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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1942

QUESTION BOX

Doro hard water make heavy bread?
Cabbage versus onions for vitamin
Sunshine and heat hard on rayon?
Wash synthetic fabrics?



ANSWERS FROM

scientists at various
State agricultural
experiment stations,
U. S. Department of Ag-
riculture

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Questions from housewives are on the schedule again today--questions about food and questions about clothes right out of the Department of Agriculture's mailbag. The answers to the questions today come from various State experiment stations where scientists happen to have been working on these particular problems.

The first letter asks about hard water in making bread. The letter says:

"We have recently moved to a part of the country where the water is very hard. Since coming here I have had some trouble getting my yeast bread to rise as it used to. I wonder if the hard water could make any difference. Would distilled water give better bread?"

Scientists at the Wyoming Station, in their recent study of making bread at home, found that water containing about 200 parts per million hardness--that is, fairly hard water--made better bread than distilled water. Distilled water--that is, water containing no hardness at all--softened the gluten in the flour so much that the dough became sticky, and the loaf was smaller.

Other investigators have also reported that some mineral salts in the water strengthen the gluten in the flour so help in making bread light. But very hard water may toughen the gluten so hold back the action of the yeast. If your water is extremely hard, you may get better bread by not using so much water in it. You can make bread with different liquids, you know, among them milk and potato water. The Wyoming scientists reported best results with part milk and part hard water.

They say you can use skim milk, or dry or condensed milk diluted with water. They recommend milk not only because it gives better bread than bread made entirely of water, but also because it supplies some calcium which a great many families are short of. Putting milk in bread is a good way to put extra calcium in meals.

Now for the second question. A housewife wants to know how cabbage and onions compare as to vitamins. She asks: "Does my family get as much vitamin value from creamed onions at dinner as from creamed cabbage or boiled cabbage? And what about the value of sliced raw onions compared to raw cabbage salad? We store plenty of both these vegetables from the winter. But I want to use them to best advantage."

Scientists at the Montana Station say you can count on cabbage---raw cabbage especially, but also cooked cabbage---to supply two very important vitamins, but you can't count much on onions. Cabbage is rich in vitamin C--the vitamin you need every day and the vitamin many people run short of in winter. And cabbage is good in vitamin B-one, another vitamin that many people go shy on the year around. Onions contain rather small amounts of these important vitamins. Onions are good food, of course, and especially useful for the flavor they give to meals. But they aren't up to cabbage in vitamin value. The Montana scientists report that cabbage, fresh or stored, raw or cooked, is a good source of vitamin B-one and an excellent source of vitamin C, but onions are low in these vitamins.

From questions about food let's turn to a couple of questions about clothes. Here's a letter from a woman who is going to a tropical climate. She wants to take clothes that will stand a lot of sunshine and heat. She writes: "Can you tell me how sunlight and heat affect rayon. I have several rayon dresses, white and colored, I should like to take. But I know how sunshine weakens silk and turns white silk yellow. And I know that some rayon won't stand up under a hot iron."

Scientists at the Kansas Experiment Station have recently studied synthetic fabrics. They say that sunshine and heat do have some affect on the color and strength of certain kinds of rayon. But this effect is slight compared to the damaging effect on pure silk. Sunlight does not turn white rayon yellow as it does white silk. Even heating in an oven, as the Kansas scientists did, does much less damage to most rayons than to silk. So the Kansas workers advise: "Rayons would be more serviceable than silk where fabric must be subjected to a great deal of light and heat." (Of course, cottons have long been favorite materials for the Tropics.)

Here is another letter asking about rayon. A housewife says: "I have had considerable trouble washing washable rayons. I have bought rayon dresses labeled washable which have stretched out of shape in the first washing. Perhaps you can give me directions for safely washing rayon."

The Kansas workers say many ready-to-wear garments of rayon carry a tag telling just how to wash the fabric. It is wise to follow such directions exactly. But here is how to launder most synthetic fabrics safely. Use mild soap and lukewarm water. Dissolve the soap thoroughly in the water before the fabric goes in. Squeeze the sudsy water through the garment. Never twist, rub, wring, or handle roughly. Rayon is weak when wet--gets strong when dry. Rinse in lukewarm water. Squeeze out moisture; don't wring. Roll in a towel just long enough to take out excess moisture. Then unroll and stretch the garment to its proper size and shape. Dry it flat. Never hang rayon on sharp wires or pegs; never let rayon garments blow in the wind. That may stretch them out of shape. Press when nearly dry on the wrong side with a warm, not hot, iron.

Listen for more questions and answers on Thursday.

