

EAT AND ENJOY IT

A Scientific Irreverence

(Written for "The Listener" by Kay)

THIS is not a scientific article: I know as much about science as a cow knows about acoustics. Nor is it a religious article, though it was partly suggested by Lent. On general principles I take off my hat to those who go hungry for righteousness, but I can't quite believe that God frowns on full bellies. No. I write from the standpoint of good digestion—not quite the same standpoint as the Health Department took the other day when it scoffed at the Hay diet, but not far away from that.

The trouble with the Health Department is that it knows too much to be confident. I know so little that confidence is easy. Just as the near-sighted cannot see the wood for trees, some of us cannot see our food for vitamins.



Man has always loved his victuals.

After all, food was invented before vitamins. And emotions were evolved before the Psycho Boys (who sound like the Marx brothers, but are vastly different), who expose all the guilt and anxiety neuroses that lurk in our subconscious. As for those newcomers, the dietetic crusaders, they are bent on one thing only: to hang up a food chart in front of us the way we should dietetically go. Perhaps we have been unfortunate in our vitamin exponents, but frequently their brows have been knobby and corrugated and the light of too much zeal has shone from their eye. I prefer a kindly twinkle of humour.

Not Festive, But Furtive.

The vitamin has thrown its shadow so furiously across the festive board that we are no longer festive but only furtive. We ask ourselves apprehensively if the item under our nose has correct nutritional value, but we suspect it has been boiled too long and therefore robbed of its life juices and solar energy.

Man has always loved his victuals, but never before has he been so food conscious. Up to a point this is reasonable enough. Good fuel is required to make the system work, so why not be scientific about it and benefit by all these new discoveries in food values? This is a better attitude than the cry that what was good enough for Grandma is good enough for us.

But surely the main thing is to enjoy your food and let the vitamins take care of themselves. Of course we must eat

to live. Therefore we must eat intelligently in order to live well. The question is, can we while eating to live and eating intelligently also get a little fun out of the eating? What were we given an appetite for? If you happen to have been born with a digestion of which you are completely unconscious, and if you continue to thrive on the foods you have always eaten, why worry? Then you may eat what you like, and while you needn't live to eat you may have a lot of fun at the dinner table three times a day and eat without fears or tears.

Perhaps a study of dietetics is necessary for those less fortunate people whose stomachs won't lie down properly. Jack Spratt can eat no fat, his wife can eat no lean. A. has an allergy for rhubarb. B. comes out in a rash if she eats porridge. C. can't touch butter. D. loathes cabbage and all the greens. E. swears by spinach and its near relations, forgetting that the chief authority for spinach is Popeye the Sailor-man.

Then we have the greenleafers, the vegetarian fiends to whom all flesh is poison, the meat gobblers, the cake snatchers, the plum-pudding addicts: the tea wives, cocoa sippers, wine bibbers, etc. But the majority of us, if we will have the confidence of our emotions, can take a little of anything.

Capsule Cannibals

It is true that most of us are not very inventive in food and resist unfamiliar dishes which we call concoctions. Food tastes are prescribed by what the country provides, by custom and regional tastes and prejudices. We shudder at the savage who eats parts of his enemy's body. But what do we do ourselves but swallow the glands of cattle and pigs in pills and capsules? An Eskimo would hardly know what to do with a few green leaves or even an Eskimo pie. Nor would a raw-vegetable faddist know what to do with a lump of blubber. Give an Irishman a goulash or give a Hungarian an Irish stew and there will be trouble. A Spaniard would turn up his nose at haggis and an Arab would be happier with mutton than with Cornish pasties.

It is usually only the wealthy who test and taste international dishes as well as their own. Average people know only their own national foods and are quite contented. When life is stripped to the bone, love is relegated to the background as one of the luxury emotions.

What, no vitamins to-day?
No capsules alphabetical
In units arithmetical
No A or C
No B and D
And not a speck of K?

Yes, lots of vitamins to-day
And that's not theoretical
Nor purely hypothetical
In grains and cheese
And fruits and peas
And salads bright and gay.

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