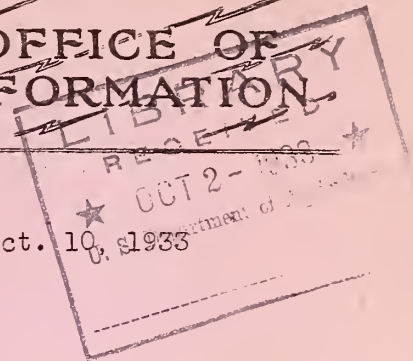


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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

TUESDAY, Oct. 10, 1933

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "Questions and Answers." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics and the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils, U.S.D.A.

Letters and letters and letters in the mailbag today. The first one is from a lady who says that the pickles she made just this season are already getting soft and mushy. She says they actually have a "slippery feeling."

That's bad news. I'm sorry to hear about those pickles. For the specialists tell me that spoilage bacteria are responsible when pickles get in this state. Perhaps you've noticed that the pickles on top of the crock often become soft, if you don't have enough brine to cover them. Those that are exposed above the protective brine spoil in a very short time. Another cause of spoilage is when the brine is too weak--contains too little salt to preserve the pickles properly. Be sure that all your pickles are well covered with brine and be sure your brine contains enough salt. Brine may be diluted in different ways. Maybe you have it just the right strength to start with, but as it draws the juice out of the cucumbers, it becomes weaker. Add more salt each day at the rate of 1 pound for every 10 pounds of cucumbers. This is necessary to maintain the strength of the brine and prevent spoilage.

Now, what to do about those pickles that have already become soft, mushy, or slippery? I'm sorry to report that nothing can be done. They're just plain spoiled.

While we're on the subject of pickle troubles, we might mention a few others that housewives write about every season. For example, what makes pickles hollow in the center? The specialists say the trouble may be with the way you pickled them or the trouble may be with the cucumbers themselves. When a cucumber hasn't developed properly, it may be hollow after pickling or if cucumbers stand for some time after you have gathered them from the garden, this may also cause hollow pickles. Be sure to use firm, solid cucumbers and use them freshly picked. Perhaps you've noticed that hollow pickles often become "Floaters." Sound cucumbers, properly cured, never float. But hollow pickles aren't a total loss like soft pickles. They aren't spoiled. They may not be attractive to serve whole, but you can chop them up for mixed pickles, relishes and salads.

Still another pickle question. What makes pickles shrivel, wrinkly and become tough? Answer: Too strong a pickling solution. Shriveling may be the result of placing cucumbers immediately into very strong salt or sugar solutions or even in very strong vinegars. If you must use a strong solution for pickling, first get your cucumbers used to it. Break them in gradually by putting them first in a weaker solution and gradually increasing its strength.

Shriveling often occurs in sweet pickles as a result of too much sugar.

In brief, here's the story about pickles. They get soft in too weak brine. They get shriveled or wrinkled in too strong a solution of salt or sugar. They become hollow if they're not sound and firm all the way through to begin with or if you let them stand and wait before putting them in the brine.

Now a question about sauer kraut. Several listeners report that they had trouble making their kraut keep last year. Well, the specialists say that the most common cause of failure in making sauer kraut is too much salt. The proper quantity is two and a half per cent of salt by weight of the cabbage packed. If the weather is warm when you're making kraut, better use a little more salt, but never more than three per cent. And when you apply the salt, be sure to spread it on evenly. The red streaks which sometimes appear in sauer kraut, come from an uneven distribution of salt.

By the way, several people have been asking about the turnip sauer kraut which specialists in the Department of Agriculture developed a few years ago. Turnip kraut naturally won't take the place of cabbage kraut, which has been a favorite for many years. But the new kraut is very appetizing and will add variety to your winter diet. If you have turnips of the Purple Top variety in your garden, save some of them to make this turnip kraut. If you want directions for making it, write to the Department of Agriculture at Washington, D. C. As I've often told you, these specialists are glad to help you out in any way with the problem of preserving food for the family this winter. Many families report that they lived in comfort last winter as the result of putting the garden surplus on the pantry shelves.

By the way, after our talk on storage yesterday, W.R.B. came in with a postscript. He suggests that you'll find that storage room in the cellar twice as convenient if you put up shelves in quantity to hold not only the stored vegetables but also many of the jars of canned food. But if you have canned your foods in tin, of course the damp cellar won't do for storage. The cans would rust.

A lady who is making over some wool clothing for her family, writes for some advice on pressing. Lots to say on the subject of successful pressing. Next time you go by a tailor's shop, drop in and watch him at this job. You can get some first-hand help that way. For home pressing, you need a smooth, well-padded, steady ironing board; a good iron; and some clean pressing cloths about a yard square. Heat from the iron and moisture from the pressing cloth make the steam that rejuvenates your fabric. The heavier the material you are pressing, the more steam you need and the warmer the iron you use. For pressing very heavy wool, use a muslin pressing cloth because it will hold more moisture than thinner material and thus produce more steam to penetrate the fabric. For thin wool cloth, you need less steam, so cheesecloth is suitable and you can use a cooler iron. But some sort of damp cloth is necessary for all pressing. This is the only way to get an even amount of moisture and to prevent shining or scorching the material. Good pressing depends partly on the way you use your iron. Keep it moving from side to side. Never let it stand on the material. Never press in a straight line. Be sure the fabric is thoroughly dry in one area of the garment before you move on to the next.

Tomorrow we'll talk about fighting fire at home.

