

Relation of Fat and Oil Chemists to Food Technology

IN THE Journal for September, 1952, Dr. C. N. Frey, then president of the Institute of Food Technologists, wrote a commentary on "The Oil Chemist and Food Technology." His discussion of the specific duties of a food technologist emphasized the close working relationship which should exist between the food technologist and the oil chemist. In the last two years progress in both fields has emphasized Dr. Frey's comments. Perhaps only the lapse of time justifies another commentary which develops more fully some of the points touched on earlier.



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Food technology has claimed recognition as a separate science in relatively recent years. Its parentage is reflected in its definition—the application of the basic principles of chemistry, physics, microbiology, and engineering to the processing and preservation of foods. Food technology was born at the request of the food industry which, with annual retail sales of 67 billion dollars, is one of our largest. A high and steadily increasing percentage of foods are processed and packaged. It is in these areas that food technologists are needed.

From the earliest legends and records to the present, fats and oils have been among the most important foods. Since 1931 the annual consumption of all fats and oils in the United States has grown from about 8 to almost 11 billion pounds. In the interval of 1931-1952 from 57 to 65% have gone for food use except during World War II when the proportion dropped to 51%. It seems that oil chemists and food technologists should have much in common.

This mutual interest has been recognized by educational institutions. In the Journal for August, 1953, Dr. F. A. Kummerow pointed out that five universities offered formal course work or seminars and research training in fat and oil technology and that 12 other institutions offered some training in this field. All five in the first category also teach food technology or engineering as do six of the 12 schools in the second category. There are only 21 schools teaching food engineering or technology (Food Engineering, February, 1954).

OUTSIDE of the schools recognition of the common interests of food technologists and oil chemists appears somewhat less general at this time. A check of the membership of the A.O.C.S. and the Institute of Food Technologists from their latest directories shows 173 members in common. Of these, the largest group of 22 are in educational institutions, 20 are from one large company (a meat packer), and the others are from government laboratories and a wide assortment of industries.

A survey of the papers at A.O.C.S. meetings and of our short courses shows that the Society has not neglected the food uses of fats and oils. As a Society however we have never formally recognized the existence of the vigorous younger Institute of Food Technologists. Perhaps at some future meeting a symposium could be held with the active participation of the Institute. Likewise at the annual meeting of the Institute of Food Technologists, a session devoted to fats and oils should have great attraction.

Whatever actions are taken by organizations, many fat and oil chemists as individuals have a deep interest in the field of food technology, and the reverse is also true. Fortunately, in recent years fats and oils, as well as food technology, have been capably presented in numerous excellent books. A worker trained in one field can obtain a good background and, in many cases, rather specialized information in the other field. Keeping in touch with progress in food research is aided by "Advances in Food Research" (volume 4 was published in 1953). In a similar way fat and oil chemistry is benefited by "Progress in the Chemistry of Fats and Other Lipids" (volume 2 appeared in 1954). With journals, books, and reviews devoted to each field and the vigorous programs offered by the A.O.C.S. and I.F.T., there is every opportunity for the interchange of knowledge and experience.

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