CHAPTER VII

FATS AND FATTY FOODS

If children are asked if they like fat, they usually say “no” very scornfully, for “fat” means to them the fat which comes on meat, or the blubber of whales that is eaten by the Esquimaux of the frozen North; and yet the average amount of fat eaten, or wasted, every day by people in this country is about five and one-half ounces, more than a quarter of a pound, and most children as well as grown people would think it pretty hard if they had to do without it.

When the children who are doing the marketing come to the booth of fats, what will they see? They will see a good supply of more appetizing articles than pieces of fat meat and blubber. They will see rich, sweet cream, golden butter, bacon, and nuts, as well as suet, nut oils, lard, and dripping. Chocolate and peanut butter and cocoanut will be here too. Surely,
the children will find something for their market basket which they will really like.

The most common form in which fat appears on the table is butter, the fat of milk. Fat is lighter than the rest of the milk, so it rises to the top in the form of cream and is skimmed off. Then it is poured into a churn and kept in motion with a dasher or paddle-wheel until the butter "comes," that is, until the fat has separated from the rest of the milk and is floating about the buttermilk in tiny masses. The motion is what causes the separation, and many a time a bottle of cream taken to a picnic in a carriage or automobile has reached the picnic grounds in the shape of butter. A few years ago, there was in the Patent Office in Washington a model of an odd sort of churn, on which some inventive genius had applied for a patent. It was in the shape of a rocking chair which, instead of arms, had cylinders. These were to be filled with cream; then the butter maker was to sit down in the chair and rock comfortably until the butter had come.

After the fat has separated from the rest of the milk, it is worked and washed to make sure that the buttermilk is out of it; then it is salted and is now ready to be eaten. Of course creameries do all this work by machinery, but it is not at all difficult to make a little butter with a bowl of cream and an egg-beater, and it will taste just as good as if it came from the best of creameries.

The things nearest like butter are oleomargarine
and nut margarine. Oleomargarine is made chiefly of the fat of beef mixed with extra pure lard and cottonseed oil and churned up with milk. It is therefore a mixture of animal and vegetable fats. Nut margarine is made of vegetable oils, such as cocoanut, cottonseed, and peanut.

Some plants produce a large quantity of oil. Two-fifths of the flesh of the olive is oil, and there is even more than that amount in the kernel. Cottonseed is one-fourth oil. Even corn and oat meal contain some fat. The kernel of the peanut is nearly two-thirds oil. Cocoanut contains a great deal. The nut trees are so successful in their oil manufacture that if they were men, they would surely make their fortunes. If you put a thin slice of almost any nut between two pieces of paper and strike it lightly with a hammer, the paper will show a greasy mark.

Nuts are usually eaten at precisely the wrong time, for nuts, like all fats, are highly concentrated food, and to eat a saucer of them as dessert after a hearty dinner is almost as foolish as it would be to eat a dessert of roast pork after a dinner of roast beef. Nuts should not be eaten just for flavor after a meal, but as part of the meal itself, and as a substantial food.

Since fat is to be found in so many different places and in so many varieties, any one whose taste cannot be suited by one kind or another must be hard to please. In a tablespoonful of butter there is about half an ounce of fat; but if you do not care to eat the butter,
you can get the same amount by eating an inch cube of cheese, or twenty-nine peanut kernels, or better still a pint of milk. Surely every one ought to be satisfied.

Fat is too concentrated a food to be eaten by itself. We put butter on bread, cream on cereals, and salad oil on lettuce; but not many people in a temperate climate care to eat a whole mouthful of fat meat or to drink a cup of oil. Often we cook our fats, using them for shortening or in frying. Food that is fried has often a particularly rich flavor, but frying needs more skill than other methods of cooking if the food is to be readily digested and palatable. Did you ever see a doughnut that was soggy and would leave a big stain of grease if laid on a piece of paper because it had not been fried properly, or potatoes that were soaked in grease instead of being dry and crisp?

Fat is sometimes spoken of as "hearty food," since it enables us to do hard work without a "gone feeling." This is because it stays in the stomach a long time. After the stomach has been empty a while, it begins to make remarks on the situation, and the possessor of the stomach feels a sensation of hunger. A slice of bread with butter on it keeps off this sensation much longer than the bread alone. On the other hand, if one has eaten too much fat, one's stomach feels uncomfortable and overloaded. Most people make the mistake of thinking that for a hearty food they must buy meat, but this is far from being true, for it is chiefly the fat in the meat which makes it a hearty food and
this can be obtained in other ways. People who are doing hard work need hearty or, as we sometimes say, concentrated food. This is why we had to save fat as much as possible in order to send it to the fighting men.

Whether fats are solid or liquid makes no difference in their value as food. So far as that goes, a Brazil nut or a little olive oil answers the same purpose. There is one thing that makes a real difference between the different kinds of fat. One kind of the vitamins that we talked about when we were visiting the fruit and vegetable booth is found in connection with fat, though only some fats contain it. This is necessary for growth, so if we are not getting it in some other way we must be particular about the kind of fat we choose. Milk fat (butter) contains it and so does egg yolk, and most animal fats, though lard does not. It has not been found in most vegetable oils, though corn oil has it. If we have plenty of milk and of leafy vegetables we do not need to think very much about this, for we shall be quite sure to get enough.

By the time that the boys and girls with the market basket have finished their buying, they will have collected a good deal of valuable information about prices and kinds of food. On their next trip, they can start about their marketing in a more businesslike way, keeping it in mind that in order to make sure of proper nourishment for their family, part of their food for each day should come from each booth. How much money to spend is a question that affects almost every-
one, and the best way to decide this is by making a “budget,” as a well managed factory would, or just as the British Government does for its expenditures. After learning how much money can be spared for food each week, this should be divided among the five groups, not haphazard, but wisely and after careful planning. Supposing that in a household consisting of father, mother, and two children, it has been found that $10 a week can be devoted to food, a good plan would be to divide this among the five food groups, setting aside first a special share for milk. If the family lived in the city and everything had to be bought, the food budget might read somewhat like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>$2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables and fruit</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proteins—eggs, cottage cheese, American cheese, fish, meat, dried beans, etc.</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cereals, including bread</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar or other sweetening</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fats</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundries</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$10.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the father, mother and two children together require as much food as three men doing moderately hard, muscular work, then their day’s food supply might well be something like this:

Fruit and vegetables (including potatoes) at least........... 5 pounds
Milk, at least................................................. 2 quarts
FATS AND FATTY FOODS

Eggs, legumes, meat, cheese, about. ...................... 1 pound
Cereals (including breadstuffs) about ...................... 3 pounds
or less of these and more potatoes
Sweets. ......................................................... 1/4 to 1/2 pound
Fats. ......................................................... 1/4 to 1/2 pound

A wise choice of food is always an important matter, because upon this depends in so great a degree our health and our ability to do our share of the work of the world. It was especially important in the days of warfare, because America had to provide so much food not only for herself but also for those who, together with her, were fighting for the freedom of the world. It is even more important in these days of reconstruction, of building up the world anew, and of trying to make it a better world than we have ever had before.

It is worth remembering:
That fat exists in many forms.
That fat is a hearty food, too concentrated to be eaten by itself.
That at least a part of our fatty food should come from milk or butter or from some other substance that contains the kind of vitamine found with fat.
That to spend wisely we should make a careful plan.
American Clothes and Real Milk Have Been Furnished to Many European Children