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homemakers' chat

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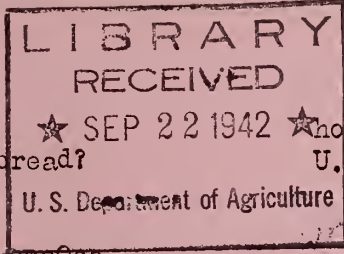


U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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QUESTION BOX

Raw potato to clarify fat?
Malt extract instead of sugar in bread?
How brine beans?



Tuesday, August 11, 1942

ANSWERS FROM

home economists of the
U. S. Department of Agriculture

Again this week the mailbag is full up and running over with questions about food.

The first letter says: "The present campaign for saving fat reminds me of my grandmother. She seemed to know all the thrifty ways to save fat for use in cooking. I remember that she used to try out fat--that is, make it clear for use again, by cooking raw potato in it. But I have forgotten just how she used the potato. Perhaps you can refresh my memory on this old-time method of clarifying fat".

The answer to this question comes from home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. They say the old-time method of clarifying fat was this:

First, render the fat by cutting it in small pieces, heating over slow heat until all the fat was melted, and then straining it through a fine sieve or cheesecloth. Now to clarify the fat with potato, put this strained warm fat back on the stove, add slices of raw potato, and heat the potato and fat together over low heat until the fat stops cribbling. As the potato cooks, it draws to it the fine particles of food left in the fat, and also foreign odors and flavors. After heating a few minutes, strain out the potato. The fat should be clear.

Home economists who have recently tested this and other methods of clarifying fat report better results from clarifying with water than with raw potato.

Clarifying with water is easy. Just add water to the strained fat--about equal quantities of fat and water; then boil the water and fat together. Strain through cheesecloth and let cool. When the fat is cold, it will form a hard layer on top

of the water so that you can just lift it off. The water will take up most of the food particles and foreign odors and flavors that you want to get out of the fat. A few particles of food may cling to the bottom of the hardened fat, but you can easily scrape them off.

Before you go to the trouble of clarifying fat with either potato or water, be sure clarifying is necessary. Very often all you need to do is to render the fat--that is, to heat and strain it. That is all you need to do for the fat you turn into the butcher for war salvage--the fat that will go for making explosives. And heating and straining is all you need to do for most cooking purposes. For deep-fat frying, of course, you have to have clear fat so you must clarify used fat before you put it in the frying kettle. But most fat that is left over in the kitchen--the drippings, the bacon grease, the trimmings from the roast or ham--most of this fat won't do for deep-fat frying anyway. It is very useful for making stews, seasoning lean meat and vegetables. But for these uses it doesn't need clarifying. The home economists find that clarified fat doesn't seem to keep as well as fat that has been simply heated and strained. So why go to the bother of clarifying unless you're sure it's necessary?

Let's leave fats now and turn to a question about putting up snap beans. The letter says: "Up until this summer I have always put up snap beans by canning under pressure. This year I'm short of jars, so I should like to preserve some of my beans with salt--the old-fashioned method of brining. Please give me directions."

Here is a recipe for brining snap beans. Use only fresh beans of green or wax varieties. Snap off the ends of the beans, wash the beans and pack them in an earthenware jar with alternate layers of salt. Weigh the salt and beans first. Use one part salt to 10 parts beans by weight. Use some sort of heavy weight to hold the beans down in the jar. After 2 days add enough brine to fill the jar.

To make the brine use 10 parts of water to 1 part salt. Cover the beans with chard leaves. If a slight mold forms on top, skin the moldy top off. The rest of the beans will be all right. Keep the earthenware jar of brine and beans in as cool a place as possible, of course. If the beans keep properly they will come out of the brine firm though slightly dark in color.

Now maybe you're wondering about cooking brined beans. Here's how. First, soak them overnight in fresh water. Then cook just as you do fresh beans.

Last question: "Can you give me some help on cutting down my meat bill? I'd like to know how to prepare some cheap meat dishes."

The answer to this question is a new bulletin published by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. This bulletin is called "Meat for Thrifty Meals." It is Farmers' Bulletin No. 1908. And you can get a copy by writing to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. and asking for it. Copies are free while the free supply lasts. Once more--"Meat for Thrifty Meals," Bulletin No. 1908.

That finishes the questions and answers today. Listen for more on Thursday.

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