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Homemakers' chat

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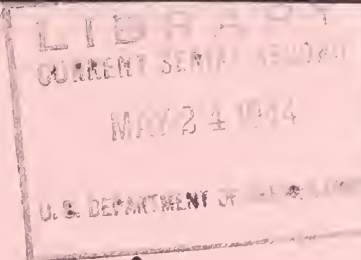
U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Tuesday, May 23, 1944.

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QUESTION BOX:

What is thiamine?
Food value of berries?
When collect milkweed pods?



ANSWERS FROM:

Nutritionists and soil conservationists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture

Homemakers seem more than ever interested in good nutrition during these days of planning Victory gardens, getting ready to can fruits and vegetables, and counting out ration points. The mail always brings in question about food values, and this week we have several. The first one is about thiamine--the second about the food value of berries. Then we have an inquiry about milkweed pods. The specialists in the U. S. Department of Agriculture are ready, as usual, with helpful answers.

Here's what the nutritionists have to say in answer to the first question: "What is thiamine? I often hear it mentioned as something important in the diet."

Thiamine is one of a large family of vitamins grouped under the alphabetical letter B. It is also called B-one, but, thiamine, its chemical name, is the popular term. Thiamine has been nicknamed the morale vitamin, because it helps steady the nerves---helps you to keep cheerful--with a stiff upper lip. People who get too little thiamine in food often have poor appetites, slow heart rate, and feel tired.

You get thiamine in small amounts from a large variety of foods, if you eat well-balanced meals, and these small amounts ordinarily will add up to the amount of thiamine you need in a day. The body cannot store large amounts of B-one or thiamine, so you need to get a constant supply to make sure of having enough. Nursing and expectant mothers need more thiamine than other people.

The best sources of thiamine among animal products are lean pork, chicken,

kidney, and liver. But, you can also get thiamine from egg yolk, lean beef, lean mutton, brains, fish roe, codfish, salmon, and sardines. Among vegetables, green peas and green lima beans rank best for thiamine, but potatoes, most green vegetables and various others help to keep up the supply of this vitamin. The branny outer parts of whole grain cereals are rich in thiamine--that's one reason why nutritionists urge people to eat whole grain breads and cereals, rather than breads made with refined flour or highly refined cereal foods. One reason for enriching flour and bread has been to add the thiamine which refining removes.

Since thiamine is one of the vitamins that dissolve into the cooking water of vegetables, make some use of this liquid to get all the thiamine you can.

Next we have a question about berries. "What food values do we get from berries---especially blackberries, gooseberries, raspberries, strawberries and blueberries?"

In general berries give you vitamin C, and some berries, such as blackberries and raspberries---contain vitamin A. The nutritionists explain that we eat berries chiefly for their refreshing, somewhat acid flavors, and their vitamin values. Even when they taste quite sour, as gooseberries do, berries contain some fruit sugar, so they add a few calories to the day's quota, if you are counting calories.

To get the most vitamin value from any berries, especially vitamin C, eat them fresh and uncooked, as soon as you can after picking. Vitamin C is easily destroyed by heat and by exposure to air. So a berry shortcake gives you more vitamin C than a berry pie, unless you make it without cooking the berries. Ripe raw strawberries are the richest of all the berries for vitamin C.

Plant scientists are constantly working to improve the eating qualities of various berries, and also their shipping qualities, so the berries can be safely sent long distances from where they grow. These scientists have found several species of blackberries and raspberries that are exceptionally good for freezing.

But to savor any berries at their best and get the most good from them, eat them as soon as you can after picking, whether they're wild or home-grown.

Speaking of wild berries reminds us that the family berry pickers this month or next may happen to notice some patches of milkweed also growing wild, and that brings up the next question. "Where can I find out about collecting milkweed pods for military uses? I understand the floss is wanted to fill life jackets instead of kapok. Is there any particular month for gathering milkweed pods? And what do you do with the pods when you have collected them?"

Milkweed grows wild in abundance in about 21 states in the northeast and north central part of the United States, and to some extent in several other States. You can find out what your State is doing about collecting milkweed pods from several places. Your school authorities, or your country agricultural agent, the War Board, or the local Soil Conservation Service office may be able to give you detailed information about how you can help in your county. They may also be able to tell you what prices the pods bring, where buying stations are located, the dates for collecting the pods, where to get empty bags for filling, and how to take care of the filled bags until you sell them.

Anyone who wants to, of course, can pick milkweed pods, but last year school children did most of the work. The firms that handle the pods pay by the bag for them. Hundreds of boys and girls earned money toward their war bonds as they helped gather much-needed war material.

Early September is the proper time to pick pods in most of the States where milkweed grows. However, picking should not be started until the seeds begin to turn brown, and it must be finish before the pods open up and let the floss blow away. But now is the time to locate patches of milkweed plants in your general neighborhood, and if necessary, to ask the owners of the fields where the plant grows, for permission to enter and collect the pods. If there is a large quantity of milkweed, you may want to organize a little "company" of boys and girls to do the picking and drying.

More questions and answers on nutrition subjects on Thursday.

