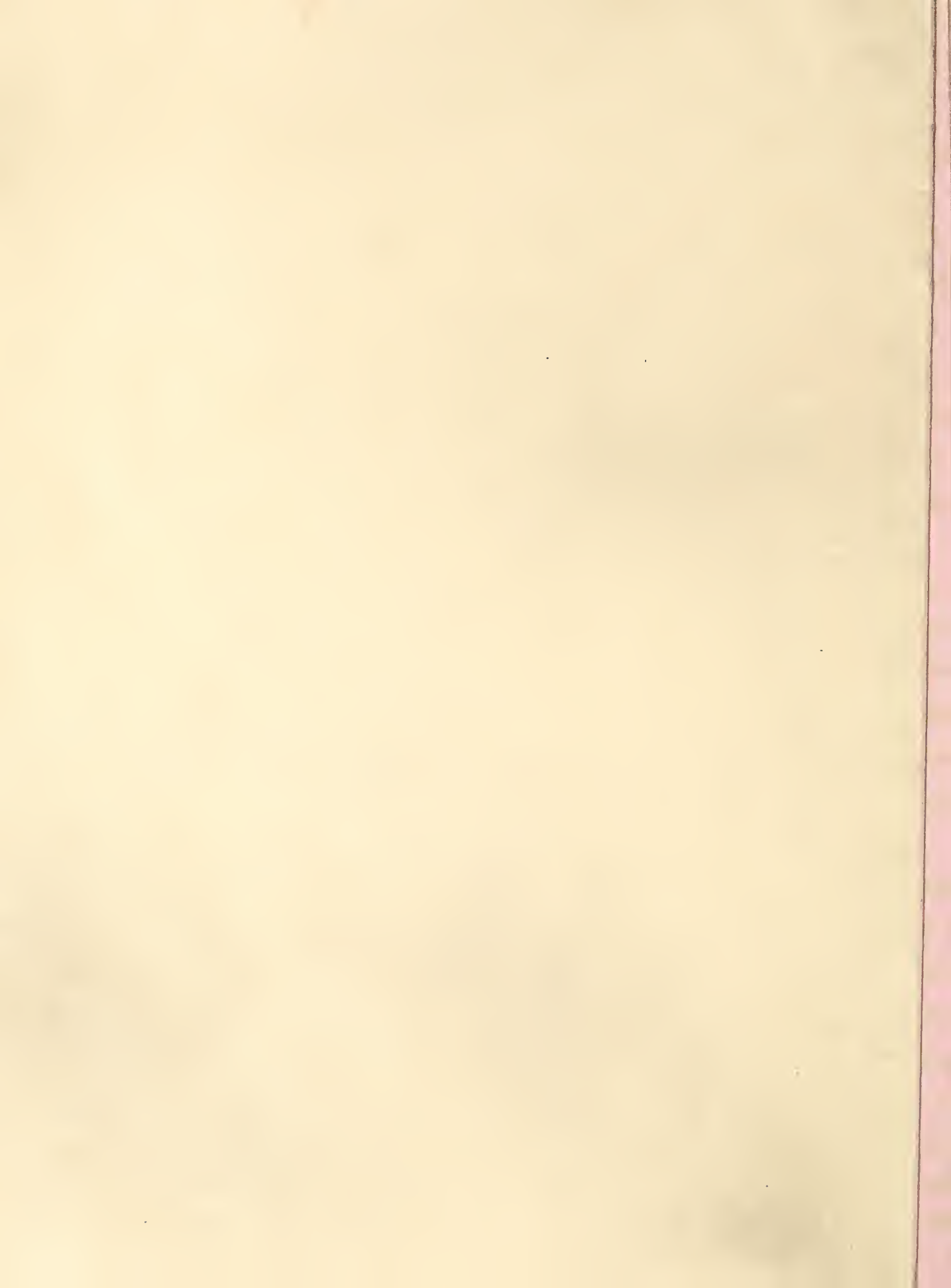


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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

TUESDAY, December 30, 1941

QUESTION BOX

How use discarded Christmas tree? :
That foods needed every day? :
Cooking with buckwheat :
Cure for lamb? :
No boiling for "boiled" ham? :

Answers from --
scientists of the
U. S. Department of
Agriculture

--ooOoo--

Out of the mailbag this week come suggestions as well as questions from housewives.

Did you ever wonder if the Christmas tree couldn't serve some useful purpose after the holidays?

Tell, here's a letter offering a number of ways to use your discarded tree. The letter says: "I always feel sad to see an old Christmas tree dumped out on the trash heap, or standing forlornly in an ash can, all its glories forgotten. In our family we make a point of taking the tree down just before Twelfth Night and we put it to various uses, depending on the vote of the family.

"One year my young son cut the trunk in lengths suitable for our fireplace, and then tied these sticks in a bundle to dry. They made excellent firewood. He got the idea from Boy Scouts in a neighboring town who go around every January collecting old Christmas trees to cut in stove lengths for needy families. The branches of the trees won't do for firewood, of course. I used these to protect my garden. Evergreen boughs, you know, make an ideal mulch for perennials. They're good to hold leaf mulch around evergreen shrubs like laurel, or rhododendron, and the boughs are also good to lay over the garden bed and protect dormant plants.

This year we plan to set our Christmas tree out as a shelter and feeding station for the birds. Our neighbors did that very successfully last year. They wired the lower branches to the ground to keep the wind from blowing the tree over. And

then they tied suet, raisins and little bags of seed and whole grains onto the branches. They had a great collection of birds there all winter, especially when the snow was deep and the birds had trouble finding any food on the ground.

"I understand that one city sponsors a Twelfth Night bonfire so that children may come and burn their Christmas trees safely under supervision. This is probably a good idea for fire prevention, but my family prefers to put the tree to some good use.

"Here's a use for the needles that fall from the tree. We sprinkle them on slippery sidewalks."

Tell, there you are--a lot of different ideas on what to do with a Christmas tree after the holidays are over.

Now for the questions in the mailbag. Here's one from a mother; She says: "My New Year's resolution is going to be to feed my family the foods they need every day for good nutrition. Will you tell me where I can get a list of the foods a family should have every day?"

The answer is: Yes, from a free folder published by the U. S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D. C. The folder is called "Eat the Right Food." Anyone is welcome to a copy. A postcard addressed to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. asking for "Eat the Right Food" will bring you this folder.

Now for question No. 2. A housewife asks whether buckwheat can be used in an other way than in pancakes or in griddle cakes.

Again the answer is: Yes. You can use buckwheat in bread, biscuits, waffles steamed brown bread and also in dessert cakes like gingerbread, spice cake, upside-down cake and drop cookies. In all these recipes you get best results by combining the buckwheat flour with white flour. Generally, use a little less buckwheat than white flour.

Now here's a question from a farm housewife. She asks: "Is it possible to cure lamb as you do pork?"

Meat experts of the U. S. Department of Agriculture say: Lamb is easily and quickly cured, but there is the disadvantage that the cuts dry rapidly after smoking and tend to become strong in flavor. Ribs, loins, and breasts that have been cured and smoked may become disagreeably dry and strong in flavor after only 3 or 4 weeks in storage. Smoked legs store better than shoulders, but even legs will become fairly dry and hard after 2 to 4 months storage at room temperature. Some families prefer the "gamey" flavor of cured lamb, and cure several cuts for special use. Freshly smoked lamb may be boned and canned in the pressure cooker by those who wish to prevent the meat from drying.

You can get further information on curing lamb--or preserving it in other ways--by writing to the U. S. Department of Agriculture for a free bulletin called "Lamb and Mutton on the Farm." This is Farmers Bulletin No. 1807. And as long as the free supply lasts, a postcard addressed to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. will bring you a copy of "Lamb and Mutton on the Farm."

Last question: "Is it true that 'boiled ham' is better if it doesn't boil?"

Very true. Boiled ham should never boil. The cooking experts say it should simmer--that is, cook just below boiling--in water enough to cover it all the time. Let it simmer 25 to 30 minutes a pound, or until the meat is tender and thoroughly cooked. Let the ham cool in the water it cooked in.

That's all the questions this week. More a week from today.

