meal. A school lunch program could be worked out very simply in a one-room schoolhouse... or there might be a huge cafeteria to serve one or more schools. You'll adapt your program to the conditions of your own school.

As we've said...you can get help in organizing and financing your program from Food Distribution Administration. Get in touch with the nearest regional office... they're located in New York, N.Y.; Atlanta, Ga.; Dallas, Texas; Chicago, Ill.; and San Francisco, Calif. A representative from FDA will explain the details of the program to you. The program has to be sponsored by community groups.

...the local PTA or civic club can sponsor it jointly with the school board of department of education. The sponsor signs an agreement with FDA telling the kind of lunch that will be served and the number of children...and FDA agrees to pay back from two to nine cents for each lunch, depending on the type. The rest of the cost is usually covered by what the children pay...though all children must be allowed to eat whether or not they can afford the meal. You submit regular reports on the program, and FDA sends a check to the school principal.

So go to work right now...and get your community interested in starting a school lunch project. School lunches are an investment in the future. For further information, write for the pamphlet "Lunch at School". Address Department of agriculture, Washington, D.C.....and ask for "Lunch at School".

The second woman asks: "Every now and then I hear that the War Food Administration has let canners release some canned goods from stocks held for the Government. If the Government doesn't need all that canned food, why is it set aside?" Here's the answer.

Every once in a while the War Food Administration does announce the release of some canned foods from set-aside stocks. This food goes through regular trade channels to your grocery store, where you buy it...and it's a valuable addition to our supplies of certain important foods. In the early fall, for example, several million cases of canned string beans and tomatoes were released...later, nearly a million cases of catsup were transferred to civilian supplies. And most recently, a large number of cases of canned peaches and apples were released.

These set-aside stocks of foods are called "contingency reserves". Interpret that to mean "emergency reserves", if you like. It means food set aside to cover shipping losses, sudden military movements...or perhaps, unexpected success in battle that brings with it heavy demands on food supplies. And there's also the possibility of some sort of disaster that might affect the food supply of the civilian population.

Perhaps you wonder how Uncle Sam decides how much food to hold in reserve. The percentage kept in reserve is based on the amount of food we have and expect to have. You've heard of the Food Requirements and Allocations Committee...made up of various groups who have a claim on our food...the Armed Forces, civilians, and our allies. This committee studies the needs of all groups, studies the supplies of food we have, and adjusts them to each other in the best way they can. And at the same time...a certain percentage of our food supply is put aside to cover possible emergencies. The canners themselves hold this food...just as soon as the war need for it has passed, the food is released for civilians.

So remember, when you hear about this food being transferred from reserve stocks to civilian channels, it's all part of a careful plan to make most effective use of our food in wartime.

Now for the final question. "I understand that a lot of chicken has been set aside for the army. Does that mean there won't be any chicken for us civilians?"

The War Food Administration says, homemakers will still be able to buy chicken...although stocks of cold-storage chicken have been set aside for purchase by the armed forces and government agencies. Through this new set-aside, the Quartermaster Corps hopes to catch up on its needs for all the armed services...the G.I. Master Menu calls for chicken two Sundays a month for our men in uniform.

But there are several reasons why you can still expect to buy chicken. First...the set-aside doesn't apply to poultry going into storage after December 29, or to chickens sold fresh-killed. Government agencies will buy only the suitable birds that were already in storage on that day.

Also...the program of culling laying flocks should mean more poultry on the market. As you've probably heard, farmers all over the country are culling their flocks so they'll have about the same number of laying hens they had a year ago. And this may mean about 40 to 50 million pounds of chicken marketed in the next few weeks.

And here's another reason you'll see chicken on the market...the early start of the egg season. We're likely to have a record crop of eggs...there are already local abundances of eggs in some areas, and producers are getting lower prices. That may mean the producers will want to cull their flocks even more, especially in areas where they don't have too much feed...and so more poultry than usual would go to market in the late winter and early spring.

And that brings us to the bottom of today's mailbag.

