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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Saturday, July 30, 1938.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "NEWS NOTES FROM WASHINGTON." Information from the Bureau of Plant Industry, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, and the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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Fruit news is what our Washington correspondent is reporting in her letter today.

She writes: "Stores here in Washington are doing quite a business in water-melons these hot days. Any hot noon or afternoon down along the wharf where the melon boats unload, you'll see the cars drive up to buy the great green melons piled high along the curb. Groceries, too, are running special sales of watermelons. Some are selling chilled melon by the halves, quarters or even by the slice. These days most families aren't big enough to consume a 35 to 60 pound melon at a sitting and most home refrigerators won't accommodate such a big supply of fruit. So the stores try to oblige by selling melon in section. My grocer tells me that even this arrangement isn't very satisfactory because much good fruit goes to waste.

"But the plant breeders here at the Department will probably solve that problem one of these days. They hope to develop a small watermelon that will fit the needs of small families and small ice-boxes. They are also working to develop a sweeter melon and one that will stand up well when shipped to distant markets. More than this they want to produce additional varieties that are resistant to the various diseases that afflict melons today.

"These plant scientists gathered not long ago at the regional vegetable breeding laboratory near Charleston, South Carolina, where they saw some wild watermelons brought over from Africa by Department plant explorers. These wild African melons are very sweet. The plant breeders will cross them with the best commercial varieties of melons now in use, hoping to develop a sweeter melon for the market.

"The regional laboratory near Charleston is little more than a year old but the plant breeders there are hoping to produce smaller sweeter melons with skin and flesh colors that suit consumer demand in just a few seasons. They are also working on disease problems and hope to produce more varieties of melons that will resist fusarium wilt, anthracnose, leaf spot and blight--four diseases that cause so much loss to melon growers.

"Up in the State of Washington the plant breeders have been busy, too. They have been working to produce varieties of raspberries especially suited to freezing. The Puyallup Valley in Washington has been called 'the nation's No. 1 berry patch.' Some of the finest raspberries grow there and raspberry raising has been one of the State's great industries. But the cold weather last winter is costing Washington a third of its crop this summer. So the berry







breeders have been working to produce new varieties that will stand freezing--bushes that will live through severe winters and bear fruit adapted to the cold-pack or quick-freezing process. The two new and very promising hybrid raspberries are the Washington, a sweet berry with a very delicate flavor, and the Tahoma, a sour, early berry of very brilliant color which is especially good for quick freezing.

"Speaking of sour fruit reminds me of some lemon news. Lemon production in this country is on the up and up. The men who figure out crop statistics say that lemon production in the United States is increasing and may be expected to increase during the next several years. In fact, we've been growing more and more lemons since around 1900 when lemon production first became of importance.

"If you are interested in lemon figures, here are a few to illustrate the increase: California's production averaged 6 million 800 thousand boxes of lemons during the years 1927 to '31. But in the next 5-year period the average was 8 million 100 thousand boxes. Only two-thirds of the lemon trees in California were in full-bearing this past year. As more of them come into full-bearing, you can expect many more lemons on the market.

"We used to import a great many foreign lemons and lemon products but during the last 25 or 30 years these have dropped to an insignificant number. Instead of importing lemons the United States is now exporting them. Canada is the largest buyer at present although other nearby countries and even the Far East are making some purchases of American lemons.

"Here's a little news about fruit color. Nature's dye materials aren't necessarily fast color. That's a point worth considering in cooking and canning. The yellow and orange colors in fruits come from substances called carotinoids. These colors are fairly stable. But the reds and blues which come from anthocyns easily fade or change to dull brown if the fruits are overcooked. Tannins are also present in fruits in varying amounts and they tend to break down during cooking and discolor products made of light-colored fruits. The dark brown of overcooked apple butter, for example, comes in part from this change in tannin. So every good jelly and preserve maker cooks fruits and fruit juices as fast and in as short a time as possible. This is to save the brilliant natural color and also the flavor of the fruit."

That concludes this week's letter of news notes from Washington. But since this subject of jelly and preserve making has come up, I'd like to suggest once again that while the free supply lasts, you are welcome to the bulletin called "Homemade Jellies, Jams and Preserves." It is No. 1800. Order it from the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D. C.

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