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War Rations British Homemaking

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Marabeth Paddock explains how British homemakers are solving war-time nutrition problems with ingenuity.

Instead of exchanging notes on some tasty dish, British homemakers discuss economies in food preparation—a subject vital to the Americas today. Other foods not on the rationing list but which are scarce and difficult to buy have caused added problems for the British.

In order to conserve sugar, the women in England are advised to boil fruit for stewing in a small amount of bicarbonate of soda before adding the sugar. One-third less sugar is used this way. The Low Temperature Research Station at Cambridge, England, has made this announcement regarding the inactivation of vitamin C: “Fruits are so acid and the amount of bicarbonate of soda so comparatively small that the vitamin C content will not be seriously affected.” By using salt the women can save one-half the usual amount of sugar needed in making jam. The disadvantage in this method is that the jam doesn’t keep for more than a few weeks when it is opened.

Milk is saved by rinsing milk bottles with water and using the milk-water in pastries and sauces. Casserole dishes and pot-roasts are employed by the British women to use the less tender cuts of meat. They find that wiping raw meat with vinegar before storing it in a cool place is helpful in keeping it fresh. Bacon, not included in rationed foods, and cheese dishes help brighten menus on meatless days.

Like the women in some parts of the United States, women in England are saving bacon fat and are melting fat from meat and bones. In England, however, this fat goes back into general kitchen use. Because bread is one of the scarce commodities in the British Isles, the women find it important to make every scrap into breadcrumbs.

Meat is on the rationing list and numerous economies are being practiced in its preparation. One homemaker in England has found that having the meat joints boned and using the joints for roasting and the bone for soup helps conserve her weekly ration. Pastes are made from the leftovers of meat and fish. The women have been instructed not to throw away bones for they can be used again and again for soups and stock.

Watercress is a substitute when spinach is not to be had, and herbs and spices are used in place of onions, which are hard to get.

Treacle, the English term for molasses, is difficult to buy, so women are using honey in its place in their English treacle tarts. They are reducing the suet in suet puddings by adding breadcrumbs or by increasing the baking powder.

Despite the shipments of dried and frozen eggs from the United States, there is still a scarcity in England. The homemakers there bake eggless cakes, margarine being used often instead of butter.