

THE COOKING OF VEGETABLES

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



THERE are two classes of the community who need to know more than they know at present about the values of foods — men and cooks. Men, because so often by their food preferences and their position as the economic head of the family, they determine to no little extent the choice of the family food supply. Cooks because they hold it in their power to make or to mar the values of the foods by their habits and prejudices in cooking and serving it.

To the cooks it must be said that in order to get their money's worth of what is at present a dear foodstuff, there are ways of preserving its goodness. That vegetables contribute many health-giving qualities is undoubted; it will require another article to enumerate them. On very low rations of fruit at present, Britain has had to make the most of vegetables as a substitute. British nutrition advisers recently issued rules for the preparation and cooking of vegetables, which are here summarised:—

1. Obtain as fresh as possible.
2. Keep in a cool damp place in order to reduce wilting.
3. Take precautions to avoid damage due to crushing or bruising during transport or handling.
4. If vegetables are to be shredded or finely chopped for salads, prepare immediately before serving.
5. Use the smallest possible amount of water for cooking.
6. Have water boiling before adding vegetables.
7. Add salt to water before adding vegetables.
8. Do not add soda.
9. Add vegetables gradually or in small amounts at a time, in order to prevent water going off the boil.
10. Cook vegetables no longer than is necessary to render them tender.
11. Plan cooking arrangements so that vegetables are dished up immediately after they are cooked.
12. On no account allow to stand for a long time on a hot plate.
13. If there is water left after cooking, drain off and use in the preparation of soups and gravies; alternatively, if successive batches are being cooked on the same day, use the same water again, adding more if necessary. One might add (14) Avoid sieving or chopping when the vegetables are hot. Shred cabbage before cooking it.
15. Bake or boil potatoes in their skins.

Methods of Cooking

The same advisers summarised the methods which will cause least de-

struction of nutrients in vegetables as follows:

Method 1: Boil for the shortest time in a small quantity of boiling salted water. Use water left over for boiling other batches and for addition to soups and gravies.

Method 2: Slice the fresh vegetables into ribbons about 2 or 3 inches long by 3/4 inch wide and cook briskly for 1/2 to 1 minute in a small quantity of hot oil or dripping to which salt has been added. (Two teaspoons oil and 1/2 teaspoon salt to an average sized cabbage.) Add a small quantity of boiling water (1/2 to 1 cupful for above) and stew for about 10 minutes in a closed container. Keep the lid on. When the vegetables are cooked only a very little water should be left.

Hay box cookery should not be used. Steaming of vegetables even with the best equipment is not as satisfactory as the methods described. (Next article: "Health Camps from Health Stamps." By Dr. H. B. Turbott)



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