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Army Streamlines Field Rations

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TO COMBAT the eventuality of a weakened cog caused by hungry soldiers in the war machine, the United States Army has recently planned a new field ration to be used for feeding moving troops or for troops quartered at isolated outposts.

It is believed that it will be necessary for the soldier in the front line trench to carry on his person emergency rations due to the possibility of being cut off from hot meals served from mess kitchens. The new ration, known as Type C, is one of the first fruits of the research carried on by the Quartermaster's Corps Subsistence Research Laboratory in Chicago.

The ration consists of two units, one of meat, the M-unit, and one of bread, the B-unit. The meat units contain meat and beans or meat and vegetable stew. Beef, pork, white beans, tomato juice and pulp, potatoes, carrots, onions and spices are combined into one day's fare.

The bread unit consists of four and one-half ounces of biscuit. With the development of stable shortenings the new biscuits are a vast improvement over the old hard tack made of flour, water and salt with no shortening. They contain milk, sugar and malt, with one-fourth of the flour composed of whole wheat to provide bulk.

The present type of biscuit has been developed as a combination of the biscuits originally planned for the bread unit. Three kinds of wafers were first developed, a pilot biscuit similar to the old fashioned hard bread, a graham biscuit and a milk biscuit. Owing to the difficulties in assembling this assortment, the three were combined into one crisp, tender biscuit.

In addition, the bread unit contains one sealed packet of powdered coffee, sufficient to make one pint, sugar in tablet form and an ounce bar of chocolate which has been fortified with the vitamin B complex. Six cans weighing about five pounds make up the day's ration, two cans being provided for each of the three meals.

Palatability of the food when either hot or cold and an appetizing appearance were important considerations in planning the ration. The quantity allowed was high. During the recent maneuvers in the Panama Canal Zone the rations were used for test purposes.

The most common criticism was that it provided more than the average man could eat in a day. Perhaps the 3,900 to 4,500 calories per day required by soldiers can better be met by issuance of only two meals a day, supplemented by the emergency chocolate ration.

Nutritive quality and balance were other requirements. A moisture content as near to that of body tissues as possible was considered necessary. Also sufficient roughage for digestive functioning was deemed advisable.

In planning the menus, formulas were drawn up which satisfied every requirement of a perfect ration. But to the technician's chagrin, these formulas which were adequate on paper were inconceivable when actually combined in the kitchen. Finally the meat and bread units were developed, a ration which, it is believed, will prove excellent.

To preserve the product from deterioration or contamination by gas, hermetically sealed cans with a key-opening band and attached key were adopted. All of the meat and other products contained in the ration are bought according to government specifications.

The cost of the ration as now being produced is greater than the preceding standard field ration, but mass production is expected to lower this materially. The day's supply weighs between five and five and one-half pounds gross. If the emergency chocolate bar is substituted, the weight would be reduced approximately one and one-half pounds.