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The University of Nebraska Agricultural College Extension Service
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W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln

#1190

When We Go Shopping

MURIEL L. SMITH

BUYING is just one phase of the homemaking job, and it places a serious responsibility upon homemakers. The buying problem for the consumer becomes more difficult because of the increase in the variety of products and services from which to select. In Milwaukee, for example, a survey was made which shows that in 1924, families made their selection from 43 brands of breakfast foods, and in 1934 from 106 brands; in 1924 from 82 kinds of washing machines and in 1934 from 141 kinds. To guide one in the selection of things to be purchased there is not yet enough dependable information about the products; this means that it is important to study our buying problems.

Recently interest has been centered around consumer education. Through testing laboratories approval is given as products meet certain requirements and the interested consumer may obtain this information. A few organizations and agencies (not financed by advertising) are preparing and publishing consumer information.

Sources of Consumer Information

1. The United States Department of Agriculture has established grades of fruit and vegetables and meats to help the homemaker buy more wisely.
2. The Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906, one of the best-known federal acts, helps to protect the consumer against substitution and against the use of harmful preservatives in goods which enter interstate commerce.
3. The American Medical Association has for years been conducting investigations that have brought to light facts that are of help to one who buys drugs, medicines, and cosmetics.
4. The American Home Economics Association has a committee working on standardization of consumer goods.
5. State agricultural colleges have research departments where unbiased results and conclusions may be secured on such studies as have been made.
6. Consumers' Research is a membership organization that prepares for publication facts concerning a large variety of consumer goods. Address: 24 West 25th Street, New York City.
7. Better Buymanship booklets published by the Household Finance Corporation at 919 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, give useful information. They may be purchased by writing to the address above.
8. The Better Business Bureau is an organization for the purpose of increasing honesty in salesmanship and advertising. The address of its headquarters is: National Better Business Bureau, 383 Madison Avenue, New York City.

9. Consumer's Guide is published semi-monthly by the Consumer's Council of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration in cooperation with the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and the Bureau of Home Economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U. S. Department of Labor, Washington, D. C.

10. Consumer's Union of the United States, 22 East 17th Street, New York City, is a recently organized agency for the distribution of information on consumers' problems. A subscription to its publication makes this information available.

What the purchaser wants is the elimination of false and misleading claims of values, and adequate protection against harmful substances in foods, drugs, and cosmetics. Some of the things the purchaser does not want are: The use of meaningless terms such as "tested", "certified", "approved", "warranted", and "accepted" unless a reliable authority is cited. Magical claims for foods, drugs, and cosmetics are unfair when the consumer has a right to know the truth.

The Homemaker's Buying Field

The scope of the homemaker's buying is seen as the following divisions of the subject are called to attention:

Check once (✓) the types of buying that you think offer the most difficult problems.

Check twice (✓✓) those which are next in importance. In the blank spaces indicate kinds of each which you buy:

...	...	The purchase of fresh foods
...	...	The purchase of ready-to-eat foods
...	...	The purchase of ready-to-wear clothing
...	...	The purchase of materials for making clothing
...	...	The purchase of household equipment
...	...	The purchase of personal services
...	...	The purchase of family development

Customer's Self Rating Scale¹

A rating scale which has been developed to judge one's efficiency as a shopper will serve to check on shopping habits and point to places for improvement. In rating yourself on the scale, grade yourself on each of the twenty points—5 points for a perfect score, 3 average, and 1 poor.

Getting Attention:

1. Greeting the sales person pleasantly
2. Selecting a sales person whom you want to serve you
3. Remembering the sales person's name

Courtesy:

4. Showing consideration for other customers
5. Acting in a pleasant and friendly manner
6. Being honest regarding your choice or preference
7. Stating frankly and honestly your reasons for not buying
8. Avoiding shopping in rush hours
9. Referring suggestions for improvement of service to the proper person

¹ Sylvia R. Shiras, Home Demonstration Agent, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Intelligence in Shopping:

10. Obtaining information regarding the purchase before going shopping.....
11. Stating as definitely as possible your needs
12. Weighing carefully the suggestions of the clerk
13. Making sure your decision is final
14. Avoiding so far as possible the necessity for returning the purchase.....
15. Asking no unreasonable favors
16. Knowing where you can best be served for different items.....
17. Avoiding the making of decisions when tired.....

Good Appearance:

18. Dressing appropriately and becomingly for shopping.....
19. Being well groomed.....
20. Remembering that pleasant facial expression and good posture are as important in being personally effective as good taste in dress.....

Shopping for Equipment

The use of workable, convenient, efficient equipment is essential if one would make the best use of time. For example, a good egg beater is important to every well equipped kitchen. When buying equipment such as an egg beater one should ask that it reduce the amount of time and effort required for doing a task, that it work easily, and with a minimum amount of noise and friction. The beater should be well built, rust proof, and easily cleaned.

The wheel-type egg beater, for example, requires less time and energy than the whisk type. Some of the best makes are constructed with a comfortable wooden handle at the top and side and with protected cogs.

From the many kinds of whips and beaters one's choice may be guided by the use to be made of that piece of equipment. Egg beaters are used to whip cream, to beat eggs, to mix ingredients for gravy or salad dressing, and to develop fine texture as in whipping gelatin.

Before buying any equipment apply the following list of questions:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Is there a need for it? | 4. Can the work be done better with it than without it? |
| 2. Will it save time, effort, or fuel? | 5. How much can I afford to pay for it? |
| 3. How often will it be used? | |

Before buying an egg beater examine what is found on the market and observe the following features:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Is it well made? | 4. Will it fit closely to the bottom of container? |
| 2. Is the finish smooth and rust resisting? | 5. How much storage space will it require? |
| 3. Are the blades or wires thin with cutting edges? | 6. Is it easy to operate? |
| | 7. Is it easy to wash? |
| | 8. Is it easy to hold? |

Analyze by the following table the types of egg beaters from which you might choose:

Kind	Advantages	Disadvantages	Estimated length of life	Total cost	Yearly cost
A.					
B.					
C.					
D.					

Shopping for Towels

Consider first the purpose which the towel is to serve. The kitchen hand towel should be durable and attractive when freshly laundered. A fabric such as crash or huckaback in either cotton or linen serves well. Terry or turkish towels are best for bath, where a pliable, absorbent textile is most desired. The buying of hand towels and bath towels will include some of each kind. The following materials have the characteristics needed:

Crash is a term applied to fabrics of plain weave, having coarse, uneven yarns and a rough texture. Crash towelings are made of linen, cotton, or a combination of the two. The best grades are made of the more even yarns, closely woven; the lower grades are coarse, or uneven yarns, loosely woven and often unbleached.

Huckaback, or huck, is similar in appearance to the basket weave. It is woven in small geometric patterns, the small design being characterized by floats on the surface. Loosely spun yarns are used which give it good absorbent qualities.

Terry or turkish toweling is a soft fabric in pile weave of small uncut loops or pile on both sides of the fabric. The pile may cover the entire surface or be arranged in ribs or patterns. The loops or pile may be made of a single or double yarn. The number of loops, their closeness, and the length and quality of the fibers determine the absorbency of the towel. The loops are held by a background of plain weave and upon the firmness of this background depends the strength and durability of the towel. Turkish towels are made to meet various demands and for that reason vary in size and quality. The careful buyer can learn something about the construction of the towel by pushing aside the pile and counting the number of filling threads between each set of loops. In the better grades of toweling there may be three, four, or even six filling threads for each row of loops. When this construction is combined with a double-ply warp, a strong towel is the result. The selvage is also an indication of the quality of the towel. In the best towels it is closely woven and neatly finished. Some manufacturers speed up production by weaving two towels together, cutting them apart, and finishing off the selvage. Such a selvage can be easily distinguished.

The sizes of turkish towels have been somewhat standardized by the manufacturers as a result of a conference conducted under the U. S. Department of Commerce. The following sizes are recommended and are most often found in the stores:

16 by 30 inches
18 by 36 inches
20 by 40 inches

22 by 44 inches
24 by 46 inches
24 by 48 inches

Because of their absorbent qualities turkish towels are used in many households as hand towels. When buying for this purpose remember that the chief point of wear is the center of the towel and that a large size is unnecessary, inconvenient, and more costly and difficult to launder.

Points to consider when selecting towels:

1. **Absorption.**—Is the weave sufficiently open to absorb moisture easily? Is the pile well distributed over the surface, or has the design reduced the area having pile weave?
2. **Construction.**—Has it a firm, even, background weave? Is the pile a single or double yarn? Is the selvage well finished? Is the hem stitched closely at the corner?
3. **Strength.**—Is the warp close and firm enough to stand strain of laundering and use?
4. **Beauty.**—Are the color and design attractive? Will it make a color harmony with the other equipment on hand? Is it labeled, "Guaranteed Fast Color?"
5. **Size.**—Will the size selected fit the needs? Do we need that particular size most of all?
6. **Cost and care.**—Which grade will be most economical in original cost and laundry expense?

Shopping for Men's Shirts

Some work has been done on the standardization of men's shirts. One should observe brands, read labels, and ask for information as to the shrinkage claims as one makes the selection of this kind of garment. In order to get the quality, size, and features desired, notice collar size and laundering feature, length of sleeve, armhole stitching and finish, firmness of yoke, kind and number of buttons and buttonhole finish, and length.

Know the size needed. To determine the correct collar size, measure the distance around the neck with the tape measure at the level the collar is normally worn. Determine sleeve length by measuring from base of neck in line with tip of shoulder with arm flexed to elbow for the strain. The standard shirt sizes are:

Collar sizes: $13\frac{1}{2}$ to 20.

Sleeve lengths: 32 to 36. A figure 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6, representing 32, 33, 34, etc., to the right of the collar size on the shirt tells the sleeve length.

Materials most commonly used are broadcloth, chambray, madras, percale, cotton flannel, and novelty materials. Broadcloth is probably the most popular and practical dress shirt. Terms which are commonly found on shirt labels are as follows:

"Nafal" means that the label has been issued by the National Association of Finishers of Textile Fabrics, and specifies that the fabric has been tested and found to conform to standards for fastness of color to light and washing, established by the Association.

"Sanforized" means shrunk by a patented process for the shrinking of cotton or linen fabrics permanently. The cloth should be shrunk to zero (within a tolerance of one-fourth of an inch per yard) to be considered sanforized shrunk.

"Full-cut" on the label is the manufacturer's way of telling that he has not made a skimp cutting of material. Some manufacturers cut material so that they can get 13 or 14 shirts out of the same number of yards of materials as it takes to make 12 full-cut shirts.

"Mitoga" means that the garment has been cut and shaped to be somewhat fitted at the waistline.

The life of a shirt ordinarily depends more on the care in laundering than upon the wear it gets. Commercial laundering which often includes strong bleaches followed by stress and strain of the ironing machine, may cause well-made fine fabric shirts to last no longer than poorly made, coarse fabric garments.

Points to be observed when buying shirts are:

1. Consider that there may be some shrinkage even for "sanforized" or "pre-shrunk" garments.
2. Non-wilt collars may not resist continued laundering as well as soft collars.
3. In case of work shirts select those which have re-enforcements across shoulders, chest, and elbows.
4. A closely woven fabric having a high thread count gives better appearance and more wear.
5. All seams well turned and stitched double with a fairly fine stitch (about 16 per inch).
6. The collar points well matched with no folds or lumps in the tips, show good workmanship.
7. Buttons on good shirts are ocean pearl, clear, regular, and seven in number. The button holes should be carefully finished.

Shopping for Canned Food

Out of the need for a means of officially determining and certifying the quality and condition of canned fruits and vegetables has grown the standardization and grading service by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. They have defined the grades for most of the fruits and vegetables. The government grades are designated as A, B, and C. The Farm Products Inspection law provides for investigation and certification to shippers and other interested parties the class, quality, or condition of certain farm products including fruits and vegetables. The law is permissive but not mandatory or compulsory.

The canning industry has its products graded as Fancy (A), Choice or Extra Standard (B), and Standard (C). The word "Fancy" appears on some labels; and, as required by law, products below standard are labeled as such. A few canners have their products graded and labeled A, B, or C by governmental agents. A few examples may serve to indicate the differences in quality between A, B, and C grades as they have been defined by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

Grade A fruits at present usually are canned in the richest syrup, the amount of sugar used being less for Grade B and still less for Grade C, and varying with the requirement of each kind of fruit. Some fruit is also water-packed without sugar, and while this is not given a high grade rating, it is cheaper and more desirable for pies. Other characteristics of

Grade A fruits are a typical tree-ripened flavor, uniformity in size and symmetry, and freedom from defects. In Grade A grapefruit, most of the sections must be whole or practically whole, and Grade A applesauce must have a heavy, smooth consistency.

Grade B fruits are less perfect in quality, size and symmetry, somewhat less tender, and less full-flavored. Since nature produces more good than perfect products, there is more Grade B than Grade A on the market.

Grade C fruits are variable in size and tenderness in the same can; the syrup may be somewhat less clear and the fruit may not be packed quite so solidly in the can. There are more broken pieces of grapefruit and the applesauce has a less heavy consistency than in Grade A.

Vegetable grades vary in much the same way. Grade A tomatoes, for example, are whole or almost whole; the color is a good red; they are practically free from pieces of skin, cores and other defects, and possess a full, ripe flavor. Grade B tomatoes are less uniform in the size of pieces, and may have some light-colored or defective pieces. Grade C consists of fairly large pieces and only 'reasonable' freedom from undercolored parts, skin, cores, and defects. Other vegetables likewise vary from uniform and tender in Grade A, to less uniform, fairly tender, and fairly free from defects in Grade C.

Style.—Pineapple is canned whole, sliced, diced, crushed, or in tid-bits; apricots with skins off or on, whole, halved or sliced; peaches, whole, halved, sliced, or pickled; carrots, beets, and snap beans, small and whole or cut or sliced; corn, cream or whole grain; fruit salad, machine-cut or the more desirable hand-cut.

Variety.—Cling-stone or free-stone peaches; sour or Royal Anne cherries; green gage, Washington, yellow egg or Italian plums; green or bleached asparagus; Alaska or sweet varieties of peas; golden bantam, evergreen or country gentleman corn.

Approximate number of pieces of the larger fruits and vegetables.—As a rule the larger peaches and pears are packed in large cans; the diameter of the can indicates the size of pineapple slices, the large slices coming from the center of the fruit.

Approximate size of vegetables such as peas and asparagus.—Peas are sorted by machinery, the sizes numbered No. 1 to No. 6, or named "petits pois" (smallest), "extra sifted", "sifted" or "fine", "early June", and two larger varieties called "marrowfats"; "run of the pod" are unsifted, just as they come from the garden. Asparagus may be "salad points" (tips from 1 to 2½ inches long and of varying diameters), "asparagus tips" (3¼ to 3½), "cut asparagus" and "soup cuts" (tips, ends, or center pieces). Sizes vary from giant through colossal, mammoth, large, medium, small, and tiny.

Thickness of syrup on fruits.—Berries retain their color and flavor best when packed in heavy syrup, but heavy syrup is not as desirable on fruits to be used for salads.

Suggested Chart for Comparison of Various Brands of Fruits or Vegetables

	Sample No. 1	Sample No. 2	Sample No. 3
Before opening can, find the following information:			
1. Size of can.....			
2. Name of brand.....			
3. Name of packer or distributor....			
4. Net weight as stated on label.....			
Open the cans, and:			
1. Count number of halves of drained fruit (or slices or cups of minced fruit)			
2. Measure number of cups of liquid.			
3. Taste for flavor (best, good, fair, flat, poor)			
4. Observe texture (best, good, fair, poor)			
5. Notice color (best, good, fair, poor)			
6. Observe liquid: Clearness—good, poor (vegetables)			
Heavy, medium, thin (fruit)			
7. Final gradings: A—highest quality; B—medium; C—low; D—very poor.....			
8. Price per can as purchased.....			
9. Name use to which each is best adapted			

Directions for Testing Canned Goods

For a demonstration select three No. 2½ size cans of some particular fruit, choosing a high, medium, and low priced product. Keep price secret until end of test.

Drain fruit, allowing same time for each to drain, say one minute. Measure liquid, cut fruit into small pieces for testing, and return fruit to original can.

Observe shape, flavor, color, texture of fruit; amount and quality of syrup, and fullness of the pack.