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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Monday, October 10, 1932

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Home Fire Hazards." Information from the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils, the Bureau of Agricultural Engineering and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U.S.D.A. Menu from Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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Our young neighbor, Horace, dashed in on his way to school this morning to see Uncle Ebenezer.

"Bet you don't know what week this is, Uncle Ebenezer," he said.

"I can't guess. You tell me."

"Fire Prevention Week," announced Horace, proud of his knowledge. "But my teacher says that every week ought to be fire prevention week."

"You've got a wise teacher," said Uncle Ebenezer.

At this point, Uncle Silas glanced up from his paper.

"Look here," said he. Right here in this paper is an article on fires. It says that losses from fires on farms in this country amount to about a hundred million dollars every year. That's bad. And, what's more, fires in small rural communities exceed a hundred and sixty million dollars every year. Talk about economy, Aunt Sammy. Think of all the country would save by guarding against fires. Your friends the housekeepers could do a lot to help these unnecessary disasters. Do you know what really causes most fires? Well, perhaps the woman who cleaned gloves in the kitchen forgetting that the pilot light in the range might--and did--blow things up. Or hot ashes put in a wooden barrel. Or the man who dozed off while smoking in bed. Oily floor rags left in the corner where they burned by spontaneous combustion. Kindling so close to a fireplace that sparks flew into it. A cigarette stub that fell into a waste basket. Matches left where children could get at them. Overheated electric irons. Dirty and defective chimneys. And so. Seems to me just good common sense and forethought around the house will prevent most fires."

That was quite a long speech for Uncle Silas, but he says he always can talk in a good cause.

Experts in fire prevention have listed some very common fire hazards. You know, many of us go along day after day risking home fires quite unconsciously. That's too dangerous and too expensive. Shall I tell you what the experts say are the most dangerous fire hazards in homes?

First, an accumulation of unused material anywhere in the house. This means not only trash but also clothing, boxes or cartons, paper and packing materials.

So keep your cellars and attics clean. If you must store anything, put it away carefully. Accumulations under cellar stairs are especially dangerous. By the way, here's another important point. Many bad fires have occurred from the careless habit of searching for things in the attic or cellar with a match or a lighted candle.

Second point. Paint rags, oily rags, rags with turpentine or other volatile solvents are very dangerous. So never store them nor let them lie in a pile. Destroy them at once.

Third, matches. Many fires have been started by matches, supposedly out, that are carelessly thrown into the waste basket. Of course, every good parent knows that matches ought to be kept well out of the reach of the youngsters in the family. Many women keep matches on the shelf of the gas range--a most convenient place to have them when a match is wanted, BUT a dangerous place because the shelf may easily become hot enough to set the whole box of matches off.

Bonfires may be a quick way of disposing of rubbish but they are a source of many bad accidents. So burn your rubbish in a suitable container or rubbish burner so that flying sparks or embers won't ignite dry grass or foliage or nearby buildings.

Fourth, chimneys. Keep your chimneys clean. Dirty flues cause a lot of fires. That's why careful home owners see that flues are cleaned before the first fire in the fall. Cobwebs and accumulations of dust and dirt up the chimney have often started a chimney fire. Loose bricks and cracks in the chimney sometimes let sparks out and set the roof afire. So once a year at least, have a chimney inspection and cement any loose bricks and fill in cracks.

Still another common fire hazard is the electric iron, particularly one without heat control. You know how it goes. The phone rings while you're ironing. You hurry to answer it, leaving the iron standing with the current turned on. And then you forget about that iron. And then, you know what happens. Heat controlled irons are safer. But, even then leaving an iron standing on the board or on fabric isn't safe. A bad scorch may occur in almost no time. And even when the iron is turned up or on a stand, in time it may set fire to the board.

Finally, the experts say that one of the worst fire hazards is cleaning clothes at home with inflammable fluids. Though I've mentioned this danger often before, as you remember, I'd like to say my say once more in no uncertain terms, against this method of dry cleaning. Gasoline, naphtha and so on are good cleaners, but they're too dangerous to use. Safe cleaning fluids like carbon tetrachloride may cost a few cents more, but the extra expense pays many times over in safety.

Now I wonder. Have I forgotten any point about fires that I meant to tell you today? Oh, yes. About using kerosene to start a fire. Thumbs down on that, say the experts. To be sure, kerosene is less hazardous than gasoline, but it acts the same way when it's heated. Look in the fire records. There you'll find plenty of accounts of explosions which have killed people trying to quicken fires with kerosene.

Now let's turn from fires to food and concentrate on plans for our Monday economy meal. The main dish is a good looking and different dish--noodle ring filled with creamed frizzled chipped beef. Then let's have fried slices of egg plant. For dessert and salad, all in one, let's have tart fruit salad made of fall fruits in season and served with crisp salted crackers. And coffee, to top off the meal with.

I would like to give you directions for making noodle ring today, right now, but we haven't time. So bring your pencils first thing tomorrow and we'll have the recipe for noodle ring.

