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# homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE

Thursday, August 13, 1942.

ANSWERS FROM:

home economists of the  
U.S. Department of Agri-  
culture

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

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3Hh QUESTION BOX:

Cook cucumbers?  
How season with onion?  
How mend trouser knees?  
How much does unbleached muslin shrink?

Today the mailbag brings two timely food questions, one about cucumbers and another about onions, also a question about repairing men's trousers, and another about unbleached muslin. Home economists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture have answered these questions.

The first writer says: "We have so many cucumbers in our garden this year---more than we can use in pickles and salad. Perhaps you can tell me some different ways to use them. Is it possible to cook cucumbers?"

Nutritionists believe in serving cucumbers raw most of the time because you get the most food value from them raw, but for a change once in a while you can certainly cook cucumbers and cook them in several ways.

The simplest way to cook them, the home exonomists say, is to pare and cut them lengthwise or in quarters, then steam them until tender. Season with butter or other well-flavored fat, salt and pepper, and sprinkle with paprika for color. Or serve them in a white sauce.

You might also try baked stuffed cucumbers. Pare the cucumbers and cut them lengthwise, but scoop out the seeds and center pulp to form a shell shape. Then par-boil the shells for about 10 minutes. Meantime make a well-seasoned stuffing of bread crumbs, minced onion cooked in a little fat, the cucumber pulp, and chopped parsley. You don't need a recipe for the stuffing. Just make it like any meat stuffing, seasoned as you prefer. Fill the stuffing into the parboiled cucumber shells, and bake 15 minutes in a shallow baking dish, or until the crumbs are browned. A little water in the bottom of the baking dish will keep the cucumbers from sticking.



Here's a question about seasoning with onion. "In using chopped onion to season hamburgers, meat loaf, or stuffings, should I cook it or add it raw?"

Onion or any other pronounced flavor usually makes a more successful seasoning if you use it sparingly. So if you cook the onion just a little before you add it to other food, you modify flavor yet hold enough of it to give zest to a dish that might otherwise be uninteresting and flat.

To season a meat loaf or hamburgers, allow 1 or 2 tablespoons of minced onion to a pound of ground meat. Cook the minced onion a few minutes in an equal amount of well flavored fat, until the onion is transparent and tender but not quite brown. Then add it to the meat and mix it well. Cook the onion in the fat first when you use it in stuffing or hash.

For stews, meat pies, and other dishes in which the onion is not chopped so fine, cook in fat just the same until the pieces are tender, then add your flour to the fat to thicken the gravy.

Most people like onions for their own sake, and enjoy boiled or baked stuffed onions as a vegetable, or scalloped onions, or onion soup. Raw onion in salad is a little strong for some tastes, but fried onions, either plain or French fried, appeal to most people, if the onions are carefully cooked and not greasy.

Now we come to a question about saving clothes. "How can I repair my husband's trousers at the knees? One knee is actually split through, the other is threadbare and likely to go any minute."

The best way to repair worn knees on men's trousers is by a method called "retreading" them, the clothing specialists say. Turn the trousers wrong side out. Cut pieces of sateen or some other strong lining material about the color of the trousers, and wide enough to fit the front leg sections from



seam edge to seam edge, where the fabric is worn thin. These pieces should be about 10 or 12 inches long, to extend above and below the knee.

If the trouser knee is broken through, get a piece of the suit material from the inside vest facing or a wide back seam and baste it on the worn spot on the wrong side. Then lay the piece of lining over the worn area, basting it to the trouser leg and to the side seams. Stitch it into the side seams to reinforce the front of the leg. Then, on the right side, darn backwards and forwards over the worn place, through the trouser, the patch and the lining behind. You can darn either by hand or by machine. Of course, you use matching thread or thread just slightly darker.

Turn the trouser legs inside out and catch the top edge of the reinforcement invisibly to the trouser material. Leave the bottom edge loose to prevent any puckering or wrinkling. Press the mended places as you press any woollens. Use a damp press cloth over a dry woollen cloth.

Last question: "If I use unbleached muslin to make some house-dresses, will it shrink in the wash, so the dresses won't fit?"

Yes, the home economists say, it will shrink considerably when washed, unless you launder the yard goods before you make it up. The usual price for unbleached muslin is low enough so the manufacturer does not add the cost of preshrinking to the other manufacturing costs. It's up to the customer to do her own preshrinking.

To give you an idea how much the unbleached muslin is likely to shrink, tests made by textile scientists of the U. S. Dept. of Agriculture show that on the average the muslin shrinks about 8 percent in length and 7 percent in width on laundering. You can see what this would do to a sheet 72 inches wide by 108 inches long. After washing, the sheet would be only 67 inches wide and 99 inches long. And this amount of shrinkage in house dresses of unbleached muslin would ruin the fit.

It is very simple to preshrink the muslin yourself. Either put it in your washing machine in clear lukewarm water, or lay it in a pan or tub until it is thoroughly wet. Don't use any soap. Hang the piece up to dry, being careful not to stretch it. If you put it through the wringer avoid making wrinkles. Press the cloth when nearly dry.

That finishes the questions for this week.

