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Homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 1944.

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QUESTION BOX

How wash blankets?
How wash walls?
How serve canned snap beans?

ANSWERS FROM home economists of U. S.
Department of Agriculture.

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Judging from our mail today, spring cleaning is in the air. Let's ask the home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture to answer two cleaning questions from homemakers, and, for good measure, a third letter asking about ways to serve canned snap beans so they'll be more interesting.

Here's the first letter of the day: "I want to try washing my wool blankets this spring. Can you please tell me the best way to wash them?"

Dry cleaning is better than washing for most woolens, but if you're careful, it's possible to wash blankets at home without getting them boardy, or shrinking them. Just remember wool blankets can't stand heat...cold...harsh soap...and wringing.

Allow plenty of water for washing blankets...lukewarm, soft water for suds and for rinsing. If the water's hard, and you soften it with ammonia or borax, be careful in adding the water softener, because too much alkali is bad for wool. And be sure the temperature of the water is correct--one dip into hot or cold water may shrink the wool, and once it's shrunk, you can't do anything about it.

Use a mild soap, and make generous suds before you put the blanket into the water. Don't soak the blanket. Wash it by hand, if you can, squeezing the suds through the fabric--rubbing shrinks and hardens wool. If you use a machine, wash the blanket quickly.

Rinse thoroughly two or three times in clear water. And be sure your rinse waters are lukewarm--not hot or cold. Squeeze the blanket out gently, instead

of wringing, and hang it out of direct sunlight, with a half or a fourth of it on one side of the line. Or, if possible, hang it over two lines. Don't use clothespins. While the blanket is drying, squeeze the water from the ends occasionally, and shake the blanket to fluff it. After it's dry you can raise the nap by brushing with a clean stiff whiskbroom.

The warmth of a blanket depends largely on how much nap it has, so wash and dry blankets carefully, to help them keep their fluffiness and softness.

Now that we've talked about washing blankets, here's another "washing" letter, from a housewife who wants to know, "Is there some way to wash painted walls so they won't get streaked?"

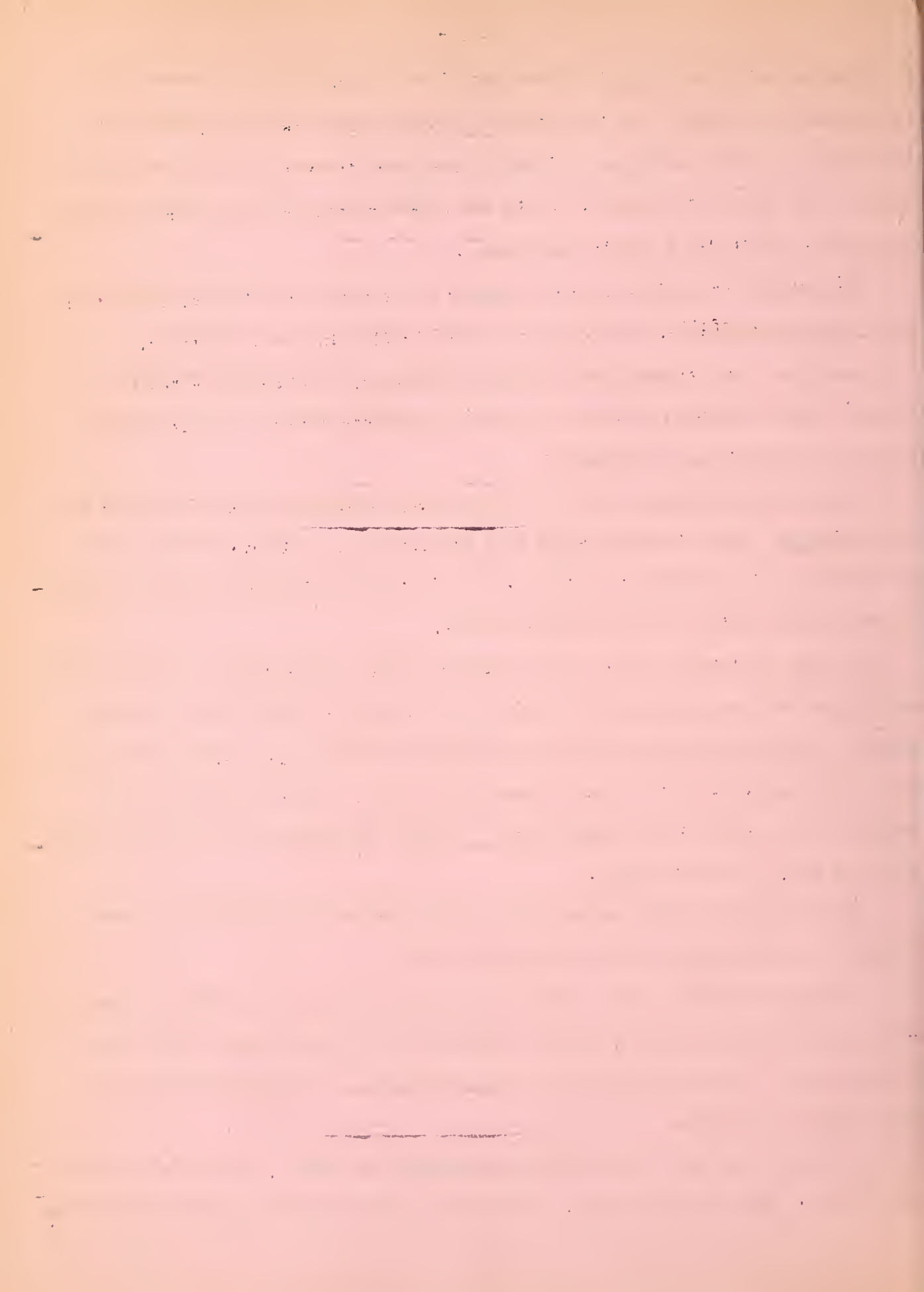
The home economists say that you can prevent streaking if you wash walls from the bottom up. When water runs down on a soiled wall, it leaves streaks that are difficult or impossible to remove. But if the wall is already moist and clean, water running down on it won't leave stains.

To wash your walls, make a light suds with mild, neutral soap, and don't wash any harder than you need to get the dirt off. Rinse away every trace of soap, because soapy water leaves a film that catches and holds dirt. After rinsing the wall thoroughly, wipe it dry with a clean soft cloth. Use water sparingly in washing walls...wash only a small area at a time...and change your suds and rinse water as soon as they're dirty.

If the walls are badly soiled, add a little trisodium phosphate, or other alkaline cleansing agent, to your soap and water.

The home economists have a timely suggestion to make walls easier to clean: After you wash painted walls, apply a thin coat of ordinary laundry starch with a paint brush. Then the next time you wash the walls, the dirt will come off easily with the starch.

And that takes care of our cleaning questions for today...now let's read our last letter. This homemaker says, "I'd like to serve canned snap beans more often,



now that they are point-free. But my family says they're 'dull' food. How can I prepare canned green beans so they'll be more flavorful and interesting?"

The trick of making canned green beans interesting is in the seasoning you put on them. The food specialists have many ideas for dressing up green beans, and your family will probably like some of these: Try a hint of nutmeg or mace in the beans, or finely chopped onion...onion salt...or lemon juice blended with a little melted fat. Or, how about a cream sauce with a touch of curry, soy sauce, mustard, or worchestershire? And many families like a meat flavor with snap beans -- bits of bacon or ham, or the drippings from salt pork.

Canned snap beans don't always have to appear on the table as a vegetable. For attractive salads, team them with other vegetables--grated carrots...onion ...cabbage--or add them to chopped leftovers of meat or poultry.

Now for some main dish suggestions: Bake green beans with tomato, cheese, or curry sauce, with crunchy browned crumbs over the top. And for a really filling meal, cook spareribs or ham hock with potatoes, and then during the last ten minutes, add green beans plus the liquid from the can.

Remember the canned snap beans you buy are already cooked--to serve them hot, all you need to do is heat them thoroughly. Be sure to use the liquid from the can--that's where you get precious vitamins and minerals. If you don't use all the liquid when you serve the beans, save it for your soup pot.

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