

## Helps for the Spring Market Basket

By MARGARET L. MARNETTE

**W**ITH the coming of warm weather, fresh fruits and vegetables are in abundance, and lucky indeed is the housewife who has a garden from which she can gather her own. For the homemaker who must resort to the huckster's cart, or the corner grocery store, a new problem is offered. Besides knowing tempting ways of serving these desirable foods, she must know how to purchase them.

Among the first fruits of the spring season are strawberries and pineapples, and the vegetables include asparagus and the various greens.

Nothing is more tempting and delicious for any spring menu than ripe strawberries, and in order to be delicious they must be carefully selected. Because of the several varieties of berries, it is a common view that the largest berries are the best and the smaller ones are fit only for jam. However, the medium size berry is really the most satisfactory from all viewpoints. The Dunlap is the commonest variety in the middle western states. It has a crimson color and is juicy and tart, rather than sweet. The berries are slightly heart-shaped and have small seeds.



Another good variety of berry grown in Iowa is the Warfield, which is round rather than heart-shaped as the Dunlap, and is more sweet but less juicy. It is a deeper red color and the seeds are slightly larger and browner than the Dunlap.

In buying berries, try smelling them. Fresh berries will smell fresh, and have a clear, dewy smell to them. Pulling the blossom end is a good test. If it pulls clean and juice spurts out, the berries will usually be fresh. Fresh berries have a peculiar taste which a

two-day-old fruit has lost. It is a more tart and not over-ripe taste. Do not hesitate to buy medium or small berries, but beware that the small berry is not also hard and green.

Pineapples begin to arrive about the first of June and the housewife whose family enjoys this tropic fruit will find it to her advantage to buy them by the crate for canning. Pineapples must be entirely ripe to be edible. The spines should be faintly brown and peel off easily. Pressing the end is a fairly good way of telling whether or not the fruit is ripe, but is not always reliable. Smelling the blossom end will give a more definite idea because of the fact that the ripe pineapples smell drier and not so green as the unripe fruit. The fiber should be a good yellow.

If green or unripe pineapples are purchased they may be stored in a cool, dry place. Putting them in the sun will cause them to ripen in spots.

Among the vegetables is the asparagus plant, which is a member of the lily family. It grows best in well-sanded, wet soil, and takes about two years for it to mature enough to have a good crop. The edible stalks grow

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## Lacquer for Kitchen Tables

By DELLA J. NORTON

**W**HY not lacquer your kitchen table? The Department of Household Equipment at Iowa State College has found this new paint finish seems to better resist the many and varied stains to which kitchen working surfaces are subjected, than many of the advocated finishes. Few brides wish to "try out" all the many finishes they may choose for kitchen tables or built-in working surfaces. No bride or experienced housewife wants a finish which must be renewed after six months' use. How shall they know what to choose? Inquiry of the many testing laboratories conducted by women's magazines revealed as many "best" finishes as answers given. So research has recently been carried on to find which finish seems to hold up best under kitchen conditions.

Few housewives have escaped the trials of preserving time from the effect of fruit juice stains left on table surfaces. Likewise hot water, fat, soap, or even a hot pan set down hurriedly may instantly ruin a table. These very tests were applied in the laboratory under controlled conditions so each finish tested might receive identically the same treatment. Let us see how one test was applied, the dry heat test. Pyrex custard cups of

the same size were filled with a certain amount of water and heated in the oven until the water reached 200 degrees F. The cups were then placed on the test tables and left two hours. Results were thus easily compared as to the relative effect of dry heat upon each finish.

The tops upon which the tests were applied were made especially for this purpose. Strips of poplar, maple, pine and oak were fastened together lengthwise. By finishing each table crosswise each finish could be tested on each of the four woods. The finishes applied were enamel, enamel covered with a "water-proof" varnish, plain varnish, two lacquers, hot oil, a mixture of hot oil, paraffin and turpentine, and plain paraffin well ironed into the surface with a warm iron. Inlaid linoleum was given the same tests. Porcelain enameled iron is an attractive, resistant finish, but was not included as it is too expensive for use in many homes.

When all the tests had been applied to all the finishes, the tables had somewhat the appearance of a relief map. On the whole, the soft woods showed stains worse than the hard woods. The oil, mixtures of oil and plain paraffin finishes all showed the

stains more readily than did the paint finishes, the latter seemingly protecting the wood better. The "water-proof" varnish greatly increased the resisting power of the enamel and was not damaged by moist heat or hot water. However, use of water-proof varnish does not insure protection from the stains left by soap or fruit juice. The plain varnish did not hold up well, being ruined by soap and dry heat. One of the lacquer finishes applied was a clear lacquer, the other ivory color. Both of these finishes held up better than others applied, while the enamel covered with water-proof varnish was a close second. The latter is much more difficult to apply than the lacquers, as it took three under coats of flat white paint, two coats of enamel and one coat of varnish. The lacquers required three coats. Moist heat was the only stain that showed on the surface of the lacquer finishes.

Although very new on the market, the lacquers are giving surprising results. They may be obtained in a wide range of colors and are quickly applied. By using clear lacquer an attractive grain in a wood may be preserved, but if it is desirable to use a less expensive soft wood, such as pine or poplar, the opaque finishes are best.