

Just Within the Family



Nutrition Lessons For Migrant Mothers

*Climax of the cooking sessions was to be a special event
—each woman to prepare a dish from her native culture.*

The Papago Indian housewife furnished cholla bud salad. The Negro woman prepared rice pudding. The Spanish-American women came burdened with enchiladas and Spanish rice.

The woman whose husband had been without work for several months was puzzled but not defeated. As final solution, her husband went out and shot a jackrabbit, and the wife cooked it for the assembly of cooking class enthusiasts.

The nutrition course for young homemakers, a series of six lessons, was held at a cotton camp at Sahuarita, 25 miles south of Tucson.

The migrant camp itself is a permanent settlement with about 40 families representing four ethnic groups. There is some seasonal and some permanent work provided, but with cotton production 95 per cent mechanized, employment is scarce, especially for unskilled laborers.

With these migrant families of an interesting ethnic grouping, available foods were used to teach basic nutrition, meal planning and preparation, food selection and buying, and food needs of young children.

From Various Cultures

Indian, Spanish-American, Negro and Anglo housewives joined in avid participation in the classes after the

first period of reticence and timidity was passed. That first stage, the attempt of the teachers to gain the confidence of these young housewives, was most important. In many ways it was much more difficult than the actual lesson work which followed.

Cooperating were personnel from the Pima County Health Department, the Pima County Extension Office, and the homemaking teacher in the Sahuarita public school.

Directing the series of lessons was Miss June Gibbs, Extension Nutritionist at the University of Arizona.

Learning to Cooperate

The Extension team approached this project with some uncertainty but with great good will and humility. It is a tribute to all participants, those teaching as well as those learning, that all ended as good friends who can work together on future programs.

At the beginning of the series of meetings, the home agent asked for one of the homemakers to offer her kitchen for use by the group. None volunteered. For the final meeting, a demonstration of making yeast bread, a kitchen was readily offered, and the housewife told the nurse that she greatly enjoyed having the ladies use her home.

As the barriers gradually broke down, it was inspiring to the teaching group to see the great effort put forth by those attending the sessions. Most of these young wives made real sacrifices to complete their homework, dress themselves and their children, and appear at the class sessions.

“Cooking School” in Church

The sessions themselves were held

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ABOVE, PICTURE OF little church where classes were held.

Nutrition Lessons

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in a small concrete building, formerly a one-room school and now used by an interchurch group as a church, as part of a migrant ministry program. The church, as well as the housing, is on property owned by the farming company for which the migrants work.

There were almost no facilities for food preparation in the church—no stove, no water, inadequate lighting, a few benches and a makeshift table. The teaching team had to work strenuously to prepare in advance for these class sessions.

The elementary school at Sahuarita has an excellent school lunch program, with an imaginative manager who introduces the children from the migrant camps to nutritious meals and unknown foods. Cooks bake bread at the school—in fact, this was what motivated the migrant housewives in their request to learn how to make yeast bread.

4 Ethnic Groups Join

The six “classes” in food selection and preparation were attended regularly by 10 Negro housewives, 8 Spanish-American, 2 Papago Indian and 7 white.

The program itself began with the lesson on “eating to live better.” Teachers discussed the effect of food on health, looks and behavior. The basic foods were itemized, and the class was taught which available foods were sources of the vitamins, minerals, proteins and carbohydrates so necessary to growth and maintenance of a healthy body.

The homemakers also were told where these needed food elements could be obtained most economically—powdered milk, available fresh vegetables, cheaper cuts of meat, for example. A demonstration meal included powdered milk and salisbury steak for protein, cabbage slaw for vitamin C, rolled wheat biscuits and rolled wheat cookies for the B vitamins, and powdered milk for minerals.

For Healthy Children

A second lesson discussed properly nutritious meals for growing children, with emphasis again on powdered milk for minerals and protein. The needed Vitamin C was discussed, and beans were cited as a cheaply available high protein food. The meal included spiced milk, banana milk, peanut butter milk candy, and beans



INSIDE VIEW of the little church building

cooked with powdered milk to make a suitable child's dish.

Another lesson discussed meal planning, with a meal which emphasized beans in three dishes. The next lesson centered on meat selection and buying, covering facets of meat preparation, fresh and canned meats, cooking of cheaper, tougher cuts of meat, and the importance of proper meat storage.

Principles of food preparation were emphasized in the fifth lesson, with a demonstration meal which included two rice dishes. The sixth lesson was the long-awaited demonstration of cooking yeast breads. There were yeast bread rolls, yeast bread loaf, yeast bread tea ring and yeast bread cinnamon rolls.

“Una Fiesta Grande”

This was the climax, and the smell of baking bread was a magnet which drew the children when the school bus stopped. Twenty women and 30 children made a gala fiesta of the occasion, and the yeast bread rapidly disappeared. Disappearing, too, were the dishes the homemakers themselves had made—cholla bud salad from an age-old Papago recipe; enchiladas made as they had been made in Mexico for generations, sharpened with the hot chile sosa picante. Disappeared, too, the roast jackrabbit, the offering of a woman who had no money to buy food, but a great affection for the class and those who taught it; and pride, too, in doing her share.

After the climax must come a denouement, and this was the evaluation session, a review of what had been learned. The women, queried regarding the basic four foods and other

important points in the lesson, did remarkably well, and glowed with pride at their accomplishment.

Their comments, too, helped give an evaluation:

“I didn't know you could make so many things out of dried milk. . . .”

“I fooled my husband into eating canned meat, using that salisbury steak recipe. . . .”

“Now I have the satisfaction of family praise when I prepare appetizing meals. . . .”

“The children are just crazy after that peanut butter candy. . . .”

Impressed Sponsors, Too

To the teaching group, too, this series of lessons was a new experience. Miss Keating, the nutritionist with the Public Health Department, said, “This was an ice breaker, the first concentrated nutrition training program in the county. It was an introduction to these migrant families of this type of activity. It will guide us in further work.” Miss Clotine Wilson, the Public Health Nurse assigned to Sahuarita, says “They're still talking about it. It was a social occasion as well as an educational experience.”

Months later a photographer visited the migrant camp to take pictures. A young Negro mother enthusiastically nodded her head when asked if she had taken part in the cookery sessions, then asked: “When are Miss Gibbs and those other ladies coming back? We surely would be glad to have them put on another series of those lessons. . . .”

9 Rich Scholarships For Home Economists

Arizona girls may cash in on six scholarships of \$800 each and three of \$500 each being offered this year to college juniors majoring in home economics, announces the National 4-H Service Committee.

Graham P. Wright, state 4-H leader, noted that candidates must be presently enrolled in a 4-H Club or be a 4-H alumnae. Applications should be made to Wright, accompanied by 4-H and scholastic records.

Also required is a statement telling why the applicant is interested in home economics as a major course of study. The applicant also should show need for financial assistance to complete her junior and senior years.