POW's Eat Foods of Their Dreams

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Iowa State's returned prisoners of war eat self-selected diets according to Rosalie Riglin

**CONTRARY** to fond beliefs of the folks back home, "Ma, I Miss Your Apple Pie" was not the tune Johnny sang when he came marching home from a prisoner of war camp. He wanted those apples crisp, crunchy and juicy—straight from the orchard.

Raw vegetables, celery, carrot sticks, lettuce and tomato salad and cooked carrots and peas were other foods he craved. Conditioned first by an army diet, which included little sweet stuff, and then by imprisonment in German camps where he subsisted on a diet of coarse, dark bread and turnips, cabbage or potatoes, Johnny found he couldn't take the sweet, rich desserts his mother carefully prepared for him. He wasn't unappreciative, just uncomfortable because he couldn't digest pies, cakes and puddings. Even some raw or canned fruits proved too sweet at first.

Most of the Iowa State student veterans interviewed have now been back in the American way of life for at least 3 months and eat desserts sparingly, but fresh fruit is still their favorite way of finishing a meal.

Paralleling the shortage of sugar in their diets was the men's agreement that so far as they knew their teeth were in as good condition now as when they entered the army. Army nutritionists have reported that although starvation and extreme malnutrition existed in Japanese prisoners of war, the men's teeth seemed in good condition, crediting the fact to this lack of sugar.

German prisoners of war may well give partial credit for their sound teeth to the vitamin C they received from the thoroughly-disliked cabbage and turnip rations. These vegetables also prevented scurvy or reduced its effect. The coarse bread and potatoes in their diet furnished some thiamin. In these respects the German prisoners of war were more fortunate than the men in Japanese camps who lived on rice and suffered from vitamin B (thiamin) deficiencies, scurvy and lack of protein.

MILK and more milk was the order of many a G.I. who had tasted only powdered milk and not much of that for a long time. One former prisoner recalled vividly the excitement of one of his buddies from Michigan. After the Russians liberated the men in this camp, they drove several dairy cattle into the stockade. The Michigan boy being the first to spot the cattle shook the fellow in the next bunk, shouting, "Get up! Get up! Look, milk!"

"Hmm? What's so good about that?" his sleepy friend wanted to know.

"What's so good about it? This is liquid milk, cow's milk, the first real milk in 2 years!"

One man reported that he lost 80 pounds during his imprisonment, which is typical of the severe weight losses found when prisoners were liberated. The army doctors immediately put him on an egg nog diet because it was the most nutritious food he could digest.

Many said that while in prison camps they tried not to think about food so they wouldn't be hungry, but mind over matter didn't always work. However, all agreed that they didn't stuff themselves to gain weight after they returned to this country. Even when they could eat as much as they wanted, they discovered that life in the army had taught them they could get along with less food more comfortably.

A FAVORITE meal? Of course they have. Fried chicken or steak is tops on menu for all of them. There's a little disagreement on the potato question ranging all the way from "no potatoes" to "All right, if they're mashed, not fried or boiled in the jackets." Carrots and peas are next, followed by a vegetable salad. A banana or an orange is all right for dessert, and no dark bread, please.

Although those who have given thought to the nutrition problem of liberated prisoners are agreed that the men who have been subjected to severe malnutrition should take special dietary precautions, none of the Iowa State men are on special diets. The army nutritionists have judged them all able to select their own foods and they seem to be doing it wisely.

Their future is in their own hands.

Founded prisoners of war report food preferences entirely different from their previous favorites