Meat - to the Front

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Recent emphasis on better nutrition for the nation brings a new responsibility to home economists. They now face the task of helping to educate the women of America who are eager to serve their families better balanced and better cooked meals.

A survey on consumer habits of thinking with respect to nutrition and particularly meat was recently conducted by Elmo Roper, the well-known surveyor of public opinion. Approximately 5,000 scientifically selected men and women of all income levels in all sections of the country were questioned in this study.

Mr. Roper's organization found that 55.8 percent of the women are influenced by science in planning meals, and women are more interested in vitamins than any other nutritional factors. The importance of proteins and minerals in the diet is largely underestimated and there is a great lack of knowledge regarding the natural vitamin content of meat and other basic foods.

Only 1.2 percent of the population is vegetarian, apparently, for 98.8 percent of all adults eat meat. When asked why they eat meat, 79.8 percent said that meat was the most satisfying food. In addition, 35.7 percent said they preferred the taste of meat to any other food. Meat led all others as the food most persons would be least willing to cut out of their diet.

Low income families eat meat as often as higher income families, although this does not indicate the amount or quality of the meat eaten. However, neither group eats it as often as several nutritionists recommend.

Revealing how little the general public knows about nutrition, 75 percent consider pork hard to digest, and "not good for you," despite recent educational campaigns showing that all meat is 96 to 98 percent digestible, and that pork is the greatest natural source of thiamin or vitamin B₁.

The average consumer thinks that meat is expensive for the food value in it, "hard to digest," "fattening," lacking in vitamins and that its protein is unimportant. It is the job of the trained home economists to correct these erroneous ideas.

Comparison of the attitudes of doctors and home economists shows that home economists are less favorable toward meat eating than doctors. Doctors are

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more in favor of increasing meat in the diet than consumers. A majority of women who gave their occupations as “domestic science teachers” voted meat the most expensive food, disregarding the fact that meat is a rich source of such important minerals as iron and phosphorus, high quality body-building proteins, necessary fats and vitamins A, B complex, and G (carotene, thiamin, niacin and riboflavin), and as such is an economical source of food values.

Thirty-four percent of the women mentioned that they would like to have more information about meat. Knowledge about different cuts of meat, preparation and nutritional value are topics on which homemakers desire information.

Recently the American Meat Institute has campaigned to educate consumers on the thrifty cuts of meat. These have the same food value as better known, more popular and therefore higher cost roasts and steaks. Consumers, however, named many inexpensive cuts and reported that they had tried them.

The survey indicates a serious need for educating consumers on nutrition; the almost superstitious beliefs in regard to many foods, especially meat, need to be dissipated promptly. There is also a need for home economics educators to brush up on recent developments in the field of nutrition, and to inform consumers. No phase of the victory effort is of more fundamental importance than a thorough understanding of the simple fundamentals of modern nutrition by the men and women behind the lines.

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