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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

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QUESTION BOX:

Tone down jar ring odor?
How make chocolate meringue?
What hard eggs turn green?

ANSWERS FROM home economists of U.S. Department Of Agriculture.

The homemakers of the nation continue to fill the mailbag with questions for the home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture to answer. Today homemakers want to know how to tone down the rubbery odor of some jar rings.... how to make chocolate meringue...and why the yolks of hard-cooked eggs sometimes turn green.

Let's begin with the jar rings. The letter says, "Is there some way to tone down the rubber odor that some of the jar rings have?"

To help remove this odor, and any specks of rubber dust, the home economists recommend scrubbing the rings with a brush and hot soapy water, and then boiling them for 10 minutes in water and baking soda. Use a quart of water and a tablespoon of soda for each dozen rings, and make a fresh solution of soda and water for each lot of rings. After boiling, rinse well.

These wartime rubber rings are made of reclaimed and synthetic rubber, and, as many homemakers discovered last year, they don't have the stretch of the old-time rings. Put them on while they're still hot and wet, because they're more pliable then. If you're using a closure for which you put the ring on the shoulder of the jar, put the ring on before you fill the jar. If you're using the 3-piece closure, where the ring goes on the glass lid, put the ring on after the jar's filled, just before you put the lid on.

I'll repeat: for jars where the ring goes on the shoulder of the jar, put on the ring before filling the jar. For jars where the ring goes on the lid, put on the ring after filling the jar. And have the ring hot and wet, so it will

stretch more easily. You know, of course, the ring that goes on a glass lid is smaller than the kind that goes on the shoulder of a jar.

Well, from rubber rings we'll go on to two questions dealing with eggs-- and of course, you know, eggs are abundant right now. First we'll hear from a homemaker who says, "Not long ago, I ate some vanilla cream pie that had a chocolate meringue. I'd like to know how to make this meringue. Can other flavors besides chocolate be added to meringue? Another thing I'd like to know is how to cook meringue on top of the stove, instead of baking it,"

Let's see, now, where to begin answering this letter. First of all, let's take the chocolate meringue. For a meringue using 2 egg whites, all you do is mix a tablespoon of cocoa with the last 2 tablespoons of sugar that you put into the whites. Beat this cocoa-sugar mixture into the whites a tablespoonful at a time, just as you'd beat in plain sugar. Chocolate meringue makes a nice touch for pies and also for puddings that need a bit of dressing up.

You can also add other flavorings to meringue-- for example, an orange meringue is an unusual topping for desserts. To make it, use 1 teaspoon of orange juice for each egg white, and add the juice just before you beat the whites. After you've beaten them until they stand in soft peaks, beat in the sugar, using about 2 tablespoons for each egg white, and adding the sugar 1 tablespoonful at a time. Then, last of all, fold in finely grated orange rind, suiting the amount to your own taste.

Now for the question about cooking meringue on top of the stove, to save the need of heating the oven. Prepare the meringue as for baking, then drop it in mounds into a pan of simmering water. Cover the pan and let it simmer 10 to 15 minutes. Then remove the meringue immediately from the water.

Last on our list today comes this letter: "When I hard-boil eggs, they're often tough, and I notice the yolks usually turn green outside, and the shell sticks to the egg-white so it's hard to shell the egg without breaking it. What causes this?"

You'll notice this homemaker speaks of "boiling" the eggs, and the egg specialists say this is probably responsible for her difficulties. It's always advisable to cook eggs at a low temperature, whether you're hard-cooking them or using them in any other way. Eggs are a protein food, and low cooking temperatures keep proteins from shrinking and getting tough.

Egg yolks contain iron and sulfur and when you cook an egg at high temperature for a long period, the iron and sulfur working together form the dark green layer on the yolk. If you cook the egg at a low temperature— simmering it instead of boiling— there's less chance the yolk will turn green. The egg specialists say that a simmering temperature, instead of boiling, also seems to reduce the tendency of the membrane inside the eggshell to stick to the egg white.

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