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U. S. Department of Agriculture

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, January 29, 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "THE CABBAGE FAMILY." Information from the Market Basket, Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Homemakers, I'd like to present, today, some members of the old and honorable Brassica family -- more familiarly the Cabbage family. Or tribe, or clan, as you please. Both aristocrats and plebeians belong to the numerous branches of the Brassicas. But they are all good for vitamins, minerals, and the bulk needed in a well-regulated diet. And for flavor, cost has nothing to do with preferences in our household.

At this time of year you can find almost all the Brassicas in your neighborhood market. Here's that good old year-around standby -- hard-headed White Cabbage. And loose-leaved Green Cabbage from the South. And the red Danish Cabbage which changes color curiously unless you cook it with a tart apple or a little lemon or vinegar. Here's curly Savoy Cabbage, so good stuffed and so beautiful as a salad bowl. (Did you ever try a cabbage salad with a whipped-cream-horseradish dressing served in a head of Savoy with the center hollowed out?)

And there are the Collards, Kale, and Brussels Sprouts -- all members of the large Brassica family. So is Broccoli, that comparatively recent arrival from Europe, and its pale domestic cousin Cauliflower. Then there are two Chinese cabbage cousins now grown in this country, Betsai (pronounced pet-si) and Chihli (pronounced chilly). In the early summer another branch of the family appears in some localities -- Kohlrabi (pronounced Kole-rah-be), and in the fall, in some sections, people cut Cabbage Sprouts after the main heads have gone to market. You cook them just like cabbage or any greens.

In appearance the various cabbage cousins are so unlike that you could serve the different kinds successively and give your family the illusion that they were eating quite different vegetables.

Take Brussels sprouts, which some consider one of the aristocrats of the group, because they are so often associated with the Thanksgiving or Christmas turkey and other holiday menus. Brussels sprouts look like cabbages in miniature. They grow up the length of the plant stalk, which is sometimes 30 inches long. The season begins in September and extends through the winter until April or May, but the sprouts are at the height of their season from October to January. As they are hand-picked and are usually packed carefully in quart or pint berry boxes, they command a higher price than cabbage.

Good quality Brussels sprouts are firm, compact, of fresh bright appearance and goodgreen color. If they are puffy-looking, you can still use them,

but the quality and flavor are poor. Don't buy wilted Brussels sprouts or those with yellow leaves. And look out for indications of worm injury and plant lice.

The price of cauliflower keeps this vegetable also among the more "exclusive" members of the Brassica clan unless there happens to be a season of heavy production. Cauliflower appears on the market in greatest abundance in the late summer or early fall and is shipped from different sections all winter.

Fine quality in cauliflower is indicated by a white or creamy-white, clean, heavy, firm, compact, "curd" or flower head. The jacket, or outer leaves which protect the head, should be fresh, firm, and green. The size of the head has nothing to do with maturity. Large and small heads may be equally mature. "Riciness", when the flowerets are beginning to grow, is not objectionable if not too far advanced. Avoid spotted, speckled, or bruised curd, and the presence of plant lice.

Cook cauliflower quickly in boiling water in an uncovered kettle and it will stay white and mild flavored. If the flowerets are separated, 10 to 15 minutes is long enough. If the head is left whole, cook 25 to 30 minutes.

Broccoli once commanded a high price because of its comparative scarcity. Then the Italians and French in this country began growing it. Americans took to broccoli also, and today we can buy about as much broccoli for 15 cents as used to cost 60 cents. Two to 2-1/2 pounds of broccoli make 5 or 6 servings.

To prepare it trim away the coarse leaves and fibrous portions. Split the larger stalks lengthwise, leaving some of the flower heads on each piece. Cook for 15 to 25 minutes in lightly salted water in an uncovered pan and lift gently so as not to break off the flower heads. Serve with Hollandaise sauce, or a simple seasoning of butter, salt and pepper.

Broccoli looks more like cauliflower than other members of the cabbage family, but because of its greenness it ranks as an excellent source of vitamin A, while the white cauliflower does not. Broccoli is a good source also of vitamin C, but not as good as Brussels sprouts, collards, kale, kohlrabi, and cabbage. It is listed as a fair source of vitamin B and a good source of vitamin G.

Cabbage of some kind is available the year around. The ordinary new green cabbage is the most delicate of all the cabbage family in flavor, when properly cooked. All cabbage is excellent for vitamin C when eaten raw or cooked only the shortest possible time. When boiled for hours, as in an old-fashioned "boiled dinner", cabbage was literally "cooked to death" as far as its vitamin C was concerned.

The reddish brown color and disagreeable odor and flavor which develop in overcooked cabbage has done much to arouse an unmerited distaste for this vegetable, and are quite unnecessary. They are due to the sulphur compounds contained by all the members of the Brassica family. Paradoxical as it may seem, all of these vegetables send less penetrating odors through the house when they are cooked uncovered, and they keep their natural green, white, or red color better. So cook them in the shortest possible time, in an open saucepan, in very little water. Another good method is to pan young cabbage in a little well-flavored fat, to save even more of the food value.

Whether your family food budget is liberal, moderate, minimum, or even restricted, there is some member of the cabbage family available at all seasons and at different price ranges to fit your budget.

