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HOMEMAKERS' CHATS

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Subject: "YOUR CHILD'S EATING HABITS." Information from home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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One of the greatest favors you can do for your child is to start him early in good food habits he can carry all through life, that's what nutrition scientists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture say. The more the scientists discover about nutrition, the more they realize that the food habits a child learns young can make a difference in his whole life. His food habits affect his health and strength. His food habits affect his looks. And his food habits may even affect his character and success in life. Your child may be energetic, alert, efficient in his work, even-tempered, well-poised, and happy because you started him "eating right" at babyhood. Or he may be dull and listless at school, or irritable and unhappy, and eventually inefficient at his job, and disagreeable to get along with, just because you didn't bother to start him with the right eating habits, or because you didn't realize how important good food habits would be to him.

Nutrition scientists today go so far as to say that a poor diet may be the cause of lack of courage and will power. And that is a matter of importance to the Nation in these emergency times. The country needs to have every citizen physically and mentally fit to take part in the big job of defense.

So you can do a great favor not only to your child but also to your country by guiding him in the food habits that build health and character.

Now let's get down to how a mother can teach good food habits. One of the first things she can do is to guide her child early to like different foods. The more variety of foods he eats, the more sure he is of being well-nourished. The youngster who eats just a few things is the one who is in danger of malnutrition. Guard your child against the bad habit of "don't like this" and "can't touch that." Doctors nowadays start babies in early on different foods. By the time a well-trained baby is a year old he has learned to eat cereal, egg yolk, cod liver oil, strained vegetables and fruits as well as milk. The modern idea is to get the baby used to new tastes, and temperatures, and the feeling of different foods in his mouth as early as possible. By the time a modern youngster is a year and a half to two years old, he has left baby food behind.

One secret of getting a baby to like new foods is to offer just a very little at a time at first. Too much food at once, or too many different foods on the table may discourage or confuse him. Small helpings don't look like such an effort to eat. One food at a time is easier to concentrate on. The idea is to make eating pleasant from the very start.

You can help, too, by serving food that looks and tastes good. Modern nursery schools make a point of having meals for children not only nutritious, but also cooked well and served attractively on gay dishes in bright cheerful rooms. Don't blame your youngster for shoving away a dish of lumpy cereal or messy-looking tasteless vegetables, or scorched cocoa.

Another way to help children learn good food habits is to be sure that mealtime is a peaceful time. Parents can do a great deal by being calm,

unhurried, and pleasant at meals. In homes where the dinner table is a family battleground, children have a hard time getting food down, to say nothing of liking it. Psychologists today advise against arguments, discipline, and even nagging about manners at meals.

Very often when a child takes a dislike to a food he is following some grown-up who has set an example. Children never inherit food dislikes. They learn them. A mother who makes a face whenever she gives a child a spoonful of cod liver oil soon teaches him to dislike the oil. A father who makes unpleasant comments about the vegetables at dinner soon teaches his son to refuse them. Little words and little suggestions may make deep impressions on young minds.

So much for teaching tactics. Now some tips about foods to teach your child to like particularly. Recent studies have shown that one big fault with American diets is too much sugar, starch and fat and too few of the protective foods like vegetables, fruits, milk, eggs and wholegrain cereals. Help your child to health by teaching him to like all these protective foods. Teach him to like the darker wholegrain cereals rather than pure white foods. Let him get acquainted with wholegrain cereals first. And let him learn to like bread and cereal, fresh ripe fruit, and vegetables like peas and tomatoes without "doctoring them up with sugar." Let him acquire a taste for natural fruit juices before he has sodas and pops that are sugar in liquid form with artificial flavoring and color. And don't make a child think he must always take his milk with chocolate in it. Chocolate milk is a special treat but plain wholesome milk is a standard food he needs to like all through life.

There are a few hints to help you help your child to good food habits.

