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WAR FOOD ADMINISTRATION
Food Distribution Administration
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HELP REDUCE AMERICA'S WASTE LINE!

A Food Conservation Job for Local Clubs and Organizations

I

After 20 years of wrestling with food surpluses the Government is now calling upon every club and organization in the United States to help mobilize the public behind a campaign to save food. Why?

Despite shortage of farm machinery and farm labor, American farmers for the past 3 years have answered the Department of Agriculture's call for more food by progressively stepping up food production. In 1942, aided by favorable weather, they produced an all-time record crop--- 27 percent more food than the average for the pre-war years 1935-39. In 1943 even this record was pushed still higher, despite a wet, cold spring, floods, and a summer drought. Why hasn't this been enough?

The answer is that production alone is not enough. No matter how much food the Nation's farmers are producing, the demand grows more rapidly than the supply.

The increased demand has come in three main categories: military, civilian and lend-lease. Our armed forces by the end of 1943 will approximate 10 million men. Many of these men went into the army from food-producing, food-processing, or food-distributing jobs. All of them eat more in the armed forces than they did as civilians. Men in service get about 5 pounds of food a day; civilians average $3\frac{1}{2}$ pounds. We all recognize that our soldiers need more. And with more of our troops overseas, in all corners of the globe, supply lines must be extended. This calls for increased shipments, larger reserves.

At the same time the needs of our fighting Allies have increased. While the English were fighting off the German blitz attacks of 1940 and 1941, they were increasing the amount of food they raised and cutting down the amount they ate. By planting gardens in bombed-out city blocks and in the grounds of Buckingham Palace, by draining swamp lands and plowing up pastures, the British increased the proportion of their food which they raised themselves from one-third to two-thirds. On the other hand their armies have also expanded and their food needs likewise.

Soviet Russia which has suffered greater casualties than any of the United Nations has also suffered most heavily in production capacity. In the first year of Nazi attack Russia lost her "bread basket" - the Ukraine - and other areas, which produced 40 percent of her peacetime food. She suffered the same problems of farm manpower as we, as her armies swelled to hold back the Nazi flood. Although all Russia has been cheered by the successes of the Red Army in rolling back the Nazis in 1943, American observers report that this winter food rations will be lower than ever and many civilians will go hungry until the reconquered lands can be restored to production. We can ill deny these fighting Allies the food they desperately need.

To Russia and England combined we sent only 6 percent of our 1942 production. In 1943 it is more, but still amounts to only about 12 percent of our total supplies. Realizing that every support we can give our Allies reduces the amount of fighting our own soldiers will have to do -- and that, despite rationing, our food allowances are still far higher than our Allies' -- most Americans will take it with the same "thumbs up" as the British, and with the same grim determination as the Russians: "Nichevo" - "what does it matter?"

Nor can we forget the starving people of Athens and Warsaw, of Czechoslovakia and France, or Norway and Yugoslavia. These people have borne the horrors of total war for 4 years. It is not only good humanitarianism to store up food so that at the first opportunity we can send it to them. It is good military and political strategy as well. As these nations are liberated, one by one, we want them to become effective fighters on our side. Until that time, nothing else can so inspire their will-to-resist as the assurance that the day of liberation will bring American ships and trucks loaded with food. To make good on such a promise of food is up to us civilians here at home. When we realize that food saved will mean the saving of lives of our soldiers who must clamber out of landing barges to storm the guns of Hitler's fortress of Europe, we shall make good!

The greatest increase in demand for food, however, has come from our own civilian population. Civilians are eating more, as a group, than they ever have before, although with rationing, upper income families are eating less. Despite rationing, higher prices, and temporary shortages, most American families have been buying more and more food. In 1942 less than 13 percent of the food we produced went to either our own armed forces or for Lend-Lease shipments. With a 27 percent increase in production over the period 1935-39, that meant that our own domestic consumption had increased 14 percent. In 1941 and 1942 American civilians ate more food per capita than ever recorded before, and current estimates indicate that for 1943 our per capita food consumption will exceed that of any year during the 1920's or 1930's.

More people were working. Our unemployed shrank from around 8 million to about 1 million. More people had more money to spend. Higher hourly wage rates, longer hours, and steadier employment swelled weekly and annual earnings. At the same time, there were fewer things to buy. The goods civilians normally would have purchased (automobiles, radios, refrigerators, furniture) were disappearing from the market. Billions of dollars of their income went into war bonds, savings, and the payment of debts -- but not nearly enough to make the difference between the 65 billion dollar national income in 1936 and the 116 billion dollar income in 1942. Higher prices took their share of the remaining margin. But there was still a large amount of excess earnings available and food was the most plentiful of the consumer goods left to absorb them. Legitimate merchants all over the country felt the pressure of greatly increased demand. More people started eating in restaurants. And when rationing finally became necessary, black markets arose to supply people who valued their appetites above their country. Through all these channels an unprecedented amount of food went to civilians.

II

It is clear that if we are to have enough food to meet all our needs -- military, civilian, and allied -- rationing is necessary. But there is another resource we have not yet tapped. Twenty to thirty percent of the food we produce appears to be wasted! The big and little dribbles all along the line, from farm to garbage can, constitute our biggest reserve of food today. This seems incredible but it is so.

For so many years we have had such an abundance of food that we have developed deeply ingrained habits of waste. For years we were plagued by farm surpluses. There was little incentive to eliminate waste. Some food was left rotting in the fields, some wasted in transit, some in warehouses, some in store, and even more in restaurants and homes. And though rationing and higher prices have caused some reduction in waste, many of our wasteful peacetime practices and habits still persist. Twenty to thirty percent of the food we produce -- approximately 1 pound in every 4 -- is allowed to spoil or is thrown away! One-quarter of our food production facilities working at top pressure to produce food that we never use! America in the midst of a hungry world wasting the precious commodity every other nation lacks! Here is a challenge we all must face.

Organizing an attack upon food waste is a new job for the American people. As individuals we may have been frugal in many respects, but our eating habits have been developed in a pattern of plenty. As compared with other nations we have never had to exercise unusual care to prevent leakages of food. Usually food has been cheaper than labor, so we developed careless shortcuts in the handling of food which saved time at the expense of wasted supplies. We have scorned to harvest off-grade or low-quality crops. We have developed standards of retailing based upon "Sell the best, discard the rest." In our homes, we have guided our food management by the rule of "Please the palate!" We have made our sinks and garbage cans the best fed members of the household. We have peeled, and sorted, and scraped from our plates an average of 15 percent of all the food we have brought into our homes.

Yes, these are the facts. Let's examine the home food wastage more carefully to see how it occurs. The average housewife will claim in all good faith that she wastes practically no food at all.

Analytical studies of garbage collected in 247 cities show that the garbage contains an average of 300 pounds of food per person per year - an average waste of more than 3/4 pound of food for each individual every day.

This amounts to roughly 20 percent of the food which is purchased by American householders. Adding such waste as fats and oils that are lost in careless cooking or poured down the sink, and subtracting inedible waste such as egg shells, coffee grounds, melon rinds, et cetera, we may reasonably estimate that about 15 percent of the edible food brought into American homes is wasted. This is equivalent to about 225 pounds of edible food waste per person per year, or about 3/5 pound per person per day. Raymond Pearl, Chief Statistician of the Food Administration in World War I estimated that the wastage of food in the home amounts to 5 percent of the protein, 25 percent of the fats, and 20 percent of the carbohydrates - or an over-all waste of 19 percent of the calories. Of what does this food waste in the home consist? It is caused by:

1. Unplanned buying -- resulting in too much of some kinds of food.
2. Improper storage -- food stored at too high or too low a temperature will spoil easily.
3. Failure to plan use of left-overs -- the refrigerator is often merely a "way station on the road to the garbage pail."
4. Unpalatable preparation of food.
5. Over-generous serving of food -- especially to children and guests. "Company dinners" are typically wasteful.
6. Failure to utilize all portions of food, as:
 - a. Peeling potatoes results in the discard of from one-tenth to one-fourth of the weight and even more of the vitamin and mineral values.
 - b. The beet tops are more nutritious than the roots, yet are seldom used.
 - c. The most nourishing leaves of the cabbage and lettuce are the outer leaves -- yet they are seldom used.
 - d. The skin of vegetables is palatable and nutritious, yet it is discarded and the less valuable inner parts are eaten.
 - e. Many people discard the heels of a loaf of bread -- thus throwing away one-tenth of the loaf. Consider how much more bread is wasted by careless toasting, by bread mold, and by simply throwing away pieces which have been taken on the plate. If every American family wasted only one slice a week (and the real wastage is far greater) it would make 100 million loaves a year. Every religion includes a prayer for daily bread -- yet we are very wasteful of it.
 - f. A little dab of butter here and there gets thrown away -- never very much, but if every American civilian would save half an ounce of butter a week it would provide enough butter for our entire army as constituted in 1942.
 - g. How much needless food waste is caused by our rules of etiquette? Can we afford, in wartime, to refuse to let Johnny pick up the bone in his fingers and gnaw off the last shreds of meat? Is it really good etiquette not to tip your soup bowl to get the last two or three spoonfuls? With a shortage of fats, what's wrong with using bread to sop up the gravy on the plate? Can we afford to prepare and serve more food than the guests will eat just to keep up the reputation of the "bountiful hostess"?

- h. Squeeze your grapefruit dry! Just one cupful of grapefruit juice provides approximately a full day's requirement of vitamin C. When you fail to squeeze out the juice after eating the pulp as much as a quarter of the value you paid for may be wasted.

We can imagine the outcry that would ensue if all grocers required each shopper to throw 15 cents of every dollar into a hopper at the front of the store where it would be chewed up and discarded. Yet what actually happens is worse. The money is spent for food to be wasted. Labor is required to grow, harvest, and process that wasted food. Transportation and warehouse facilities are required to get it to market. Retail clerks must package, display, and sell it. Garbage trucks and men must be employed to pick it up and haul it away. Finally, where to put the garbage after it is collected has proved to be one of the major problems many cities have to solve. Stinking garbage piles greeting visitors on the outskirts of town -- rivers polluted by spoiled food -- or expensive incinerators for burning this wasted food are three possible results of buying food which is not eaten. The sights, smells, and facts relating to garbage are all unpleasant.

What kinds of food are thrown away? The Sanitary Engineering Research Laboratory of New York University in 1940 conducted a study of five refuse dumps in New York City, from August 3, 1939, to October 22, 1940, separating the garbage from the refuse as brought in by 168 truck loads, and analyzed the waste food to determine its contents. They found the following percentages, measured by weight:

Baked goods (bread, cake, pastry)	13.9 percent
Vegetables (beet, carrot, potato, etc.)	27.0 percent
Citrus fruit (grapefruit, lemon, orange, lime)	29.1 percent
Greens (beet-top, cabbage, celery, lettuce, etc.)	22.9 percent
Meats, bones, fish	7.1 percent

III

It is obvious that a vigorous and concerted drive is needed to reduce this criminal wastage of food. The biggest objective of this food conservation campaign is to make every one of us realize the importance of the little bits and dribblets of food we waste. Few families throw food away in pound, or quart, or bushel lots. Because our food waste is divided into such small quantities and is concealed in our food-management practices, we are likely to over-look our own share of responsibility for it. But our garbage cans tell the tale. Week after week they continue to fill up. And every family knows the problem that results if the garbage collection should be a day or so late. Only by preventing food waste in ounces can we save the millions of tons they cumulatively represent.

The over-all national drive against food waste is just getting under way. It will undoubtedly change, develop, and expand as it goes on. Since food conservation is something new on the American scene, the methods have to be worked out and refined as the problems are met. Every community will have its own problems of food waste, and it will be up to local leaders to devise solutions that will work. Meanwhile, there are various food conservation projects in which every local community has a part to play.

The Clean Plate Club. Test campaigns are being conducted in some sections of the country to develop a "clean plate pledge" campaign. Local clubs can lend their support by giving it publicity and by pledging their membership to clean up their plates at every meal. Essay contests and radio programs may become integral parts of this campaign in many areas. These contests and programs will need to be organized and sponsored by responsible clubs.

School food conservation program. Through the U. S. Office of Education and State departments of education, elementary and high schools all over the country are being asked to introduce into the curriculum, wherever they properly can, studies of food wastage and food conservation measures. Elementary and high school pupils will be making food conservation posters, writing essays, and giving speeches on how to save food, and producing food conservation plays and programs. There will be many ways in which clubs can encourage and assist the schools in making these projects effective.

Commercial food handling practices. Food Advisory Committees representing all branches of the food handling industry are working on plans for eliminating waste in storage, transportation, markets, and restaurants. Many of the measures which will result from these studies will require public cooperation. Stores and restaurants cannot change some of their practices which cause food waste unless the public understands and supports the measures they take. Local clubs may well confer with food industry representatives concerning conservation programs requiring public education which they may undertake.

Rodent and insect control. Rats are estimated to destroy 189 million dollars' worth of food every year. They are also a constant threat as disease carriers. Insects are reported to damage growing crops and food in storage (including food in the pantries of homes) to the extent of well over a billion dollars a year. The poisons and insecticides with which these pests are commonly attacked are considerably reduced because of the war. For this reason there must be an intensification of trapping, rat-proofing, and sanitation efforts to deal with these menaces to health and food supplies. Representatives of the United States Bureau of Entomology, Extension Service, Fish and Wild Life Service and Public Health Service have long waged war on these pests. Now they are intensifying their program of eradication and are calling upon youth groups especially to aid them in reducing this cause of food loss to the minimum. Local clubs can support this work.

Adjustment of wasteful eating habits. Food prejudices, dislike of "left-overs," and even our table manners result in much food waste. These problems are largely individual matters, but they are matters in which the individual needs to be supported by general agreement. Under present circumstances, in a public eating place, or as a guest in someone's home, it takes courage to squeeze your grapefruit, or tip your soup bowl to get the last drops, or pursue the last peas with a teaspoon, or mop you the meat juices with a piece of bread, or pick up a bone to gnaw off the last shreds of meat. Yet by a concerted attack upon the social prohibitions, such practices can become normal wartime table manners.

Food conservation information. Many housewives need instruction in the best means of storing, preparing, and serving food, in menu planning, and in wise buying. Increasingly such food conservation information is appearing in women's magazines, in the food columns of daily newspapers, and in the advertising of food companies. Home economists and food demonstration agents are doing much to educate housewives along these lines. Many clubs may well make such food conservation topics the basis for study and discussion groups. Members may exchange information and economy tips. Lecturers may be invited to address public meetings. Clubs may sponsor demonstrations of proper methods of preparing nutritious meals and of storing, preparing, cooking, and serving food in order to prevent waste. Literature may be obtained from the Food Distribution Administration, War Food Administration, Washington 25, D. C.

Harvesting crops. The shortage of farm labor makes it virtually certain that some of our 1943 food production will go unharvested unless the problem is met vigorously in every community. Local clubs can aid greatly by encouraging their members to enlist in this work for as many days or weeks as possible. Many will want to join the United States Crop Corps. Berries and fruits growing wild on vacant lots are another potential source of food which requires organized action to recover effectively. Clubs can take on this work. The School-Lunch program is a worth-while outlet for crops that are in plentiful supply and which housewives can pick and preserve cooperatively. It is one way to assure the youngsters food for their lunches next winter. In all these activities the general rule should be to see to it that every scrap of usable food is harvested and utilized.

Home and community canning. It is essential that the produce from the country's 20 million Victory Gardens should be utilized to the fullest extent. Naturally the responsibility rests primarily upon the people who have the gardens. In many communities, however, much of this food may go to waste unless there is a concerted program to preserve it. This program should be and in most areas is under one unified head (the Victory Garden Committee, the Nutrition Committee, or some other group) but it should have the active support of all community organizations. Among the tasks to be undertaken are: (1) providing reliable information on home canning and other food preserving methods through demonstration centers; (2) determining whether there are sufficient glass jars and other preservation materials in the community, and arranging for their best distribution; (3) determining who has pressure cookers and arranging for their maximum use; (4) organizing community canning centers; and (5) providing for the distribution of surplus home-canned produce to school-lunch programs, hospitals, and welfare organizations.

IV

It is desirable that all of the food conservation projects described here be carried on as part of a coordinated community activity. The War Food Administration is not appealing to one, but to every club and organization, to aid in the task of bringing home to the public the facts of the wartime food situation, and in mobilizing effective action by the public based on these facts.

Local clubs and organizations are urged to get together and as far as possible carry out their work in concert. The machinery for pooling work of this kind already exists in many communities.

The Community Service Division of the local Defense Council may logically form the organizational base in most communities.

The local Nutrition Council (usually a subcommittee of the local Defense Council) already includes in its membership representatives of many of the women's clubs and men's service organizations.

The individual club or organization can probably best initiate action within its own membership by setting up a food conservation committee empowered to coordinate the organization's work with that of others in the general community mobilization.

Food Conservation materials are being prepared and will soon be available on request from the Nutrition and Food Conservation Branch, Food Distribution Administration, Washington 25, D. C.

They include:

1. Food Conservation Manual for Community Action -
an outline for community organization to reduce food waste;
our wartime food problem; important sources of food waste;
specific conservation projects suitable for community action;
suggested materials for promotion through all important
publicity outlets.
2. Information for Public Speakers - presents food conservation
material designed for use by public speakers.
3. Discussion Materials on Food Conservation for use by Women's
Groups - ways to get the best value from food by improved
methods of meal planning, buying, preparation and storage:
in question and answer form; suitable for small or large groups.
4. Reduce Food Waste and Help Shorten the War - a basic folder describing
causes of food waste and ways of reducing it.
5. Booklets - reference list of brief, clear, easy to read bulletins;
available without cost; will help you to improve family health
by serving more nutritious meals and to lower food costs by
use of modern cooking methods.
6. Radio Scripts -- adapted for presentation over local stations.
7. Facts on Food Waste - a short summary of sources, kinds and amounts
of food waste.

The most effective material, however, will be obtained locally. Surveys of food waste in the home, stores, bakeries, dairies, canneries, and other points in the local food distribution system, if carried out with the cooperation of the private interests concerned, should produce the best results in arousing the community to the significance of food waste and the most practical action to reduce it.