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Housekeepers' Chat

Library, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture
Wed., Jan. 20, 1932

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Food Makes a Difference." Menu and recipes from Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletin available: "Food for Children."

--ooOoo--

Yesterday's mail brought me a lot of nice letters -- some so interesting that I'd like to answer them personally. One of them deserves an immediate reply, and with your permission, I'll read the letter aloud, and then answer it, also aloud.

The letter is written on a bright plaid stationery -- a Christmas present, I suspect. Here's what it says:

"Dear Aunt Sammy: My wife has been taking down your menus and recipes, and trying them out on her family. She has excellent success with the recipes, and she says that the menus help her out considerably, since it is quite difficult to plan something different, several times a week. Now Aunt Sammy, I don't profess to be a dietitian, or a food expert, since plumbing is my business, but I'd like to know why it's necessary to have something different, several times a week. As far as I'm concerned, I'd be quite satisfied with a good dinner of meat and potatoes and bread and butter, every day. Why worry about changing a good menu?"

The letter is signed "Doubting Thomas." Very well, Doubting Thomas, come with me, and I'll show you what's wrong with a diet of meat, potatoes, bread and butter, day in and day out, and year in and year out. Are you ready? I'll lead you to the Bureau of Home Economics. Come right down the corridor -- right over here, if you please.

Yes sir, I want you to look at this exhibit of white rats. Four of them, all in a row, ranging in size from this little one, with the deformed skeleton, to this big husky one, with the well-formed skeleton. Are they "real" rats? Well, they were real rats, not so long ago. Four male rats, from the same litter. Looking at the difference in size, between puny little Rat Number One, and big husky Rat Number Four, you'd hardly believe they started out the same size. What made the difference? Why, the food they ate.

Let me explain. All four of these rats had all they wanted of a diet typical of many American people: meat, potatoes, cereal, butter, sugar, and salt. Sure -- that's the diet you say is quite sufficient, by itself. But Rat Number One didn't find it so. Rat Number One ate only the diet of meat, potatoes, cereal, butter, sugar, and salt. See what happened to him?

Contracted chest, crooked legs and ribs, deformed pelvis, and poorly formed jaw bones. A fine chance he'd have had, if a disease had taken hold of him!

Rat Number Two has slightly better bones than Rat Number One. Do you know why? Because he ate some fresh vegetables each day, in addition to the meat, potato, cereal, butter, sugar, and salt. What vegetables did he eat? Spinach and carrots.

Now let's study Rat Number Three -- he's not so bad looking; in fact, his bones are nearly normal. He drank milk each day, in addition to the basic diet. And yet, some people still think that milk is not important, for growing children.

Here's Rat Number Four -- isn't he a fine-looking specimen? Twice as large as his runty brother, Rat Number One. Why shouldn't he be strong and husky? Besides meat, potato, cereal, butter, sugar, and salt, this rat had the same amount of fresh vegetables as Rat Number Two, and the same amount of milk as Rat Number Three. In other words, he had a well-balanced diet -- with sufficient vitamins, and minerals, to help him grow a fine large skeleton.

Need I say more? There's nothing much to say -- when you can see quite plainly for yourself, that food does make considerable difference.

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There are two or three questions to answer, before I broadcast a menu. The first question is from a little boy. I can tell by the handwriting. "Dear Aunt Sammy," he writes, "do you know anything about building rabbit houses?" I'm sorry to say that I never built a rabbit house in my life, but I will send you a copy of a leaflet, issued by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. It is called "Rabbit-House Construction." I'll be glad to send it to anyone else who wants working plans and bills of materials, for building rabbit houses.

The next question is from a listener who wants a recipe for Yeast-raised Buckwheat Cakes. Here you are, with a recipe for Yeast-raised Buckwheat Cakes -- seven ingredients:

2 1/4 cups lukewarm water	1 tablespoon sugar
1/2 yeast cake	1 teaspoon salt, and
1 1/2 cups buckwheat flour	1/4 teaspoon soda
1/2 cup wheat flour	

Seven ingredients: (Repeat)

Soften the yeast, in 2 tablespoons of the lukewarm water. Mix all the other ingredients, except the soda, into a smooth batter. Add the yeast. Let stand overnight, in a fairly warm place. In the morning, remove 1/2 cup of the batter, to save as "starter" or "seed" for the next time. Dissolve the soda, in 2 tablespoons of water, and stir into the batter. Bake the cakes on a well-greased griddle, and serve at once.

The starter must be kept covered, in a cool place, and if care is taken can be carried along indefinitely.

While you have your pencils, you might as well write the menu: Beef stew; Steamed or boiled rice; Rutabagas; Cabbage and pineapple salad; Hot chocolate and crisp cookies.

Thursday: "A Handy Cleaning Closet."

