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# homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE

Thursday, September 10, 1942

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

ANSWERS FROM:

Home economists of the U.S.  
Department of Agriculture

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in 3Hh  
QUESTION BOX:

How make over dresses for fall?  
Stew Secrets?  
How cook parsnips?

--ooOoo--

The fall wardrobe claims first place in most women's attention at this time of the year, - only, instead of going shopping, a great many women are trying to make what they already have do, and are asking for help in remodeling garments. Clothing specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture have put together a number of suggestions on freshening up and making over old clothes. You can get these suggestions by writing directly to the Bureau of Home Economics, or to your State clothing leader in the State Extension service.

Meantime, as an example of things to do, take the answer to this question in today's mail bag. "My two daughters and I want to get all the good we can out of the clothes we have on hand now. Many of the dresses look pretty hopeless. They are faded, worn, out of style, too short, too tight, or have spots or dams where they show. Havy you any suggestions?"

Sometimes you can put two old dresses together and come out with one good new one, the clothing specialists say. Look in the pattern books and fashion magazines and stores for ideas and designs that might fit the things you have on hand. You often can dye faded material. Some fabrics look better if you turn them and use them wrong side out. When you take garments apart, pull the threads, or rip carefully with a razor blade. Brush off the lint from old soams. Press wool or silk fabrics on the wrong side with a pressing cloth. Press frequently as you go along after you start a make-over.

Look for weak, worn spots and stains, and plan to cut around them if you can.



or hide them. You can hide them by covering with an appliqué in contrasting color, matched somewhere else to carry out the design. But if you add trimming, be sure it is in keeping with the garment, and a good color to combine with the dress you are reclaiming.

Try on each old garment and study it before you do much ripping. Sometimes you can get rid of a loose, sagged look by padding the top of the sleeve a little; or taking a couple of little pin tucks at the back of the neck to make it fit better, or you can raise the skirt higher at the waist; or take in seams at the side. When a dress is too tight, you can sometimes slash a tight section and set in a piece, such as a yoke or panel, in the same or in contrasting or harmonizing material. Very often, if you can't find an exact pattern to help you do this, you can pin-fit the new part right on the person who is going to wear the dress.

Very often it's the neckline that dates a dress. Very often you can fix that with a fresh washable collar, jobot or long draped scarf. You can make a number of these little accessories yourself with very little work, out of bits of organdy, linen, piqué, and other materials, and trim them with lace or handwork.

You can often combine the good parts of two dresses that look well. A top from one - a skirt from another or sleeves, belt, and patch pockets from one dress may make colorful trimming for another. But be sure, the materials you combine in such ways as these are strong enough to stand reasonable wear after you have done all the work.

Nowadays everyone is interested in thrifty meat dishes like good stew. "How much meat should I buy for a stew to serve 5 or 6 persons?", is one question in a letter today.

Allow about 2 pounds of lean raw meat without bone for a good all-meat stew for 6 persons, the home economists say. For a stew with vegetables, you can use less meat, of course, but the more meat you have, the more nourishing and tasty the stew.



Here's another question about making stew: "How can I get the stew gravy to have a rich taste?" The answer is: Flour and then brown the meat in fat before you add water. And brown the vegetables a few minutes in well-flavored fat. Vegetables are at their best when you cook them quickly, so don't add them until the meat is almost - if not quite - tender.

Still another question: "Should I start a stew with hot or cold water?"

Answer: It doesn't matter whether the water is cold or hot. Add enough water to cover the meat, and simmer slowly until the meat is tender. Don't boil. Many cooks like to add sliced onion for savory flavor. If the stew is not thick enough by the time the meat is tender, mix 1 or 2 tablespoonfuls of flour to a smooth paste with a little cold water. To the paste add several spoonfuls of the hot stew and then stir the mixture into the rest of the stew and cook until smooth and thick. Season to taste with salt and pepper, and parsley if you have it.

You can serve stew in different attractive ways. Serve it in a border of rice potatoes, or flaky rice, or with dumplings; serve it as filling for hot biscuits in meat shortcake; scalloped with spaghetti or macaroni; or as a meat pie under a lid of biscuit or pie crust or mashed potatoes.

Our next letter is from a woman who asks how to cook parsnips "so the the family will like them."

Have you ever tried boiling parsnips whole? Then split them lengthwise, and strip out the tough center. Dip the halves in flour and fry until they are golden brown in a small amount of fat. Or mash the parsnips, season them, make little cakes, and fry.

Another way to serve the boiled parsnips is in a white parsnips is in a white sauce. Or you can scallop them in a shallow baking dish, with thin white sauce poured over them, and buttered crumbs on top. These are all good ways of serving parsnips.

More questions and answers next Thursday.

