Science in the Kitchen

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DO WOMEN think about science when busy with their housework? More likely their minds are occupied with the problems of planning, cooking, and serving meals to suit their husbands. Appreciation of what science has contributed to daily living rarely enters their heads. Is this the scientists' fault?

Women believe what pseudo scientists on radio and television say; this may be true because of the way the wares are dramatized. Perhaps the real experts should follow that example and make science more intelligible to the average person. Almost every simple kitchen procedure involves science—and the procedures *are* simple because of scientific research.

A menu for one day will illustrate some of the many benefits the homemaker enjoys. For breakfast—frozen orange juice, an individual package of ready-to-eat restored cereal, pasteurized milk, graded eggs, toast made from enriched bread, butter wrapped in quarter pounds, and coffee from a vacuum-packed can.

For lunch—soup from a can, crackers from a three-in-one package, vegetable salad (the greens already prepared in a transparent bag) tossed with bottled French dressing.

For dinner—a packaged steak; graded, clean potatoes; frozen squash (seasoned with iodized salt); cake made from a mix; and canned or frozen fruit.

And the meals can be prepared in a minimum of time, with the quality up to standard.

Modern equipment has released the homemaker from much drudgery. Electric mixers, coffee makers, waffle irons; home freezing units; dish-washing and clothes-washing machines; and temperature-controlled ranges and refrigerators are a few of the many labor saving devices.

Women take for granted such things as bottled or cartoned pasteurized milk, canned and dried milk; packaged baking powder, spices, and cocoa; canned soups, fruits, and vegetables; packaged cereals; well-bagged, enriched flour; wrapped, sliced bread; and brown-and-serve rolls. What a tremendous amount of time, study, and money have been spent so that the homemaker can have them!

Some of the questions women might ask (fi they ever thought of them) are: How does cream of tart ar invert sugar so that finer crystals are formed in cake frosting and candy? Why can corn sirup be used instead of cream of tartar? Why is cream of tartar added to eggs when making angel food cake? Why is fudge creamier if beaten when cool? How does baking powder act? Why does sour milk give a whiter, more tender biscuit? Why does tomato soup curdle? What is meant by hydrogenation? What is an emulsified fat? What is a stabilizer? An antioxidant? How do these things affect keeping qualities and use of ingredients in recipes?

Why do scientists not answer such elementary questions in a way that women will accept? It might be a stimulating experience for scientists to talk to an audience of homemakers instead of always discussing research with each other in technical language. Professional groups talk to themselves too much of the time. There are many thousands of other persons who have minds that are receptive and who might be a strong influence in furthering research. Better understanding would assure more efficient use of the present day foods and equipment and this would mean more sales for the grocer and manufacturer. The past few decades have made available better-tasting and more nourishing foods, but it is ease of preparation that has the greatest appeal for the homemaker. She is grateful but does not understand that it is science that has liberated her from many nonchallenging jobs. Has the time come to translate the scientific words; to give findings practical explanations and to present them in a kitchen package to the most important buyer—the American housewife?