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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, February 24, 1933.

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Subject: "Food After Fifty." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics,
U. S. D. A.

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Grandfather and grandmother get the attention today. We're going to talk about meals not for the youngsters, but for the oldsters. Many of us homemakers have the job of planning meals to suit several different ages so we need to know not only the right food for the young people in the family, but also the right food for the old people.

Old age is not just a matter of years. It's a condition of the body. Some people are old at fifty. Others seem young at seventy. It's all a matter of keeping the body fit. And food is a most important item here. The first twenty or twenty-five years is a period of growth. After that comes a long period during which the body tends to maintain a constant weight. If the load of work is adjusted to the capacity of the human machine, and if the machine gets the proper amount and kind of food, conditions for a long life and many years of efficiency are ideal. But everyone of us has to remember to stoke his own furnace correctly day by day.

Scientists experimenting with animal feeding have shown that old-age symptoms, such as a decline in vigor, can be modified by diet. Animals with a well-balanced diet, keep their youthful vigor much longer than their brothers and sisters who lack certain foods. The same is true of human beings. Many of our ills, both large and small, are due to diet lacks. A lot of us struggle along through life, dragging through our work, not really sick but not up to par. People like this never know the fine sensation of living life abundantly and efficiently. And old age is likely to come to them early. We all need to consider our food as a source of good health and well being -- not just a means of keeping alive.

In later life many of our troubles come from infections of one sort or another. We realize today that a diet low in vitamins, especially vitamin A, makes people liable to infection. Plenty of vitamins will build up your resistance. We also need a proper supply of minerals for good health and long life. Our daily food, from babyhood on, has a lot to do with keeping fit at fifty-- and sixty and seventy.

How much should a middle-aged person eat? And what should he eat? Muscular activity begins to decrease at this period of life. The strenuous exercise that a man of thirty carries on grows less as he grows older. As we decrease our muscular activity, we need less energy food. But often our habits of eating are still strong and our appetite persists. Along in the forties John may give up that daily game of tennis in favor of some more moderate exercise, yet he may demand the same hearty meals he's been used to all his life. This is the reason that so many middle-aged people gain in weight. Middle-aged and elderly people, when they settle down to a more quiet life, need to watch their

weight and cut down calories. Those extra pounds are a sure indication that they have more fuel food than they need.

Specialists at the Bureau of Home Economics have worked out a weekly low-cost food budget for an elderly, inactive couple in their seventies. They have found that such a couple need only a half or two-thirds as much as they would have needed in their twenties or thirties. The elderly couple will use more milk and eggs than the young couple, but less of every other kind of food.

For a long life and a happy one count on a simple sensible diet, greatly simplified in late middle age. The specialists suggest that most people, from middle age on, should eat less fat--less fried foods, rich sauces and pastries. They need less sugars and starches also, for these are energy foods. And they will do well to eat meat only in moderation. Milk, eggs, fruits and vegetables are some of the best foods for this time of life.

After middle age, when true old age sets in, other food problems arise. The internal processes of an elderly person slow up. Therefore, caring for excess food becomes difficult and overeating may be dangerous. From sixty on, the body tends to lose rather than to gain weight. Aged people are likely to lead a very sedentary life, so a small amount of food is all they need. Hot rather than cold food is especially good for them in chilly weather. Aged people who have trouble chewing fruits and vegetables may prefer fruit juice or stewed pulp. Their vegetables may be well cooked and mashed, or strained and served in soup. In many ways the diet for the aged is like that for children during their first five years or so. It consists of milk, eggs, fruit juices, cooked vegetables, cereal puddings and strained vegetables. Many elderly people are more comfortable if they eat oftener than three times a day. A glass of milk, a cracker or some fruit in the early morning--if they wake then; a light breakfast later; a cup of tea or broth about four in the afternoon, and hot milk or hot broth at bedtime--reinforcement between meals such as these keep up the energy during the day and make for better sleep at night.

Here's a simple dinner menu planned for people of this age. Tomato cheese fondue for the main dish. (That's a new dish. Some time early next week I'll give you the recipe) Tomato cheese fondue; Flaky boiled rice; Spinach; Fruit salad; Cinnamon Toast and Hot tea.

