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3/17
HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

(Release on receipt)

SUBJECT: "To Have and Have Not" Information from officials of the Production and Marketing Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

ooOoo

Everybody's asking: What's happened to butter? Where is it?

The simplest answer is that you can't have more milk, cream, ice cream, evaporated milk and cheese and have more butter too.

But homemakers won't be satisfied with such a simple answer. Must be something more to it than just that.

Well, there is.

Currently, there is the matter of supply. Butter production has gone down steadily since 1942. In 1945 it was the lowest in twenty years.

Think back a little ... go back before the war years. In those carefree days, about half the milk sold by farmers was separated on the farm for sale as cream. This was largely used for butter production. The skimmed milk remained on the farm. It was fine for mixing with feed.

To increase the wartime food supply, the Government encouraged farmers to deliver whole milk. This meant that the butterfat and non-fat solids would all be available for human food. Part of the whole milk was converted into evaporated milk, Cheddar cheese, dried ice cream mix and dried whole milk powder for our armed forces, and for our allies. Meanwhile fluid milk consumption in this country jumped 25 percent during the war years.

In spite of the butter wane, civilians saw more of the golden food during the last two months of 1945 than in any previous two months of the year. This increase was occasioned by the sale of some 70 million pounds from Government stocks.

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During the war, the Army and other Government agencies bought butter seasonally. That is, they purchased most of their requirements during the heavy-producing summer months, so that all of the winter months production could be available for civilians. Last summer, the Armed Services had to assume that the war would continue. So, it was necessary to acquire sufficient butter stocks to carry them through the winter. With the sudden surrender of Japan, the Army reviewed its requirements ... taking into account demobilization needs ... and released the unneeded stocks for civilian use. But the windfall was quickly absorbed in the holiday rush.

Another factor contributing to the current shortage was the equally sudden surrender of ration coupons. With the end of meat, fats and cheese rationing, it was not necessary for homemakers to throttle their butter purchases. Demand soared. And that's another ... in a long line of reasons ... why butter stocks are slimmer than a dinosaur's noodle.

Add the fact that cheese, evaporated milk and dried milk are being sent abroad to relieve critical post-war shortages ... and the butter picture shrinks a little more.

And still another thing is that we are now in our season of lowest butter production. This, however, is not too telling. Butter demand is more or less constant throughout the year. Production is flush during the summer months ... for the rest of the time it is seasonally low. During the flush period, butter is shuttled into storage to tide over the lean winter months.

January finds us on the up-stairs. Gradually, production increases and hits its real stride in April, May and June ... and then takes the down escalator. However, it is not expected to go up nearly as much as last year because of the greater demand for fluid milk, cream and ice cream.

So it would seem that the butter prospects for the new year are not too bright. It should be of some cheer to realize that total milk production is expected to continue high, and you may continue to get most of it ... even though it won't be in the form of butter.

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