



FOOD

for the male

by Pat Stiff

Experimental Cookery Junior

Dear Marian,

How's life treating you at the U.? Besides an occasional glance at the books, I've just mailed another package to Jim in Korea. The deadline for mailing Christmas parcels overseas is Nov. 15, and I want to be certain the box gets there by Dec. 25. Are you going to send Larry a package?

Choosing the contents for an overseas box is fun, Marian. I get a kick out of roaming the aisles in grocery stores to hunt for unusual canned items Jim might like. Since he's from Maryland and likes sea food, I pay special attention to that shelf.

When I was home last summer, I sent homemade things. In the line of cookies, the cake or bar kind such as brownies or gum-drop gingers are easier to pack than flat, round or crisp peanut-butter or sugar cookies. Aluminum foil keeps them fairly fresh. For easy wrapping I place the brownies side by side on the foil just as they were together on the cooky sheet. To keep the food from being squashed and getting crumbly, I put the aluminum-wrapped packet in a sturdy cardboard box which goes inside a larger box with other items.

Watch for crumbs

Dad wrote last summer from Seoul about packing cookies—he didn't believe mine would arrive in one piece because he's seen many poorly wrapped cooky crumbs dumped out of mail bags. A tin container for homemade food is ideal, but not always available.

You know how little time there is for cooking here in Ames, Marian. I've found a deliciously rich dessert easily made from one can of sweetened condensed milk. All you do is boil the unopened can of milk for 3 hours and mail it. Inside is a creamy, but firm, caramelish-butterscotch pudding.

Last summer I asked Jim what the men look for in packages from home. He wrote that the old criteria of "something that will keep" brings cans to mind first, small cans, the smaller the better. The contents—something out of the ordinary, real treats like deviled ham, pickled herring, tasty cheese of all descriptions, specialties not included in army menus.

To go with beverages, I mailed pretzels, vacuum-packed rye bread and un-refrigerated cheese, potato sticks, pumpkin seeds, blue-cheese crackers and French-fried onions. Well-packaged boxes of crackers stay as fresh as tins.

Jim says that in most cases the water is terrible,

making juices a good item to include. The water is usually not bad enough to contaminate condensed fruit juices, but the ready-to-drink are more desirable. Soups are good also, not the kind to which you add water, but canned, ready to heat and eat. Simplicity—that's what insures a successful overseas package.

And in each package put a prize: good reading material. It's scarce, especially magazines newer than two months. If he smokes cigars or a pipe, his brand of tobacco is not around. Send it.

Heat it up

The men's having access to stoves, or heat of some type, enlarges the choice of things to send, too. I want to try some hard chocolate that will melt into a tasty hot drink for winter. Also, I think I'll mail him popcorn and salt next time.

Trying to fit everything compactly and firmly into one box is more challenging than a 1,000-piece puzzle, Marian. Of course, the outside box has to be good and strong. Cardboard and paper fill empty spaces between items so nothing rattles or shifts position. Magazines and paper-bound books make good "stuffers," too.

Wrapping the outer box with heavy paper and sealing the package with brown tape and heavy cord is the easiest part. The post office likes to have two separate strings tied around the box in both directions, making four knots in all.

The packing and sealing is important since the box will be in the not-so-gentle mail for 3 to 8 weeks. For an extra quarter at the post office, the box goes "special handling," which sometimes speeds delivery by 2 or 3 weeks.

Foot the bill

In mailing to servicemen, you pay postage only to the port in the U.S. Parcel post, of course, is cheaper than air mail. Weight limit for overseas parcel post is 70 pounds, and the size must be under 100 inches combined length and girth. For air mail, the weight limit is 2 pounds, and the size must not exceed 70 inches combined length and girth. Insurance rates vary depending on the value declared.

Marian, I hope this doesn't frighten you away from fixing a package for Larry. He'd love to get a Christmas box from you. Since it's best not to send anything that he'd have to carry while on the move, food is the wisest choice.

Good-bye for now,
Pat