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A Pressure or a Fireless Cooker—Which?

By ETHEL CESSNA MORGAN

Fireless cookers have many advantages. Very often the food products are superior to those cooked by ordinary methods, many healthful foods which require long cooking are rendered practical. If it will be found there is much better food, and if by being cooked away, less fuel is used and there is much less demand on the homemaker's time and strength, freeing her for other household tasks or pleasures.

Some find a "closed up" taste to the foods to which they object. Where the cooker is sanitary, this is due to flavors having been trapped rather than steaming into the air. This often disappears after the food has stood for a few minutes in the air or it may be overcome by placing the meat, for instance, into the oven a few minutes to brown.

There are many uses for fireless cookers. One homemaker suggests that she finds it useful to put the Sunday dinner in the cooker while preparing breakfast; to leave dinner in for the men at home when going away for the day; to send a hot dinner to the men when their work is too far away to come home; one or two of the main dishes of the meal at breakfast time, when much time must be spent in the garden or other out-of-doors work; to keep cool drinking water during the day—for fireless cookers will keep things cool as well as hot.

These are but suggestive of the many uses to which the fireless cooker may be put. It will be found a very valuable household "friend".

Pressure Cooker

In recent years pressure cookers have been adapted to home use and have become very popular and have outsold the fireless cookers in many sections. Miss Florence E. Ward reports that for 1926, 2509 pressure and steam cookers were bought for the farm kitchens in 36 states of the North and West, while during the same period, 1661 fireless cookers were made at home and 319 purchased, and she estimates that 1,905,519 hours have been saved by the use of these and other household helps. When we add to the number those purchasing cookers in the stores and those who are increasing the increase in numbers and popularity since these figures were given, we see that pressure and fireless cookers have become a very important factor in household keeping.

The pressure cooker is based on a very different principle from the fireless. We all know that it is impossible to cook foods higher than the boiling temperature under ordinary conditions. But by cooking them under pressure a much higher temperature can be reached. The following table is interesting in this connection:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pressure</th>
<th>Temperature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 pounds</td>
<td>230°F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 pounds</td>
<td>240°F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 pounds</td>
<td>260°F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This means that food may be cooked much more quickly. Using this principle, a number of manufacturers have developed pressure cookers which are perfectly safe for domestic use at a price within the reach of many.

Features of Pressure Cooker

The essential features of a pressure cooker are a strong kettle, usually of heavy aluminum, an air tight cover with secure locking device, a pressure gauge, steam vent and safety-valve which is simple and reliable. Any standard pressure cooker is perfectly safe if operated according to directions.

It is particularly adapted to the cooking of cheaper cuts of meat, fibrous vegetables and a limited number of puddings (the temperature can be controlled by using a low pressure during the raising process and a higher pressure during the finishing). The following are the main advantages claimed for the pressure cooker:

1. Time, labor and fuel are saved.
2. Cheaper foods are made available for every day use.
3. Foods are never burned in cooking.
4. Foods keep hot longer in the heavy aluminum kettle.
5. In cooking tough cuts of meat, flavors are retained to a greater extent because there is no loss of volatile material.
6. An entire meal may be cooked in one container, thereby saving dishwashing as well as fuel. (Flavors do not mix).
7. Foods are sterilized by the high temperatures.

Most of the objections to the pressure cooker come from cooking at too high a pressure. Food is cooked sometimes "cooked to pieces" and the flavor distorted by the high temperature. Most of the objections are overcome by the proper manipulation of the pressure.

One of the greatest advantages is the quick cooking of the cheaper cuts of meat. There is a saving not only in fuel cost, but in food costs and the homemaker's time as well.

Not long ago, I served a pigeon dinner for Sunday company in a triffe less than an hour's time, starting with raw birds. Ordinarily, pigeons of assorted ages require at least three hours' cook-
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 related 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COST TABLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fireless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open kettle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Savings resulting.

(Compare with open kettle method generally used.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Saving in Fuel</th>
<th>Pressure Cooker</th>
<th>$2.00</th>
<th>Fireless Cooker</th>
<th>$2.00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>75 min.</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>11.14 cu. ft.</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 hr. 35 min.</td>
<td>50 min. prep.</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>9.14 cu. ft.</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 min.</td>
<td>hr. in (prep.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>45 min.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 meal 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 stove 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 meal 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 pressure 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.

Helps for the Spring Market Basket

(Continued from page 3)

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 too coarse for use.

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 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 much 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 some in his 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.