

## Plentiful Foods

YOU CAN SAVE up to 6 percent of your weekly food bill by buying meat, poultry, eggs, fruit, and vegetables when your local market has them in good supply and features them as sale items.

That means a sizable saving in a year. It is wise therefore to be flexible with your meal plans and serve the items that are in biggest supply.

Improvements in harvesting methods, packaging, transportation, and storage have extended the traditional season for most foods. But—especially for fresh fruit and vegetables—there is still a major harvest season when they are most plentiful in your locality.

Favorable weather or other crop and marketing conditions can bring about bumper harvests that overstock normal marketing channels. When there is a big supply of fresh produce on the market, prices tend to go down. That is the time to buy fresh fruit and vegetables.

For example, you may be tempted to serve fresh tomatoes and sweet corn in December, but unless they are in plentiful supply you may pay 14 cents a pound more for tomatoes and 29 cents more for six ears of corn in December than in peak harvest periods.

Another advantage is that fresh foods bought at harvest peak may be highest in flavor and nutritive value. A processed food in heavy supply probably was frozen, canned, or packed at the peak of quality.

Seasonal supply charts are good

guides, but you should remember that they are guides and that supplies can vary year to year. Some years there is a short crop, and contrary to chart indications, the supply is limited.

Other years, the words "seasonally abundant" fail to describe the king-size harvests that exceed normal demands and may well cause problems of marketing. When that happens, the price to the grower drops, sometimes to levels below his cost of production.

At times you may have overbought something or purchased just the right amount but could not use it as you planned. On a large scale, that can happen to a producer, who harvests a larger crop than he expected or has the crop ready for market ahead of or behind schedule, and the deliveries overlap with those from other sections. Just like you, he has to revamp his plans to avoid waste. He tells people about the abundance.

This information is readily available. Through its plentiful foods program, the Department of Agriculture regularly issues reports about foods that are especially plentiful. Food editors of newspapers and magazines, retail merchants in advertisements and displays, and radio and TV broadcasters pass the information on to consumers.

Newspapers tell in articles, recipes, and pictures about an abundant food. Radio and television stations have spot announcements and other consumer service features. Extension consumer marketing and home agents make available interesting ideas. They are a product of cooperative endeavors of Government and private enterprise to help producers, sellers, and consumers.

An instance: Beef was especially plentiful during 1964 in the United States, which always has been a leading beef-consuming country. The producers, who raise these animals and feed them for market, had achieved the highest level of beef production ever recorded in this country. Beef was listed as a plentiful food.

Excellent beef was available in abundance in markets everywhere at good

prices. The help of food editors and others was enlisted to develop new ways of serving beef. Suggestions for freezing it at home were made available. "Eat Beef" was added to the plethora of slogans that bombarded Americans, but it helped.

Consumers did eat beef and in so doing helped move a food abundance through the normal channels of trade, to the benefit of producers, packers, the food industry, and consumers, who were able to stretch their food budgets while beefing up their menus.

I OFFER some suggestions about the use of plentiful foods.

For some, turkey still means Thanksgiving and Christmas, but turkey now is available all year. Consumers willing to change their buying habits take advantage of summer turkey sales and serve turkey in new ways—stuffed and roasted, broiled, barbecued, fried, or served cold in sandwiches or salads.

The next time turkey is featured, do not look at the calendar but rather in the cookbook. Generally you pay less per pound for the larger turkeys, a 20-pound tom being cheaper per pound than 10-pounders. You get more meat in proportion to carcass on the big ones. Just be sure you can manage a big turkey.

Try this: Ask the meatman to saw a frozen turkey into halves or quarters. Wrap the pieces individually and place them in your homefreezer as soon as you can.

Modern methods of producing and processing keep the number of broiler-fryers that come to market in rather abundant supply all year. Grocers like to offer special sales on them to alternate with specials on other meats. If you find broilers on special sale, you may be able to save as much as 20 to 30 percent. Put them in your freezer.

Instead of roasting chickens, buy whole broiler-fryers of 2.5 pounds or more for stuffing and roasting. You may be able to save 10 cents a pound, or more.

For stewing, get a large broiler-fryer

and simmer it to tenderness. The cooking time will be less, because these are young, tender birds. Stewed broiler-fryers are excellent in soups, stews, and casseroles.

Chicken necks can stretch your budget. Three pounds simmered slowly until the meat is easily removed from bones yield about three cups of dark meat, enough to serve six, for casseroles and croquettes.

The prices of beef vary because of greater demand for certain cuts, like porterhouse, rib, sirloin, and round steaks, as compared to chuck, brisket, plate, neck, and shank meat. Because ground beef usually is prepared from less popular cuts, it costs less.

Lean for lean and fat for fat, however, all cuts of beef are about the same in nutritional value. Variations in calories are related to the amount of fat that interlaces the lean meat. A well-balanced diet needs a certain amount of fat for proper digestion and utilization of the goodness in all foods.

Knowledge of the different cuts of beef helps one in buying beef. The demand for steaks and rib roasts is exceptionally high in some seasons. For example, summer cookouts create a heavy demand for steaks and barbecue meats. If roasts go on sale then, buy one, even if it is summer, or stock your freezer with several roasts.

Buying larger cuts of beef when they are featured can be a wise purchase, too. The trick is to have the meat cut into portions to suit your family needs. A rib roast five ribs thick may be too large for an average family; ask the meatman to remove the shortribs, cut off two or three rib steaks, and leave the two-rib roast. You now have the makings for three meals: A braised shortrib dish, broiled rib steaks, and a rib roast for a special dinner.

Small- and medium-size eggs sometimes sell for as much as one-fourth less than the large and extra-large size in the same grade, especially in late summer and early fall.

Always compare prices of eggs of different sizes within the same grade

to see which is the best buy. It does vary. The size does not affect quality, but it does affect price. You should always judge egg quality by the grade, not by the size. There are Grade A Extra Large, Grade A Medium, and Grade A Small eggs as well as Grade B Extra Large, Grade B Medium, and so on.

To determine which eggs are the best buy, divide the cost of a dozen eggs by the number of ounces a dozen eggs weigh. That gives the cost per ounce, which, multiplied by 16 (ounces), gives the cost per pound, of the dozen eggs. The minimum weights per dozen are: Extra Large eggs, 27 ounces, or 1 pound 11 ounces; Large, 24 ounces, or 1 pound 8 ounces; Medium, 21 ounces, or 1 pound 5 ounces; Small, 18 ounces, or 1 pound 2 ounces.

For example, if Extra Large Grade A eggs sell for 86 cents a dozen, the price paid per pound is 51 cents. If Small Grade A eggs sell at 58 cents a dozen, the price per pound is 52 cents. The Extra Large eggs would be about 1 cent a pound cheaper. If, however, the Small Grade A eggs sell at 40 cents a dozen, the price per pound is 36 cents, or 15 cents a pound cheaper than the Extra Large Grade A eggs at 51 cents a dozen.

Fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruits and vegetables are the mainstay of menus. The increase in processed foods makes it important for each consumer to keep a watchful eye on food advertisements. For many times the abundant supply is a processed food item rather than the fresh product.

Citrus fruit, root vegetables, cranberries, and apples generally are plentiful and more favorably priced in fall and winter. Fresh berries, melons, peaches, plums, and garden produce are in generous supply and lower in price during the late spring to fall harvest months. They are usually lowest in price in your community when it is harvesttime in the nearest growing district. Advances in transportation, however, make it possible for all to share

in an abundant harvest miles away.

Budgets and appetites respond when plentiful fruits and vegetables are included in the shopping lists.

For example, if lettuce goes up in price (perhaps because of weather conditions that cut the size of the crop), consider using cabbage or endive for the salad or have a relish tray salad of carrot, green pepper, and celery.

Fresh oranges and grapefruit are most reasonably priced in January into April. In summer, the family can still enjoy citrus products in canned or frozen form. Many grocers feature frozen and canned orange, grapefruit, and lemon products in summer. Watch the advertisements so you can keep your freezer and cupboards well stocked.

You can also get vitamin C from tomatoes, raw cabbage, and some of the dark-green vegetables that may be in plentiful supply.

When a fresh product comes on the market, at the beginning of its harvest season, it may be higher in price than it will be after the harvest has been underway for awhile.

For instance, tomatoes may start coming onto the market in quantity in May, and prices may start dropping. But lowest prices usually do not come until midsummer, sometime in August, when the harvest is at its peak.

Keep checking the advertisements and keep a watchful eye on the various produce items when shopping, if you plan to buy in quantity for canning or stocking the freezer.

Canned and frozen foods often are bargains when grocers make their end-of-year inventory. January sales on odd lots of canned goods, discontinued lines, or lines that are moving slowly are good for stocking the cupboard.

Sometimes case-lot promotions are conducted in February and March. Fall by-the-case sales also are worth watching, especially if there is a generous new pack of the fruit or vegetable. It is important for the last year's pack to be moved in order to make room for the new. Sales of frozen food also gain momentum then.

Take advantage of special sales of salad and cooking oils. Buy by the quart, half gallon, or gallon for use in many ways, like these:

Add 1 tablespoon salad oil per layer when whipping up a packaged cake mix. The result is extra lightness.

Brush gelatin and candy molds lightly with oil before using. The molded creations will come out easily.

To keep macaroni, rice, noodles, and spaghetti separated during cooking and also to keep water from boiling over, add a tablespoon of oil per cup of boiling water.

Cakes, cupcakes, and breads will have evenly browned, unbroken crusts when the pans are brushed lightly with vegetable oil and then dusted lightly with flour before the batter or dough is added. (JOYCE SEARLES SHORT)

## USDA Grades

USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) grades for food are a dependable, nationally uniform guide to quality and a means of making valid comparisons of quality and price.

Beef, lamb, butter, poultry, and eggs are the products most likely to carry the USDA grade shield.

This official emblem of quality is not so widely used on other foods, although it is available for use on many others.

The food that carries the USDA grade shield—usually with the designation U.S. Grade A or AA, or (for meat) U.S. Choice—measures up to a definite standard of quality, as determined by a Government grader who has examined it. It is clean and wholesome.

Processors and packers who wish to employ Government grading services

and have their product carry the USDA grade shield must meet strict requirements for plant sanitation and operating procedure.

Meat and poultry must be inspected for wholesomeness if they are to be graded.

Products with the shield are not the only ones graded. Your grocery store may do most of its buying on the basis of USDA grades. Wholesale grades, such as U.S. No. 1, marked on containers of fresh fruit and vegetables often carry through to the retail level. They may appear on consumer packages of such commodities as potatoes, onions, apples, and citrus fruits.

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE performs three functions that have to do with the quality and wholesomeness of food—standardization, grading, and inspection.

Since food, as a product of Nature, comes in varying degrees of quality, some way of sorting it out—grading it—is needed.

Before you can grade a product, you have to have a standard measure of quality, in the same way you need a standard measure of quantity, such as a pound, a bushel, or a quart, before you can measure how much.

Standards for grades of quality cannot be quite so precise as measures of quantity. They are based on the attributes of a product that determine its value and its usefulness.

For instance, consumers have said they want tenderness, juiciness, and flavor in a beefsteak. In order to develop standards for grades of beef, then, it is necessary to identify the factors that indicate how tender, juicy, and flavorful the meat from a particular beef carcass will be.

The standards for beef accordingly take into account the amount of marbling (fat interspersed within the lean), the color, firmness, and texture of the meat, and the age of the animal.

Standards for each product describe the entire range of quality. The number of grades for a product depends