

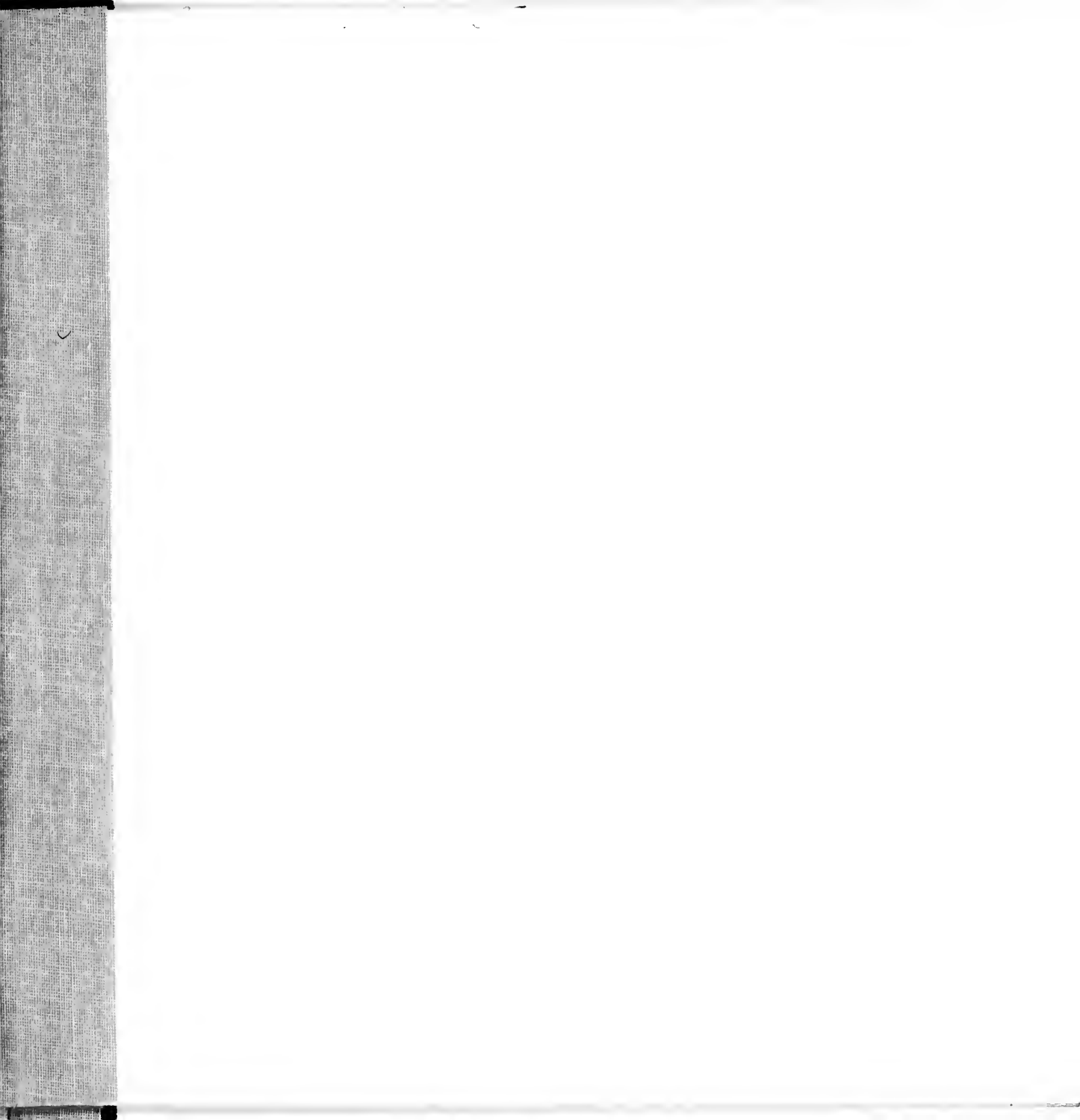
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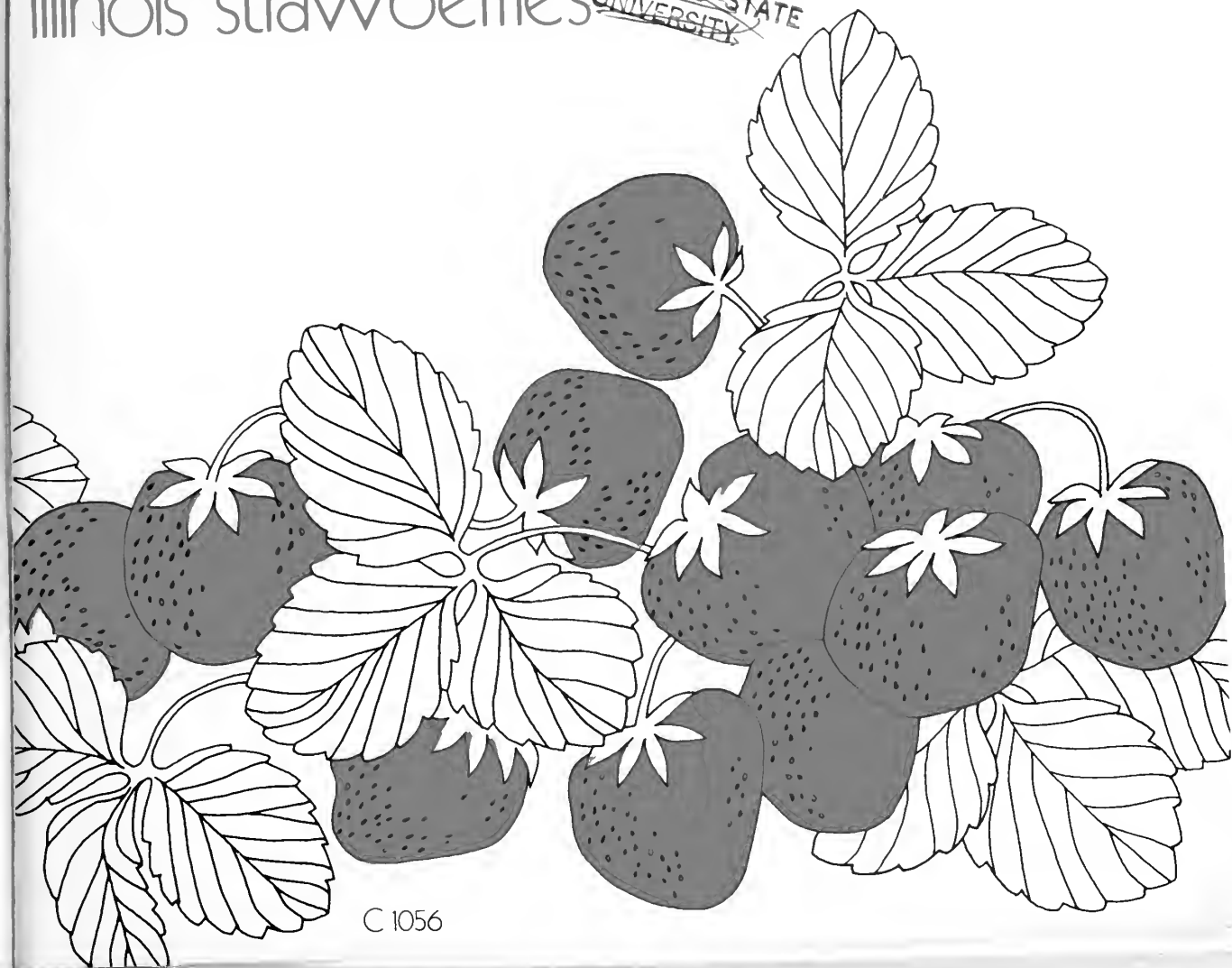
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tips on picking and using illinois strawberries



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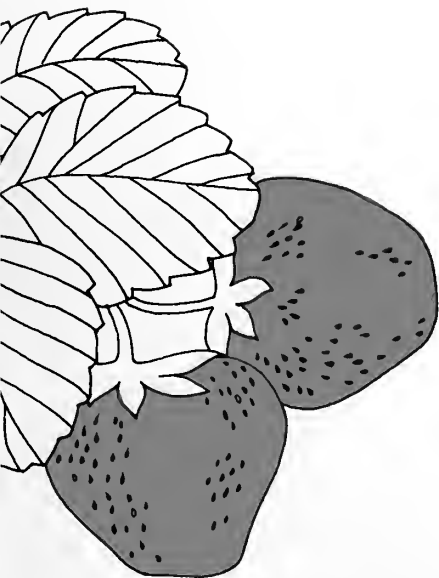
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Strawberries — red, ripe, luscious! Many of us enjoy eating Illinois berries frequently during the height of the season. You can buy them at the grocer's or at a roadside stand, but some people enjoy picking their own strawberries and will drive 50 or 100 miles to a Pick-Your-Own farm.

This publication can help you get more out of the strawberry season with recipes for fresh fruit and tips on selecting and picking berries. And, you can extend the season by following the directions for freezing and preserving strawberries.



nutrition and the strawberry

Strawberries are not only good to eat, they are also “good for us.” They are an especially tasty source of vitamin C (ascorbic acid). In fact, one cup of fresh strawberries provides about 88 milligrams of ascorbic acid. This more than meets the Recommended Daily Dietary allowance of 55 to 60 milligrams for the average adult.

Strawberries are low in calories: One cup of unsweetened strawberries has only 55 calories. So if you are on a reducing diet, use strawberries to add flavor, food value, and pleasure to meals. You can even eat some as a between-meals snack.

how to buy strawberries

Strawberries come in many sizes. Some consumers prefer large berries even though some of the smaller varieties may be tastier. Dry, firm, fully ripe berries are best. Caps should be green and fresh looking. A stained box may indicate some of the berries in it are overripe.

how to pick strawberries

Strawberries look better and keep longer when they are picked and handled correctly. Because they are a very tender fruit, they will bruise and discolor any time they are squeezed. *Handle them gently* at all times, whether picking, placing in the container, or handling the filled containers.

Strawberry varieties differ considerably in ease of picking. Surecrop berries, for example, when mature usually snap off readily with a portion of the stem attached. Sparkle, on the other hand, will always bruise unless you pinch the stem off. The surest way to pick fruit with a minimum of bruising is as follows:

1. Grasp the stem just above the berry between the forefinger and the thumbnail and pull with a slight twisting motion (Fig. 1).
2. With the stem broken about one-half inch from the berry, allow it to



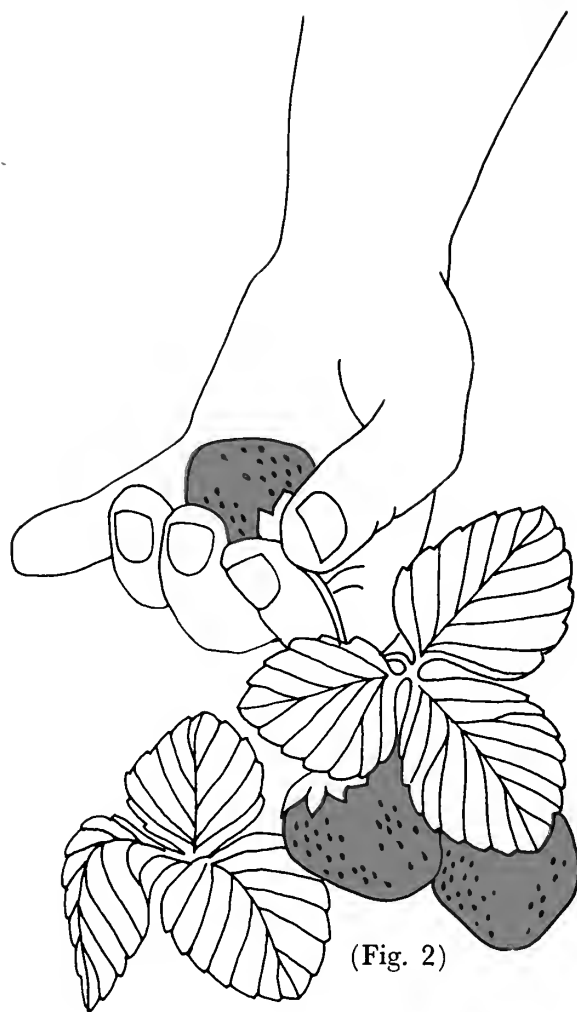
(Fig. 1)

roll into the palm of your hand.

3. Repeat these operations using both hands until each holds 3 or 4 fruits.
4. *Carefully place* — don't throw — the berries into your containers. Repeat the picking process with both hands.
5. Don't overfill your containers or try to pack the berries down.

Another method may be used with some varieties that cap easily. Picking berries without the calyx or cap will result in some bruising but is satisfactory for berries that will be processed soon after picking.

1. Grasp the stem between the thumb and forefinger just behind the cap (Fig. 2).
2. Squeeze slightly against the cap and apply slight pressure against the berry with the second finger. The berry should pull loose, leaving the cap on the stem.



(Fig. 2)

tips for strawberry pickers

Whether you pick strawberries from your own garden or at a Pick-Your-Own farm, here are a few tips to keep in mind:

1. Be careful that your feet and knees do not damage plants or fruit in or along the edge of the row. At a Pick-Your-Own farm, it is important that you pick only on the row assigned to you.
2. Most growers furnish picking containers designed for strawberries. If you use your own container, remember that heaping strawberries more than 5 inches deep will bruise the lower berries.
3. Pick only the berries that are fully red. Part the leaves with your hands to avoid missing hidden berries ready for harvest.
4. Pick the row clean. Remove berries showing rot, sunburn, insect injury, or other defects from the plants and place them in between the rows behind you.
5. Berries to be used immediately may be picked any time but if you plan to hold the fruit for a few days, try to pick during early morning or on cool, cloudy days. Berries picked during the heat of the day become soft, are easily bruised, and will not keep well.
6. Avoid placing the picked berries in the sun any longer than necessary. It is better to put them in the shade of a tree or shed rather than in the trunk or on the seat of your car. Cool them as soon as possible after picking. Strawberries may be kept fresh in the refrigerator for 3 or more days, depending upon the initial quality of the berry. After a few days in storage, the fruit loses its bright color and fresh flavor and tends to shrivel.
7. Give the harvested fruit a soft ride home.

take good care of strawberries

When you get the strawberries home, sort but do not clean them until just before use. Washing and capping berries before refrigeration causes a loss of food value and increases spoilage. Store berries uncovered in the original container or a shallow container in the refrigerator. When you are ready to use the berries, wash them quickly in cold water. Do not let them soak. Lift the berries gently from the wash water and drain well before hulling.

ways to use strawberries

Some of the old favorites — strawberry shortcake, fresh strawberry pie, strawberry sundaes, and strawberries and cream are hard to beat. Strawberries combine well with dry cereal and milk for breakfast or with custards, puddings, tapioca, and other desserts made from milk. Strawberries add color and flavor to compotes and salads. Popular combinations are strawberries with bananas, pineapple, or cooked rhubarb. Strawberries make a handsome garnish for salads, desserts, and fruit punches. To use them as a garnish, clean the berries but leave the caps and stems on them.

Strawberry Natural

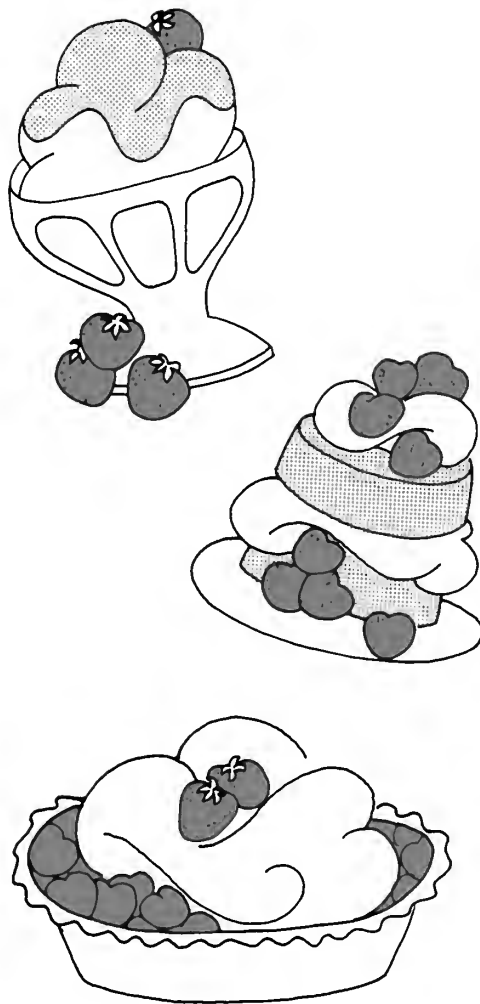
For each serving wash 1 cup of fully ripe strawberries. Leave the caps and stems on. Drain until dry. Arrange the berries on a dessert plate and serve with a small dish of confectioners' sugar or sour cream for dipping.

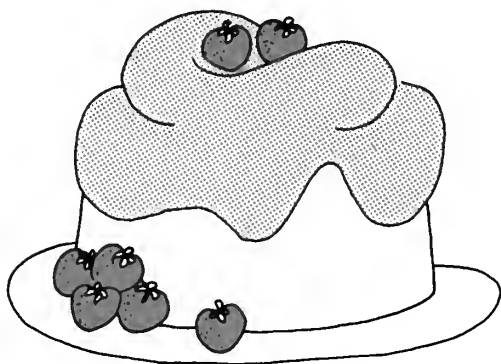
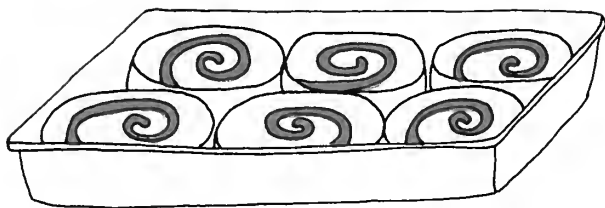
The French version of this is to serve the berries with a small bowl of port or Marsala wine and a mound of granulated brown sugar. The berry is dipped first into the wine, then the sugar, and then popped into the mouth.

Fresh Strawberry Pie

9-inch baked pie shell
1 quart strawberries
1 cup sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cornstarch
1 cup water
red food coloring

Sort, wash, and hull berries, but leave 6 to 8 choice berries with the caps on them to be used later as a garnish. Crush half of the rest of the berries, and sprinkle the mixture of sugar and cornstarch over them. Add the water. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until the mixture is thick and transparent. To improve the color, add a few drops of red food coloring. Cut the remaining berries in half and spread them in the pie shell. Pour the cooked mixture over the berries. Chill. When ready to serve, cut pie





into 6 to 8 pieces. Garnish with a spoonful of sweetened whipped cream or topping and a whole berry.

Note: If berries are extremely juicy, spread a thin layer of softened cream cheese on the pie shell. This will help keep the crust from becoming soggy.

Strawberry-Rhubarb Whirl

1 cup sliced strawberries
1 cup diced rhubarb
1 cup sugar
1 cup water
milk
2½ cups prepared biscuit mix
2 tablespoons butter or margarine
whipped cream or topping

Combine strawberries and rhubarb. Combine sugar and water and cook for 10 minutes, stirring until sugar is dissolved. Add enough milk to biscuit mix to make rolled biscuits (follow directions on package). Roll dough into a rectangular shape about 9" x 6". Spread rhubarb and strawberries on dough. Roll up like a jelly roll 9" long. Slice 1½" thick and lay the slices flat in a baking

pan. Dot with butter or margarine. Pour hot syrup over the top. Bake in a hot oven (450°F.) for 20 minutes. Serve warm with cream, whipped cream, or topping. Makes 6 servings.

Whipped Strawberry Topping

1 egg white
3 tablespoons sugar
1 cup crushed strawberries, fresh or frozen
1 teaspoon lemon juice

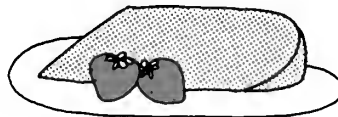
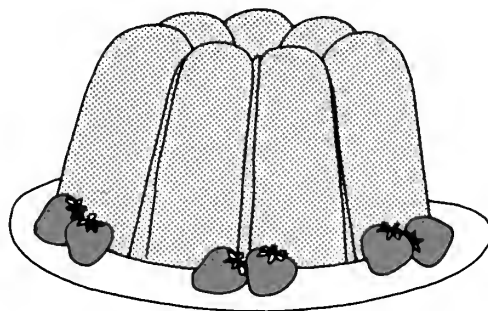
Beat egg white until foamy. Gradually beat in sugar, strawberries, and lemon juice. Continue beating until stiff and fluffy. Serve immediately as topping for sponge or angel food cake.

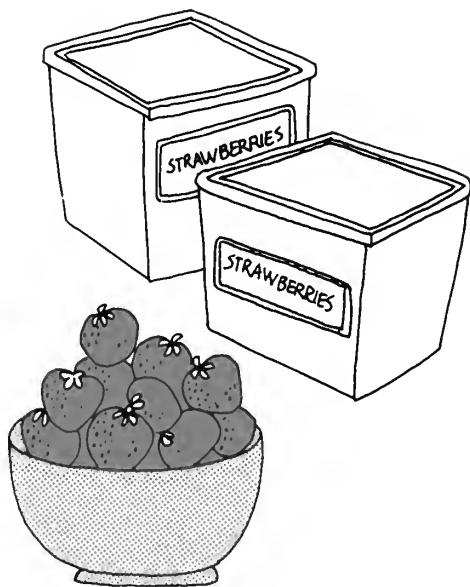
Strawberry Mousse

1½ to 2 cups crushed strawberries (about 1 quart box)
¼ to ½ cup sugar (use larger amount for tart berries)
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1⅓ cups chilled evaporated milk

Mix together strawberries, sugar, and lemon juice. Whip milk until very stiff.

(Evaporated milk whips easily if it is icy cold.) Fold strawberry mixture into whipped milk. Pour immediately into cold refrigerator trays or a fancy mold and freeze. Makes 8 to 10 servings.





freezing strawberries

When you have more strawberries than you can eat or when strawberries can be obtained at a reasonable cost, freeze them to eat later. For freshly made strawberry jam at any time of the year, freeze berries and then make the jam at your convenience.

Strawberries are easy to freeze. You can use a dry sugar or a syrup pack. The dry sugar pack is especially easy and gives the best flavor and color. This method is usually used for sliced or crushed berries. For whole frozen berries a syrup pack is recommended because it produces a plump, well-shaped berry upon thawing. For special sugar-free diets, strawberries can be frozen unsweetened, but the unsweetened frozen berries are not as high in quality as sugar- or syrup-packed berries.

No matter which type of pack you choose to use, follow these general directions for preparing and packaging

strawberries for freezing. When preparing for freezing:

- Use only firm, fully ripe berries.
- To avoid bruising and soaking the berries, wash only a few at a time in cold water.
- Drain on absorbent paper or in a colander or sieve.
- Remove the hulls and follow directions for the type of pack desired.

When packaging for freezing:

- Do not fill containers completely; allow a head space of $\frac{1}{2}$ " for pints, $\frac{3}{4}$ " for $1\frac{1}{2}$ pints, and 1" for quarts.
- Be sure the berries are covered with syrup, juice, or water; uncovered berries may change in color or flavor. To hold berries under the syrup, place a small piece of crumpled waxed paper on top and press berries down into the syrup or juice.
- Seal containers and label with the name of the product and the date frozen.
- Freeze promptly, then store at 0°F. or below.

Dry sugar pack

- Halve, quarter, or slice clean berries into a bowl or shallow pan. If desired, berries may be crushed rather than sliced.
- Sprinkle sugar over berries, using $\frac{2}{3}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar for each quart of fruit.
- Gently turn berries over and over until the sugar is thoroughly dissolved.
- Package and freeze.

Syrup pack

- Make a syrup using $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups water to each cup sugar. Dissolve the sugar in either cold or hot water; if hot water is used, be sure to chill the syrup before using. Use about $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ cup of syrup for each pint container.
- Place whole or sliced berries in containers and cover with cold syrup.
- Package and freeze as discussed earlier.

Unsweetened pack

- Pack whole, sliced, or crushed berries in containers.

- Cover whole or sliced berries with water or berry juice containing 1 teaspoon of crystalline ascorbic acid to each quart of water. Cover crushed berries with their own juice. Package and freeze as discussed earlier.

strawberry jams and preserves

In this section, recipes are given for making jam from fresh or frozen strawberries. The starred recipes are adapted from U.S. Department of Agriculture Home and Garden Bulletin No. 56, How to Make Jellies, Jams, and Preserves at Home.

Strawberry Jam*

4 cups crushed strawberries (about 2 quart boxes)

4 cups sugar

Measure berries and sugar into a large kettle. Mix well. Bring quickly to a full boil and boil rapidly, stirring constantly, until mixture reaches 220°F. or mixture thickens. Remove from heat; skim. Ladle into clean, hot containers. Seal with lids or paraffin. Makes 4 half-pints.

Strawberry Jam with Powdered Pectin*

5½ cups crushed strawberries (about 3 quart boxes)



1 package powdered fruit pectin
8 cups sugar

Measure berries into a large kettle. Add the pectin and stir well. Bring quickly to a full boil, stirring constantly. Add sugar, continue stirring, bring to a full boil, and boil hard for 1 minute. Remove from heat; skim. Ladle into clean, hot containers. Seal with lids or paraffin. Makes 9 half-pints.

Strawberry Jam with Liquid Pectin*

4 cups crushed strawberries (about 2 quart boxes)
7 cups sugar
½ bottle liquid pectin

Measure berries into a large kettle. Add sugar and mix well. Bring quickly to a full boil, stirring constantly, and boil hard for 1 minute. Remove from heat and stir in the pectin. Ladle into clean, hot containers. Seal with lids or paraffin. Makes 8 half-pints.

Uncooked Strawberry Jam*

3 cups crushed strawberries (about 1½ quart boxes)

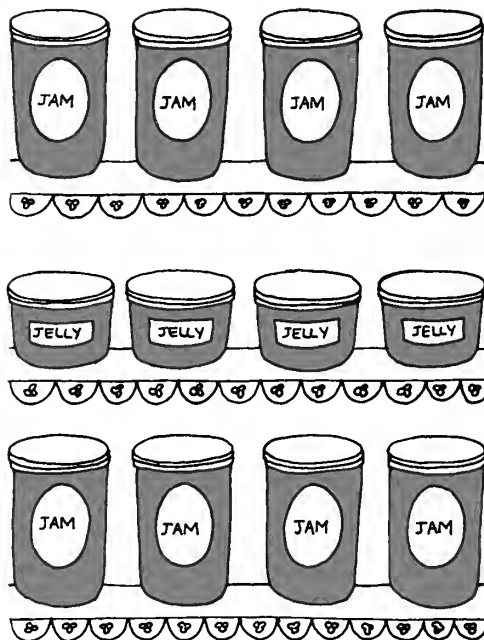
5 cups sugar
1 package powdered fruit pectin
1 cup water

Measure berries into a large mixing bowl. Add sugar, mix well, and let stand for about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Dissolve pectin in water, bring to a boil and boil for 1 minute. Add this solution to the berry mixture and stir for 2 minutes. Ladle jam into freezer containers or canning jars; leave $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch space at the top. Cover containers and let stand for 24 hours or until jam has set. Store in refrigerator or freezer. Jam will keep in refrigerator up to 3 weeks or up to a year in the freezer. Makes 7 half-pints.

If the jam is too firm, stir to soften. If it is too soft, bring it to a boil and it will thicken on cooling.

Strawberry Jam with Frozen Berries Packed in Sugar or Syrup

$3\frac{1}{2}$ cups thawed, crushed strawberries
and juice
 $3\frac{1}{2}$ cups sugar



3½ tablespoons powdered pectin *or*
½ bottle liquid pectin

Thaw the berries. If they were not crushed before freezing, crush them. Measure the fruit and juice into a very large saucepan.

To make with powdered pectin, measure sugar and set aside. Thoroughly mix powdered pectin with thawed berries and juice. Bring quickly to a full boil, stirring constantly. Add sugar, continue stirring, and heat to a full rolling boil. Boil hard for one minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and skim off foam. Stir for 5 minutes, skimming as necessary. Fill clean, hot containers. Seal with lids or paraffin.

To make with liquid pectin, mix thawed berries and juice with sugar. Stirring constantly, bring mixture to a full boil and boil hard one minute. Remove from heat and immediately stir in liquid pectin. Skim off foam. Alternately stir and skim off foam for 5 minutes. Fill clean, hot containers. Seal with lids or paraffin.

Strawberry Preserves*

6 cups large, firm, tart strawberries (about 2 quart boxes), cleaned and capped

4½ cups sugar

Combine whole fruit and sugar in alternate layers. Let stand for 8 to 10 hours or overnight in the refrigerator or other cool place. Heat fruit mixture to boiling, stirring gently. Boil rapidly, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking. Cook to 220°F. or until syrup is somewhat thick (about 15 to 20 minutes). Remove from heat; skim. Ladle into clean, hot containers. Seal with lids or paraffin. Makes 4 half-pints.

For information on growing strawberries at home, request Circular 935, Growing Small Fruits in the Home Garden, from the Office of Publications, 123 Mumford Hall, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

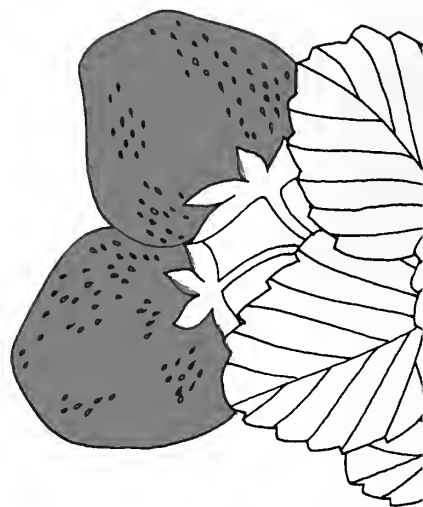
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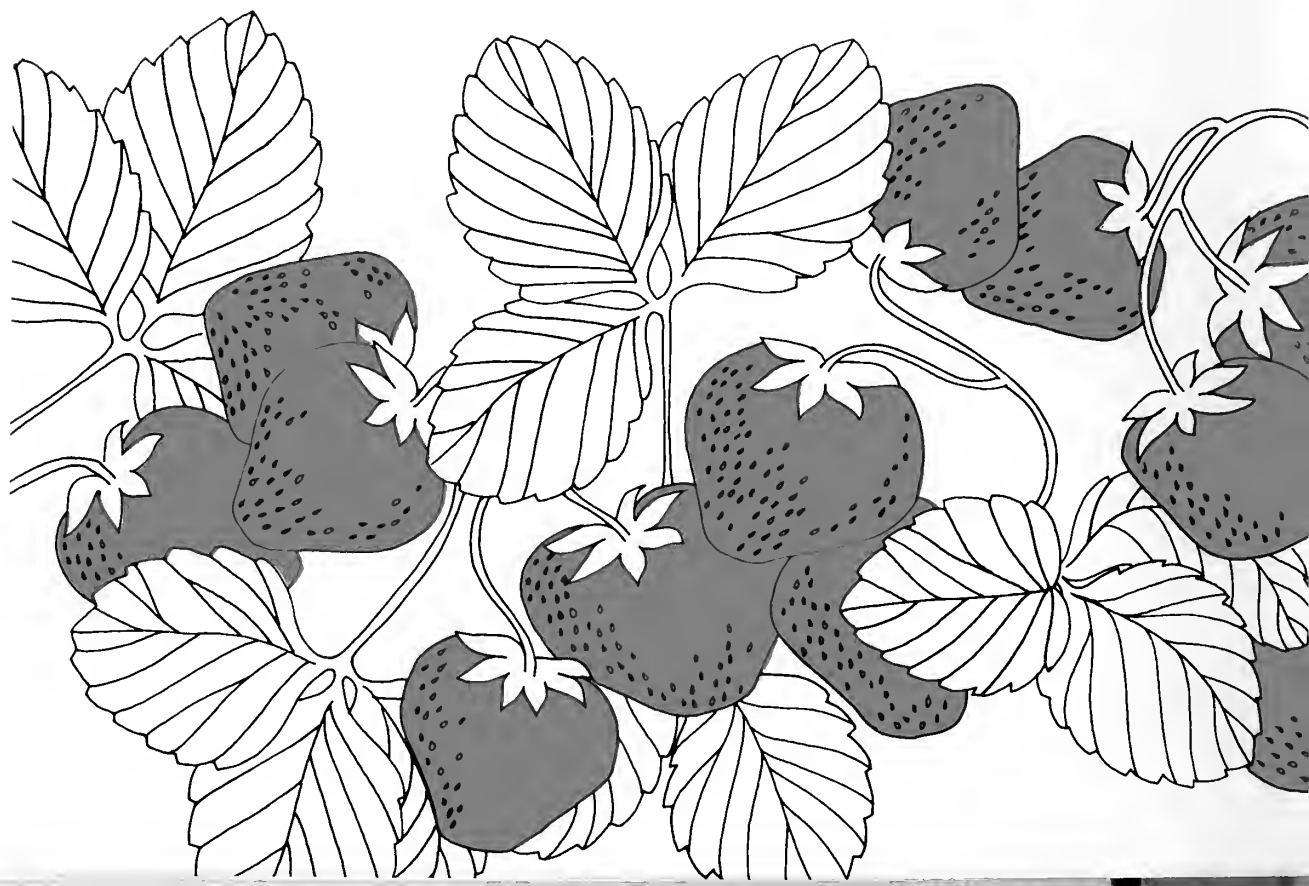
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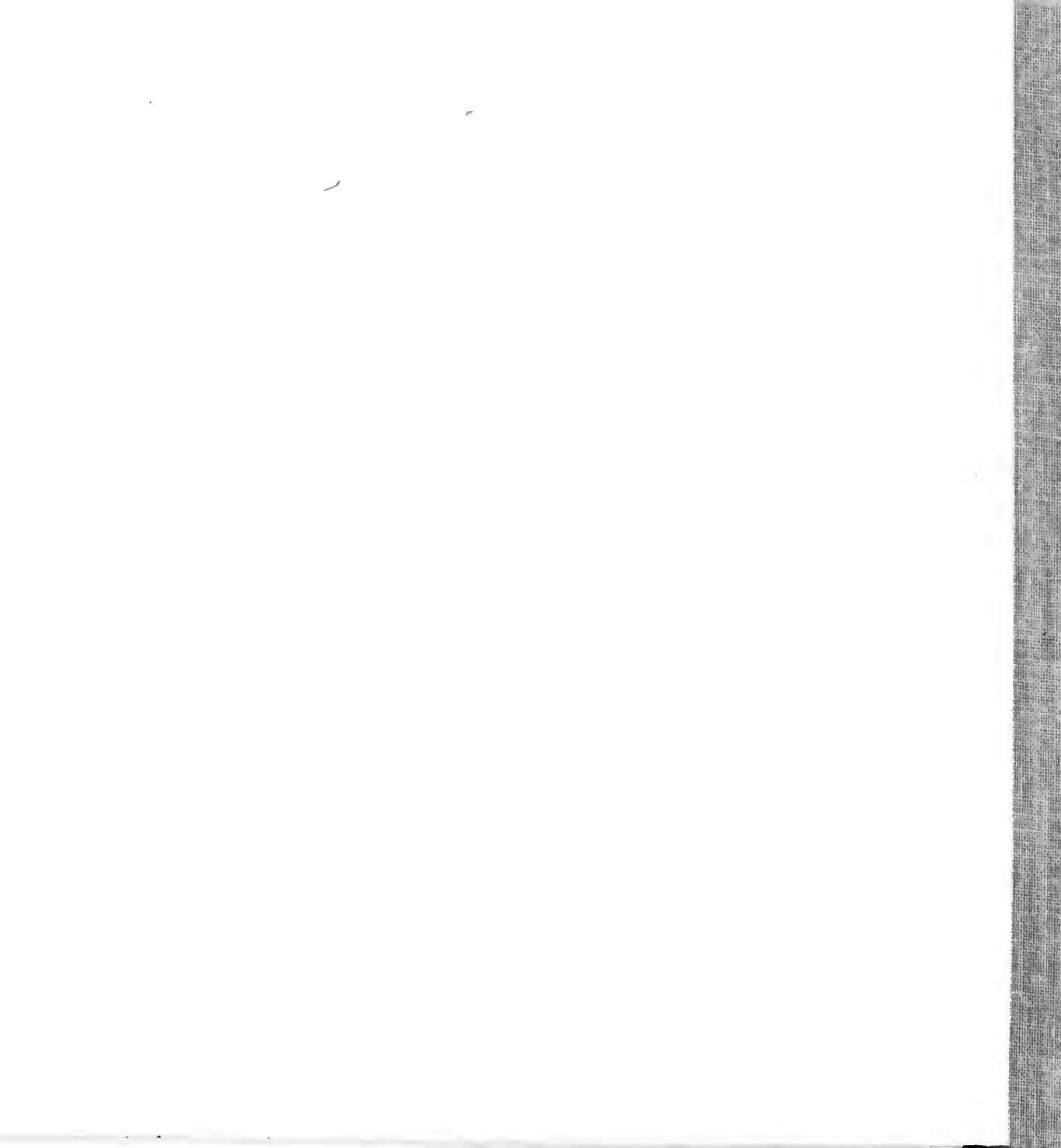


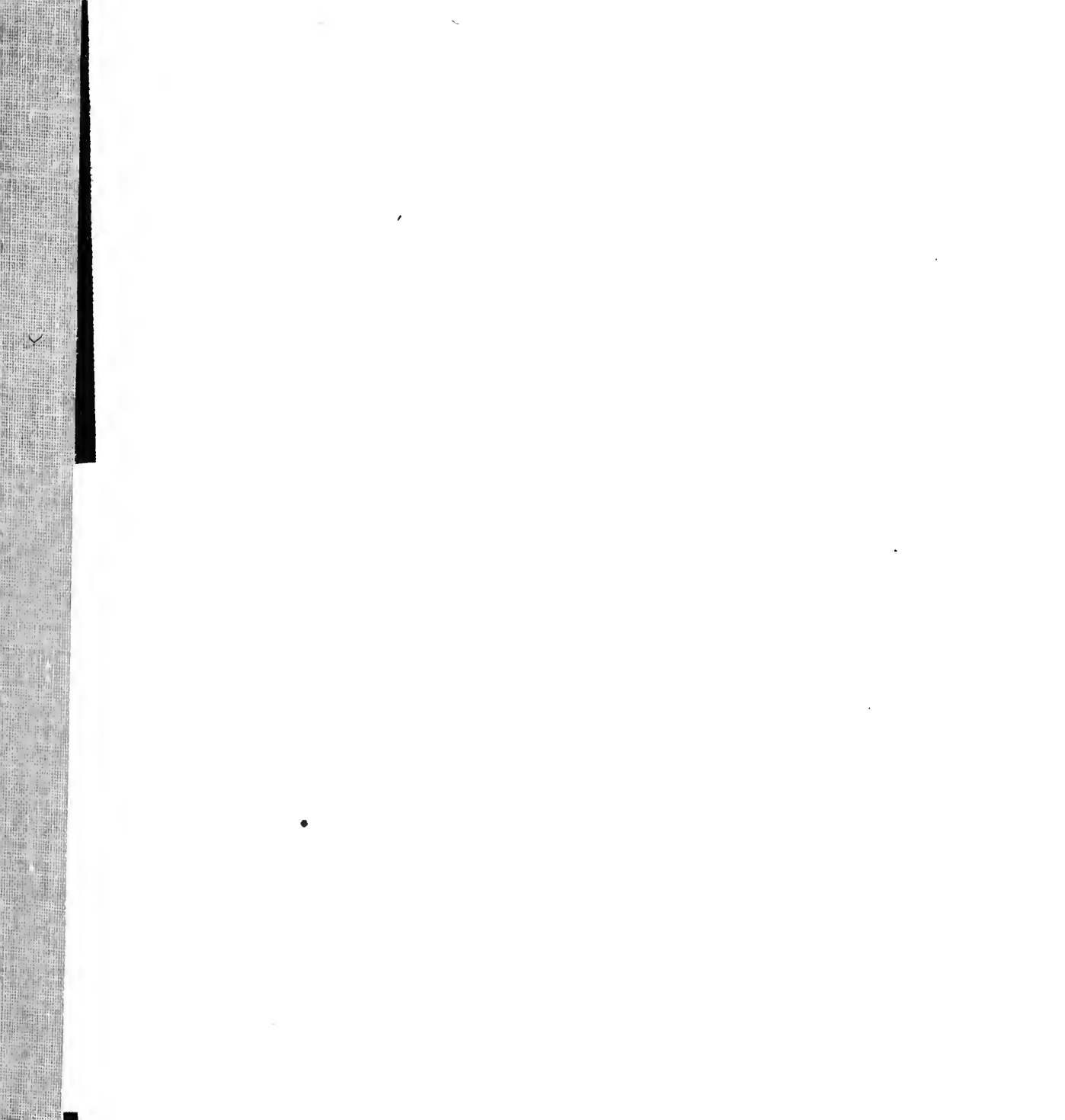


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