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Homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Thursday, February 26, 1942

QUESTION BOX:

How save vitamins?
How make vinegar?
Ways to use stale bread?

ANSWERS FROM:

Home economists and chem-
ists of the U. S. Departmen
of Agriculture

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Questions for today are on avoiding waste. One is on saving vitamins in cooking; another on making vinegar at home to use fruit not worth canning; and one on using stale bread. Home economists and chemists of the Department of Agriculture answer them.

The first homemaker asks: "Please tell me how to save vitamins in cooking." And the home economists reply:

Don't stir air into foods while they are cooking. The oxygen in the air destroys some of the vitamin value in the foods. For the same reason, don't put hot foods through a sieve. And don't chop fruits or raw vegetables for salads until just before serving. Use all vegetables and fruits as soon as you can after they come from market.

Put vegetables into boiling water to cook, and bring the water back to the boiling point as fast as possible, because the interval before boiling begins is when vegetables lose the most vitamin value. Use as little water as possible, and use the liquor you drain off when you dish up the vegetable. Better still, concentrate it and serve it along with the vegetable.

Don't fry foods that are valuable for vitamins. Don't put vegetables into stew when you start cooking the meat, since stewing meat takes much longer to cook. Put the vegetables in when the meat is nearly done.

Start cooking frozen vegetables while they are still frozen. And serve raw frozen foods immediately after thawing, or they lose vitamins.

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So much for saving vitamins. Now let's turn to a question on making vinegar. It's from a homemaker who says she uses a good deal of vinegar in the course of a year, and thinks she could make it at home from the inferior fruits that aren't suitable for canning. Also she says: "I've heard that you can make vinegar from other foods besides fruit. Where can I get reliable instructions for making vinegar from different foods?"

One answer to that last question is: Write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., for a copy of Farmers' Bulletin 1424, called "Making Vinegar in the Home and on the Farm." Making vinegar isn't hard, the chemists say, but it takes certain equipment which the bulletin tells about.

You can make vinegar out of almost any food that contains enough sugar. For example, if you have honey you can't sell, or honey washings, or maple sirup skimmings, or even scorched maple sirup, you can make it into vinegar. Apples that have been frosted or frozen will still make good vinegar if you press them right away before they have a chance to spoil. When you have inferior fruits on hand, just cut out the poor spots and make the rest into vinegar.

Of course, in the fruit season, you have a choice of almost any fruit. Raspberries, pears, peaches, plums, fresh prunes, and persimmons are some of the best vinegar-makers. Grape juice is also good, although it may make a dark vinegar.

Our next question is on saving stale bread. That's a problem many of us have. The writer asks: "How can I make good use of accumulated bread without serving any more bread puddings?"

Well, the home economists have several suggestions. How about serving that good old British standby once in a while-- hot bread and milk? Nothing better for people who come home tired, wet, or cold. And you don't need fresh bread to make it. Just pour a cupful of scalding hot milk over a slice of stale bread or toast, dot with butter, add a few grains of salt, and there you are. Or, if you like,

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let the bread cook in the hot milk a minute and then serve your "pick-me-up". Or have it for a bedtime snack,- especially for the elderly- or a breakfast cereal that's different, or a simple luncheon dish.

Another suggestion for using stale bread is to make oven-dried toast, delicately browned, crisp, brittle. Don't have the oven very hot for this. Brown the bread in slices or in sticks, to go with soup, salad, tomato juice,- in fact, to eat at any stage in any meal where you would serve some kind of bread. You can store oven-dried bread in a tin with a tight lid, like crackers. And you can use it in place of toast under creamed chicken or fish or chipped beef or mushrooms. Or welsh rabbit.

Oven-dry the broken pieces of bread and heels, if not too dark, and then roll them out on a bread board until you have fine crumbs. Sift, and store in a glass jar covered with cheesecloth. These are the crumbs you sprinkle over scalloped dishes. If you want to use crumbs to cover croquettes, eggplant, veal chops, fish, and so on. But better not use crusts for crumbs, since they brown too quickly and too much.

Stale bread also goes into stuffings and scalloped vegetable dishes. Or into fruit scallops, including apple and rhubarb betty. Stale bread makes good French toast -- slices of bread dipped in egg and milk, and then delicately fried in a very little butter or other good-flavored fat. Serve unsweetened French toast with meat, or use it as a dessert with sirup, honey or jelly. Almost as good as waffles, and less trouble.

There you have at least half a dozen suggestions for using up stale bread, and bread pudding wasn't even mentioned! Nevertheless, as an afterthought,--have you tried chocolate bread pudding? That's really different.

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