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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Thursday, May 4, 1944.

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In 3 Hh

QUESTION BOX:

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Best way to save strawberries?
How prevent screw bands from rusting?
Food value of potatoes?

ANSWERS FROM:

Home economists of the U. S.
Department of Agriculture

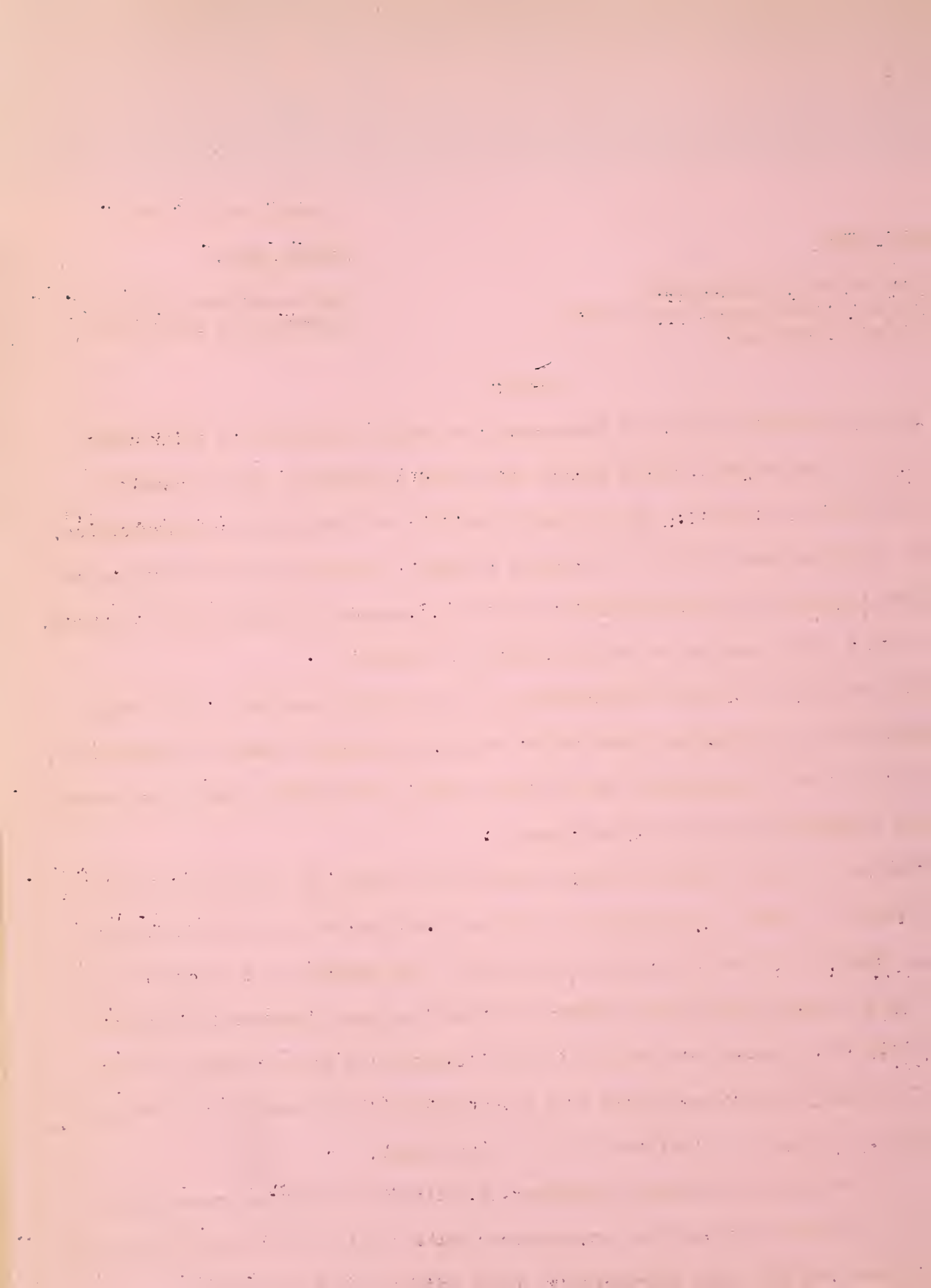
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About the first of May many homemakers, are really beginning to think about canning and other ways of saving garden fruits and vegetables. So the canning questions begin to roll in. We have two in today's mail bag---one on strawberries, and one on screw bands that have rusted on the jars. As usual, we've turned these questions over to the home economists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to answer, along with a third question on the food value of potatoes.

"To can---or not to can---strawberries" is the first question. A good many homemakers think strawberries taste better as jam or preserves than when canned. But if you wish to can strawberries, you do them a little differently from other berries. The home economists give these directions:

Wash and stem the berries and add half a cup of sugar for each quart of fruit. Bring slowly to a boil. Remove from the stove. Let them stand overnight in the kettle. Standing in the sirup helps prevent them from raising to the top of the jars. In the morning bring them quickly to a boil and pack immediately into hot jars. Fill to within half an inch of the top. Adjust the lids according to the type of closure, and process either pint or quart jars for 15 minutes in a boiling water bath. Complete the seal and store in a cool place.

Now about making strawberry preserves. The difference between preserves and jam is chiefly that in preserves, you keep the fruit whole, but in jam you crush it. Whichever way you like your strawberries, don't cook them any longer than you have to. Keep all the vitamin C possible, and preserve the natural color and flavor.



Since sugar is limited, we're still asked to use less than we used to in making jams and preserves. You can use three-fourths of a pound of sugar to a pound of strawberries instead of the "pound-for-pound" rule, and make good jam. The sirup will be a little thinner than usual. Or you can replace half the sugar called for with an equal measure of corn sirup or mild-flavored honey.

After washing, draining, and capping the berries, combine them with the sugar in alternate layers and let them stand 8 or 10 hours or overnight before you cook them. Stir carefully as you heat them to boiling. Boil rapidly for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the sirup is somewhat thick. Skim off the scum. Pour the berries at once into hot sterilized jars and seal.

If you have freezer-locker space or a home freezer-storage cabinet, you'll find freezing strawberries is the best way of all to preserve their flavor, aroma, and color. They are almost like fresh fruit. Freeze the berries promptly after picking. Handle them carefully, so as not to bruise them. Sort, hull, wash, and drain. Slice or crush the berries or leave them whole. Pack the sliced berries with dry sugar--one cup of sugar to 5 cups of fruit. Whole berries retain their appearance better if you pack them in medium uncooked sirup. Just stir equal measures of sugar and cold water together without heating. Use water-vapor-proof containers and place the berries in the freezer as soon as possible after you pack them. Store at zero degrees.

Well- you have a choice of canning, preserving, or freezing strawberries. Take your pick. Next comes a question about jars and screw bands.

"Some of the screw bands on my jars of canned fruits and vegetables last year got rusty, and I had trouble getting them off when I wanted to use the food. How can I prevent this happening this year?"

As soon as you take the jars from the canner, screw the bands down tight. Then when the jars have cooled, take the screw bands off if you can do so without forcing them, so you can use them over again on other jars. If the band sticks, cover it for a minute with a hot damp cloth, and it will probably loosen. If you try to

force it, you may break the seal on the jar. Store jars in a cool but dry storage place.

Now let's turn to a question about potatoes, which are still on the list of abundant foods. This homemaker asks, "What food value have potatoes besides the calories they supply?"

Well the nutritionist tell us potatoes pack good food value under those brown jackets of theirs. And as for the calories--a medium-sized potato has only about 100 calories---no more than an apple or a banana, and only half the calories of a medium-sized piece of pie or a hamburger and a roll. If you're watching weight, watch what you put on the potatoes, the home economists say. It's the gravy, butter or other fat that "piles up" calories. And when you eat more high-calorie foods a day than your body expends for energy, you add the pounds.

When you eat potatoes every day, you can get as much as one-fourth of your vitamin C for the day, besides some of the B vitamins, iron, and other important minerals. Best way to serve all potatoes is quick-cooked and steaming hot. The longer they stand exposed to air, the more vitamin C they lose. Best way to get most food value from potatoes is to boil or bake them in their jackets. And of the two ways of cooking potatoes in their jackets, nutritionists prefer boiling to baking because boiling saves more vitamins.

However---if you have cooked potatoes left over, save them to start a good dish for another meal. You can reheat them in dozens of good ways. While they have the most vitamin C served freshly boiled in their jackets, they will hold some vitamin C for another day. But keep them covered, and in a cold place until you use them.

