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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Tuesday, November 18, 1941

:QUESTION BOX

- : Iron from salts or meat? :
- : Flourine in cooking water :
- : Minerals and vitamins for strong teeth :
- : Food value in parsley :

ANSWERS FROM

various state experiment
stations

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Once again the week's mailbag brings in a number of questions about food and health. And once again the answers to these questions come from nutrition scientists at various State experiment stations who have been doing research on these particular subjects.

The first question today is about one of the valuable minerals in food-- iron. As everyone today knows, plenty of iron is necessary for healthy red blood. But here's a letter from a mother who says: "Is it true that iron salts taken in a tonic or medicine are better for building up children's blood than iron-rich food like lean meat?"

An answer comes from the Illinois Station where nutrition scientists have been making a special study of iron in food. The Illinois scientists found that a child in normal health can use cooked lean beef just as easily as inorganic iron salts such as he would take in an iron "tonic" or "medicine" for building red blood. Earlier studies at the Wisconsin Station showed that young animals did not use the iron in raw meat as well as the iron in the form of salts. Apparently, cooking meat makes the iron easier for the body to use.

Here again, scientists find that normal human beings get their minerals and vitamins better from good natural food than from tonics or medicines or synthetic preparations.

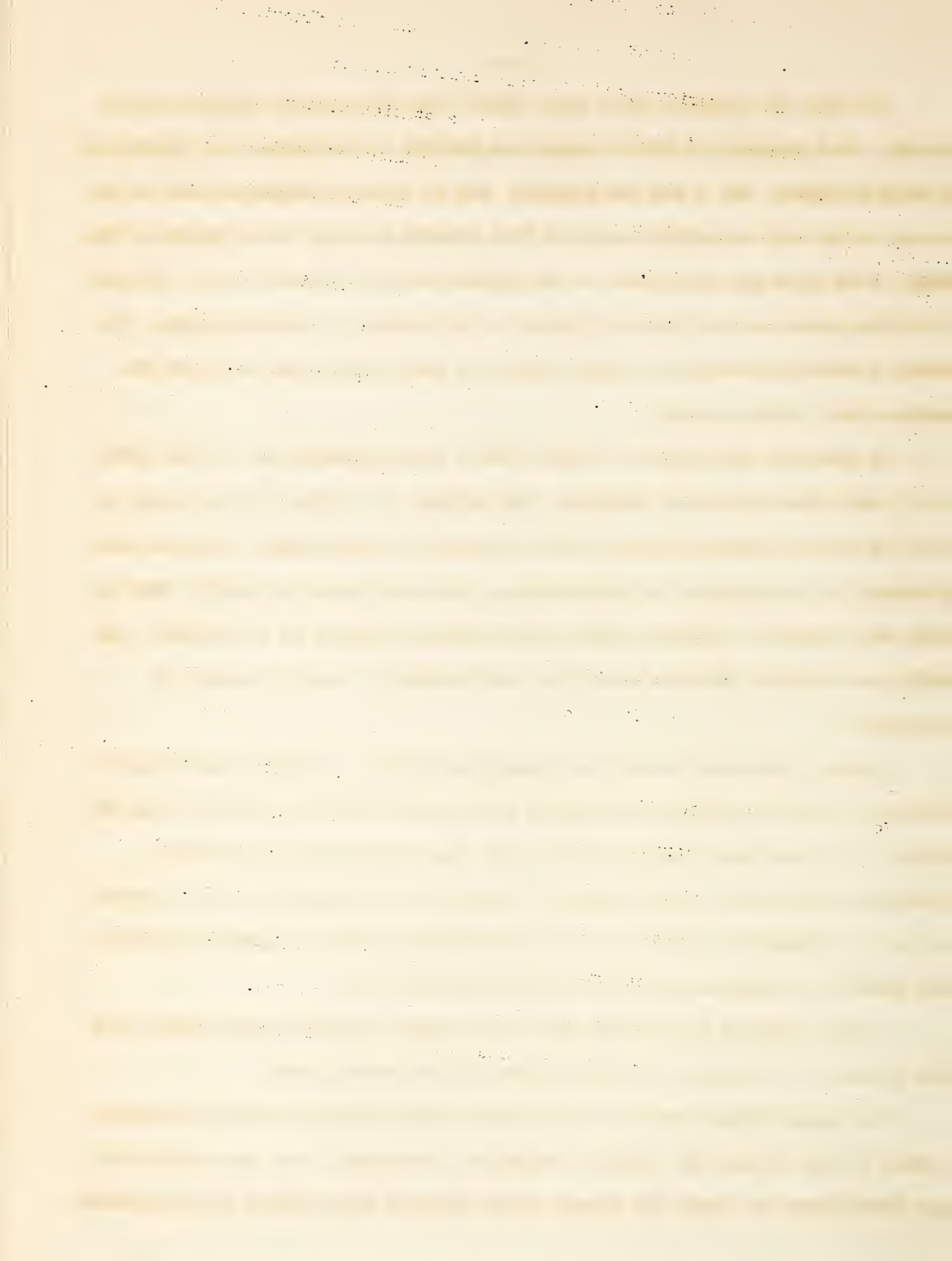
Now from the question about iron, let's turn to one about another kind of mineral. Most minerals in food or water are helpful to the body--or at least have no harmful effect. But a few are harmful. One of these is fluorine found in water and in the soil in various parts of this country and many other places in the world. Some years ago scientists at the Arizona Station discovered that fluorine in drinking water was the cause of damage to teeth known as mottled enamel. The Arizona scientists developed a filter which any family could use to filter the fluorine from drinking water.

In the mail this week is a letter from a farm housewife who has the problem of well water containing fluorine. She writes: "We filter all the water we drink but not all cooking water, and not the water our cows drink. Can you tell me whether it is necessary to filter cooking water and water for stock? That is, would foods cooked in fluorine water contain enough fluorine to be harmful? And would a cow drinking fluorine water give milk containing harmful amounts of fluorine?"

Arizona scientists report that vegetables cooked in fluorine water unfortunately do absorb considerable fluorine so you should use the filtered water for cooking. But they have found that milk from cows drinking water containing fluorine contains only a small trace of fluorine--too little of it to be harmful. You may be interested to know, too, that vegetables, fruits and grains raised on soil containing fluorine absorb only small amounts of it.

While questions about teeth are up for answer, here's another asking just what minerals and vitamins in food go into building strong teeth.

The answer comes from the Maine Station where scientists have been making a study of food habits and physical condition of children. The Maine scientists say: Since bones and teeth are formed almost entirely from calcium and phosphorus,



an adequate supply of these two minerals is the first essential. Next, there must be enough vitamin D from sunshine or fish liver oil to help the body absorb and use these two minerals. Then vitamin C is necessary for the formation of dentine and bone and vitamin A for the tooth enamel.

Here are some of the important foods for supplying these tooth-building foods in the daily meals. A quart of milk for each child; egg; meat or fish; citrus fruit, tomatoes or other vegetables or fruits rich in vitamin C; green or yellow vegetables; whole-grain cereal foods; and fish liver oil.

Last question: "Has parsley any food value?"

The New York State Station found that parsley was exceptionally high in vitamin C as well as in vitamin A and iron. But because the flavor of parsley would not tempt you to eat a great deal at a time, parsley is used mostly as a garnish or seasoning, and food value is not significant.

That's all the questions for today.

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