UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Radio Service
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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Tuesday, June 21, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS." Information from the Bureau of Plant Industry, United States Department of Agriculture. Publications offered: "Mushroom Culture for Amateurs," Farmers' Bulletin 1587, and "Some Common Mushrooms and How to Know Them," Circular 143.

--ooOoo--

The first answers on the program today go to those listeners who have been asking questions about mushrooms -- wild and tame.

Here's a letter from a lady who wants to know how to tell the difference between a toadstool and a mushroom.

She writes: "Every summer we have what look like very delicious little white mushrooms growing down in our back fields. I am very fond of mushrooms. But I'm afraid to gather these wild ones because they may be toadstools--poisonous, you know. Will you tell me of a simple and sure test for mushrooms?"

My answer will disappoint this listener. I can't give her any "simple and sure test" that will distinguish between poisonous and edible mushrooms. The scientists who have made careful studies of the subject say that there's no such thing as a simple test for all kinds. They say the only way to be safe is to recognize the various mushrooms as you recognize the faces of friends. And that takes a little study and experience.

By the way, the scientists don't often use the word "toadstool." I can't tell you why. I just know that mushroom is the preferred term in scientific circles. And they distinguish between the two kinds by speaking of poisonous or edible mushrooms.

Which reminds me of another mushroom inquiry. A listener writes: "Is it true that you can tell the difference between good mushrooms and those that are poisonous by dropping a dime in the cooking water? I have heard that if a dime or a silver spoon turns dark in the water the mushrooms are poisonous."

Answer: Never trust a dime or a silver spoon to distinguish between poisonous and edible mushrooms. This is just one of many mushroom superstitions that may get you into trouble. You may also have heard that mushrooms that peel easily are edible--another unreliable idea. Or you may have heard that insects on a mushroom show that it is safe to eat. Wrong again. Insects eat both kinds of mushrooms. They haven't digestions like human beings and aren't poisoned the same way.

None of these supersititions have any foundation in fact. Moreover, they are dangerous. The scientists say that the way to be safe is to learn the characteristics of the common good-to-eat mushrooms and use only those you know.

(more)

In talking about whey and its possible uses, this bureau is chiefly concerned with whey solids in powdered or condensed form, highly concentrated by evaporation. The housewife who has some fresh liquid whey left over from making cheese may wish to save the valuable nutrients it contains, but she cannot very well condense or evaporate it at home because she hasn't the right equipment. She can, however, use the fresh liquid whey in several ways. Where a slightly acid taste is not objectionable, as in tomato soup or lemon drinks, the whey that is left from draining cottage cheese may be used, but for the most part, sweet whey is more desirable.

Taken by itself, whey has a rather insipid taste. But substituted for water in punches or fruit drinks, it combines well with more pungent flavors and adds to the nutritive value of the beverage. Whey lemonade is especially good, and a blend of whey and tomato juice makes a good appetizer. With some of the other fruit drinks, there is less actual fruit juice flavor when part whey is used, but the whey nutrients, while different from those in undiluted fruit juice, add value of their own.

Mixtures of fruit juice and whey can be frozen as sherbets in the home ice cream freezer, or made into gelatin desserts. Another good home use for sweet whey is in soups, in place of water or milk. The milk proteins left in the whey do not curdle easily in the presence of acid, as skim milk protein does, so for cream of tomato soup, whey is more satisfactory to use. Nutritionists have long advised against the use of soda in making tomato soups, and when whey is used the soda is unnecessary.

Sweet whey can be used in making bread, rolls, biscuits, muffins, or griddle cakes in place of either water or milk. It is not a complete substitute for skim milk, which retains the casein of the milk, but when the whey is on hand it may be convenient and economical to use it in such ways and save the milk for something else. Whey should always be utilized on the same day it is obtained, unless it is promptly pasteurized. Otherwise it will not keep.

The commercial applications of the whey research of the Bureau of Dairy Industry interest housewives who like to learn about new things which we may be using in our homes a few months or a few years hence. When whey is concentrated under vacuum its solids remain as a powder which has many uses in food manufacture. For instance, whey solids have been successfully used in making canned soups. The fact that the whey does not coagulate or curdle in large lumps is a great advantage. After a while we may also have condensed or dry whey for making soups at home, or for use in restaurants in soups, gravies, or sauces.

The investigators found that they could make a good combination beverage and soup by mixing tomato juice and whey and canning it. The product could be used as a cold drink or a thin hot soup, or it could be thickened with flour for a cream-style tomato soup.

Sweetened condensed whey is another product developed by the bureau and is intended for large scale production in dairy plants. In sealed containers it will keep for months without refrigeration. It can then be used for fruit whips and frozen desserts, for various kinds of candies, flavored for icings and for topping soda fountain dishes, or for garnishing hot chocolate. A small quantity mixed with jam will whip into an attractive preserve that lacks the intense sweetness and richness of ordinary jam, and that can be used as a sauce.

It must be remembered, however, that all these uses are in the future. They have been tested in the laboratory, but we housewives will not see whey powder or sweetened condensed whey on the market just yet. Meantime we can all make good use of any home-produced liquid sweet whey we may have.

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