homemakers' chat
FOR USE IN NON-COMMERCIAL BROADCASTS ONLY
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Thursday, February 5, 1942.

QUESTION BOX:
How start community garden?
Tomatoes versus citrus fruit?
Rayon or cotton for children's underwear?
How cook with dried eggs?

ANSWERS FROM:
Home economists and extension workers of the U.S.Department of Agriculture

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Two food questions, one fabric inquiry, and a query about community gardens make up our quota of questions for today. Home economists and extension workers of the U. S. Department of Agriculture answer these questions. Let's take up the question about gardens first. The letter says:

"A group of women in our town are interested in starting a community garden in the spring. Will you give us some advice on starting such a garden?"

Extension workers have found that community gardens are very helpful in some areas but are not needed everywhere. So before you go very far with your garden plans, better make sure a community garden is really needed. Here are some questions to answer first: Is there any shortage of farm-produced vegetables in your region? If there are plenty of home gardens in your locality, what use would be made of the vegetables grown in a community garden? Also, who would do the work? Seeds and fertilizer are precious this year and it would be wasteful to raise anything not actually used, or to plant a garden that would later deteriorate for lack of care.

However, if a community garden would help families in your town to improve their diets by having more of the fresh vegetables they need, the first step is to form an advisory garden committee. This committee may already exist in connection with the local defense council. The committee will then draw up plans for the whole garden project, based on a survey of the nutritional needs of the community.

The committee can also promote the garden idea generally through newspapers, posters, lectures and local meetings of different kinds, to interest everyone in the town in the garden, and in supplying seeds, fertilizer, tools or money to buy them. Subcommittees may look about for suitable land, assign plots to workers, decide on what and how much to plant, and get trained persons to supervise the work throughout the season. (You can usually get detailed information on gardening from our State Extension Service.) And then, someone must also take the responsibility for seeing that all surplus is stored, preserved, or used in the community.

All in all a community garden presents a number of problems that deserve your careful thought before you turn a spadeful of earth.

Now for a letter from a teacher who is concerned about her family's diet. "Please tell me this," she writes. "Will canned or fresh tomatoes take the place of citrus fruit in our diet? How much tomato juice should each of us drink every day?"

Home economists of the Department reply that both tomatoes and citrus fruits are excellent foods for vitamin C. You can substitute tomato juice or canned tomatoes for citrus fruits, but you need about twice as much tomato juice as orange juice to get the same amount of vitamin C. For example, according to the new yardstick of nutrition, an adult would need about 3 cups of canned tomatoes or 4 cups of tomato juice to get all the vitamin C he needs in a day. Fresh tomatoes out of your garden are a little richer in vitamin C than canned tomatoes. So 2 cups of fresh tomatoes are enough to supply your daily needs of vitamin C. One tall glass of orange juice would be enough.

But more than likely you'll get your vitamin C from several different sources every day. You won't have to rely on tomato juice or tomatoes alone,- or on citrus fruit alone. You'll naturally eat other foods that contribute this vitamin. You'd get some from cabbage. Raw cabbage is excellent for vitamin C,- so is sauerkraut.

You'd get some more from other raw salad greens. You'd get some from potatoes,- and some from fresh or canned fruits other than citrus. You get more vitamin C from any raw vegetable or fruit than you do from the same food cooked or canned. So, if you have a variety of foods containing vitamin C, you wouldn't need quite so much tomato juice or canned tomato.

Our next question is about children's underwear. "Which is more durable for children's knitted underwear,- rayon or cotton?"

Tests made by the Department's home economists indicate that cotton is more durable than rayon for the strenuous use boys give their union suits. The tests showed that girls' vests get less strain than boys' union suits, but that girls' vests of rayon lengthen in the wash, and eventually need more mending than those made of cotton. All the cotton tested stood more laundering than the rayon. A little girl could get along on 2 cotton or 3 rayon knitted vests a year. Boys needs average almost 4 cotton union suits or 6 rayon union suits a year.

Another letter-writer has read about dried eggs sent by this country to Britain. She asks, "Are dried eggs used like fresh eggs in cooking?"

Yes, the home economists say, you can use dried eggs like fresh eggs in cooking after you have restored the water that was evaporated in drying them. These scientists have worked out a number of recipes using dried eggs. For breakfast you can scramble them or make omelets. You can use them in soft or baked custards or custard-like puddings. You can put them in baked foods like cookies or cake. The reason we send the eggs to Britain in dried form is, of course, to conserve shipping space, and because the dried eggs keep well and there is less loss from breakage.

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