

MATERIALS FOR DEVELOPING THE TECHNIQUE OF
CONSUMPTION FOR FOODS

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The studies that have been made of our food crops have been concerned chiefly with problems of production and distribution. Techniques of production have been worked out for all of our leading crops and the technical information is available to anyone interested. In distribution, too, techniques have been developed.

The consumptive activity has received little attention to date. The consumer has only recently been recognized as an important factor in our economic scheme and production and distribution considered in terms of consumption. The education of the consumer is still left almost wholly to competitive commercial interests and is accomplished through the medium of modern advertising. This method is expensive, characterized by half truths and economic shortsightedness.

The intelligent buying of food is not only important, it is also difficult. Our food stuffs are many and varied and their purchase presents more difficulties than does the purchase of materials satisfying other human needs, such as clothing and shelter. Much technical knowledge covering a wide range of products is needed.

Many of our food products, even the most perishable, are raised in distant producing regions, brought to us by special transportation such as fast freight, express, and refrigerator car. They are held for delayed consumption in cold storage or are preserved for indefinite periods by drying, canning, freezing. Each new process leaves the consumer less well-informed concerning his food products and makes acquiring of new knowledge necessary.

Materials for developing the techniques in food consumption should furnish, as a background, information concerning the methods of production or manufacturing which have a bearing on consumption and the marketing machinery which brings the product from distant producing regions. Certain specific information concerning the product is needed such as: the chief producing regions; the volume of production; the peak of production; the season when available and when most abundant; varieties with quality; grades and the brands descriptive of such grades; standard packages with volume or weight; quality and value as distinct from appearance and price; and the special uses for which the product is suited.

The importance of definite information in regard to the season can be illustrated by cauliflower. Cauliflower, the variety *botrytis* of the cabbage group, is a plant requiring abundant moisture and cool temperature for the production of marketable stock. It shows a definite climatic response with the heaviest production in January, a lesser production in the Fall and Spring and a very small production in June, July and August. The intelligent placing of consumer demand is therefore very clear.

Spinach is another crop with clearly marked seasonal availability. The four chief producing regions are Texas, Virginia, Maryland and South Carolina, with Texas and Virginia the heaviest producers. The three winter months are the months of heavy production with no shipments in June, July and August. The ecological factor of temperature is well shown; spinach, heat intolerant, is produced in the winter in the truck gardens of Texas and the South Atlantic states. In the northern states, the summer season is

too hot for the production of spinach, and the period suitable in Spring and Autumn is too short to produce more than a small and uncertain supply. Spinach is, therefore, a vegetable to be used when most available, namely in January, February, March, rather than in June.

Materials of this nature the writer feels, would, if made more generally available help in developing a technique of consumption.