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# homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE

Monday, March 6, 1944.

Subject: "NUTRITION AND REFRIGERATION." Information from home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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The first warm days of spring remind us that for keeping certain foods we can't use the window-sill "cooler" or even the cellar, much longer. The best place for all perishable foods is inside a good refrigerator, where you can hold temperature below 45 degrees. So, if you've been saving current or economizing on ice all winter, it's time to get the refrigerator into action again.

You're often told that Americans are the best fed people in the world. It's true, because refrigeration has brought the perishable "protective" foods within reach of so many. Granted that in some parts of the country people are still without ice boxes because they live too far from any electric power line, or because they have had low incomes, household refrigeration is possible for a large number of homes. Unfortunately nutritionists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture have found that it is in just those parts of the country where people can't keep perishables easily that families have inadequate diets.

When nutritionists talk about an "adequate" diet, they mean more than food that simply satisfies hunger. They mean a diet that contains enough of the "protective" foods---the foods that are high in vitamins, minerals, and good protein. The most important protective foods are milk, milk products, fresh fruits and vegetables, meats, fish and eggs. They are all very perishable. So they must be kept cold.

Fortunately in most parts of America we have all sorts of refrigeration---cold storage warehouses where large quantities of food can be stored until it is moved to retail stores; refrigerator cars and ships to move food in; freezer lockers where individual families can store home raised foods for long periods, and house-

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hold refrigerators for short time storage after the perishable foods come in the house.

We depend on household refrigerators more than on any other home equipment to prevent food waste, either by spoilage or by loss of precious vitamins. If you let food spoil, you definitely lose it. Your family loses whatever nutritive values it contained, as well as the money it cost and the work you put into shopping for it or raising it, and preparing it. If you expose vitamin-rich foods to air or warm temperatures or overcook them or hold them too long, you destroy vitamin C in particular, and also some vitamin A. More nutrition values lost.

But by refrigeration you can slow up vitamin losses while you are holding foods for use later. For example, scientific tests have shown that if you squeeze orange juice overnight, and put it in the refrigerator, it will lose hardly any vitamin C. Tomato juice also retains much of its vitamin C for 2 or 3 days in the icebox. The "crisper" in the refrigerator is the best place to keep salad greens, cooking greens, peas, corn, beans, and members of the cabbage family. Air steals vitamins, too, so keep pod vegetables unshelled, and don't shuck corn until you want to cook it. True, vegetables take up considerable space in the refrigerator, and unless you have a very large box, you'll need to market often to avoid overcrowding it.

As for the chief protein foods, meats, fish, poultry and eggs, they all need refrigeration for safe keeping. Certain dangerous bacteria can thrive in protein foods that have begun to spoil. Such food may then cause food poisoning. If you can't buy as much meat as you used to, you surely don't want to lose any of it by spoilage. Keep meat and poultry in the coldest part of the refrigerator. Cook variety meats and ground meats the day you buy them. If you store fish a few hours, wrap it to protect other foods from the fish flavor and odor.

And here are some more tips on what to keep in the refrigerator: Keep all cooked meats in the coldest spot---also ready-to-eat luncheon meats, tenderized hams, hash, croquettes, meat gravy or meat broth. Cool any hot foods quickly, cover them,



and put in the icebox as soon as you can. Never let them stand around your kitchen.

Of course you keep milk and eggs, and dishes made from milk and eggs, clean, cold and covered. Put canned milk in the icebox once you have opened the can. Don't wash eggs before you store them. If you have a hydrator, put the eggs in that, rather than in an open container or a cardboard carton.

Keep butter and margarine in their original wrappers inside the cartons to protect them from odors and flavors from other foods. Leftover meat fats belong in the refrigerator and not on top of the stove. The refrigerator protects fats and oils from light as well as keeping them cold. Light turns fats rancid. If you keep each kind of fat in a separate jar, you can tell which is which when you want a particular flavor. Maybe you season beans with bacon or sausage fat, or use chicken fat for making gravy or a crust for a meat pie.

Many homemakers like to keep the loaf of bread in the refrigerator, especially in warm, damp weather, to prevent mold forming on it. When coffee was rationed we learned that flavor and aroma of coffee were saved by storing ground coffee in the icebox. While coffee isn't one of the vitamin-rich foods, no one should waste it.

If food should freeze in the ice cube compartment of your refrigerator, it does not lose vitamins. Freezing does not appear to have any destructive effect on vitamins, although if foods are once thawed, they will lose vitamins if they are exposed to air.

If your family is among those that do not yet have a good refrigerator, and can't get one in wartime, ask your county extension agent for suggestions about other ways of keeping food cold in warm weather. You won't be as badly off as the people of some of the warm countries which do not have any sort of refrigeration. Many of them live mostly on a cereal diet, or use salted or dried meats because they can't keep fresh meats. Or they form a taste for fermented milk or rancid butter, and buy all their poultry alive. You can find ways to protect the perishable foods by keeping them cold, and it's very important to give your family that protection.

