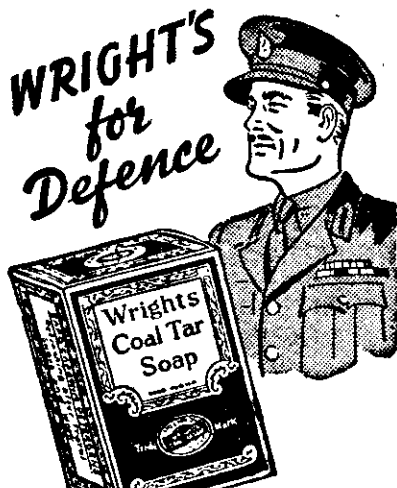


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RECIPES **ASK Aunt Daisy** QUESTIONS ANSWERS

FOR THE BUSINESS-GIRL HOUSEKEEPER

FREQUENTLY I get letters from anxious young women who find it difficult to prepare and serve good and nourishing evening meals when they reach home after the long day at work. Generally it is a meal for two—husband and wife, or two women living together, and the marketing presents problems, as well as the cooking.

Advice on this very important subject can only be of a general kind; the individual will always have to work out her own problems, since the likes and dislikes of each group must be allowed for. I found the same question being asked in the U.S.A., for, of course, all business women have similar problems, no matter what country they live in. But this particular problem is more easily solved in America, because most business women have refrigerators, and all can buy the invaluable packaged and canned foods which are specially prepared according to the latest scientific processes, under which no food value is lost. Indeed, to many of the packaged foods, additional vitamins and minerals have been added, just as wheat-germ is added to a cereal in New Zealand.

The quick-frozen, packaged foods in particular are coming more and more into favour. In these foods the full flavour, food value and delicious freshness are all conserved by the quick-freezing process. Thus one can buy fillets or steaks of flounder, mackerel, swordfish and so on, all trimmed of waste and ready to use; or raspberries, strawberries and peaches in any season; or green peas, string beans, asparagus, carrots, cauliflower, etc., all the year round—all harvested at the peak of quality, and rapidly frozen, so that they retain their colour, flavour and tenderness, with negligible loss of vitamins. All the quick-frozen foods carry precise directions for cooking. Fruit takes about 3½ hours to thaw in the package at ordinary room temperature, or 2 to 2½ hours if thawed out of the package.

Prepared Mixes

Another helpful item for business women in the U.S.A. is the number of "prepared mixes" to be bought—such as griddle cake mix, scone or "biscuit" mix—which have only to be mixed with water or milk and popped into oven or steamer. For instance, at a beach picnic in Darien, Connecticut, one Sunday, the charming and servant-less hostess just disappeared for half-an-hour into her adjacent home, mixed up a packaged "biscuit," adding a cupful of blueberries which she had picked that morning and brought back a pretty wicker basketful of hot blueberry scones—which were greatly enjoyed. No measuring or even guessing to do, just empty the package into a bowl, add the blueberries and some liquid, and there you are! Probably vegetable shortening is used, because it never goes rancid.

Of course we already have some prepared mixes in New Zealand—pastry and puddings; ask your grocer about these. In the U.S.A. too, can be bought

fancy sandwich-breads in tins—date and nut, prune and nut, chocolate and nut, etc., all ready to slice as they come from the can. A supply of such tins in the pantry of a business woman is a great help in getting a meal in a hurry when she has had no chance to go shopping.

Plan Well Ahead

The New Zealand business woman, however, is perfectly capable of feeding herself properly without these many helpful commodities, and by dint of using her keen wits is in most cases faring very well indeed. Nevertheless, she looks forward to getting quick-freezers and pressure cookers into our homes when the war is over, as a part of the future domestic economy which international councils of home-makers will work to establish.

The only way to overcome the problem of serving a good dinner without too much delay after getting home from office or other job is to plan well ahead. Sketchy, pick-up meals, day after day, are bound to tell on both health and spirits, and nobody can keep well on good meals served only at week-ends. Besides, one enjoys a good meal after a long day's work.

Plan the dinners a week ahead, and have a little notebook which will tuck inside your handbag, in which to jot down two lists—one of the "perishables," which you should buy on the day of using, and the other of the "staples," such as eggs, butter, flour, sugar, which you buy when convenient. Perhaps you can leave the day's order with the butcher or fishmonger in the morning and so have it ready to pick up on the way home. How simplified such things will be when we can have things delivered again! And plan out each night's menu thoroughly so that you won't waste time when you get home, but will know exactly what to do first.

Keep your menus simple, with dishes that can be cooked (or partly cooked) the night before, or those that are quick to prepare. By planning ahead, you can get a casserole dish all ready and half-baked the night before, or have a stew half-cooked and needing only to be skimmed, heated and thickened, or your pudding could have had an hour's steaming before you went to bed, and will need only to be steamed up while you are cooking and eating the first course next evening.

Creamed Dishes

Don't forget these simple and tasty dishes. All you have to do is to make a good white sauce, varied with grated cheese, or grated onion, or chopped chives (and always chopped parsley!)—and into it, when cooked and smooth, put any cut-up "left-over" at all—either fish, or lamb, or mutton, or poultry, or rabbit, with any vegetable, too, if you like, and just heat it through. You can serve it on toast if you like, and it is nice to have a green vegetable, either raw or cooked.

Casserole Dishes

These are most useful, especially the "all-in-one" kind. For this you first fry the sliced onion in a little fat, then the meat, cut either into serving pieces, or smaller, and then put both into your casserole, cover with hot water, and add cut-up raw potato, and carrots and parsnips, a handful of peas, a couple of cut-up tomatoes—almost anything in season—and a handful of washed rice. Put on the lid and cook for an hour overnight. Remove lid. Next day put lid on again and cook it half-an-hour, or as long as you can. If you use the popular and modern casserole of porcelain-enamelled cast-iron, you can fry the onions, etc., in it first on top of the range, then put it into the oven, and lastly bring it to the table itself, for it is specially designed to look nice enough for this. Other casserole dishes can be prepared without searing or frying the onion and meat first; simply put all the meat and vegetables in together, cover with hot water, put on lid and cook in oven the night before; next day, skim and thicken to taste.

Ox-tails make a very good stew or a casserole dish. Dip the joints in flour, and brown them all over in hot fat; also brown onion slices; cover all with hot water, and simmer slowly till tender; two or three cut-up kidneys and some cut-up carrots added make this dish extra good. Take off lid and leave till next day. Then skim, and bring to boil; remove the meat while you thicken the gravy. Put the meat back to get hot, and serve.

Mixed Grills

These are always favourite dinners, and are quickly cooked. We say "mixed" because one can use just a little of a scarce item and make up with more plentiful pieces—say, one nice piece of steak, and the rest sausages, and tomatoes halved, and perhaps a slice or two of bacon. Meanwhile, the potatoes can be boiling, and a pan-full of sliced onions frying. Try pouring a little hot water in with the onions after they have fried pale brown, and cover the pan with a lid or plate for a few minutes. Then remove the plate and let them brown off. They are easily digested this way, and quickly cooked.

FROM THE MAILBAG

Renovating a Faded Raincoat

Dear Aunt Daisy,

Would you please give me the instructions how to renovate boys' navy raincoats? I read in your *Listener* notes some months ago how it was done, but before I could rescue the magazine it was destroyed. I think the idea is to lay the coat on a table and, using a nail brush, do all the coat over with navy dye, but I am not sure whether the dye is to be boiled and salt added, the same as one would prepare a dye bath for any other article.—Yours sincerely, J.H. (Ohura).

Yes, just make up the dye exactly according to directions on the packet. Our Link who gave us the method brushed the dye into her boy's navy coat, using a table in the garden. Choose a breezy day, without much sun. I have checked this again with the Link, and she tells me the coat is lasting splendidly, has never faded, has been wet many times, and is now handed down to a younger brother.