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The Sugar Problem- A Challenge to Homemakers

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The Sugar Problem—

Ann Koebel reviews the current sugar situation and effect on consumption in American homes.

The traditional American sweet tooth is going to be affected by the victory effort since the American homemaker, like the British, is now buying her sugar with a ration card. This situation is a result of the curtailment of shipments from the Pacific and of the fact that a considerable amount of the available supply is being used for the manufacture of alcohols and for shipment to our allies. Although Americans are going to be able to buy less sugar this year than last, they will not need to make drastic changes in their diets.

There are two main ways of stretching that sugar allotment: by using less sugar and by making substitutions. The main decrease in sugar consumption will have to come from the use of less sweetening. There are some substitutes available for the homemaker, the main ones being molasses, honey, maple syrup and sugar, corn syrup and sorghum, but their supply will not be materially above last year's. This means that if homemakers would start using large amounts of honey or corn syrup the demand would exceed the supply. It will be mainly a matter of conserving rather than replacing.

Dr. P. Mabel Nelson, head of the Foods and Nutrition Department, says that Americans have been using more sugar than they really need. The dentists second this, saying that an excess amount of sugar in the diet is a contributing factor in tooth decay.

The only way that the body uses sugar is for energy. It is entirely lacking in essential minerals and vitamins. As far as the energy requirement goes, there are other foods which are much less expensive forms, such as macaroni, rice and other carbohydrate foods.

Americans have tended to use sugar to mask, rather than complement, the natural flavor of fruits and cereals. By practicing moderation for victory, they can learn to like foods for their own flavor rather than for that of the sugar they have always put on top of them. In order to make a little bit of sugar go a long way homemakers will have to make good use of what sugar is available.

Fresh, dried and canned fruits are rich in sugar. By serving more fruits and fewer rich desserts the homemaker can satisfy the family's sweet tooth without going into the sugar bowl.

Using fruits in cooking will increase the apparent sweetness of puddings and cakes even if less sugar is used. If dried fruits are cooked slowly for a long time they will need little or no additional sugar. By using more fruits the homemaker will not only be stretching her sugar allowance but she will be helping to build a stronger America since the nutritive value of fruit is far above that of those puddings and cakes.

When bananas that have ripened until they have brown specks are sliced on top of cereal it won't be necessary to use additional sugar. Cereals and puddings will still taste sweet if less sugar is used but quartered dates or shredded coconut are added.

Partial substitutions of other sweetenings, when they are available, will generally produce as good results as when only sugar is used. However, total substitutions in recipes which were made for sugar are not advisable since the same product won't be obtained if all of the sugar is replaced by molasses or honey. When
a recipe without sugar is desired homemakers will have much better results if they use a recipe which originally called for molasses or honey.

There are a few general rules to follow in substituting for sugar. The following table gives the proportion of each sweetening to use and any other changes which will have to be made in the recipe. As a general rule it is not advisable to replace more than one-half of the sugar.

Many rural homemakers will have honey which they can use in place of part of their sugar. City homemakers will also be able to get some honey after the new crop comes in. In baking cakes or cookies made with honey a moderate oven should be used. With a high temperature they will brown before they are done and the flavor of the honey will be changed.

There is another factor to consider in the use of honey, and that is its power of absorbing water. In moist products such as steamed puddings and soft cookies this is an advantage but in cake frostings, hard candies or other products which should harden this is a disadvantage. If honey becomes granulated it can be easily liquified by immersing the jar in hot water for an hour. It will be much easier to measure if a greased measuring spoon is used.

Molasses and sorghum have one definite advantage over sugar in that they are excellent sources of iron, that essential mineral which is so apt to be slighted in the American diet. Sweetened condensed milk can be used in beverages, frostings and desserts. Both molasses and maple sugar products will give a different flavor to foods than will cane sugar. Although it is usually substituted equally for sugar, corn syrup will give a slightly less sweet product.

The canning question has not yet been settled although the indications are that extra sugar allotments will be allowed. However, many fruits can be canned without sugar and when sugar is used one-fourth to one-half of it can be replaced by corn syrup.

As far as the homemaker is concerned the supply of any of these products which can be substituted for sugar will be limited. Therefore, any extensive use of them will be impossible, but by substituting them for part of the sugar the homemaker can help make her sugar allowance stretch for that extra special cake for Sunday dinner. All substitutes are slightly different from sugar in chemical composition, and they will produce a different cake or pudding if they are used in large amounts. If it is necessary to use recipes with no sugar the homemaker should watch for new recipes which the manufacturers will be putting out for that purpose, rather than trying to repropionate recipes intended for sugar.

The main decrease in the consumption of sugar will come from moderation and careful planning on the part of the homemaker. The present sugar allowance really isn’t going to be a hardship. Americans who have been masking flavor with sugar are going to be very surprised to find how good the natural flavor of fruits and cereals is. Homemakers will have to vary their traditional menus a bit but the result should be a healthier America.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SWEETENING</th>
<th>EQUAL TO 1 CUP SUGAR</th>
<th>REDUCE LIQUID</th>
<th>ADD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honey</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>¼</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molasses or Sorghum</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>¼</td>
<td>½ tsp. soda per cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn syrup</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>¼</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maple sugar</td>
<td>⅔ cup</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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