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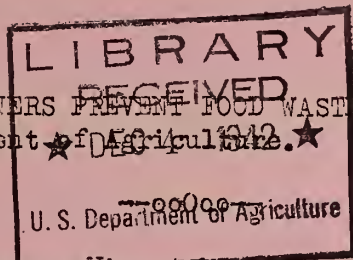
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Homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

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In 3Hh



Monday, November 2, 1942

Subject: "PATRIOTIC TABLE MANNERS PREVENT FOOD WASTE." Information from home economists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Times and customs change. Nice table manners in one country or at one period of time may be all wrong-- even unpatriotic-- with our country at war. For example, as Eskimo host serves himself first and eats first, to show the food is not poisoned. Half a century ago it was a mark "refinement and good breeding" to leave a little uneaten food on the plate. Perhaps it showed you weren't greedy. During the first World War people began to realize that good food left on the plate was extremely wasteful, when multiplied by thousands of plates with good food left. It became the patriotic thing to eat everything that was served except for plainly inedible parts like bones.

Under present war conditions home economists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture are again encouraging the fight against food waste in the home. This matter of leavings on the plate is one that any family can easily control, once everyone understands how unpatriotic it is to waste food in any way. While you are serving a meal, put small portions on the plates at first, and offer second helpings. Small children can eat only a third to a half as much as grownups; serve them accordingly. Suggest to the children when they help themselves that they don't let their eyes get ahead of their appetites.

One reason for needless leavings on plates is whims about food. There was good reason for the old saying that children should eat what's put before them. Children properly trained from babyhood to try and to eat all wholesome, well prepared food, don't develop prejudices. But when four or five members of a family have different likes and dislikes, and you try to cater to them all,

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you are bound to have considerable wasted food and wasted time preparing it. Perhaps you can persuade the objectors by explaining that only little children reject foods without tasting them, and that in wartime, it's unpatriotic not to try and learn to like all sorts of different foods. Some of these foods must take the place of other foods we can't get. Let everyone try a very little of each food served, regardless of whether it is a favorite or not. Also have each one's favorite dishes whenever possible.

Too much salt in food is one reason why it sometimes gets left on the plate, and that's due to a very common habit of salting food before tasting it. On this point one of the old-fashioned ideas of good manners is worth preserving. If a good cook knew her business she seasoned foods correctly. It was once bad manners to add any seasoning, salt included, unless the host suggested it.

There are lots of little points where patriotic table manners of today are different from the days when you were a girl. Time was when it was considered inelegant to use bread to take up gravy or vegetable juices on your plate. But today we try to eat all those juices and all that good gravy, and sometimes the best way to do so is to "sop them up" with a piece of bread, as the children say. No need to go at it small-boy fashion, however, with conspicuous plate polishing, but be sure to get the full good of whatever is served. When you're serving a roast or steak with fine nourishing "dish gravy", put pieces of bread right into the platter juices yourself, and serve them along with the meat.

In most parts of the country it is no longer a moot question whether or not you can take fried or roast chicken bones up in the fingers to get the last good from them. This method of eating is correct except for very formal occasions.

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Another question long since settled by public opinion is the matter of cutting up your lettuce. It's not only permissible, but very desirable, to prevent the waste of lettuce left on the salad plate. Cut it up and mix it with the rest of the salad— provided, of course, that you eat it, down to the last good vitamin. And the greener the leaves, the more vitamins, remember.

Eating the skins of baked potatoes saves food values, too. They used to be thrown away through some false idea of table daintiness.

Polite usage once forbade stirring coffee or tea with a spoon, but nowadays, if you use sugar in your beverages, you have to stir and get the most good you can from the sugar, or you are plainly unpatriotic. Moreover, your sugar ration may not last!

We've become so accustomed to ready-sliced bread that very few remember how bread was served in the last war when wheat was scarce. The whole uncut loaf was put on the table, with a bread knife alongside. You cut the bread off as it was wanted,— thick or thin. Perhaps we could go back with profit to slicing the loaf on the table.

One final suggestion: "Piecing", or eating between meals, used to be considered a bad thing. But today we know that some between-meal eating may be all right. And after-school snack of milk and fruit, or cookies may be just the nourishment the school child needs. It amounts to a little extra meal which may be a real necessity to the growing boy or girl after a long walk. Of course, eating just before mealtime is still poor practice because it often spoils the appetite.

You see how table manners fit into wartime economy. The little ways of saving count to your country as well as the big ways.

