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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Friday, July 31, 1942

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SUBJECT: "FIGHT FOOD WASTE" U.S. Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Today let's talk over a serious problem the problem of food waste important at any time, but especially now that our country's at war.

To supply our armed forces takes a lot of food. And Lend-lease shipments to our allies take a lot of food, too. And, feeding those of us at home takes a lot of food, too. Every bit of food is valuable these days. More can go to waste by carelessness by allowing food to spoil, or throwing it away because you have more than you need. You can help fight food waste now, and you can start the fight in your own kitchen.

You may think the amount of food you throw away is small, so it doesn't matter much. But take a minute to consider. Imagine that when you look over your food supplies today, you have to throw away a bad egg, a piece of spoiled meat, and a slice of moldy bread. In itself, each of these is only a bit of food and doesn't seem a serious waste. But suppose every homemaker in the country discards the same quantity of spoiled food today. Multiply that egg, that meat, and that bread by the Nation's 34 million homes. There you'll have a staggering total of food waste and loss.

Makes you sort of sit up and take notice, doesn't it? Makes you realize that if everyone does her part, much of this food waste can stop....makes you realize that food spoilage is something to defeat here at home. And now that summer is here, food spoils more easily than in cold weather, and chances for waste are greater. So you need to be on the lookout constantly to guard against food spoilage.

For instance, let's take the case of eggs, meat, and milk. They're among the foods that spoil most quickly. They're also on the list of foods in the Food-for-Freedom campaign. Being in the Food-for-Freedom campaign means that farmers are making an all-out effort this year to produce more of them, so it's doubly important that waste in the kitchen does not offset their efforts.

And another thing about these 3 foods. Milk-and-egg dishes, and meats can cause food poisoning if you don't keep them properly.

Let's look at meat first. Raw meat, poultry, and fish need to be in the coldest part of the refrigerator for safe-keeping or the coldest storage place you have. In fact, raw meat, poultry and fish need a temperature of 45 degrees Fahrenheit or lower. If you can't provide such cold storage for them, use meat the same day you buy it, and keep it as cool as you can until you cook it.

Be extra careful with ground raw meat. It spoils even more rapidly than meat in one piece. Keep ground meat very cold, and use it quickly. And here's a tip about storing meat in general. When you bring it home from the store, take off the wrapping paper, and cover it loosely with wax paper before you put it away.

As for poultry in particular, wash it thoroughly, both inside and out but never soak it in water.) Then pat it dry, and store it wrapped loosely or covered loosely until time to cook. Then if you don't eat it right away, chill it quickly, and keep it chilled until time to serve.

Now for fish. Most good housekeepers know how fast fish can spoil. Fish spoils in only a few hours at room temperature. So either cook fish right away, or wrap it in wax paper, and store in a very cold place. The wax paper keeps that fish odor from other foods.

Cooked meats need careful attention, too. Be sure to cover them before you put them away. Don't cut or chop cooked meat until just before you use it, because any meat that has been cut or chopped spoils more quickly than meat in one piece.

And as for meat sandwiches and meat salads, make them up only shortly before serving time, and keep them cold until you put them on the table.

Milk also belongs in the colder part of the refrigerator, and should be kept there when not in use. Keep milk covered, and away from strong smelling foods. Clean all milk containers with suds and sun on all milk containers.

In many parts of the country we now have milk deliveries every other day instead of every day. This makes keeping milk sweet even more of a problem. If you haven't enough refrigerator room, it may be better for you to buy every other day's milk supply at the store.

Eggs are another food you need to store in a very cold place. Keep your main supply of eggs in the refrigerator, or other cold place, and take each egg out only as you need them. Never wash eggs before storing them. If you do, you wash off the protective "bloom" or film that keeps out air and odors. If eggs are soiled, wipe them with a rough, dry cloth before you put them away.

Milk and egg dishes, like custard, cream pie, and pudding are favorites in the summertime, but they are quick to spoil also. So make them up not far ahead of serving time, put them right in the refrigerator or other cold storage place, and keep them there until time for eating. Egg sandwiches, devilled eggs, and homemade salad dressings, made with egg, are other foods that spoil easily. Take good care of them.

That's all for now about fighting food waste. Just remember....every little bit of saving counts. And, well - the rest is up to you.

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