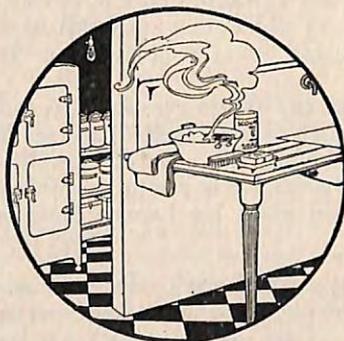


SAVING FOOD

by

PROPER CARE



Food costs more than it used to, more than some of us can pay without either living less well or saving less money than we think we should. This leaflet tells how to care for food so we shall get one hundred cents' worth for every dollar. Other leaflets and bulletins tell how to choose food wisely. Send to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., for lists of publications on home problems.

Thrift Leaflet No. 13



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & TREASURY DEPARTMENT



HOW TO KEEP FOOD FROM SPOILING

What makes food spoil? Molds and other tiny forms of life which get into the food and grow in it, may change its flavor, texture, appearance, odor, and food value.

Where do such microorganisms come from? From everywhere about us but especially from dirt, dust, and filth. They are often carried by flies, vermin, and household pets. They may get into food from unwashed hands, or from dishes which are not clean even though they may look so, or which have been washed in dirty or contaminated water.

How can we prevent their getting into food? By protecting it from dirt, dust, and flies; by keeping it in clean places and in clean receptacles; by making sure of a pure water supply; by insisting that every person who handles food or dishes wash his hands before he begins such work; by scalding all the dishes in which food is placed; by wiping them with towels washed out in boiling water or by draining them dry.

Are dangerous microorganisms ever found in food which do not make it spoil? Yes, those which cause typhoid and scarlet fevers, tuberculosis, colds, influenza, diphtheria, and other diseases may be carried by food. Most so-called food poisoning is due to harmful microorganisms carried into the body by food which has become contaminated by accident or carelessness.

How do we guard against these? In the same way as against those which cause spoilage—by scrupulous cleanliness in connection with the water supply, the food, the dishes in which it is kept, and especially the persons who handle either. Sneezing and coughing scatter some kinds on food or dishes; some may get into them from hands that have touched an infected person or object.

Under what conditions are microorganisms most likely to do harm if they get into food? Where it is warm and damp. Many kinds grow best in the dark, but not all.

How can we check their growth in food? By keeping it cool and by keeping moisture away from dry food. Sometimes by cooking, for great heat destroys many microorganisms and checks most of the others.

By what means can food be kept cool? By naturally cool air (window boxes in cold weather, cool storerooms, well-houses, underground pits), by artificially cool air (ice boxes, refrigerators, commercial cold storage methods), by cold water (dishes set in cold water), by evaporating water (iceless refrigerators, porous earthenware water coolers, dishes wrapped in wet cloths), by heat-tight receptacles (refrigerators, fireless cookers, vacuum jacketed bottles).

At what temperature should food be kept to check the growth of most of the harmful microorganisms? Not above 50°, or better 45° F.

Is food harmed in other ways than by microorganisms? Yes. Some kinds are harmed by becoming dry or wilted; some by becoming moist, some by freezing. Many kinds may be attacked by vermin.

How can we protect food against drying out? By storing it in a cool place; away from drafts; in an air-tight receptacle; wrapped in paraffin or parchment paper; near a vessel of water which will keep the air moist.

How can we prevent dry food from absorbing moisture? By keeping it in a dry, airy place; in an air-tight receptacle; wrapped in paraffin or parchment paper.

How can we protect food from vermin? By making sure that it is put away clean in clean receptacles into which the vermin can not find entrance. Send for Farmers' Bulletins 658, 740, and 851, for directions for keeping vermin out of the house.

HOW TO CARE FOR SPECIAL FOODS

Milk and cream. These are among the most perishable foods; always keep them clean, covered, and cool; preferably 50° F. or lower. Scald the receptacles daily. Store in the coolest part of the refrigerator—usually at the bottom in the compartment just below the ice chamber. Do not keep milk and cream near highly-flavored food—they may absorb the flavor.

Meat and poultry. Keep clean and cool. Remove the wrapping paper when they come from the market; cut off any tainted parts; place on a clean dish in the refrigerator or cold storeroom. Wipe with a clean, moist cloth just before cooking.

Fish. Keep clean and cool. Many varieties flavor foods stored near them; so do not put fish into the ice box, unless in a tightly-covered dish.

Eggs. Insist on getting clean ones; dirty ones spoil quickly. Coolness delays spoilage. Do not wash an egg until just before using; the water removes a coating on the shell which hinders microorganisms from getting into the contents.

Fats and oils. Store in the dark. Keep cool, clean, and covered. Remember that butter absorbs flavors.

Dry groceries. Keep dry and clean; protect against vermin. The flavor of tea, coffee, and spices is injured by air and moisture; therefore, store them in air-tight containers. Roasted coffee, especially when ground, loses flavor rapidly; do not lay in a large stock unless you can roast and grind it at home. The fat in chocolate may turn rancid, so keep it cool and dark.

Baked goods. Bread and cake tend to grow dry, so keep them in a covered box or dish. Cool bread in a clean, open place when it comes from the oven; wrapping hot bread in a cloth tends to injure the flavor. Fresh bread is so moist that it makes a good growing place for mold. Therefore, scald the bread box at least once a week and do not shut it up air-tight, especially in hot weather or when it is filled with fresh bread.

SPEND WISELY



SAVE SANELY

Crackers and cookies lose their crispness by absorbing moisture, so keep them in air-tight boxes, perhaps wrapped in parchment or paraffin paper.

Canned goods, preserves, jellies, etc. Store where it is clean, dry, and cool. Keep glass jars away from light to prevent fading. Examine vegetables within a fortnight after canning to detect spoilage, often shown by leakage, by bubbles inside, or by bulging tin. A little mold on the top of jelly or rich preserves is not dangerous, but never eat canned vegetables which look, smell, or taste at all spoiled.

Cooked foods. Cooked foods which are moist, especially those made with milk, eggs, meat, or fish, are excellent breeding places for harmful micro-organisms, including many of those which cause poisoning. If they are to be kept, chill them quickly (for example, by setting the dish in cold water) and put them in a cool place. Left-overs of meat pies, dishes made with cream sauce, soft custard, boiled dressing and dressing made with cream must be carefully kept and handled, and promptly used; they often cause serious poisoning before they taste or smell spoiled. Boiled rice, hominy, and other cereals also spoil quickly.

Fresh vegetables and fruits. Most kinds should be kept clean, well-ventilated, and if possible at a temperature between 60° and 40° F. Fruits and vegetables stored in boxes, baskets, barrels, and bins should be sorted frequently to remove decayed ones, which may infect the others. Very often the decayed portion may be cut away and the rest of the fruit or vegetable used at once. Wilted leaf vegetables may sometimes be freshened by soaking in water just before using. All vegetables and fruits, especially those to be eaten raw, should be thoroughly washed or rinsed in running water before they are used. The loss of flavor and texture is very slight even in such thin-skinned fruits as strawberries, and is more than made up for by the lessened danger.

DON'T WASTE GOOD FOOD BY POOR CARE

