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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, March 29, 1932.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Pressing Your Spring Clothes." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Bulletin available: "Making Dresses and Blouses."

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In a season like this when wool is such a popular material, when sports dresses and street dresses to say nothing of suits and coats are just the thing for spring use--in a season like this, it certainly pays to know all the secrets of pressing.

"I'd like to make a little street dress for spring," Marian Lee told me the other day, "but somehow the clothes I make all have a homemade look. They never are trim and tailored in appearance as I want them to be."

"Maybe it's just a matter of pressing," I suggested. "Do you press your dresses carefully as you make them? No matter how well the sewing has been done, a gown that's poorly pressed is sure to have a homemade look. On the other hand, an expert at pressing can give almost any garment a neat, tailored look. Yes, even when the sewing isn't perfect."

Press as you go, is the rule for making most garments. Don't wait until the dress is all finished. Then it will be too late to do a good job. Instead, stitch, finish and press all seams, all pleats and all finishes as you go along. Finish and press the separate parts and lay them aside where they won't get wrinkled until it is time to use them. Finish the sleeves, cuffs, collar, belt vest and body part of the dress, press each one and then hang them up carefully until you are ready to assemble them.

The expert presser knows how to use an iron and how much steam to apply. She also has the right equipment,--ironing board, pressing pads, pressing cloth and so forth.

Did you ever stop to think that little things like the padding on the ironing board may affect your success in pressing and also affect the appearance of your dress? This matter of a smooth surface on your ironing board is very important. Folds and wrinkles can cause a lot of trouble and spoil the good results you might otherwise have.

The ideal board for pressing is smooth, tightly covered, and well-padded. It stands firmly on the floor or is solidly attached to the wall, so

it doesn't shake when you work on it. What to use for padding? Well, several thicknesses of smooth old blankets or canton flannel make a good padding. The stores are also selling pads just made for this purpose. Stretch a clean smooth cover tightly over the top. You can use an old sheet for a cover, but new unbleached muslin is probably better because it is stronger, will last longer and is inexpensive. But remember to wash any new material for the sizing is sure to cause trouble.

If you want to do a really top-notch job of your pressing, you'll need good pressing pads as well as an ironing board. These pads can either be made at home or purchased. They are like small, very hard cushions. Some are rounded at one end and pointed at the other. Others are long and narrow with straight ends, made to slip inside sleeves. Such pads can be used under any part of the garment that is hard to reach yet needs careful pressing.

As I said, you can make these pads yourself, and if you have two of different sizes and shapes you will be prepared to give a professional press to any dress. The pad with the rounded end and the point at the other end can be about sixteen inches long. Make it about 8 inches wide at the rounded end and then taper it off to a rather sharp point. Another one shaped like the sleeve-- long and narrow, might be about fifteen inches long and five inches wide.

How to make these pads? Well, cut the shape out of heavy ticking or some other similar material. Sew the edges together and stuff with sawdust. Put it in just as firmly as possible. Then sew up the open end. Now cover the pad with some soft material like outing flannel and over this put another cover of muslin, which you can take off and launder when it becomes soiled just as you do the ironing board cover. These two covers will, of course, be perfectly tight and smooth. There, the pad is now complete and is as smooth and hard as the ironing board itself without one lump, wrinkle or soft spot.

The clothing specialists tell me that these little pads are also most useful in ironing children's clothing or blouses.

One more article of equipment--the pressing cloth. For this you might cut a yard square of slightly heavier material like muslin. Of course, this cloth should always be kept clean so that it won't stain the material you are pressing. Leave the edges rough. Hems make marks on the goods.

So much for the equipment. Now for the actual process of pressing.

Wait a minute. Just one minute: I forgot to remind you of a couple of important points. Of course, you know that before making a wool dress, before even cutting it out, the material must be sponged. Otherwise, it will shrink when it's pressed with steam and make a dreadful-looking mess. It may also spot with water. Then, as I said earlier, you must press each part of the dress as you progress. This, by the way, is an argument in favor of having your ironing board in the same room with your sewing machine and cutting table and other sewing things. There 's no use wasting time and steps running back and forth to the kitchen or the laundry to press each little piece.



To press the dress, lay it flat, wrong side out, with the weave straight on the ironing board. Pressing on the right side, you see, sometimes causes a shine on the fabric. And always press with a cloth. Lay the pressing cloth over the dress after you have wrung it out of water. Now test your iron. Is it clean? Is it hot enough to snap when the water touches it? It should be sufficiently hot to drive the steam into the fabric, but not hot enough to scorch. And you know that wool scorches more easily than any other fabric.

There's an art to using the iron correctly in pressing. Never let it stand in one spot for a minute. Keep it moving gently back and forth from side to side so it don't mark or stretch the fabric. And be sure the material is thoroughly dry before you stop pressing.

The heavier the cloth you are pressing, the more steam you need and the hotter the iron you use. For very heavy wool, a muslin or drill pressing cloth is better than cheesecloth because it holds more moisture and thus produces more steam. But be very careful to wash it thoroughly to remove sizing.

Thin material like silk, on the other hand, requires less steam. For silk a thin cloth, wrung out very dry will do the business. You can also use a cooler iron for very thin material. But always remember that some sort of a cloth must be used in all pressing. This is the only way to get an even amount of moisture and a flat seam and to prevent shining or scorching of the material.

All the questions you've been asking about vitamins are going to have an answer. Beginning tomorrow, I'm going to spend each Wednesday on a vitamin.

Tomorrow, I'll tell you about vitamin A. If you want to be well acquainted with these interesting and useful food substances, join us on Wednesday.

