

QUALITY SEPARATION IN THE POTATO INDUSTRY

Potato consumption has been decreasing a great deal in the United States and Canada for some years. In 1923 the average consumption was around 172 pounds per person, but reached a low of 96 pounds per person in 1952. This is a decrease of 76 pounds per person in this period, or for the United States and Canada combined it amounts to about 75,000,000 bushels less per year. If this extra market were available today, there would certainly be no low potato prices. Some of this drop in consumption may be due to less waste and changes in merchandising and storage, but only a small part of it. During the past six years alone, there has been a decline of about twenty-one pounds of potatoes per person. The problem now is to recover some of these losses.

The recent trends in processing potatoes is helping to maintain potato consumption to a great extent. If it were not for this outlet consumption would be even considerably lower. Especially in the United States and larger Canadian centers, a considerable portion of the potatoes used are being purchased as frozen french fries, frozen mashed potatoes, and as potato chips.

Factors leading to the decline in potato consumption include the following: 1. The quality of potatoes on the market has not kept pace with the consumers' demands for better quality in practically everything she buys. 2. The notion that potatoes are fattening. 3. The number of other foods which now compete with potatoes which were not even on the market until recent years. These include, especially in the United States, rice, sweet potatoes, macaroni products, etc. If the potato is to maintain its present rate of consumption, or increase it, the cooking quality will have to be improved. It will also help to have them as easily prepared, and attractive to the consumer, as possible.

NO RELATIONSHIP
"Beauty is only skin deep" never applied more appropriately than to our present day potatoes. There is no relationship whatever, between the exterior appearance of a potato and its cooking qualities. This is unfortunate as the consumer will often choose potatoes by their appearance. Unfortunately, many of the newer varieties, while attractive and high yielding, are lower in cooking qualities than the varieties of some years ago. Practically everything done in the so-called improvement of potatoes has lowered their mealiness. Much research and commercial effort has gone into dressing up the potato with brighter skins, shallower eyes, regular shape, better sizing, better packaging, brushing, washing and waxing. Much less has been accomplished to improve the actual eating qualities. In other words, a fairly good job has been done to improve the portion of the potato which goes into the garbage can.

Where would the poultry industry be today, if they had spent all their efforts on improving the shell of the egg without thought for the interior? Instead they are able to handle their eggs and tell exactly what the edible portion is going to be like. Similarly, by the method of separating potatoes with salt solutions into various specific gravity groups, the potato industry can now "look" into the interior of the potato and give the consumers what they want in the way of mealiness.

Use of a salt solution grader separates the non-mealy from the mealy potatoes in no way regardless of the variety or the conditions under which they were grown.

JUST AS IMPORTANT
It is just as important to the consumer to have this separation as it is to have pastry flour and bread flour in separate bags. Most consumers want mealy potatoes for baking and mashing, but for boiling and serving whole, these same customers want a potato that is not mealy, but will hold its shape and not break up during boiling. By this specific gravity separation, any lot of potatoes can be separated into lots and labelled and advertised according to their best cooking purposes such as "excellent for baking", "guaranteed to be mealy", "will not fall apart when boiled", etc. In consumer tests in larger centers it has been found that the consumers have

been willing to pay premiums of up to 1 1/2 cents per pound for mealy potatoes, and were willing to pay higher prices for boilers than for unseparated potatoes. One important factor to remember, of course, is that the best potato ever grown can be spoiled by improper cooking, so that proper cooking directions should be printed on the potato bags.

There is no doubt that quality separation is one type of service which the industry could supply to consumers and which would be a step to the greater use of this excellent food by all consumers.

BUNBURY NURSERY
The Prince Edward Island Rural Beautification Society last week held a very successful banquet — two hundred and forty-five persons attended. The presentation of prizes and the showing of Before and After pictures was quite a revelation in showing what could be attained by cleaning up the grounds around the houses and barns and fixing fences and painting and, in some cases, where the community got together and cleaned up the sides of the roads. The owners of the properties must certainly be much prouder even if they did not win a prize.

How often when we are driving along the roads we pass an attractive place and we remark on it, "Isn't that a nice place, I wonder who lives there?" There is no name on the mail box or the print is so small we cannot read it, and so we still wonder who lives in that nice place.

The stencil of your name will be supplied free of charge by writing to the District Inspectors of Pesticides, Post Office Building, Charlottetown. Please print your name. Those that wish to put the names on Scotch Light Reflector Tape can obtain the letters in three inch size for fifteen cents a letter, these have adhesive backs and are easy to stick.

It is not too early to start thinking about entering your place in next year's Beautification Competitions. Make a list of what you think should be done — dead trees can be removed, or the dead limbs can be cut off, a certain amount of carpentry work can be done during the winter, also, if you are going to plant some trees and shrubs, the places where they are to go can be made ready in fall. Dig the hole large enough and in the bottom put some well rotted cow manure, peat moss or well rotted compost and mix this into the subsoil so that the roots of the shrub or tree will have a chance to penetrate into the soil (Do not use fresh manure). When planting spread the roots out — do not cramp them into a small space.

YOUNG CATTLE
Age for Breeding: The age to breed depends on the growth and development of the heifer. Since she will not yield any income until she has freshened, she should be fed liberally in order that she may be bred to freshen at 2 years of age or soon thereafter. As the calf is carried about 280 days, the well-grown heifer should be bred when 15 to 18 months old.

If the heifer is not undersized, nothing is gained by breeding for freshening at a later date. However, the breeding of heifers that have not made good growth should be delayed somewhat, since too early calving under such conditions may result in smaller-than-average cows at maturity.

Handling the Heifer: Kindness in the care of the heifer will make her easier to handle when she enters the milking herd. Teach her to lead at an early age. Stall or house her with the milking herd a month or so before she is due to freshen. If possible, give her the stall she is to occupy after calving. Handle her daily during this period in a quiet, gentle manner that will gain her confidence. After she freshens, milk her carefully and quietly so that she will not get excited. The development of a nervous condition at this time may cause the heifer to form the habit of kicking or holding up her milk.

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