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Advice on Health (No. 276)

Aluminium Utensils

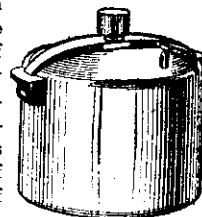
(Written for "The Listener" by DR. MURIEL BELL,
Nutritionist to The Department of Health)

READING an argument to the effect that if aluminium could be used as a means for attacking and removing the tarnish on your silver, it would therefore attack your vitals when you had used it for cooking purposes reminded one of the sailor who justified

the use of alcohol by arguing that, if water rotted his boots, then it would certainly rot his internals!

The recent booklet published by His Majesty's Stationery Office on behalf of the Food Investigation Section of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, entitled *Aluminium and Aluminium Alloys in the Food Industry*, by Bryan, answers unequivocally any criticism about the health hazards of aluminium ware for household or industrial purposes, and at the same time goes thoroughly into the practices which may shorten or lengthen the life of the aluminium saucepan itself.

In relation to health, the book quotes that "there is no convincing evidence that aluminium in the amount in which it is likely to be consumed as a result of using aluminium utensils has a harmful effect upon the ordinary consumer." "The conclusions after six years' investigation at the Mellon Institute, Pennsylvania," the report goes on, "are that aluminium is not a poisonous metal and does not give rise to any disease, and that aluminium does not accelerate the destruction of vitamins or other accessory food substances during cooking. . . . The views of the Council of Public Hygiene of France and of the German Board of Health are also clearly to the effect that there is no more likelihood of producing organic disease or food poisoning by the use of aluminium vessels than by those of any other sort."

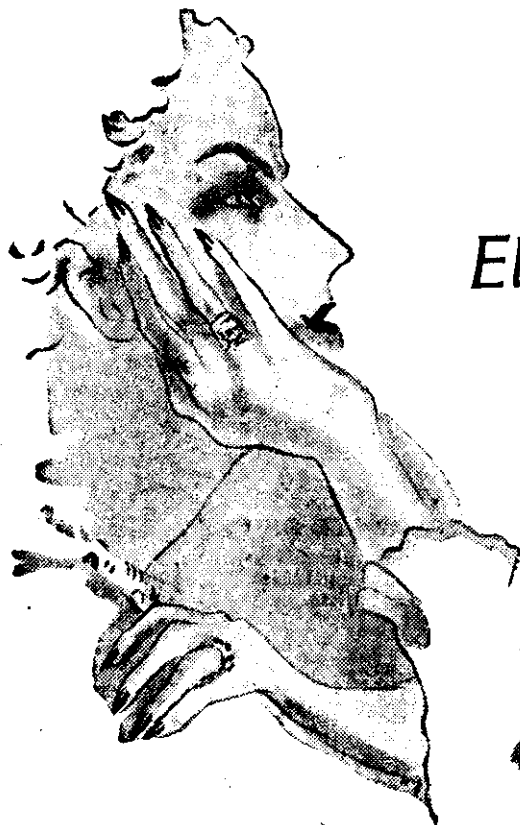


Aluminium occurs naturally in plant and animal tissues, for it is the most abundant and widely distributed of metals. There are quite appreciable amounts in tea, potatoes, onions and lettuce, and indeed it is estimated that about as much or more comes from foods as is likely to come from modern cooking utensils.

The author explains that the film which occurs on the surface of aluminium pans after use is composed of aluminium oxide, and that it helps to avert corrosion. Blackening of the surface may be due to iron or silicon, and is harmless to the person eating the food.

To avoid pitting of our aluminium ware, advice is given about the care necessary in cleaning after use. Soda reacts with the aluminium and should not be used unless mixed with sodium silicate or some other "inhibitor." Copper wool will cause abrasion of the surface and will leave behind traces of this metal, thereby setting up a galvanic cell, leading to pitting of the surface. Cleaning materials should be restricted to soap and water, or steel wool, or some moderately abrasive household cleanser. Vessels should be well rinsed

(continued on next page)



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