

## RECENT CHANGES IN FOOD HABITS

BY

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## ABSTRACT

Eating habits with respect to form of foods and manner of preparing them have undoubtedly undergone much change over the past several years. Such change has a bearing upon the biological values of foods, upon the esthetic satisfaction afforded, and upon cost even though it does not lend itself to statistical treatment. Changes in these intangible factors probably equal or exceed the importance of shifts in quantity consumption.

Although the American diet is made up of about 100 different foods, approximately three-fourths of the calories come from a dozen or so major items and all can be assigned to six groups. This paper has brought together figures showing changes in quantity consumption for these groups or for important representatives of them and has pointed to the possible influence of these changes upon the nutritive value of the nation's diet.

Great diversification in kind of food in late years has been one evidence of a relatively high income and standard of living. There is, however, a physiological limit to the amount of food a person can consume; therefore if one item of food is consumed in greater quantity it is at the expense of another. These points are well illustrated in the group of fruits and vegetables where there has been during the past ten years a manifold increase in the use of several such items as spinach, head lettuce, and grapefruit. Early figures on total vegetable and fruit consumption are unfortunately too incomplete to substantiate the general impression that their use has measurably increased over the past thirty years. The consumption of milk, as fluid milk and its products, has increased steadily although meats *in toto* have shown little change over the past thirty years. Fats and oils have shown a slight rise and sugar a very marked one in the same period. The consumption of grain foods and flour has fallen off noticeably during the years when other foods mentioned have come into greater prominence.

It would be gratifying to know that the national diet has improved in quality and in nutritive value as it has become more diversified. Analyses in the past of diets of groups of people representing different occupations have shown little if any margin of safety in some of the mineral nutrients and probably in certain vitamins. The tendency toward a greater use of vegetables, fruits and milk during the past thirty years is commendable because it is in the direction of safeguarding those nutrients.