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Helps for the Spring Market Basket

By MARGARET L. MARNETTE

WITH the coming of warm weather, fresh fruits and vegetables are in abundance, and lucky indeed is the housewife who has a garden from which she can gather her own. For the homemaker who must resort to the huckster's cart, or the corner grocery store, a new problem is offered. Besides knowing tempting ways of serving these desirable foods, she must know how to purchase them.

Among the first fruits of the spring season are strawberries and pineapples, and the vegetables include asparagus and the various greens.

Nothing is more tempting and delicious for any spring menu than ripe strawberries, and in order to be delicious they must be carefully selected. Because of the several varieties of berries, it is a common view that the largest berries are the best and the smaller ones are fit only for jam. However, the medium size berry is really the most satisfactory from all viewpoints. The Dunlap is the commonest variety in the middle western states. It has a crimson color and is juicy and tart, rather than sweet. The berries are slightly heart-shaped and have small seeds.



Another good variety of berry grown in Iowa is the Warfield, which is round rather than heart-shaped as the Dunlap, and is more sweet but less juicy. It is a deeper red color and the seeds are slightly larger and browner than the Dunlap.

In buying berries, try smelling them. Fresh berries will smell fresh, and have a clear, dewy smell to them. Pulling the blossom end is a good test. If it pulls clean and juice spurts out, the berries will usually be fresh. Fresh berries have a peculiar taste which a

two-day-old fruit has lost. It is a more tart and not over-ripe taste. Do not hesitate to buy medium or small berries, but beware that the small berry is not also hard and green.

Pineapples begin to arrive about the first of June and the housewife whose family enjoys this tropic fruit will find it to her advantage to buy them by the crate for canning. Pineapples must be entirely ripe to be edible. The spines should be faintly brown and peel off easily. Pressing the end is a fairly good way of telling whether or not the fruit is ripe, but is not always reliable. Smelling the blossom end will give a more definite idea because of the fact that the ripe pineapples smell drier and not so green as the unripe fruit. The fiber should be a good yellow.

If green or unripe pineapples are purchased they may be stored in a cool, dry place. Putting them in the sun will cause them to ripen in spots.

Among the vegetables is the asparagus plant, which is a member of the lily family. It grows best in well-sanded, wet soil, and takes about two years for it to mature enough to have a good crop. The edible stalks grow

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Lacquer for Kitchen Tables

By DELLA J. NORTON

WHY not lacquer your kitchen table? The Department of Household Equipment at Iowa State College has found this new paint finish seems to better resist the many and varied stains to which kitchen working surfaces are subjected, than many of the advocated finishes. Few brides wish to "try out" all the many finishes they may choose for kitchen tables or built-in working surfaces. No bride or experienced housewife wants a finish which must be renewed after six months' use. How shall they know what to choose? Inquiry of the many testing laboratories conducted by women's magazines revealed as many "best" finishes as answers given. So research has recently been carried on to find which finish seems to hold up best under kitchen conditions.

Few housewives have escaped the trials of preserving time from the effect of fruit juice stains left on table surfaces. Likewise hot water, fat, soap, or even a hot pan set down hurriedly may instantly ruin a table. These very tests were applied in the laboratory under controlled conditions so each finish tested might receive identically the same treatment. Let us see how one test was applied, the dry heat test. Pyrex custard cups of

the same size were filled with a certain amount of water and heated in the oven until the water reached 200 degrees F. The cups were then placed on the test tables and left two hours. Results were thus easily compared as to the relative effect of dry heat upon each finish.

The tops upon which the tests were applied were made especially for this purpose. Strips of poplar, maple, pine and oak were fastened together lengthwise. By finishing each table crosswise each finish could be tested on each of the four woods. The finishes applied were enamel, enamel covered with a "water-proof" varnish, plain varnish, two lacquers, hot oil, a mixture of hot oil, paraffin and turpentine, and plain paraffin well ironed into the surface with a warm iron. Inlaid linoleum was given the same tests. Porcelain enameled iron is an attractive, resistant finish, but was not included as it is too expensive for use in many homes.

When all the tests had been applied to all the finishes, the tables had somewhat the appearance of a relief map. On the whole, the soft woods showed stains worse than the hard woods. The oil, mixtures of oil and plain paraffin finishes all showed the

stains more readily than did the paint finishes, the latter seemingly protecting the wood better. The "water-proof" varnish greatly increased the resisting power of the enamel and was not damaged by moist heat or hot water. However, use of water-proof varnish does not insure protection from the stains left by soap or fruit juice. The plain varnish did not hold up well, being ruined by soap and dry heat. One of the lacquer finishes applied was a clear lacquer, the other ivory color. Both of these finishes held up better than others applied, while the enamel covered with water-proof varnish was a close second. The latter is much more difficult to apply than the lacquers, as it took three under coats of flat white paint, two coats of enamel and one coat of varnish. The lacquers required three coats. Moist heat was the only stain that showed on the surface of the lacquer finishes.

Although very new on the market, the lacquers are giving surprising results. They may be obtained in a wide range of colors and are quickly applied. By using clear lacquer an attractive grain in a wood may be preserved, but if it is desirable to use a less expensive soft wood, such as pine or poplar, the opaque finishes are best.

ing, but by the use of the pressure cooker they were cooked till the flesh was ready to fall away from the bone in the time it took me to cook the potatoes and set the table.

By using foods requiring about the same time, a whole meal may be prepared at once with no absorption of odors.

As to cost and ease of operation of fireless and pressure cookers, an interesting comparative study has just been carried on in the Home Equipment Department, using a gas stove.

A menu made up of different and representative types of food, which, with the addition of a salad, made a complete and properly balanced meal, was chosen. This menu was Swiss steak with onions, tomatoes and carrots, rice as a vegetable and chocolate bread pudding. This was cooked five times in the pressure cooker, four times in a one-compartment fireless cooker and three times on top of the stove under as nearly identical conditions as possible with the following results:

COST TABLE

Cooker	Food Weight	Fuel	Cost at \$2.00		Labor Necessary
Pressure	5.28	12.43 cu. ft.	\$.0248	\$.0124	50 min. prep. 1 hr. in P. C. (not constant watching)
Fireless	5.20	15.89	.0316	.0158	1 hr. 20 min. (prep.)
Open kettle	5.28	27.03	.027	.027	2 hr. 35 min.

Savings resulting.

(Compared with open kettle method generally used.)

Saving	Pressure Cooker	Fireless Cooker
Saving in Fuel	14.60 cu. ft.—54 %	11.14 cu. ft.—41 %
Saving in Labor	45 min. 22.5%	75 min 51.2%

From the above tables it is evident that there is a decided saving in fuel by the use of either cooker. When translated into terms of money we can see just what this saving would be. A study of gas bills in a given city indicated that the average gas bill for a family of four is \$5.50 a month, or 15 cents a day. Assuming that 10 cents would be used in preparing the dinner meal, according to the above figures, \$.054 would be saved each time a pressure cooker meal similar to the above was prepared, and \$.041 saved each time a similar fireless cooker dinner was served. By frequent use of either cooker a substantial saving in the monthly gas bill would be made.

There is also a decided saving in labor in each case. It took less time to prepare the food for the pressure cooker, but longer intermittent watching, while with the fireless cooker the necessity of pre-heating the stone and having the foods at boiling temperatures when placed in the cooker required more time, but when the meal was once in the cooker it could be absolutely out of mind until serving time.

The resulting food products were carefully scored according to set standards and were as acceptable in quality as those cooked on top of the stove with the exception of the rice. The meat was decidedly better in the cookers, with a slight advantage in favor of the fireless cooker. That cooked on top of the stove was cooked away, darker and of poorer flavor, while the rice cooked in the cookers was very palatable. The larger quantity of water which could be used in the ordinary method gave a slight advantage as to distinctness of the individual grains.

The type of cooker the homemaker chooses depends upon her needs. Each has its advantages. If her household duties are such that she prefers to get her dinner early in the morning so that she may have freedom for a shopping trip or work in the garden, by all means she should have a fireless cooker. If she prefers to cook her meal quickly, with possibly a roast, while she is setting the table and preparing the rest of the meal, the pres-

tender. Breaking them or peeling down the end is the best method of testing. The fibers will show closely united threads when the stalks are tender.

Lettuce is now used as a salad vegetable the year 'round, but leaf lettuce, which is at its best in the spring, is seldom served otherwise. The leaves should not be more than eight inches long, and the ends must be free from the milky white liquid which gives the leaf such a bitter taste. The leaves should be light green in color and crisp.

Besides lettuce, there are several tempting greens which have all the qualities necessary for a satisfying salad. For instance, there is the water cress plant, of which there are several varieties. The leaves of the plant are round-lobed and smooth, and the stems are long and slender. The color ranges from bright to olive green. Most water cress is found along shores or near a spring. The plant is sold in bunches or by the pound.

Spinach is another green, which is more of the fern variety than water cress. It is a deeper green and the leaves are larger. In buying spinach, make certain that the leaves are free, or nearly so, from sand. The stems should be pale green and the fibers should snap when broken.

Swiss chard is a third garden green which is a favorite in many homes. This plant grows to about one foot in height and is more like leaf lettuce than any other green. It has a long white stem, which may be eaten as celery. The veins are white instead of green.

The dandelion is being used on more menus now than heretofore. In many city stores the plants may be purchased as other greens, but most everyone has all he wants of this plant in his own yard. One store sells dandelion sprouts, which are the white roots just below the leaves and above the brown roots. The only thing to watch when buying the plant is that there is not an excess of the milky white liquid on the roots, which shows that the plant is old and tough as well as bitter.

All in all, freshness and cleanliness are the two factors which determine the desirability of fresh fruits and vegetables. Learn to judge them by appearance and smell. Buy them in the early morning, once or twice a week, and keep them in cool places until you use them. Your spring menus may be made attractive and inviting if you choose your fruits and vegetables with the same care as you do your staples.

Justice is the only worship;
 Love is the only priest;
 Ignorance is the only slavery;
 Happiness is the only good.
 The time to be happy is now,
 The place to be happy is here,
 The way to be happy
 Is to make other
 People happy.

—R. G. Ingersoll.

sure cooker is more desirable as well as being a greater fuel saver. She should suit her cooker to her needs.

Certainly the purchase of one of these cookers is worth while in time, labor and fuel saved, helping to reduce the high cost of living and freeing the homemaker's time for other essential home duties.

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to about six to eight inches in height, although sometimes a stalk ten inches long will be suitable for food purposes. Usually, however, after the middle of June stalks tend to become tough and woody, and to develop fern leaves.

Asparagus stalks should snap briskly when broken. This is a good test for freshness and desirability of the stalk. The color of the best stalks is pale green, with faint white or slightly yellow ends. The size of the stalk has little to do with the crispness, as many slim shoots are extremely tough and some of the thicker ones may be quite