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HOUSEKEEPER'S CHAT

Monday, January 11, 1932

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Cutting Food Costs." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletin available: "Getting the Most for Your Food Money," from U.S.D.A.
"How to Spend Your Food Money," from the Children's Bureau, U. S. Department of Labor.

--ooOoo--

It's a fine feeling to start off on a Monday morning with good news. That doesn't happen to me every Monday. But today I have some very good news for you. Three guesses what it's about. What's that? Quite right, Susanna. The news is about a brand new leaflet just off the press.

Letters have been coming month after month asking how to plan low-cost meals for these thrifty times. The specialists at the Bureau of Home Economics have been doing their best to give advice and answer all these letters. But you can see that it's a difficult job to try to cover such a big subject in a letter. So the specialists have prepared a most useful little leaflet that gives just exactly the advice those letters have been asking for.

From now on when you write me, "Dear Aunt Sammy: How can I cut down on my food costs, yet give my husband and seven children the foods they need for health?" I'll reply, "Dear Arabella: I'm sending you a nice new leaflet that will tell you all about it."

This new leaflet is called "Getting the Most for Your Food Money." Here's the way it starts out on the very first page: "If men and women are to feel well and able to work, if children are to be healthy and able to go to school, they must have food enough and the right kind of food." That's what the leaflet says. Did you notice the last line--"food enough and the right kind of food." That's very important for us meal planners to keep in mind. The kinds of food, yes, and at low cost.

"To go without the foods you need for any length of time will bring the tired run-down feeling, or the actual sickness that means lost time and doctor's bills," says the leaflet. Sometimes if we don't plan our meals wisely, what we save on food we later spend to pay the doctor or lose on days out of work. You know that it is lack of certain essential kinds of food, as well as too little food, that causes scurvy, rickets, pellagra and other forms of malnutrition.

"If you can afford to buy what you like, you can afford to buy what you need. If you can raise your own food, you can get the right kinds without spend-

ing very much money." But how about families with a small amount of money to spend who can't raise their own food? They're often hard-pressed for money to buy even enough. Besides, you know, it's not always simply lack of funds that keeps people from eating the foods they need for health and efficiency. It's often food habits or food prejudices, ideas about food that we may have been brought up with. Food habits are not a safe guide. Not all of us like to eat the foods we need.

The less variety you can afford in your meals, the more important it is to choose well. And the smaller your purse, the more important it is to get the most for your money.

Now here's what the experts at the Bureau of Home Economics advise, if you want to get the most food for your money, especially if you have very little money. They say to divide each food dollar into five parts and spend each part for a different kind of food. If there are children in the family each dollar that goes for food should be spent about like this: 25 cents for milk and cheese; 25 cents for vegetables and fruit; 15 cents for bread and cereals; 20 cents for butter, lard or other fats and for sugar or molasses; and 15 cents for meat, fish and eggs.

If your family is made up of adults it will need less milk and cheese and correspondingly more vegetables and fruit.

The homemaker who is cutting food costs needs a guide to economical, balanced rations. She needs to know exactly the foods the whole family needs every day and those that are needed several times a week. If she is sure that her family has the essentials first, she can add the extras and the luxuries in food as her pocketbook allows. The leaflet provides just such a guide. Here are the foods which it says the whole family should have every single day:

First, bread and other grain foods like cracked wheat, corn-meal mush, oatmeal, rice and grits.

Second, potatoes

Third, milk, whether fresh, evaporated or dried

Fourth, one or more vegetables and fruits, especially vegetables of green or yellow color.

Fifth, sugar, molasses and other sweets

Sixth, butter, lard, fat meat and other fats

And, of course, plenty of water to drink.

Now, the whole family should have several times a week in addition to this list of foods:

First, tomatoes, raw cabbage, or raw fruit

Second, dried beans, peas or peanuts

Third, lean meat, poultry, eggs, fresh fish, canned salmon or cheese.

Then, of course, there are the very young children to consider. They need milk at every meal, tomato or orange juice every day, and several eggs a week, if possible.

The leaflet also gives two market lists showing a week's supply of low-cost food for a family of five. The first list gives the ration which contains

enough of each food to meet the needs of the body with a margin of safety. You can live on this ration for any length of time. Then there is another cheaper list giving the ration that just meets body needs with no margin for emergencies. You can get along on this ration for a short time, but for safety other foods should be added as soon as possible.

Besides this leaflet, there is a one-page dodger planned especially for mothers interested in buying the right foods for the children. This is published by the Children's Bureau and is called "How to Spend Your Food Money."

Both these leaflets are free. Drop me a postal and ask for "Getting the Most for Your Food Money" and for the dodger called "How to Spend Your Food Money" and I'll see that you get a copy of each.

By the way, every now and then some one sends a request for a bulletin and forgets to send her address. Then she waits and waits and wonders why the bulletin never comes. If you put your name and address in the letter, you'll be sure to get any of these publications I tell you about, even though they sometimes may be a little slow in reaching you.

How would you like to have an inexpensive dinner menu today, since we're on the subject of economy meals anyway? I have a nice one, just right for a cold day. Ready with your pencils?

Let's start the meal with good old-fashioned split pea soup. You can make this very inexpensive and nourishing soup look festive by laying a thin slice of lemon on the top of each bowl of soup just before it is served. And cover each slice of lemon with finely chopped green parsley or bright red paprika.

Split pea soup, to start with, followed by creamed salmon, on toast. Then spinach; Buttered carrots; Lettuce with onion rings, and for dessert, Sliced oranges and bananas.

The salad in this meal adds crispness and flavor but the meal is well-balanced without it, so if you prefer to cut the costs even further, just leave the salad out.

I've had a request for directions for preparing spinach so that the whole family will enjoy it. Since we have spinach in our menu today, anyway, why not answer that request right now?

Half the battle of making spinach popular is preparing it properly before it goes into the kettle. First pick it over and throw away the wilted leaves. Cut off the stem ends and wash in several waters to remove grit. Several washings in fresh water each time to take out every grain of sand. And lift the spinach out of the water carefully each time, instead of pouring the water off the spinach. The idea is to leave all that sand right where it has settled in the bottom of the tub, instead of stirring it up again and perhaps getting it on the leaves.

Now, if the spinach is young and tender, it can be cooked in the water that clings to the leaves. Start the cooking at moderate heat, cover the kettle at first, and turn the spinach now and then until it is thoroughly wilted. Then

remove the cover and stir frequently. Cook 2 pounds of spinach about 10 to 15 minutes. Then drain and chop it fine. Season with pepper, salt and butter or other fat, and serve. Spinach cooked in this way will retain its attractive green color and fresh flavor.

Older spinach is better cooked in a small quantity of water for about 20 minutes. Then drained, chopped and seasoned with butter or other fat and with salt and pepper.

Tuesday, we'll talk about parrots and canaries and other bird pets.

