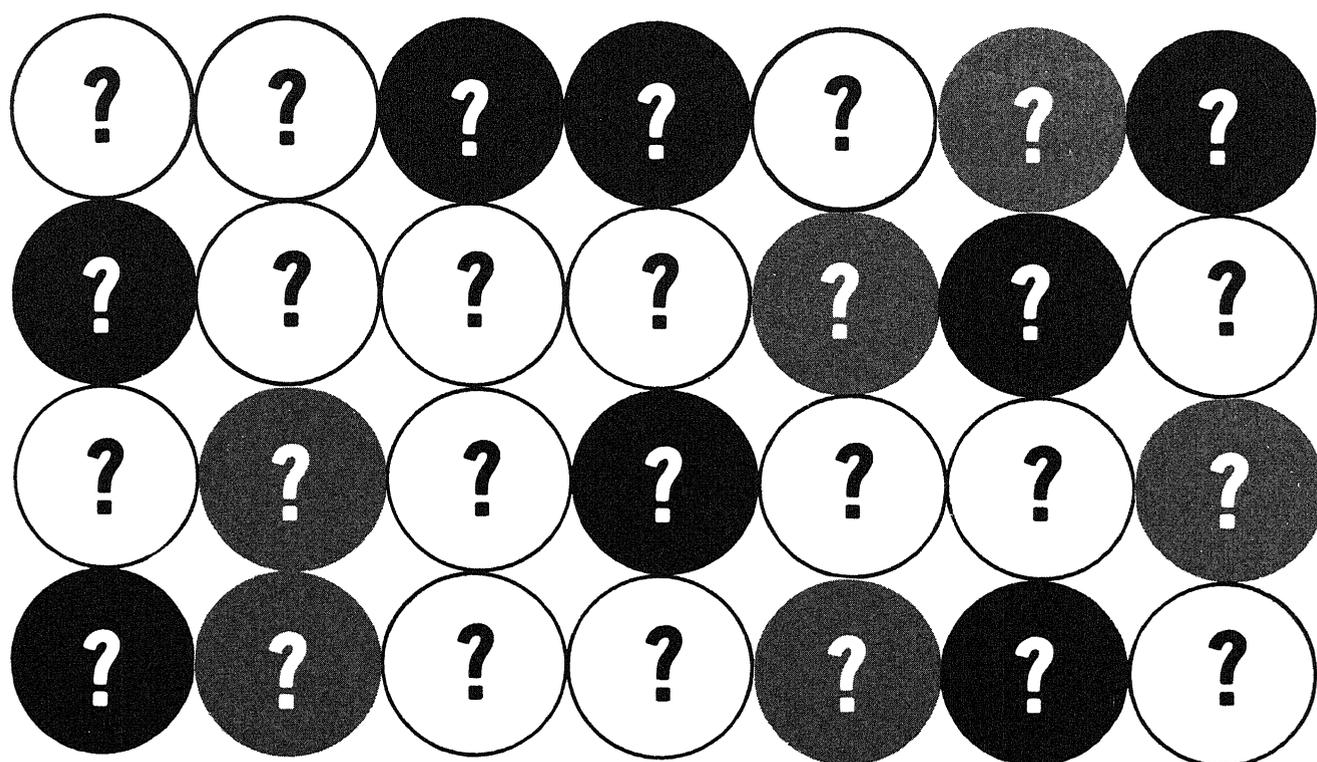


# RESPONSES TO MORE THAN 500 QUESTIONS ASKED BY OHIO HOMEMAKERS!



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE/THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

## FOREWORD

Homemakers have raised questions related to food marketing for many years. Because of this interest and concern, the Cooperative Extension Service of The Ohio State University has sponsored numerous discussions with homemaker groups, with the focus on Food Marketing. From these discussions, questions asked by participating homemakers have been grouped to reflect areas of concern. The questions presented here are those raised in the last two years--1968 to 1970.

The questions or comments have been listed as the homemaker asked them, except for minor changes to clarify the subject when taken out of the context of the meeting. These may very well be the kinds of questions of concern to those who meet with homemakers, who serve customers in retail situations, or who are concerned with consumer education. It is of some significance to note the large number of questions relating to packaging and labeling, information about products, practices of the food industry, marketing and economics, and utilization of the consumer's food dollar.

Many of the comments following questions or groups of questions are very brief and only begin to develop fully satisfactory answers. Those who work directly with homemakers or customers are encouraged to expand their basic knowledge of food marketing activities in order to develop more comprehensive answers.

Note: Reference to commercial products, trade names, or companies are for educational purposes. No discrimination is intended and no indorsement by the Cooperative Extension Service is implied for specific products or firms.

RESPONSES TO MORE THAN 500 FOOD MARKETING QUESTIONS  
ASKED BY OHIO HOMEMAKERS, 1968-70

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## PACKAGING AND LABELING

1. Does the consumer receive better quality and more value from pre-packaged fresh produce?
2. Why do most stores pre-wrap fruit--I like to choose my own. I don't like shiny cellophane wrap to make dull fruit appear shiny either.
3. Does pre-packaging save so much labor that it must be used?

Maintaining close control of quality, product, and labor in the store may be somewhat easier for store management where all produce is packaged than when it is sold in bulk. Because fewer employees and customers handle the produce, losses from bruising, etc., are considerably less when produce is pre-packaged. Labor can be more easily scheduled, and less labor is needed to weigh produce for individual customers, thus reducing costs. This is especially true where stores are opened for extended hours. Sales tend to be higher where the customer is given a choice of bulk or prepackaged produce rather than just one or the other. Management will balance these two factors and make a decision as to what to offer the customer.

4. Why package all the meats?
5. I don't like packaged meat and vegetables.
6. I don't like packaged meats.
7. Why are meats packaged instead of being freshly sliced or cut?
8. Why can't meat be packaged without dripping blood?
9. I like to see what I'm buying so I don't like packaged merchandise.
10. Has anyone ever taken a survey to find out if the consumer wants pre-packaged meat?

Many of the answers above apply to packaging meat. Yes, surveys have been done to find out if the consumer wants pre-packaged meat. When offered both pre-packaged pork chops and fresh cut ones, at the same price, sales of the pre-packaged chops were considerably above those of the meat cut and wrapped after the customer decided how much to buy. Many customers tell us they like pre-packaged meat because they can tell what cut they are buying, and it takes considerably less time to make a selection. Too, they know exactly how much each package costs before deciding whether or not to take it.

Meat "drips" when its temperature increases. This may result from meat warming during cutting and packaging, the refrigerated display not being cold enough, or from the package warming between the time it is selected in the store and refrigerated at home.

11. Why the different packages, such as clear bottoms in meats? Do "see through" packages fool people?
12. Meat is packaged with good side up, and you can't see the underneath side. Is refrigeration able to keep meat fresh enough? Also, fruits and vegetables?
13. Can packaging show more of what we are buying? I find bad spots on fruit that don't show through the plastic wrap and bacon that is very little meat, mostly fat.
14. Why is it so hard to select a lean package of bacon?
15. How long will it be before improved see-through packaging will be available?

Clear plastic trays have been tried, but have not been widely adopted. The visibility after overwrapping and sealing is not too satisfactory. Meat trays serve at least two functions--to provide rigidity to the package and to absorb fluids from the meat. Pulp trays meet both these requirements. Increasingly popular at this time is a foam plastic tray that seems to be well accepted by retailers and customers. The industry is looking for a package that will provide visibility, rigidity, and be adaptable to meats.

Which side of the meat cut can be seen depends upon individual company policy. Many retail firms follow the policy of the poorest side of a cut of meat facing the customer, or up, and strictly enforce this policy. Other firms have different policies. Recognize that human judgment enters into which side of the cut can be seen in many cases. The same holds true for fresh produce, although this depends upon policy for policing displays and packages. Most retail stores appreciate having spoiled or damaged fruit and vegetables called to their attention. Customers have a responsibility for

properly handling and storing food at home, too. This includes the refrigeration of perishables, also, as most refrigeration equipment in the retail store is designed to maintain quality.

The type of bacon packaging reflects what consumers have purchased, while at the same time providing protection for the product. Many packers wish they could find something different in packaging that would protect the bacon and that their customers would buy. Many stores will slice bacon, on request, so that you can see exactly what you are getting.

16. Why does lunch meat come vac-seal in so many stores and not packaged by themselves?

The previous groups of questions regarding meat and pre-packaging apply to this question. In addition, shelf life of luncheon meats can be extended by vacuum packaging. Also, vacuum packaging is much more attractive, and this increases sales.

17. What is coming in the future to preserve meats or package them?

Upon consumer acceptance, meat will be frozen and sold in retail size packages. Many people freeze meat purchased fresh in unsuitable packaging material and/or at too high temperatures (above 0°F.). When meat is frozen rapidly in blast freezers, and packaged in suitable moisture-vapor proof material, quality is better than that of home-frozen meat. Some retail firms sell some frozen meat, but to date prices of frozen meat are a little higher and customers still prefer the fresh product.

In the future, more vacuum type packaging at a central meat distribution center of consumer size packages is in prospect. Again, consumer acceptance will be the big concern. This is because beef, in particular, has a very dark color in the vacuum package, and does not turn the desired bright red color until exposed to air. Vacuum packaging will extend shelf life of meat, and usually is more sanitary than meat cut in the back room of the retail store (due to the more rigid sanitary conditions under which vacuum packaging may take place).

18. Why do some grocers sell 5 pound packages at less per pound than 25 pound packages?

Continuous checking of unit prices on regularly used items is a necessity for the price-conscious shopper. One major influence in per-pound cost is the relative popularity of the package size. Fewer people buy 25 pounds of sugar or flour at one time than a few years ago. Thus, the manufacturer packages fewer 25 pound units at one time now than in the past. This large package sells more slowly than 5 or 10 pound packages

in retail stores. The retailer can accept a smaller margin on fast moving items. In some cases, the actual product and marketing costs per pound of the larger, slower selling package may be more than for the fast selling package.

19. I prefer packages of meat in serving size. Many packages are too large.
20. Pre-packaged foods are in too large packages for one or two member families.
21. I would like meat and frozen food packaged for one or more portions.
22. Food is not in small enough packages for one or two people.
23. What is the outlook for the two person family (also older--need smaller caloric intake) in being able to buy food packages?
24. I am recently widowed. I would like to buy food in smaller packages. The bread gets stale, the bacon gets rancid, the cream gets sour, etc., before it can be used. Can producers and manufacturers be encouraged to package in such a way to accomodate this growing need?
25. Why do some grocery stores carry only large cans or packages?
26. Why not a smaller loaf of bread?
27. So much of the pre-packaged meat, etc., is in amounts too large for one person. Is there a remedy?
28. Could meat departments consider making up roasts and other meat in small amounts for one or two people--especially those on Social Security with low incomes?
29. Why is food packaged in specific amounts, which are never the amount you want, such as packaged cold meats, fruits, vegetables, etc.? The packages are invariably more than needed for two or three people.
30. Why not package some meat or produce for the small family--one or two members?

The size package seen in the food store reflects the sizes that sell best. Many consumers suddenly find themselves in the situation of buying in smaller quantities than they were accustomed to doing. This means a change in habits, not only of package sizes, but in some instances in food types. Perhaps individual serving cuts of meat, such as chops, chicken pieces, and ground beef patties, etc., will be more satisfactory than roasts. Most stores have a customer service counter in the meat section where you can buy the quantity of meat you want. The same is true for produce. Or, shop for produce where there is a bulk display.

The eight-ounce can has just enough for two servings. As a general rule, the cost per serving is more for smaller amounts than when larger units are purchased. Some package sizes are governed by various regulations. For example, in Ohio bread must be sold in one-pound or larger loaves.

Packaging cost per unit of weight goes up rapidly as size of the package becomes smaller. Nevertheless, many firms are packaging smaller sizes for the convenience of individuals or small families wishing to purchase smaller packages.

31. Soda pop in glass bottles is unsanitary, and a nuisance to return and store.
32. Should consumers stop buying items like pop in cans to prevent rubbish problems?
33. I do not like milk in plastic containers, but cannot buy glass containers anymore. Plastic adds to pollution, and milk sours faster and requires colder refrigeration.
34. Cereal packaged in plastic bags without being boxed does not stack in the cupboard.
35. Why aren't raisins, etc., placed in wax paper or plastic bags before being packaged in boxes?
36. Why are so many more papers and plastics used on foods today, such as crackers wrapped in waxed paper, a plastic bag, and then boxed and wrapped with another wax paper? This seems an added expense to the consumer.

Many differences in values and opinions typical in a consumer oriented economy are reflected here. Pop in cans and non-returnable bottles was introduced because many did not want to be bothered with returning bottles. Retailers do not like the "bottle problem" either. Recently, another element of concern has come forth--that of pollution. Non-returnables contribute to the rapidly increasing volume of solid waste.

Consumers have "voted" for plastic milk containers in some areas by buying milk in the plastic container rather than a glass one, even at slightly higher prices. Their reasons are probably twofold. The disposable plastic does not need to be washed and is non-returnable.

Packages and their associated wrappers do several things. One is to protect the food. Another is to preserve quality and freshness. Hence, the multiple wrappings and packages in a cracker carton. Packages also provide space for identification, product information, and act as a "salesman" on the shelf at the store.

Other foods, as some cereals and raisins, do not need the protection described above. For example, a combination box and plastic bag probably has not been used for raisins because they keep fairly well in a non-airtight package.

37. Why can't easy-to-open packages be opened without breaking fingernails?
38. I don't like the method of opening paper cartons of milk.
39. Why don't milk cartons have a pull top so that the pouring spout isn't touched?

The manufacturer would like to make it as easy as possible to open packages, but there are limitations. For example, if the perforations on an easy-to-open carton were cut clear through the packaging material, where it says "press here", dampness could creep into the box, and it might even come open before you get it home. A package should be as easy to open as practical, but not so easy that a light pressure may crush it or open it before you are ready to use it. Cost is another factor. For example, the key or tab opener on some cans makes them easier to open, but adds to the manufacturer's cost.

40. Why don't packages fit standard cupboard shelves?
41. Most breakfast cereal packages are too tall to fit the shelves.
42. There is a need for shorter cereal boxes to fit kitchen shelves.
43. Don't make packages so high that they won't fit on an ordinary shelf.
44. Why aren't products in more uniform sizes, rather than such odd shapes, so that storage would be easier?

Since the package must help sell a product by encouraging the customer to pick it up, a package which is tall and wide gets more attention,

just because it looks large on the shelf. Some of the newer cereal packages are deeper, squattier, and fit better in many kitchen cupboards. This has come about as a result of customer complaints.

45. Why aren't cinnamon containers provided with openings big enough for measuring tablespoons?

46. Why can't they make spice containers that you can get a measuring spoon into?

Designing containers to meet everyone's needs is difficult. There are many designs of spice containers, and many designs of measuring spoons. Some spoons are oval, some are round, some are rectangular. Some spice containers now are designed for pouring into the spoon, rather than putting the spoon into the container.

47. Why is the weight different in boxes of the same item?

48. Why don't we have uniform packaging, for cereal for example?

49. Why are there so many different sizes of packages?

50. Who governs the size of boxes of prepared cereal?

51. How are packages sizes arrived at?

52. Make it easier to figure cost per ounce or pound on items so that price comparisons can be made more readily.

53. Why do you have to be a mathematician to figure out the ounces on a meat package when the quantity exceeds the round figures of a pound?

54. Weight labels on some items are hard to understand. For instance, packaged cheese shows weight at .69 or .81 (pound, I guess) instead of pounds, ounces, or fractional ounces.

55. Why can't weights (pounds, ounces, pints, etc.) be standardized so that comparative shopping could be made easier?

56. Why are packages so many different sizes and so difficult to mentally figure--for instance, 1 pound 15 1/2 ounces, 7 1/4 ounces, or 3 pounds 4 1/4 ounces--so that one must perform quick arithmetic to decide the best buy?

57. Why so many different sizes in cans? One has to stop and read the number of ounces in cans and figure prices on too many cans.
58. Are the industries ever going to meet requests to stabilize packaging into exact weights? For example, a one pound box rather than 1 pound 3 1/4 ounces.
59. Why can't weights of contents be placed in the same location on every product? This would save much time in comparing.
60. Packaging of standard amounts to make it easier to compare prices.
61. I don't like weight on boxes that's always some odd amount so you have trouble figuring price per pound.
62. What is being done about standardizing weight and size of cans and limiting the confusion?
63. Why can't items be listed and boxed in even amounts, like 1 pound instead of 1 pound 6 ounces?

These questions are so closely related that they are grouped and will be answered as one. Admittedly, packages do come in numerous sizes, and a number of practical reasons are behind such considerations. The nature of the product, how it is prepared, whether the housewife uses all or part of the package at one time--these are some of the things the manufacturer takes into consideration. An item that is prepared at one time, as is a cake, holds the amount of mix that will make one specified size cake. Items such as pudding and pie fillings are also made up a package at a time, but since many large families use them, two sizes are offered to meet the needs of various sized families. Cereal, on the other hand, can be bought all the way from the less than one ounce individual serving package to the 18 ounce package, because all these sizes are needed to meet the requirements of different consumers. As a result of the Fair Packaging and Labeling Act many industries are voluntarily reducing the number of different sizes in which their products are offered. An example is instant coffee.

There are several reasons for the odd amounts, even fractions, in packages. Most important is that "results" are desired--enough pie filling to fill a pie, for example. The homemaker wants a well filled pie rather than a specific weight of filling. In other cases, she wants a package that calls for even measurements--two eggs, not one and two-thirds eggs, and liquid by the cup or half or quarter cup. Due to variations in recipes and brands and types and ingredients, all cake mixes for example, that make two eight-inch layers will not necessarily weigh the same. If each weighed the same, they would each require a slightly different amount of liquid, egg, and such.

Automatic scales based on the decimal system are usually used to weigh perishables, such as meat and cheese. Thus, the numbers you see on those packages will be in tenths of pounds.

Research is presently being conducted by the retail food industry to make it easier to compare values between different size packages. Dual pricing, or pricing per unit, is being tried in some stores in some parts of the country to see how effective this would be, and if consumers will really use and benefit from it. The product is priced two ways--by the package and by the pound or quart or other unit, much the same as meat is priced now.

As for location of the weight on the package, under the Fair Packaging and Labeling Act, the weight must be on the lower third of the front panel of the package. Size of print is governed by the size of the package.

64. How can you read on labels or cans the date of the content?
65. Do all items in supermarkets have some sort of coded date on them?
66. Can you teach us to read the code on meat in the case so we can find out what day it was packaged?
67. Is there a special coding on packages?

Not all items in a supermarket are code dated. Many of the perishables, like processed meat and dairy case items, are. These are usually put on by the manufacturer. Since it is a code, the public has difficulty in reading it. Indeed, it is a rare retailer who can read all of the codes.

There is sentiment now for open code dating, but the problems are many. Should the open code show the packaging date or some date in the future when the product should be withdrawn? How does the retailer sell the older product when the display is restocked? For many products what is a useful life? Should out-of-date products be discarded--or sold at reduced prices? Open code dating may create more problems than it solves, but it is quite possible that it may be required on the more perishable items because of current demand.

Most packages do carry some code information so that the manufacturer can tell when it was packed and where. This provides them with a means of identifying the product if there is a need to do this. On most food packages this code is known only to the manufacturer. If there is reason to contact the manufacturer about the contents of a package, be sure to provide the package section that shows the code.

68. Why don't they write on packages the exact contents instead of using vocabulary that no one understands?

69. What do some of the words on labels mean?
70. What is the purpose of the note added to artificially sweetened food and drinks to the effect that they are to be used only by those who must limit their intake of sugar?
71. Please put caloric count on packages and cans.
72. What recourse do we have when an inexperienced shopper buys steaks labeled T-bone, which in reality are rib steaks?
73. How can we know how many pieces of fruit are in a can and what size the pieces will be?
74. Can labeling be improved (know it has been made law, but not done yet) as to the amount in a package? What can a person do until it is labeled correctly?
75. Since packaging of various products has not been improved much in spite of recent laws, what do we do now?
76. Ice cream is not labeled as to fat content or other ingredients. Why?
77. I would like to see all ingredients listed on packages, rather than some vague notation as "spices."
78. I don't like the fine print regarding the contents on some packages. What can be done about this?
79. Why don't some of the low cost or store brand labels have more content information on them?
80. How can we get the canners of food to state, in cups and calories, what is in the cans?
81. Why are there no explanations/definitions printed on labels? For example, identity of kind of oil used.

There are several facts required by law on a label. These include the name, address, and zip code of the packer or distributor, the net contents stated in two ways--total ounces and pounds and ounces, as 24 ounces (1 pound 8 ounces) or (1 1/2 pounds) or, if the product is liquid, 24 ounces (1 pint 8 ounces) or (1 1/2 pints)--on the lower 30 percent of the principal display panel, the common or usual name of the product and the form (whole, sliced, diced, etc.) unless it can be seen or is illustrated on the label, and a listing of ingredients by their importance--the ingredient used in the largest quantity must be shown first.

Ingredients must be called by their common names. This means that salt is called "salt" and not "sodium chloride." There are, however, many preservatives and useful additives that have no easy and familiar names, so their scientific names are used to meet legal requirements. Flavors, spices, and colors need not be listed by name.

Exceptions to the rules about the ingredient listing are made for a group of products where a standard recipe (called a Definition and Standard of Identity) has been decided on by the Federal Food and Drug Administration, or in the case of meat and poultry products, by the United States Department of Agriculture. If the product conforms to the standard recipe, the maker isn't required to list ingredients one by one. Mayonnaise and catsup are examples of products where there is such a Standard of Identity. Ice cream is another example. Details of the standards are available to anyone who requests them.

Some statements, such as those relating to use in special diets, are required by the Food and Drug Administration. You may be seeing more of these kinds of statements as more research is done in this area.

Accurate nutrition information, including caloric content, is difficult to state on containers of food, though some of this kind of information is being offered. Are the calories for the contents of the package, or as it might be served? If the latter, this could vary due to different methods of preparation. Additional information usually is available by writing to the manufacturer. More information regarding nutritional value of various foods will likely be available in the not too distant future, as the food industry is recognizing the potential for fortifying food to help families meet nutritional requirements. At the same time, food manufacturers must follow current legal standards and use judgment when adding nutrients to foods. Indiscriminate fortification of food products could lead to undesirable excesses of nutrients.

When something perishable is purchased with what may be inaccurate information, return the product along with the label to the store where it was purchased, and discuss the problem with the manager.

82. Why are boxes half-full of crackers, pretzels, etc.?
83. Why are the cereal boxes  $3/4$  full when they are purchased as full ones?
84. I don't like packages that are too big for the product.
85. Why aren't packages and boxes made to fit the contents instead of a large one only  $2/3$  full? Some people never check the weight, only the size of the container.
86. Can't cereal boxes either be filled or made smaller?

Some kinds of food, as cereal, crackers, and similar type items, settle quite a bit after packaging, as the box is shipped and shaken about. You've seen this as you have shaken a cup of flour, or pills in a bottle.

Filling machines which pour the product into boxes on a moving line are set to fill each box correctly. The space develops after the packages are on their way to market. Also, some items are less likely to break if they are loosely packed. There must be sufficient space to accommodate the product when the package is being filled; otherwise the weight might be short, and the packager would be in trouble.

You buy contents rather than box size and need not be concerned about the headspace. Rest assured that the box has the number of crackers or weight of cereal it is supposed to have.

Food manufacturers recognize this problem, but until completely new ways to fill boxes are invented, the present method is the best there is. For an interesting experiment, pour the contents from a box of cereal and try to get it all back in the box.

87. Why the 12 ounce packages of weiners instead of the pound packages? Whose ideas are these?

88. Why is the homemaker fooled so much with 12 ounce packages made to look like pounds?

Is she fooled--really? Isn't it possible that some families need 6 ounce or 8 ounce or 12 ounce packages of product rather than one pound? The customer does have a choice in most stores.

89. Why don't they put a dozen weiner buns in a pack instead of ten?

Usually ten weiners are in a pound, thus the pound of weiners and the package of buns will come out even, and not with two more buns than weiners.

90. Why isn't shortening put in pounds and measured like oleo?

More and more oleo is being packaged like shortening because homemakers like the softer consistency for spreading and blending purposes. If shortening were sold in sticks like some oleo or margarine is, it would need to be much stiffer and would be more difficult to blend.

## PRODUCT INFORMATION

91. How can we tell if meat has been frozen? Does it hurt to refreeze meat?
92. Do meat departments receive and resell frozen meat?
93. How can you tell if meat you are about to buy has been frozen and then defrosted? Will it be safe to take home and freeze again? I have purchased ground beef that looked partly frozen and been afraid to refreeze it.
94. If we want to buy meat to freeze, how can we tell if it has been frozen previously?
95. How can you tell how fresh frozen food is?
96. How can you tell fresh frozen turkey?
97. Why are the giblets put inside frozen turkeys? They are so hard to remove when frozen.
98. Should one use a turkey that has been frozen for a year?
99. How long is it safe to keep a turkey frozen?
100. Why does ice cream look like it has been defrosted and then refrozen?
101. If frozen food is thawed and then refrozen, what trouble can result?

Refreezing of meats does cause some concern among homemakers. A rule of thumb has been do not refreeze foods once they have been thawed. This continues to be a good rule for most homemakers. Some foods just do not refreeze and maintain their quality. On the other hand, there are a few products, such as fresh beef, which under sanitary conditions can be thawed and refrozen, when properly packaged, with little danger or loss of quality,

as long as temperature has been kept at least as low as refrigeration temperature. Much ground beef is made from frozen beef, but the beef is not thawed prior to making the ground beef. Ground beef should be stored in the refrigerator no more than one day; if storage time is to be longer prior to use, freeze it.

Freshness in frozen foods is more related to proper storage where the temperature is kept below 0°F. than to time in terms of weeks or months. A package which has been allowed to warm to near thawing once or several times can age more in a few hours than one kept at below 0°F. for weeks or months. This applies to fruits, vegetables, meat, poultry, and prepared foods. The rule, almost without exception, is do not refreeze prepared foods.

Recommended storage life for frozen foods is: beef and poultry--up to one year; pork--three to six months; ground beef and cured meats--up to one month; and fruits and vegetables--up to one year.

Freezer management is important here. Can you afford to keep foods for a long time in the freezer, or would it be better to keep them moving in and out?

Packages of frozen foods, such as ice cream, sometimes frost on the outside when taken from sub-zero storage and placed in the freezer unit of a refrigerator.

102. Are fresh eggs available in supermarkets? Are the "grease" spots on the shells the best way to judge the age of an egg?

103. Is it safe to use an egg that is cracked?

Eggs are perishable. Like frozen foods, their true age is more a function of storage temperature and humidity than time. An egg may be fresh after 30 days under proper conditions and old in three days under conditions of too high temperature and too low humidity. Probably the best single indicator of freshness is a thick white albumen, or white. Grease spots or shell texture or other external characteristics do not indicate freshness.

Cracked eggs may be used for baking and cooking purposes, but should not be used in products that are not thoroughly cooked.

104. Why are fruits and vegetables so often shabby and spoiled looking, and meat not always good in appearance?

105. Why are some cabbages firm and some soft?

Fruits and vegetables age rapidly, especially some kinds and varieties, after they are mature. Appearance becomes less attractive and quality declines, especially when proper temperature and humidity are not maintained. There is a considerable difference between cabbage varieties in firmness of head.

It becomes difficult for a retail store to maintain quality of perishables if they have insufficient turnover or sales.

106. What makes some meat in grocery stores so red in color?

Meat in grocery stores may be red because it has just been cut. Fresh beef "blooms" after cutting (gets red) and then gradually darkens. The speed with which it darkens depends on the sanitation, temperature, light, and the wrapping material used. Color, however, may not be a good indicator of age or quality of meat.

107. When you buy canned goods at the store, how do you know they haven't been there for five or six months?

108. Do bent or damaged cans of food affect the contents?

109. Should one buy canned goods that are dented? Does this break the seal?

110. Sometimes canned goods become dented badly in handling. Should the customer be charged full price for these items?

111. How long can we store tins of food?

112. What is the time allowed for storage of canned foods?

For canned goods, a small dent will not likely be important. If a can is dented severely enough to break the seal, do not buy it. Canned foods have a long life. Most food packs are seasonal, such as peaches being canned in midsummer, and the supply lasts through until the next pack the following summer. Some will be carried over into the next year. Most businesses have a rotation policy which moves the oldest product first. There are no regulations at present relating to length of life for most canned foods because few problems have arisen due to poor quality.

113. Why are more conservatives or preservatives being added to ice cream?

Usually stabilizers are added to commercially made ice cream so that it will hold up (not melt as quickly) when it is served. This makes commercial ice cream a more marketable product than the type product we have when we make homemade ice cream, which tastes so good, but does not hold up well.

114. Can the family which butchers its own beef buy the product used to produce "Proten" meat?

In the "Proten" process, the enzyme papain is injected into the vascular system of the animal before slaughter. This, then, makes the meat more tender. This patented process is available only through commercial sources, but papain is present in other tenderizers on the retail market.

115. Why are sugar-free products higher priced than products with sugar?

Since demand for these products is less, fewer are made, and thus costs of manufacture and handling are higher on a per unit basis. Due to the small volume sold, the manufacturer, distributor, and retailer must all have a higher markup in order to recover their costs.

116. What is the base content of yogurt?

Yogurt is a cultured dairy product made with whole or low fat milk with a consistency similar to sour cream.

117. Are national brand names really better than store brands?

118. Are most brands of canned foods the same?

119. Do flour, sugar, salt, and other items of this nature differ a great deal, or is it best to stick to name brands for these? Are less expensive products of this kind necessarily inferior?

There may or may not be significant differences in taste or texture between brand names. Most people prefer to try a brand to see if it meets their needs. National brands and store brands (called private labels) are usually a matter of personal preference. However, if you find one you like, you can usually depend upon it to be of consistent quality over time.

120. Do margarine and other dairy substitutes give the same amount of food value as the real thing?

Yes. The primary reason for using butter and margarine spreads is taste. They are also a source of fat, and thus calories, and of Vitamin A. In deciding which to use, most purchasers turn to real or imagined taste differences and differences in cost. There are differences in the types of

fat present in various margarines, as well as between butter and margarine. The Food and Nutrition Board has made no definite recommendations on the type of fat most desirable for American diets.

121. Are high protein cereals worth the extra cost? Do they cost the manufacturer that much more to make?

122. How much food value is in most fancy cereals that children are attracted to?

Cereals vary in nutritive value. If one eats a variety of foods daily, then the highly fortified cereals are not necessary to insure an adequate diet. One may choose them for flavor or for extra nutrition, however.

123. How are frozen foods, such as vegetables, prepared?

Generally, the processing plant is located close to the fields where the product is grown. Harvested at the peak of quality, the vegetables are rushed to the processing plant where they are prepared for freezing, packaging, and then frozen within hours after harvest. They are frozen very quickly at temperatures well below 0°F., and also stores at these very low temperatures. To provide you with the best of quality, time is of the essence.

124. How can one tell quality in mixes?

This is another instance when the shopper needs to try one to see if it meets the quality standards of his family. Then, when one is found that meets the family's requirements, it can usually be depended upon to give the same results consistently.

125. Are all white breads equally good for the money? Some are much higher priced than others.

White all-purpose flour and all white breads and hamburger buns sold in Ohio must be enriched with B vitamins and iron. There is a current trend by bakers to add enrichment to special baked products, but they are not required to do so. Mixes may or may not be enriched. If they are enriched, the label will so indicate.

126. We have asthma and allergy problems. Corn oil, cottonseed oil, and flax seed oil are among trouble makers. Shouldn't salad dressings have to have their ingredients listed like other products?

Salad dressings are among the standardized products which do not have to have ingredients listed. For a further discussion of standardized products, see questions 68-81. If you check with the manufacturer you can determine what oils are used in a particular product.

127. Why do some food preservatives cause so much trouble?

128. Why so many fancy "chemical" products? Why not just plain vitamin and mineral foods? Why the need for so much refining?

Preservatives are not new, and have been added to foods to extend their useful life. Salt has been used for hundreds of years. We have very rigorous safety testing programs for chemical additives by the Federal Food and Drug Administration. These testing programs will become even more rigorous. Some additives which were originally approved will be discontinued and others will take their place.

129. What is the difference between diet bread and regular bread?

Diet bread is packaged in smaller loaves and usually is sliced thinner. This means you get fewer calories from the smaller, thinner slice. There is a relatively small difference in nutrition with some diet breads fortified with small amounts of minerals and proteins. Some so called "high protein breads" have been found to be no higher in protein than regular white bread.

130. Is sugar "public enemy number one"? Is there any basis for such a statement?

Sugar is a carbohydrate--a nutrient--but, like many other foods, we can eat too much of it. Sugar provides only calories and most of us need less rather than more. Sugar, used in moderation, can make up a part of a good nutrition program. Some medical authorities are concerned about the rapid increase in sugar consumption by the American public.

131. Explain about enriched macaroni, noodles, etc.

Macaroni, noodles, and rice are sources of carbohydrates which provide calories and other nutrients. Some are enriched with B vitamins and some minerals, particularly iron. When enriched, the label will so indicate. These foods can be used as alternates for bread in any well designed meal plan.

132. If, because a brand of bread is more expensive, is it better for you?

In general, the price of a loaf of bread is not a good indicator of its nutritional value. You may derive more satisfaction from the higher priced product if it has a taste, texture, etc. that pleases you.

133. How can the homemaker show that she is not getting full value for her money when she opens a can of beans and finds that the can contains all liquid?

There are two alternatives. The first is to return the opened can with its contents to the store. This probably is the more satisfactory thing to do. The other is to return the can and/or label with a written description to the processor.

134. Is peanut butter good for children?

Peanut butter is a source of protein. Four tablespoons of peanut butter can serve as a substitute for meat. Children need protein, as do all individuals. A good diet comes from a wide assortment of foods from the four food groups, so no one food should be eaten to the exclusion of all others.

135. Are diet foods really much lower in calories than regular water-packed foods?

Most diet foods are packed for specific purposes. Some have less sugar or no sugar, some have less salt or no salt. Read the label and select those that meet your needs. Some have sugar or salt substitutes. When diet foods are recommended, consult with a qualified dietitian to determine what types of food are permitted to meet the diet prescribed.

136. Are prepared foods good for the family, or is it better to prepare food at home for health reasons?

137. Are prepared foods as healthful as home prepared, and as economical?

138. Are any of the pre-packaged foods thought to be dangerous to health?

A well balanced diet made up of a variety of foods can utilize commercially prepared foods as well as home prepared foods. The quality of prepared foods from different processors varies, just as foods do made at home from different recipes.

Any food known to be dangerous is withdrawn from the market by the Federal Food and Drug Administration or the State Department of Agriculture.

139. Why are products that are sugar and salt free more expensive than ordinary food products? Why are these products more scarce in stores?

Diet foods and special foods do tend to cost more. This is largely because these foods are packed in smaller quantities and sell relatively slowly in stores. Both of these factors increase costs.

140. What is the difference, nutrition-wise, between 2% milk and skim milk?

141. Do you lose any nutrition with low fat milk?

142. Are we doing our family an injustice when we use 2% milk because it costs less?

In Ohio, skimmed milk is whole milk from which most of the butterfat has been removed. It contains less than 0.5 percent milkfat. Low fat milk contains not less than 0.5 or more than 2.0 percent fat. The label must list the percentage of butterfat. The basic difference is caloric content. Since most of us have plenty of fat in our diet, it is doubtful whether we are doing our families an injustice when we use low fat or 2% milk. This may be a matter of individual taste.

143. Which is best nutrition-wise--canned or frozen fruit juice?

Generally, the differences between canned and frozen fruit juice will be insignificant, from a nutrition standpoint. The basic difference usually is in flavor.

144. Are cheaper brands of food as nutritious as more expensive ones?

Usually, yes. The difference is more apt to be one of quality, which does not generally effect the nutritional value of the product. The only time when the more expensive item might be more nutritional would be if it was fortified, and if this is the case it will be so stated on the label.

145. When a consumer has a complaint of meat that is spoiled, where should he go?

Customers who are dissatisfied with a product should return it and/or the package to the store manager where the purchase was made. A legitimate claim will generally result in a speedy adjustment or replacement.

146. Is it safe to use poultry that has misshapen limbs, such as wings?

Most poultry in stores has passed USDA inspection for wholesomeness. Any deformed parts would be acceptable except for appearance; that is, they were wholesome when they were inspected and passed.

147. In lunch meat packages, what is the liquid?

The liquid that appears in vacuum-packed lunch meat comes from the meat. This sometimes will occur if the meat has been allowed to warm.

148. What is different about a steak that is labeled "charcoal broil"?

A "charcoal broil" label is sometimes used on steaks to indicate those which are suited to dry heat cooking, such as broiling.

149. Why don't they sell ground heart patties or cutlets?

Very likely these are not often found in retail meat counters because there is very little demand for such items.

150. What is used for filler in hot dogs and lunch meat?

A list of ingredients is required on lunch meats if they are not a standard product such as weiners or bologna (the list is often found on these products, too). In Ohio, only skeletal meat (muscles) may be used in these standardized products. Most of this kind of meat is made of varying proportions of beef and pork, plus seasoning spices.

151. When a label reads "smoked," such as a smoked picnic ham, does this mean it is cooked so you only need to heat it through, or do you need to cook it longer?

A smoked product has not been fully cooked, thus it should be cooked to an interior temperature of 170°F.

152. Are the cheaper cuts of meat as nutritious as the more expensive ones?
153. Are the cheaper meats as valuable food-wise as the more expensive meats?
154. What cuts of meat are best for nutritional value and the most for the food dollar?

Cheaper cuts of beef are very similar, nutritionally, to the more expensive ones. Protein content of muscle is a source of essential amino acids, whether from the most or least expensive cuts. Steaks and some roasts from high quality beef that have higher fat content are also higher in calories, and these extra calories may not be desired.

155. Are there any substitutes for flour products for those allergic to wheat flour?

There are several products available as substitutes for wheat in allergy diets, one of which is rice flour. A physician or local dietitian can help locate products and recipes for their use.

156. How is diet pop sweetened now?

Most diet soft drinks are sweetened with a small amount of sugar and saccharin.

157. They have taken several diet foods off the shelves since the cyclamate scare. Will they be replaced?
158. Is there an artificial sweetener without an after taste that doesn't have questionable after effects?

The use of saccharin as an artificial sweetener has recently been re-evaluated by the Federal Food and Drug Administration. A special group of advisers has concluded that saccharin, which has been in use for over 80 years, is safe for human use. They have recommended that further research be done to back up these findings. Research is being done to develop other new products that may substitute as artificial sweeteners.

159. Are additives added to food poisonous? I am concerned about additives to keep foods fresh, or to improve color, as when making meat look more red.

Additives to meats to make them appear more red are not legal in Ohio. According to present knowledge, food additives now in use are safe. Some may be restricted or discontinued if continuing research indicates that problems may be associated with continued use of various substances. The Food and Drug Administration is monitoring the American food supply and evaluating the use of additives as required by the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Law, and the amendments to it, including the Food Additives Amendment.

160. Please comment on monosodium glutamate in baby food.

161. There has been much discussion concerning monosodium glutamate in baby foods. How safe is it?

The Food and Drug Administration reported that monosodium glutamate should not be added to infant food since its use was not found to benefit infants. The continued use of MSG is permitted in processed foods for older children and adults, but foods containing it must be clearly labeled. Thus, the few individuals who may be sensitive to it can avoid purchasing products in which MSG is used.

## FOOD INDUSTRY PRACTICES

162. What is the best day of the week to shop?

163. Is one day of the week better than another for fresh meat and vegetables?

The best day to shop is probably the one most convenient to you. To take advantage of special prices, the end of the week is likely to be better, although some retail stores now have full-week specials. For perishables, heavy volume stores with rapid turnover of stock usually have fresh supplies of meat and vegetables for sale. If you shop in a smaller store with slow turnover, find out when deliveries of perishable products are received, and plan to shop soon after.

164. How can I do grocery shopping more quickly?

Plan the shopping trip ahead of time. A well-planned shopping list, based on the layout of the store, can save considerable time in the store. However, the list needs to be flexible in order to take advantage of unusually good buys for your family, as well as to alter plans in case something for which you planned is not available or not of the quality you want. The second thing that will save time is to shop when stores are not crowded. This time will vary from one community to the next. Planned shopping may also save time by eliminating some of the trips to the store.

165. How can I more efficiently find foods that are not in the same place all the time?

166. It seems they always change items to different places.

This is a problem for the shopper. Retailers continually try to locate goods in areas to get maximum traffic in all parts of the store in an effort to increase sales. Thus, they change location of items quite often to find the right combination. Another reason is so that the store arrangement won't become habit with you, and you will need to shop the whole store.

167. Some families have far to go to get food bargains. In some areas there is unrest because of the change in food stamps, so that it takes more time to shop wisely (different sizes and cost). Sometimes the bargains are hard to find, or are gone. Should they give rain checks in this instance?

With the recent changes in the Federal Food Stamp program providing more value in stamps with the same or less expenditure, families should find it somewhat easier to shop. However, wise shopping is still necessary, and this does require time. Many stores will give rain checks or substitute when they are out of some item on special. Ask the check-out person, or the manager of the store.

168. Why don't all stores carry brand name items?
169. Why have so many supermarkets cut down on some brands that are "big" items?
170. Why can't all stores carry all brands?
171. Why can we find certain products in some areas and never see them in another area?

All stores can't carry all brands because there is not room for all of them in one store. The average supermarket carries about 8,000 items, but there are 35,000 to 40,000 items available. Some of these are local and regional specialties, but no store has room to stock all that's available.

Each retail organization selects those items that management feels will sell best. As items are added, others must be discontinued to provide room for the new item. Sometimes the discontinued items are those which you, as one customer, liked.

172. Can stores do a better job of stocking all foods, especially fresh vegetables?
173. Can't food shelves be kept better stocked?
174. Why can't stores plan ahead and have standard items, like milk, in stock all of the time?
175. Why are they out of so much so often?
176. Why do store managers so often say, "the order was scratched"?

Yes, many stores could do better, and many wish they could. First, customers are not always predictable. Sales often shift with customers buying more of an item than anticipated. Second, stores today have less in stock in the backroom. They depend on prompt deliveries of orders to fill their needs. If there is a strike, storm, breakdown, or some similar problem, the order is more likely to be late, or not delivered at all. The trade uses the term "the order was scratched" to indicate the item was on the order, but was not delivered. This means the warehouse or distribution center was also out of the item.

177. How do they choose what products they put on the shelf?
178. Why can't I find an item that I have learned to like?
179. Why don't the large chains carry new items that can be found in small stores?
180. If they take one of my favorite cake mixes off the market, is it because no one else likes it?
181. A lot of people I know don't like the new instant coffee. If enough people complained about it, would it be changed back to the way it was?
182. If a product doesn't sell, why does the store keep handling it?

Customers, what's available, competition, profits--all these contribute to decisions regarding what items are stocked in a retail food store. Whether or not new products are carried may depend on whether the store is in a test market area, or whether the supplier is in a test market area. There are some favorite cities used for the purpose of test marketing.

There may be several reasons behind not finding an item after you have been using it. If it is a relatively new product, the store may have automatically been shipped a trial order, but thereafter the store must order it. Sometimes it just does not get reordered. Let the store manager know you want this item. In most cases, it takes only a few requests to get action. You would be surprised at how little communication takes place between customers and store personnel in many stores. If you have been using the item for some time, perhaps not enough other customers use it to make it a profitable one for the store to carry. Also, if the item is slow moving, the warehouse may discontinue it. Any item that has been available for some time will be carried on the shelf as long as it sells in large enough volume to be profitable.

183. Would it be possible to have more complete displays of dietary foods that are lower priced?

Manufacturers pack relatively small amounts of these items, which require special ingredients and labels, thus the cost of processing is higher per unit than for regular items which are packed in much larger volume. Limited turnover in the retail store in addition to the small production requires larger margins to cover costs.

184. How do we go about getting all flour products enriched, for example crackers, cookies, and sweet rolls?

This topic was discussed at length at the recent White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health. Manufacturers recognize the need for fortifying foods to help improve nutrition. Sould you be interested in doing something about this, first get all the accurate information you can, then contact your local Congressman and/or the Federal Food and Drug Administration. Some firms are either considering enrichment of all flour products or have already started such a program.

185. Can't we have just a grocery store, rather than all the penny and nickle machines too?
186. I don't like small items placed low for small children, as candy, magazines, etc.
187. Why not take all the toys out of the stores?
188. I like the different items stores have. Also, having everything in one store, as hardware and clothing along with groceries, helps.

Increasing sales are considered almost necessary for business survival. Thus, most retailers are receptive to items that can be sold along with groceries. In fact, today's discount store is a modern version of the old country general store. The trend is toward even larger stores, which means more items and more variety. Merchandise is usually located in order to catch your, or your child's, eye. This indicates the exercise of will power and "no" power for the toys and sweets. Many of the penny and nickle machines are sponsored by local clubs or charitable organizations.

189. Why is the red light not taken off of meat in all stores?
190. Why must fresh produce be lighted to "look good" so that it appears to be more fresh or ripe than it is?

Any light which appreciably changes color of meat is not permitted, although there may be some stores that still have red lights over the meat case. Most stores discontinued them when they realized they were deceptive.

Lights have been used to highlight displays for many years. Lighting can be overdone, and most retailers could better coordinate lighting and displays.

Retailers who plan to stay in business will make an effort to have attractive and pleasant surroundings in which to shop. Deceptive lighting will not result in satisfied customers in the long run.

191. Why are vegetables and fruits stacked on an angle so that when you pick up one, others roll onto the floor?

This is another example of a good idea--like proper lighting--gone wrong. Large, mass displays are attractive and sell more items, but when the display is like that described above, the customer is aggravated or embarrassed, and the purpose of the display is defeated. This may also occur on Fridays and Saturdays when there are many customers. The display will not need restocking as frequently, but since customers are not as satisfied, it is not good business.

192. How can we get merchants to leave more fat off meat?
193. Why are meats sold with so much fat which we then discard?
194. Why do they add so much fat to weiners, bologna, etc.? Also, is it necessary to leave so much fat in hamburger?
195. Why does store-bought hamburger shrink so?
196. What can be done about the high percentage of fat in ground beef? Where do you complain?
197. Is the customer justified in complaining about the amount of waste in a particular cut of meat?
198. Why are the best cuts of meat kept in back?
199. Why are the best and fresher meats always kept in back?
200. Why do they use old meat cuts to make hamburger?

We are all more "fat conscious" than we were a few years ago. Most customers today want leaner meat. Although changes are being made in breeding and feeding animals which provide meat, many still come to market with too much fat. This fat is expensive to trim off, whether you do it or the retailer does. The retailer who trims closely must charge more for the lean meat sold. So most stores will strive for a happy median. Let the meat man know if you think the cut you select is too fat or wasteful.

The fat content of weiners and bologna has recently been reduced to 30%. Some fat is necessary, for moistness and taste. Many of the flavor characteristics of meat are carried in the fat. In Ohio, there is a difference between hamburger and ground beef. Hamburger may contain up to 30% fat, ground beef only up to 20%. Thus, hamburger will shrink more when heated as the fat is "fried out." If you think there is too much fat in the hamburger or ground beef you buy, be sure you have the label, the product, and all other pertinent information, and then complain to the local Board of Health or to the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

Some fresh meat cuts that did not sell may find their way into ground meat. This is one method of salvaging some of the cost. Today, much of the ground meat is processed at the packer or wholesaler's meat facility.

It is doubtful that the best cuts are in the back room. The display case is constantly being shopped and, at times, will have less selection available. If you don't see what you want, ring the service bell and ask for it. If you want a special cut, you may have to order it a day in advance.

201. Why is bread first in line for shopping? It is always smashed by heavier items.
202. Why can't the bread shelf be located so that it's the last item to be purchased? That way it will not be squashed by the time the shopping is finished.
203. Why not have the bread just before you leave the store?
204. Why are the bakery items so often the first in line as you enter a supermarket?

Two reasons are recognized. One is that supermarket bakery departments carry several brands of baked goods to allow their customers a complete selection. Because the department is stocked and serviced by driver/salesmen from the various companies represented, it's important to have it located conveniently near the door. Then, aisles will not be blocked by the large hampers in which the fresh baked goods are customarily carried into the store, and the unsold, and therefore no longer fresh, packages are taken out.

The second reason is a matter of psychology. The bakery department is high in impulse purchases--and most shoppers are most impulsive when they've just entered the store, when the cart is nearly empty and the purse is nearly full. Along toward the end of the shopping trip, when the cart is nearly full and small doubts begin to arise as to whether the food money will cover the total on the checkout tape, then it's easy to resist the temptation or the impulse to buy just one more thing.

205. Does food cost more when you shop in stores where there are more modern conveniences?

206. Couldn't we have plenty of room to shop?

Food doesn't necessarily cost more in modern, convenient stores. If they attract enough customers, the store's expenses, as a percent of sales, may be no higher than a store without those conveniences which does less business.

Room to shop is one of those conveniences. Some stores were small to start with, others kept adding items and squeezing the space that at one time was adequate. Thus, usually the older the store the more congested it is.

207. What about a counter for a small number of items to be checked out, without waiting?

208. Why does the customer sometimes have to watch at the checkout counter to see that they are charged the sale price, as advertised, and not the regular price?

209. Why does the tape or the ink always run out of the cash register when the customer needs the receipt, or is in a hurry?

While an express checkout lane is desirable, it sometimes creates more problems than it solves. One thing that aggravates customers is standing in line behind a large order when the express lane is not in operation. Another aggravation is standing in line with a large order when no one is in line at the express checkout.

It's always good business, as a customer, to watch prices as they are rung up on the register. When lines are long, the checkout clerk is under considerable pressure, and may inadvertantly ring the "regular" price. If the cash register is properly maintained, there should be an ample supply of tape and all receipts should be printed.

210. Stores should separate foods--ie., frozen foods, household items, miscellaneous--in packing them to take home.
211. When bagging groceries, why put frozen or damp foods in with the dry ones--sugar, for instance?
212. Why do some chain stores no longer provide carryout service?
213. Why don't stores provide carryout service at all times?

It is more satisfactory to segregate and pack separately produce and frozen foods, or perhaps meat, produce, and frozen foods. These all go into the freezer or refrigerator when you get home. But, it does take more time at the checkout counter to do this, and separate freezer bags add to the cost of doing business. Most retailers arrive at a compromise of some kind.

Carryout service is under pressure because it adds to store labor costs. Discount stores usually do not offer carryout services. Some other retailers have cut back and made carryout service available on request.

214. Do all companies use the same code number for checking the freshness of their products? Why can't we be given these codes so that we can check for freshness of products we purchase?
215. Are the products in front or on top older?
216. Which brands or names are re-run products, such as butter?
217. Is there a safety factor in age of inventory?
218. Is it wise to complain of spoiled food purchased at the store, especially when it happens quite often?
219. In buying fruit, should one object to finding one or two bad oranges in a bag of oranges, or other fruit?
220. Why are they allowed to sell foods that are stale, spoiled, or wilted?
221. Why are cans of food sold that have been taken from the shelf?
222. Why do stores put out canned foods when they are damaged?
223. Why do food manufacturers package inferior foods?
224. How good are most guarantees that request writing the manufacturer about unsatisfactory foods? How much red tape do you have to go through?

225. How often should foods be rotated on store shelves?

If a product is not satisfactory, don't buy it. Food which is spoiled, or other wise unsatisfactory, should be left on the shelf. Let the store know when you do get an unsatisfactory product, returning the product if possible, or at least the package.

Most stores have a rotation policy. In general, for most canned foods, the new stock is placed at the rear, bottom, or to one side. For these products, rotation is not critical as they have a relatively long life.

Each retail organization has its own policy on rotation of perishable products. One general practice is to place the new product on the bottom, or at the rear of the display.

Items for which age is critical are coded by the manufacturer. Both the retailer's and the manufacturer's representatives try to check for out-of-date merchandise. Like any instance where humans are involved, slips do occur.

Most items have some identification code on them, but in many cases only the manufacturer knows the code. A few retail firms in the country are experimenting with posting these codes in the store so that their customers may check them.

Bent or damaged cans are an industry problem. A slight dent does no harm. If a can is severely damaged, pass it up.

Any manufacturer who deliberately packs inferior goods will not be in business long. If you are dissatisfied, write the manufacturer giving him the code on the package, or send him the can or package, being sure to include the code and as much detail as possible. Most well reported troubles will get prompt action. The other alternative is to not buy that product again.

Open-code dating is now being considered for perishable products. There is a strong possibility that some regulatory agencies will require dairy, meat, poultry, and other refrigerated products to have an expiration date before long.

226. Why is there a difference in quality in an all-Negro community in the chain supermarket?

227. Why is the quality of meats better in white communities than in Negro communities?

228. Why are vegetables much fresher in an all-white community than in an all-Negro community?

229. Why is the quality of meat and vegetables in some areas of low quality at a high price?

230. Why is there a difference in quality of foods, especially meat, in chain stores in different communities?
231. Why are prices of food lower and quality better in some areas?
232. Why does price differ for the same product in different stores?

Studies indicate that consumers living in suburbs shop differently than those who live in the inner city, even though somewhat the same shopping facilities are available. The inner city shopper is more likely to shop in a small neighborhood store where he is known, and, frequently, where he can obtain credit. Thus, there is a preponderance of smaller grocery stores in the inner city area. Many of these stores are in poorer general condition than those in the suburbs. This is especially true for the neighborhood store. Stores located in the inner city are often older stores that are difficult to keep clean and attractive. Meat and produce quality and freshness frequently do leave something to be desired.

These stores are not only small, but they usually have older facilities, refrigeration equipment, etc. Under these conditions, cleanliness and perishable freshness are much more difficult to maintain. This, however, does not excuse poor conditions. It only explains why such conditions exist.

Prices do differ, generally, in the smaller stores. Cost of doing business is considerably higher than in the large store, which can buy in large amounts and thus get volume discounts. The cost of credit costs money; so do the longer hours small stores are open, the higher insurance rate they must pay, and so on.

233. Why don't stores have more information posted on food stamps?

Most stores probably post what is made available to them by the local welfare department, or by the United States Department of Agriculture. There are so many different things made available for stores to post, about many different subjects, that finding space for the information is sometimes difficult. Remember, too, that in most stores the proportion of the food shoppers using food stamps is relatively small, and, as has been stated before, the store provides what the majority of the shoppers want.

234. Why aren't more companies concerned with large families in price and quantity?

Stores stock the items that the majority of their customers buy, both in kind and in size. Since the average family is just over three people, by far most of the size containers are designed to meet the needs of this size family. Let your retailer know that you would like to be able to buy in

larger sizes. He may stock a few for you. But you can also expect to perhaps pay more on a per unit basis for the larger containers, because, as explained previously, costs of packaging and marketing a small volume are greater on a per package basis than for items that sell in large volume.

235. Why do local supermarkets do a better job of communicating with and educating the buyer than large national supermarkets who have had more years of selling and should have learned something they could pass on to the consumer in way of helping them to buy better?

236. I'd like to see some method of communication established in the supermarket for the customer to contact the management or a clerk in each department. When a customer can't find an item or a clerk it is very frustrating.

The degree to which store personnel communicate with customers depends to a great extent on the local store management and the philosophy of doing business that the manager may have. More and more food retailers are realizing that they need to do more to communicate with their customers. This becomes more difficult as we have bigger stores, and self-service has also brought about a lessening of face-to-face contact between the customer and the clerk or the manager. You may find more supermarkets having consumer panels, composed of shoppers, who meet frequently to discuss problems and mutual concerns of both shoppers and store management. Many stores are working hard to improve their communications. They need your help and will welcome suggestions you may have. Learn to know the manager of your favorite store.

## MARKETS AND ECONOMICS

237. What is ahead in the way of price increases--rapid increases or a tapering off?
238. Why are prices so high?
239. Why does the price of food go up each time you go shopping?
240. Why are food prices always going up?
241. Why do prices go up continuously? Is it inflation or wages?
242. Is there any hope at all for food prices going down?
243. How can we bring down the high cost of food?
244. If people would refuse to buy high priced food and stick to lower priced ones, would this affect the prices in food markets?
245. Why are groceries so high?
246. What can homemakers do to combat high food prices?
247. Isn't it true that food prices haven't risen so much as we think? It is just that now we can buy so many more things at supermarkets that run up the "food" bill. Also, isn't it true that all these new frozen foods add to the bill, rather than meat, vegetables, etc.?
248. How much have food prices risen in the past few years?
249. Name some foods which are down in price.
250. I am getting the idea that there is nothing we can do about food prices.
251. I feel food prices are kept unnecessarily high by:
  - a. government subsidies, i.e., farmers paid not to produce to keep prices high.
  - b. government storage of surplus foods to keep prices high, and the cost of that storage which is paid for by taxes.

- c. propaganda advertising to sell status foods and those low in nutritional value, especially to low income families.
- d. hidden costs through substitution of less nutritive ingredients, such as hydrogenated fat in peanut butter.

252. Please explain reasons for the increase in prices since July 1969.
253. Why are prices up each time you go to purchase food?
254. I hear so many women on limited incomes state that food prices are almost out of reach for them.
255. Are the prices going to keep going up in grocery stores?

Food prices rose substantially in the 1960's, particularly in the latter half of the decade. Growth of the economy brought exceptional gains in production, employment, and income, but put considerable pressure on the cost and price structure of the economy. Pressure on costs and prices developed in the mid-1960's, when the rate of economic expansion began to grow faster than the supply of productive resources, such as skilled labor. Meanwhile, rising consumer incomes boosted consumer demand.

The rapid growth of the economy and the inflationary pressures that developed go a long way toward explaining rising food prices. In a competitive economy, prices tend to reflect the cost of doing business.

Retail prices of all major food groups were higher in 1969 than ten years earlier. Meat prices were up about 25 percent; dairy products, 20 percent; bakery and cereal, 16 percent; processed fruits and vegetables, 12 percent; and poultry and egg prices, 3 percent. The largest price rise was in fresh fruits and vegetables, up 39 percent.

An important question is how changes in food prices compare with those of other goods and services. Prices of practically all goods and services increased during the 1960's, particularly in the latter half of the decade. Because the food industry is interconnected with other sectors of the economy, and because food is the consumer's largest single expenditure, food prices tended to parallel changes in the overall price level.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index increased every year during the 1960's, and in July 1970 was 36 percent above the base period of 1957-59. By comparison, the price index of all food rose 33 percent. This figure includes price changes for both food purchased for home use (that purchased in grocery stores and other food stores) and food purchased in restaurants and other eating places. Prices of food at home rose 28 percent compared with an increase of more than 56 percent for food in restaurants. Prices of restaurant food rose in much the same way as prices of services, which increased 56 percent, also. Although all food prices went up about as much as the overall Consumer Price Index, prices of food eaten at home stayed below the overall price level during the entire decade.

Since July 1969, prices of all items used in family living increased about 6 percent, while all food prices increased 5.3 percent. Prices of food eaten at home increased 4.6 percent, while food eaten in restaurants went up 7.9 percent in cost since July 1969.

As for what the future holds, this depends on what happens to the economy, as well as the various factors that affect the supply of food available, such as weather, cost of doing business, and expectations for the future.

While prices may increase each time you shop, this depends somewhat on how often you shop and how frequently you buy particular items. If you buy an item about once each month, you may notice a slight change in price each time you buy, while the item you buy every week will not likely change in price every week.

What can the individual family do? More careful planning of the shopping trip, more food preparation in the home (this takes more of the homemaker's time), less impulse purchasing, less snacking (this takes around 10 percent of your food dollar), and being aware of the fact that about 25 percent of the dollar spent at the grocery store is for the paper goods, detergents, and all the other things you buy at the grocery store.

In May 1970, the following foods were priced lower than they had been the year before: oranges, fresh orange juice, cucumbers, lettuce, tomatoes, canned pears, frozen orange juice concentrate, and dried beans. These are the items from among the 98 items priced each month for the Consumer Price Index.

256. Why doesn't the price of fresh fruits and vegetables come down to a reasonable price?
257. Why are green peppers so high?
258. Why are melons in such poor condition and yet the price is high?
259. Why are dried apricots \$1.00 for a small box?

Several factors are at work in determining prices of fruits and vegetables. These items are especially vulnerable to weather conditions, and each year it seems that it freezes, or there is too much rain, or too little, at just the wrong time in the growing season for many of these perishable items. This affects the supply available for market. Because fresh fruits and vegetables are perishable, they require very special handling from harvest through to the time you buy them, and to after you get them home, and this means expensive equipment of all kinds, in addition to much hand labor which is costly. At certain times of the year fresh produce is out of season, and so a very small supply is available. As for the apricots, there has been a very poor crop for several years, so the supply is quite low, and the price high. While consumers are concerned with high prices at times, the producer is equally concerned with low prices which he receives when production conditions are favorable and the crop is abundant.

- 260. Why are large eggs so much higher than medium or small eggs?
- 261. Why have eggs been priced so high recently? (Fall, 1969)
- 262. Do you think eggs will come down again in price? (Fall, 1969)
- 263. Why are eggs so high priced at this time of year? (Fall, 1969)
- 264. Why are eggs priced so high? (Fall, 1969)

Egg prices fluctuate easily because of the laying season of the hens, and because of the way in which egg producers react to price changes. Egg prices are also related to meat prices in that eggs are a good substitute for meat. The fall and winter of 1969-70 found eggs priced quite high, compared to what they had been a few months earlier, and have been since. This was due to a smaller supply being produced, plus large demands by processors and by the armed forces.

Price differences between large, medium, and small size eggs will vary from one time of the year to the next. The difference is usually greatest in the fall months. When young hens are just beginning to lay and their eggs are smaller in size than in the spring months, when the hens are more mature. Again, the difference is related to supply available and demand by consumers for the various sizes.

- 265. What can consumers do to lower the cost of beef so that we can purchase more for our food dollar?
- 266. What can we expect in meat prices, particularly beef, in the months ahead?
- 267. Why is the price of meat so ridiculously high?
- 268. Why doesn't the price of meat, such as bacon, go down when the market price of livestock drops?

As incomes rise, people eat more beef. Average family incomes have increased from less than \$6,000 in 1958 to over \$9,000 in 1970. Beef consumption per capita has risen from 85 pounds to 110 pounds in this same period. Thus, beef demand has been very strong. During this same period beef producers increased production, although there were periods when raising beef was not profitable (1962-64). The price at the present time (summer, 1970) is likely to be a rather "normal" price, under the present cost conditions of raising and marketing beef.

Retail price changes tend to lag behind changes in livestock prices, both when prices are going up and when they are declining. Usually, six to seven weeks elapse between the time farm prices change and the adjustments are completed through to the retail level.

269. Why do cold cuts cost so much?

270. Why do cold meats cost so much?

271. Why is there such a variation in the price of cold meats, and why has the price gone so far above that of fresh meat?

Cost of the raw material (beef and pork) reflect higher operating expenses, both in production of the animals and in processing and marketing. The cost of convenience is also a factor. The six to twelve ounce packages are commonly vacuum sealed for longer shelf-life, sliced and attractively packaged. Some stores still offer bulk cold meats which you slice yourself. The cost per pound is less than the packaged product, but most people seem to prefer the sliced, packaged product even at a considerably higher price. Stores can also offer a much greater selection when the product is ready for purchase in the self-service display.

272. Why is peanut butter so high?

This is a relative thing--higher than what? There is a wide variation in peanut butter prices, depending on brand and size of container. This is one example of the product costing less on a per unit basis (pound) when it is purchased in a larger container than in a smaller one.

273. What makes a box of cereal as expensive as it is?

The cereal industry is a very competitive one, with around 100 different kinds and size packages to choose from. The very nature of this competition contributes to the cost, because there would not be as many choices if there were not enough consumers wanting so many kinds of cereal from which to choose. Because of the competition, package design, advertising, promotion, and continual development of new products must be carried on to sell the product, and to find out what it is that consumers do want and will buy.

274. Why does 2% milk cost almost as much as 3.5% milk?

Supply and demand are a fact of life here, too. Demand has increased tremendously for the lower fat milks, while it has lessened for the higher fat content in milk. Thus, the difference between the two has narrowed until they sell at nearly the same price.

- 275. Why do some food prices fluctuate up and down?
- 276. Why will milk be high one week and down in price the next?
- 277. Why do some canned food prices go up while others go down?
- 278. Why is bread sometimes 10¢ when it usually is 39¢?

Many of these types of price fluctuations reflect store advertising and promotion. Stores offer price specials to attract your attention and get you into the store. Milk, bread, ground meat, and chicken are examples of foods which retailers often use as specials. Many times these products are sold at cost or below. If the store's sales volume increases when particular items are used as specials, the store will tend to repeat these items again as specials.

- 279. Why are foods made with sugar or salt substitutes higher priced than those with sugar or salt?
- 280. Why are special diet foods higher priced than ordinary food?

The majority of customers do not buy diet-type foods, so there are not very large amounts processed, nor are large amounts stocked in food stores. Because a small volume is handled, the cost of producing and marketing on a per package basis is relatively high, thus the higher price you must pay for these special foods.

- 281. Why are apples, which are grown in this country, so much higher than some fruits which are imported?

This may depend on which imported fruits are being referred to. Bananas are an important fruit import, while others may not be as important. Fresh fruit production in this country is not expanding rapidly. Seasonal, part time, and migrant laborers have provided a source of harvest time help. Seasonal labor is difficult to secure when almost everyone who can work is working. Migrant labor use is under fire, both as an institution and because of pay scales, housing, and children's educational opportunities. Migrant

laborers will be less available for harvest help, and this harvest labor is very critical for fruit growers. Fresh fruit requires hand harvest labor and labor costs have increased.

282. Why can't they reduce or cut out taxes?

283. What are poor people to do if things go sky high?

People don't like taxes, but demand for services keeps escalating. We want medical assistance, more roads, hospitals, urban renewal, reduction of pollution, inspection of foods, better schools, university or vocational education for children, housing codes, effective zoning, increased social security, better welfare programs, and so on. There is a need for all these and more, but all such programs cost money, tax money. As long as we keep demanding that the government "do something," taxes will continue to climb.

The people who feel the pinch of inflation and increased public spending are those on extremely low and fixed incomes. These are the very groups some of the government programs are designed to help.

284. Can chain stores and supermarkets purchase identical food cheaper than the small grocer from national brand suppliers? Is this the reason items are higher at the independent store?

285. What can be done to keep the small stores in business, while at the same time halting their exorbitant price raises? Sometimes these are the only stores in the area.

286. Would the public benefit more if we went back to the small neighborhood store?

287. Is it better to buy at small independent stores or large chain stores, and which is cheaper?

288. Do you save money buying from a chain store, as opposed to a smaller independent store?

289. Why do small stores sell their foods much higher than supermarkets?

Yes, in general, small grocers do have to pay more for identical items. It costs a wholesaler more to fill and deliver an order for a few items than a truckload. It also costs the small store more to operate his store per dollar of sales. Supermarkets, for example, have operating costs equal to about 16-18% of the sales dollar. Convenience stores, the modern version of the small store, have operating costs of 21-24%. Adding together the higher cost of food the small store buys and the higher operating costs, the difference in

prices approaches 10%. Thus, a 39¢ item in a supermarket will likely be priced at around 43¢ in a small store.

If many people went back to shopping in small stores you might have a store closer to your home, but the cost relationship would be about the same. Independent and chain stores have about the same costs for similar sized stores.

While an item may cost more at the smaller store, it does not necessarily follow that the small operator is making exorbitant profits. He simply has to charge more to exist. The rapidly declining number of small stores is a direct result of their lack of profitability.

290. Why do prices of groceries remain the same or more in small towns which don't have as much industry as large towns, and thus not as much money for groceries?

Over time their costs will be very similar. Both stores may be serviced by the same warehouse, and both may be subject to the same labor union contract. This uniformity is developing country-wide. Once inside a store it is difficult to see many differences, whether the store is in the country or city, or in Maine, Florida, Ohio, or Nebraska. Some large city stores offset higher costs with higher volume, so costs per unit are not too different.

291. Why do prices seem to increase in some markets as the neighborhood changes, especially to inner city and lower income?

This is a facet of the pattern of changes of older neighborhoods that become low income areas. The stores there are also older and smaller than in the suburbs. Their operating costs are higher than in a newer larger supermarket. These small stores may tend to offer services (credit and delivery) which also will push up their operating costs. Real estate and other costs in these areas are often a real barrier to building new supermarkets.

292. Why are neighborhood stores permitted to sell their products higher than a larger chain? Aren't they all governed by the same basic laws?

293. Who controls food prices?

294. Does the government control food pricing? If not, who does?

No one sets food prices. We did have price controls on foods (and other items) during World War II. Prices are set by actions in the market between supply and demand. Retailers establish pricing policies that cover

costs, produce a profit, hopefully, and still attract customers. If they have the talent to set prices higher than their competitors, and still get customers, they are free to do so. Over the years, however, a retail business will be able to cover costs plus a reasonable profit, and no more. Competitors will see that this is all that occurs. Competition is attracted, like flies to sugar, to a business which is very profitable.

295. Can we have too much competition?

296. When will influential and important food authorities realize that poverty-stricken persons need food markets that are profit free; in other words, they have no choice, cost-wise, as to where they buy?

There can be some short range effects of price wars, misleading promotions, and bankruptcy of unsuccessful competitors, but it's doubtful that we could have too much competition for very long.

Any grocer can point out to you many examples of profit-free operations. It's not the profit level that effects prices. Some of the most profitable stores in Ohio are the low priced stores. Some of the stores that get higher prices are not profitable. A store must have customers (high sales volume) and efficient operations (management). If not, even a profit-free operation will be high priced.

297. Why do some merchants look for neighborhoods to operate their stores where there are more poor people? (For example, Jews)

Are you sure the merchants weren't there before the poor people? Problems of our society cannot realistically be blamed on any one group. The real problems--prejudice, ignorance, poverty--deserve our concentrated efforts.

298. I've heard that meat markets that do their own butchering are being put out of business in Ohio. Why?

Recently passed legislation on a federal basis requires all places of business which slaughter and/or sell meat to meet certain sanitary standards. Many small businesses have found that their facilities were not up to regulation standards, and they would have to invest a considerable amount of money in bringing their operation up to these standards. While many of the small businesses have modernized and do meet the sanitary regulations, others decided to go out of business instead. The purpose of the regulation is to assure the consumer of a wholesome meat product.

299. Will the use of credit cards in grocery stores increase costs, as it has in other stores?

The retailer must pay whoever issues the credit card and collects the money a certain percentage to do this for him. Unless sales volume increases enough to cover the extra cost, yes, the use of the credit card will increase the cost of groceries.

300. With our constantly changing foods, what do you feel is the most pertinent to teach today's young homemaker?

Probably the most important thing young homemakers can learn is the process of decision making, so that they will understand how to go about deciding what they will buy to gain the most satisfaction from their purchases and to meet their family's goals. The other important areas would be how our economic system works and how the individual both affects the system and is affected by it, and a good background in nutrition and the food needs of various family members and how to attain these needs.

301. Is meat becoming more scarce in the U.S. on a per capita basis?

No, we are actually eating more meat per person than ever before. The problem is that as we have more money available to spend, we like to spend it for meat, not only for more meat but for more expensive meat. Thus, demand exceeds supply, even though we have more meat per person than we have had in past years.

302. Why can't government surplus foods be used to feed our own poor in this country?

There are several problems involved here, and we might first say that government surplus products are being used, particularly in the school lunch program and in commodity distribution programs in some areas. However, there are no commodities distributed to families where the Federal Food Stamp Program is in effect.

Many of the commodities which are in surplus are not the type of products that people usually eat, for example, tobacco and cotton. Other products are not very useful in themselves, so unless there are other items to go with the surplus products, they are not very effective in eliminating hunger. The Food Stamp program has been thought to be more effective in that the poor family has a choice of food that they can purchase with stamps, thus allowing them to eat the kinds of foods they are used to and that they have facilities to prepare.

There are many problems involved here; more than the allotted space will permit.

303. How do we control prices and wages so that there is a more fair distribution?

Most economists feel that controls on wages and prices can have a worse effect on "fair distribution" than our present system of competition for resources. Labor, time, and talents of each of us is the number one resource of this country. In effect, we put these resources up for bid and accept the best offer we can find. If we do not find an offer that suits us, then perhaps we should think about more education, retraining for another job, or some other avenue of change. Thousands of people are retraining for new jobs constantly.

304. How high are food costs in other parts of the world, compared to the U.S.?

Food in the United States takes a smaller portion of personal income after taxes than in any other country in the world. This measure is used because it gives an indication of how well-off the country is. If a large proportion of income is used for food, then there is very little left to buy other things, like cars, appliances, education, recreation, medical services, and so on. In the U.S. in 1970, food required about 16.5 percent of disposable income; in the developed European countries around 30 percent is needed to buy food for the family; and in the less developed countries like India and Pakistan as much as 50 to 60 percent of disposable income is required for food.

## UTILIZATION OF THE FOOD DOLLAR

305. What size eggs are the best buy?

On a weight basis, when there is 9 or more cents difference between large and medium eggs, or between medium and small ones, the smaller size is the better choice. However, the size you select may also depend on how you plan to use them--are you serving poached eggs, or using them in baking. If you buy small ones, you may need to serve two eggs to satisfy the members of your family, while with the large ones, only one egg will suffice.

306. What is the cheapest meat which can be used effectively for Swiss steak? for beef stroganoff?

Both of these dishes are cooked for a long time with moist heat, so less tender cuts of beef can be used for them. Arm chuck may be a good choice since there is little bone in relation to the amount of usable lean beef.

307. How can I get the most meat for my money?

308. Is there a way to determine the best buys in meat as we look ahead, especially for meal planning so that we don't serve the same thing all the time?

309. How does one determine how much meat to buy, especially ground beef?

310. Discuss budget meat versus good meat purchased less often.

311. Is it better to pay higher prices for boneless meats? What about meat specials?

312. If you grind meat at home, do you save any money?

313. What do you get the most of for your money in meat?

314. How much do you save in buying semi-boneless ham at 69¢ a pound in comparison to a boneless ham at 79¢ a pound?

315. How can I save on meat?

- 316. Which of the different cuts of meat is the best buy for the money?
- 317. What is the least expensive kind of meat you can buy? What is the most expensive?
- 318. What is the best buy of the following: ground chuck, hamburger, or ground round?
- 319. Which kind of beef is the best choice for roasting?
- 320. Is it better to buy prepackaged meat or to have the meat man prepare it while you watch, if both are offered?
- 321. When you buy a piece of meat with a bone in it, if you cut the bone out at home, is it the same cost as one that is boneless to start?
- 322. What are the best buys as far as meat is concerned, especially bone-in versus boneless?

There is considerable range in the cost of various foods every week of the year. Because different foods have different amounts of waste, the cost per serving is a more accurate guide to food costs than is the retail price of any given unit. Knowing how much each family member eats, you can then estimate how many servings to allow. When computing cost per serving, average size servings of one-half cup of fruit or vegetables, or about 3 ounces of cooked edible lean meat, or an apple, orange, or banana are used.

Meat offers the best example of how to use cost per serving as a guide to buying. A cut of meat that sells for a lower price per pound may, because of bone and fat, be more costly than one at a higher per pound price. By knowing the approximate number of servings per pound you can expect from the various cuts of meat, you can figure cost per serving. Generally, the following is a good guide:

Bony meat.....	1 - 2 servings/pound
Moderate bone .....	2 - 3 servings/pound
Little bone .....	3 - 4 servings/pound
No bone .....	4 - 5 servings/pound

For example, if you decided you wanted to serve beef, but were unsure of which cut, to find the most economical choice on a cost per serving basis, you might find the following situation:

Short ribs at 59¢/lb. divided by 1 serving/lb. = 59¢/serving
Blade chuck roast at 79¢/lb. divided by 2 servings/lb. = 39.5¢/serving
Round steak at 99¢/lb. divided by 3 servings/lb. = 33¢/serving
Boneless rump roast at \$1.19/lb. divided by 4 servings/lb. = 30¢/serving

so, the cut with the highest price tag per pound may be the most economical choice on a cost per serving basis.

Deciding whether to buy hamburger, ground beef, ground chuck, or ground round may depend on how you plan to use it. If you are making chili, hamburger may work all right, even though it has a higher fat content. If you are making patties, or meat balls, which you want to hold together, you may want less fat content. It depends on what results you want.

For roasting, a tender beef cut is needed, since roasting is a dry heat method of cooking. The rib and loin cuts are generally the more tender ones from the beef carcass.

Whether or not to buy prepackaged meat if a service counter is also available will depend on preference. If a special cut is wanted, or a size cut not in the display case, the service counter will likely be used. Also, this depends to some extent on the amount of time available.

323. Is it economical to buy beef by the side? What about quality?
324. Do you really save money by buying "quantity" for the freezer?
325. I read in a consumer's magazine that purchasing food and storing it in a freezer is more costly than just buying items on sale week by week. The reason stated was the cost of electricity over the period of time the food was stored made it more expensive than purchasing the items as you need them day to day, week to week. Was this a true analysis?
326. Does the average family actually save with a freezer--or only eat more or better?

In relation to meat, especially beef, for the home freezer, this is a question that involves getting information and using a sharp pencil and paper. Find out how much packaged (retail) weight you will get from a beef half or quarter. Compare this with what you could buy the same quantity and quality for at the supermarket. The convenience of having a good selection of meat at home is as important to some as price. Some feel they eat better, not cheaper, with a freezer. You may have some cuts you don't particularly care for when you put a side of beef in a home freezer. For further information, get Ohio Extension publication MM-220, Buying Meat for Locker or Home Freezer from your County Extension Office.

The same questions are involved with other foods. Price-wise a freezer may be difficult to justify, but there are other considerations. Do you have a satisfactory source of a quantity of food of the quality you like? Do you have a garden from which the excess can be frozen? Do you enjoy the variety and accessibility of frozen foods? Do you enjoy processing your own food? Add up the benefits as best you can. The answer is different for each family. In addition to the above mentioned publication, you may also want USDA publication HG 48, Home Freezers, Their Selection and Use. This is also available at your County Extension Office.

327. Should you buy large quantities at lower prices, or should you buy smaller quantities at higher prices, if the amount you can use is limited?
328. What is a way of finding out if a larger item is cheaper of two sizes?
329. Is it better for people to buy large or small quantities at a time?
330. Does the larger size package always give the benefit in price?
331. Should I buy a slide rule to tell the price difference between boxes?
332. Is there a quick way to find out what size box is the best buy?
333. Is there any sort of short cut to figuring prices of different sizes?
334. Which is more economical--large or small packages of food?
335. How can we determine what size package is best in price and weight?

Quantity to buy depends on size of family, amount of food preparation done in the home, the homemaker's skills in using various amounts of food, such as left-overs, the amount of storage space available, how frequently the family eats out, among other things.

Where left-overs can be used to good advantage, buy more than what you need for one meal. For example, if buying a chuck roast, buy one a couple of pounds larger than you need, trim off the excess, cube it, and put it into the freezer for a stew later on. Or, when buying apples for lunch boxes for the week, buy the 4 or 5 pound bag rather than the 3 pound one and use the extra supply for salad or dessert.

Consider a large size package by carefully weighing the possibilities of using all the product and by noting the unit cost (per ounce or per pound) of different size packages. A couple of examples: frozen french fries in a 5 pound bag may be used as needed and may have a price per pound advantage over a 10 ounce package, or, peanut butter and cereal are two examples of foods that are usually lower priced in larger packages and which are not overly susceptible to waste or spoilage.

As to how to make the determination of whether the larger or the smaller package is the more economical on a unit cost basis, there presently is no easy way except to do some arithmetic. If you can do this in your head rather than with paper, you can at least make quick estimates in the store without too much use of time; otherwise, it may take you a while. And remember that you'll need to refigure as prices change. There are also several gadgets on the market to help make these computations, but some of them require rather intricate manipulation.

336. Does it always pay to get the cheapest brand?

337. Are "name brand" canned goods better than "store name" canned goods?

Compare the prices involved and give consideration to the quality of product you like. If brand names are important for satisfaction, this is part of the value being purchased. If brand names have little meaning, then shop, try, and decide.

338. What is coming to help in buying--size comparison and price?

Research is presently being conducted by the retail food industry to make it easier to compare values between different size packages. The biggest determinate of whether a dual or unit pricing practice is adopted depends on whether consumers will really use and benefit from it.

339. What packaged foods are really a good buy--both money wise and quality wise?

340. Is instant coffee more expensive to use than "perked" coffee? Same with instant tea?

341. How much more expensive are instant foods compared to the raw and fresh fruits and vegetables?

342. Are frozen and instant potatoes cheaper to use this time of year?

343. Is frozen macaroni and cheese economical?

- 344. What is the best buy?
- 345. What is a bargain?
- 346. How do we know when we are getting a bargain?
- 347. How can I determine what is a better buy?

To make decisions regarding all these questions, figuring cost per serving on a frequent basis is necessary in order to determine which is the best choice in terms of dollars and cents.

What's a good food buy for one family may not be a good buy for another family. It is necessary to determine the things that are important to you and your family when doing the food shopping. While the same factors are present in the case of all food shoppers, they vary in degree and emphasis.

The cost, preference of the family, nutritive values, convenience, facilities for preparing food, and eating satisfaction that's obtained from it-- all have a place in determining whether a particular food is a good buy at a particular time.

- 348. Are frozen vegetables as good a buy as fresh or canned?
- 349. In comparison which are more economical, and more nutritious, canned or frozen vegetables?
- 350. What is a better buy, generally, fresh or canned or frozen fruits and vegetables?
- 351. What is the best buy in vegetables, fresh or frozen?

There is not a definite answer to these questions. Compare prices on the basis of servings from a package, not net weight. Nutritional differences in most instances are small. As a rule of thumb, if the 9 or 10 ounce package of frozen and the No. 303 can are the same price, they are equally good values.

- 352. How do I know whether to try a new product?

How adventuresome are you? Some people like to try every new item that comes along, while others prefer to wait until someone else recommends it. Is the new product something that the family generally uses, are they eager to try new things, will the budget stand some adventures once in a while?

353. Is there really a savings in home canning fruits?

How much do you value your time? What savings are actually possible? Do you have a ready supply of fruit to can, do you get satisfaction from putting fruit up, does the family like the end product? The costs and the benefits must all be considered in making this decision.

354. Is it more economical to buy large quantities of food; i.e., normal or standard size cans, for two people, or should we buy the smaller cans?

355. What is the most economical way to buy for one person?

Refer to the previous questions in this section. Much depends on the ingenuity of the cook, and the interest in cooking.

356. Why are we spending so much at the grocery store when we have our own meat and many garden products, fresh or canned?

One small but powerful word helps explain much of the concern expressed here--inflation. An examination of the causes and effects is not possible here. What responsibilities do consumers, businessmen, and government have in inflationary times? Putting the blame on politicians and government is popular, but oversimplified.

357. Does it pay to run from one store to another getting their bargains? My time is limited and I take small children with me.

It depends on how far it is from one store to another, whether real savings can be made (considerable time checking this would be required), and how much satisfaction you get from going to several stores to possibly save a few cents. If time is a limited factor, and children go along, perhaps careful shopping in one store may be more satisfactory.

358. How often should you get groceries, every week or what?

How skilled is the shopper at planning? Some people shop as often as 21 times each week, others only once or twice a month. Planning skill, storage space, and amount of money available at one time are among the factors that may govern how frequently you shop.

359. How can people be taught to save on shopping?

360. How can low income families be interested in making out shopping lists, studying ads, etc. to help get the most from food stamps and/or money?

361. How can wastefulness be curbed without hurting feelings?
362. If a meal is poorly planned, how can the homemaker be helped without hurting her feelings?
363. What would be the best way for low-income families to buy?
364. What is the cheapest way to cook and serve food to a family without leftovers?
365. How can the cost of the weekly food budget be cut?
366. How can I cut down on my grocery costs?
367. What is the best way for me to save on the blasted expensive things?
368. How can I save money on groceries?
369. What can I buy in the way of meat in order to live cheaper?
370. How can I buy more on a limited budget?

A few statements may help point out some possibilities. First, how much do you spend for food? Do you know? If not, some record keeping may be desirable for a few months, so you know how you are spending your money now and thus have a place from which to start. Then question why you are spending as much as you are. These factors will affect what families spend: inflation, age of family members, frequency of entertaining, skill at planning, nutrition, size of family, kinds of food purchased, interest in food preparation and the family's likes and dislikes.

Many are concerned about what they spend because they would rather spend money on other things the family wants and needs. Bills like the rent or mortgage and car payments are fixed; food is purchased more often than any thing else so there is a keen awareness of what is spent for it, and there is nothing to show for the money spent for food, unless it is a few unwanted pounds.

What can families do about what they spend for food? First, they must want to do something. Then they need to put some tools to work. These tools include a sharp pencil, paper, the newspaper that has the food ads in it, a favorite cookbook, time and DESIRE.

If you are cost conscious, and truly dedicated to doing a better job of buying food, you'll find yourself making full use of label information, advertising, store displays, friends' comments, and other sources of information.

371. How much should it cost for food for an average family?
372. What should be an average food budget for a family of two adults?
373. How do you provide needed nutrition for a family of seven on a budget of \$1.33 per meal as provided by the Food Stamp Program? There is a teenager in addition to four boys ages 3 to 12.
374. What should a family of four spend on groceries a week?
375. What should be the average cost of food for a family of four per week?
376. What percent of the budget should be spent on food?
377. How can one stay within a \$25.00 per week food budget for a family of three?
378. What is the average cost of food per week for a family of six?

There are no specific answers for these questions. First, read the answers to the previous group of questions. So many factors affect what a family spends for food, or should spend, depending on the family situation. Family income is one of the important factors--with the family with more money to spend spending some of that money on food by buying mostly more expensive food and food with more services.

In the U.S. as a whole, people spend 16 to 17 percent of their income after taxes for food. However, this varies from as little as 10 percent for families with quite high incomes, to as much as 40 to 50 percent for the very low income family.

Remember, too, that when you consider what you spend for food, this is not all you spend at the grocery store. On the average, about 10 percent of what you spend is for snack foods, soft drinks and alcoholic beverages, and around 25 percent is for nonfood items like paper goods, detergents, magazines and such.

For the family obtaining food through the Federal Food Stamp Program, benefits have been increased so that the family spends less money for their stamps, and receives considerably higher value in stamps--this should enable the family to more nearly meet the nutritional requirements of the various family members.

## ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION

379. What can the American housewife do to curb false and flattering food advertising, especially when the information presented to the public is misleading the consumer on food and health values?

False advertising is illegal. This area is regulated nationally by the Federal Trade Commission, commonly called the FTC. Better Business Bureaus are concerned locally, but do not regulate. If you run into a problem, start to climb the ladder of authority. First, have the courtesy to bring the matter to the attention of the management of the company involved. If you cannot get satisfaction, then explore possibilities with your local Better Business Bureau, or, if you live in a locality with no Better Business Bureau, contact the nearest Chamber of Commerce. Your "court of last resort" is a regulatory agency such as FTC. Document your case by letters, dates, witnesses, product descriptions, and photographs that will stand the test of time. Incidentally, FTC's nearest field office is in Cleveland.

380. How can we persuade newspapers and magazines to put less stress on gimmicky foods--and more on real nutritional information?

First, realize that newspapers and magazines are in business to sell their product--newspapers and magazines--and to make a profit while doing so. Therefore, they must print the kind of material that sells. Evidently the stress on gimmicky foods does sell. Why not write or call the editor-in-chief and express your feelings to him. Perhaps he is not aware that his readers would like this kind of information, or he may feel he does not have a good source of information. Perhaps you can help him.

381. Why are some sales set up to deceive people?

Most reliable merchants will not intentionally set out to deceive their customers. They must retain old customers and gain new ones to stay in business, and that can't be done with deception. If there seems to be some deceptive motive in a sale, as stated for question 381, bring it to the attention of management, and then, if not satisfied, collect all the information you can, and document it. The Better Business Bureau or Chamber of Commerce should be called in order to explore possibilities.

382. Why do chain groceries advertise certain products at reduced prices--sale to run 5 days--then on the first day of the sale, the shelf is empty and no manager or stock boy in sight?
383. Why do some stores advertise a special for a week and when you get there, they claim they are sold out?
384. Why do the stores advertise in the paper and when you get there they are out of everything?
385. Why, when a product is advertised, you sometimes can't find it in the store?

These are realistic questions. Usually specials are available. You are very conscious of the ones that are not, however. Retailers have problems, too, with the warehouse running out of stock, with deliveries not being made, with wrong sales forecasts. Poor management is another reason--the product may be in the backroom while the shelf supply is exhausted. Also, it is extremely difficult to predict accurately consumer response to specials.

386. Why scatter the special items all over the store? This makes locating them difficult, and does not encourage purchasing more items. Incidentally, those specials are appreciated.

Having special items scattered throughout the store does cause you to purchase more items, because as you go past certain items, you are more apt to buy some of them. The power of suggestion is much greater than you may think. And consider the congestion in the parts of the store where specials would be located if those items were all in one or two places.

387. Are we really paying for the hidden cost of advertising and promotion on commodities?

Advertising and promotion costs are no more hidden than labor costs, store rent, or the store light bill. Advertising is a cost of doing business. Most businesses advertise to attract customers. If a retailer spends too much, his costs get out of line. Each retailer must decide how much advertising he can do and how to make it most effective.

388. What can a housewife learn from advertisements?

By comparing ads from various stores, you can soon determine what foods are in season. You can also get a good idea of food items which are in relatively good supply. You usually can determine what grade and/or size is being featured, and can make comparisons between stores with this information. Of course, you can also make price comparisons. Many shoppers make their shopping list using the weekly food ads as the basis.

389. How much truth is sold in advertising about a product or a cut price?

How much truth is she willing to accept and use? It's reasonable to expect an advertisement to identify the item, size of package if possible, price, possibly brand name, and any reliable quality indicator such as grade. There are some abuses of coupons, cents-off deals, and supposed price cuts. These are increasingly being subjected to regulation.

390. Do "sales" consist of older foods?

391. Do the sales in the paper really help or are the items marked up?  
Is the meat really good quality?

392. When things are marked at special prices are they of the same quality as the regular goods, or are they processed for special prices?

393. Are sale items specially packed for the sale?

394. Is the hamburger on sale of the same quality as usually sold?

395. When there is a sale, does it mean a surplus, which may mean old or inferior merchandise?

In the food trade, sale items are usually regular items, not specially packaged for the sale and not old or inferior goods. In fact, specials are likely to be quite new stock with the retailer ordering specifically for the sale. At times, some stores may use a different "trim" on some meat items. However, this may be a questionable practice for those who engage in it, as the objective of a sale is satisfied customers.

396. Why do supermarkets put their specials on the weekends which are high traffic times? These keep the housewife with a car available from shopping less busy hours.
397. Why do most of the major food chains have sales on the same day of the week?
398. Why do foods go on sale on Wednesday?

Many stores advertise specials for late in the week, usually from Wednesday through Saturday, because slightly over 70 percent of weekly sales are made Thursday, Friday and Saturday. A few stores have separate specials for the early week shopper, a few run specials for the full week. Custom influences this pattern to some extent, as customers look for food advertisements in the Wednesday or Thursday edition of the newspaper in preparation for shopping for the weekend.

399. Is it wise to buy canned goods specials? Why are they on sale? Do we dare keep them six months on the shelf?
400. Why do they have periodic sales on canned goods? Are they outdated?

Canned fruits and vegetables are usually specialied more frequently in the autumn and spring or early summer. Those items specialied in the autumn are often part of the new pack and the manufacturer has offered them to the retailer at a good price in order to eliminate the necessity of storing them until later. In other words, the retailer lets his customers assume the risk of ownership and storage rather than his doing so. The items specialied in the spring months are usually from the last season's pack, and the goal this time is to make room for the new pack.

Canned goods can be kept at least a year, in most instances, and some will keep considerably longer. However, you need to consider how long you can afford to have your money tied up in canned goods, and also what the supply or your use for the item will be in the future.

401. Is there an advantage to driving to more than one store for "specials?"
402. Does it pay to shop at several stores to get the "specials" or shop at just one?
403. Does it save money to shop the specials from store to store?
404. Can you save money by shopping two stores for weekly marketing?
405. Is one farther ahead to shop at one store or to shop around for the cheapest items?
406. When is the best time to go shopping to get the best buys?
407. Is it necessary to go from store to store to shop economically?
408. Are savings gained in shopping store to store for the weekly sales items wasted in the gas it takes to do so?
409. Does it pay to go to several markets for buying a week's groceries?
410. Is there an advantage shopping when specials are given, even though walking or driving is involved to get there?
411. Is there any one method that is best for taking advantage of sale items?
412. Is it better to shop from one store to the other?
413. Are "advertised specials" actually real values if the items are used in the family regularly? Is it a real price reduction?
414. Is it worthwhile to shop for bargains in various stores?
415. Why so many specials?

Weekly and weekend "specials" have become a part of modern-day food retailing in this country. Each week nearly every supermarket and grocery store features a variety of items priced below their regular price. Some are offered at or near the retailer's purchase price, or even below.

Stores have specials for at least three reasons: a) as a merchandising tool to compete with other stores; b) to increase store traffic by attracting customers to the store; and c) to sell not only the "specialized" items, but the week's groceries as well.

Specials can offer a real savings to you. A recent USDA study showed that if homemakers shopped in just those food stores in one immediate area and took advantage of weekend sales, plus generally thrifty buying they could save about six percent of the family's weekly food bill. Assuming a weekly food expenditure of around \$40 each week, the family could save nearly \$2.50 per week, or more than \$125 in a year's time by buying specials.

Today you will see more retail organizations using relatively few price specials and concentrating on advertising "regular everyday low prices."

Some individual shoppers make a game of shopping and shop several stores. Others find they get more shopping satisfaction by selecting one store and concentrating their purchases at that store.

416. When an item says 10¢ off regular price, is this really true? The regular price can vary according to the retailer, so isn't this an ad gimmick?
417. Why are manufacturers allowed to put a label like 12¢ off on a box, but not take it off the regular price?
418. Why do foods come with coupons marked 5, 7, 10¢ off? Couldn't food costs be reduced if this was done away with?
419. Why do packaged and canned foods come marked 12¢ off, etc.?

The "cents off" label has increasingly come under fire because it confuses many customers and because it has been abused in some cases (prices not really reduced). In most cases the cents off deal is initiated by the manufacturer with arrangements made for the promotion with the retailer. The retailer sets his own prices and in some cases the cents off deal has not been coordinated between the manufacturer and the retailer. Sometimes it's been just human error, stockboys not catching the "deal" and pricing it at regular prices.

420. Why don't stores get more on the market that we see advertised?
421. When coupons appear in the newspaper, why don't stores have the product?

Briefly, it depends on the method of distribution, especially if it is a new product. Perhaps your advertising media are in a different market area than your store. Sometimes manufacturers utilize a couponing program to "force" complete distribution in a market. Some firms may elect not to stock the product on the assumption that it will not be a "winner" in the market place.

422. Why do some stores give S&H Green stamps, TV stamps, and Family stamps while other stores do not?
423. Why can some stores use trading stamps? Why not discontinue use of this type of come on?
424. Is marketing at food stores which give stamps more expensive or do you make up the difference with the merchandise you receive?
425. Do stores which give "stamps" tend to cost more in the staple foods and in the end not save the price of the premium?
426. We get "stamps" in one store and "nothing" in another, but the prices seem to be the same. Are they?
427. Are trading stamps always going to be given away with groceries? This makes the groceries higher in cost, doesn't it?
428. Please discuss stamp and game gimmicks.
429. Is it economically wise to shop where trading stamps are given?
430. Are we really paying lots of extra money for the cost of stamps?
431. If you buy at a store that doesn't give stamps, do you actually save money?
432. How much do stamps cost consumers?
433. Are trading stamps here to stay? Do they give a good deal?
434. Are trading stamps worth going for?
435. Please discuss supermarket "gimmicks."
436. Why don't they dispense with coupons and gimmicks and lower product prices?

In some cases promotions raise prices, in some cases not. If you really don't want games and stamps, then trade at those places that don't give them. The fact is that most people do respond to active, vigorous promotion. People like to be where the action is. A good promotion brings in enough more business so that it does not raise prices. Many retailers feel they must promote just to stay in business.

Most businesses in a market area develop effective promotions which become a cost of doing business, just like the light bill. Many retailers regard promotions in just that way, as a necessary cost of doing business in today's society.

## PRICES AND PRICING POLICY

437. Why is it the national supermarket chains cannot give better price advantages consistently to the consumer while local chains can? They all supposedly earn the same return on their money.

Not all grocery organizations earn the same return, or have identical prices. Neither does a large organization necessarily mean the ability to offer lower prices. The company which has the most attractive mix of prices, product quality, convenient stores, and services will attract more customers. The store which has the most customers will be in a position to offer the best prices. In any particular area this may be a single independent store, a regional chain, or a national chain.

438. Do food prices reflect the cost of retail or wholesale and what is the mark-up on most standard food items?

On the average, prices at retail reflect a mark-up on wholesale cost. Individual items may not. Meat items will have a margin of 20-22% on the sales price, produce items 30%, dairy items 16%, grocery items 14%.

439. Must prices of small articles, as aluminum foil, be raised 10¢ at one time when the cost of living has not gone up that much?

Prices on many items are adjusted by "spurts" rather than gradually. If the price of aluminum, for example, changes rapidly, prices of the finished product may be changed at the same time by the basic industry, by the fabricator or processor, by the packager, by the wholesaler, and by the retailer to bring the prices they receive back into line with their costs. Thus, a relatively small increase for raw material can balloon as everyone adjusts prices. If one tries to take too much, competition forces them back into line.

440. Why do prices fluctuate so from week to week?

441. Why do prices fluctuate on the same item from one week to the next?
442. Why does the price of beef go up at one time and down another time?

Prices fluctuate largely because of three or four reasons. One, the supply can vary, especially on perishables like produce. Second, the demand can vary. Third, stores make extensive use of specials to attract customers to the store. Fourth, rather common use of variable pricing referred to in response to questions 447 through 463. When you mix the variation in supply, demand, and the effects of specials and variable pricing you have a large number of price changes each week.

443. Are products sold at discount stores of inferior quality or are they seconds?
444. Is the quality of products sold at discount food stores any lower than at local chain stores?
445. Is there really such a thing as a discount grocery store, or is food quality sacrificed?
446. Are discount food stores as reputable as others? How can their prices be lower?

Yes, there are such discount stores. Typically the margins--difference between what stores pay for groceries and the price they receive for them--are about 12% for grocery items in a discount operation and 14-16% in a non-discount price program. Products sold at discount stores are not of inferior quality or seconds. Lower prices may be the result of high volume and the reduction of services, such as carry-out, number of check-out operators, reduced selection, extensive private label, etc.

447. Why do the same foods in different stores have different prices?
448. Why do food stores increase prices in low income areas?
449. Why different prices of the same product at different stores?
450. Why do prices differ from store to store?
451. Why do prices on the same brand items differ in each store?
452. Why the difference of as much as 20-30¢ on the same product in different stores?

453. How are prices set by individual stores? They seem to vary so much.
454. Why do prices vary so much in different stores?
455. Why so much difference in price range for one item in chain stores?
456. Why do prices vary at different chain stores?
457. Why the different prices in the same chain store for different parts of town?
458. Why so much difference in cost from one store to another on the same brand, size, amount?
459. Why are name brand products a different price in all stores?
460. Why do prices vary so much in different markets?
461. When you buy one brand of milk at the same name store in different locations, why is the price different?
462. Why is the price of lettuce different in various stores?
463. Why the difference in price of paper towels from one store to another?

These questions have been listed together, because some understanding of variable pricing, practiced in many retail food stores today, is essential. There are 6,000 to 8,000 individual items in a typical supermarket. For an example of the variable pricing concept, three items will represent all items. The price structure of these items in three competing supermarkets is as follows:

	Supermarket <u>A</u>	Supermarket <u>B</u>	Supermarket <u>C</u>
Paisley Canned Peaches (No. 303)	\$ .29	\$ .33	\$ .32
Riches Peanut Butter (1 lb.)	.69	.63	.67
Yummy Ice Cream (1/2 gal.)	<u>.95</u>	<u>.99</u>	<u>.89</u>
	\$ 1.93	\$ 1.95	\$ 1.88

If you were shopping for canned peaches, Store A would receive the nod price-wise; for peanut butter, Store B has an edge. Store C is the price leader for ice cream, as well as for all products. Remember also that these price relations may change over time as each store adjusts its prices to create a desired price image. Multiply this variable price policy on three items to include the 6,000 to 8,000 items in the store and you see why it is so difficult to make a valid price comparison for the total mix of products and prices.

It is possible to make price comparisons on food which you regularly buy which may help you decide where to shop. In addition to price mix, however, most shoppers also give consideration to store decor and atmosphere, quality of meats and produce, attitudes of employees, cleanliness, ease of shopping, adequate selection of items desired, and other influences. Some of these other influences include services such as check cashing, carryout, and extended shopping hours. Thus, price is one major factor, but only one. You may not shop at Store C, even though they have a price advantage, because they do not have the selection of grocery products or quality of meat you desire, or other factors that are important to you.

Another factor involved here, especially where the same retail organization is concerned, is that many of these organizations put emphasis on making each individual store profitable. If this is the case, each store's prices will directly reflect that store's costs. The costs of doing business in a new store in a new shopping center with much competition may be higher than in an older store in an area where competition is not so keen. If a store is located in an area of great price competition, that store may have to adjust prices to compete in that particular area.

464. Why do two similar products have different prices, when only the brand name is different?
465. Is there a difference in brand name products besides the price?
466. What brand of food is the best buy? Is there a difference?
467. Is the cheaper brand usually just as good? If not, why not?
468. Why so much difference in price of name brands and similar quality of non-name brands?
469. What is the basic reason of price difference between two equal quantities under different brand names?

Private label merchandise may be processed on contract, by purchase from a large supplier, (often one of the national brand processors) or it may be processed by the private labeler's own plant. Private label items can often be sold at lower prices than national brands because of the lower advertising costs. To determine which one best suits your family's needs, the best advice is to buy one and try it. Usually quality will be consistent with a brand, be it national or private.

470. How can we be sure bargain-priced food is a bargain?

471. Can food quality always be told by price?

Nothing is a bargain if it doesn't fill a need for the family. Is it of the quality that can be used--this is the important question that must be asked. Remember that price is not always a good indicator of quality. Practice will help to develop skill in selecting the quality best suited to meet individual needs.

472. Why do some stores have the same item for many different prices?

473. Why are some foods marked "bargain" when they can be found in another location in the store at the regular price?

474. Why do they put stickers with a new price over the old price? Can't they wait until a new supply comes in?

475. Why is the sale price sometimes higher than the everyday regular price?

476. Why do some stores have one price on the shelf and a higher price marked on the item? Is this accident or intent?

477. Why are some items not marked with prices before being put on shelves?

478. Why are prices changed on the shelf?

This set of questions present some of the different kinds of pressures on pricing at retail. If a retailer yields to question 474, then the situation of several different prices described in questions 472 and 476 may result.

In general, retailers feel there are fewer problems when all prices are changed at the same time, whether this be on old stock or new, and most retailers try to follow this policy even though this means repricing some items. There is the problem of getting all employees to carry out the policy. A stockboy may make the price changes on the special display and forget the cans on the shelf, or he may neglect to change the price posted on the shelf when changing prices on the can. Most retailers want all items priced before they are placed on the shelf.

479. Why do grocery stores raise the price on some items when they put others on sale?

480. Do stores really raise prices on food for weekend pay days?

Grocery stores must cover their costs. If they "special" too many items, or very popular items, they may find they have more sales but less money. Retailers are concerned with the performance of the total store, and if their expenses run 16% of sales, they know they must price to attain at least a 16% margin. Most studies indicate that stores do not raise prices on weekend pay days.

481. What's the difference when products are 89¢ for 2 lb. 3 oz. and the same product under a different brand name is 2 lb. 3 oz. with 20¢ off and it comes to 88¢, or tomato soups at 9¢ a can or 10 cans for \$1.00?

On some items, the "20 cents off" example becomes almost the regular price because it is offered so often. Perhaps it is the customer's responsibility to see through and detect the 9¢ or 10 for \$1.00 situation. These are exceptional cases, but they occasionally do happen. The customer, however, is the one who makes the decision to buy or not to buy. Tactics like misleading "cents off" deals are coming under fire and are being regulated.

482. Why do large items often cost more than smaller ones?
483. Why do larger sizes cost more per pound than small ones?
484. Why don't processors price products to guarantee the best buy in larger sizes?

The manufacturer's costs are usually lower on the size packages that sell in the largest volume. And because these sell in greater volume, the retailer can take a smaller margin on them. The larger sizes frequently are not big sellers, so the cost of producing and marketing them are higher on a per package basis, thus the price per pound or ounce is higher too.

485. About how much more do you have to pay for cereals or detergents with some extra item in them?

A manufacturer may use an extra item for part of his promotion and advertising. The only way to tell if the price is more, or the item does cost extra, is to check the price per unit (pound or ounce) against a comparable brand. If the cost is about the same, then the extra item does not add to the cost; if not, then the item does affect the price.

486. What effect does "convenience" have on food prices?

Convenience is a relative term. Many convenience items (frozen orange juice, for example) may cost less than the raw product (fresh oranges for orange juice). On the other hand, if you buy the product cooked, trayed, ready to eat, you may pay for convenience. Probably complete TV dinners used for every meal would cost a family more than home cooked meals of the same quality and quantity.

Convenience is somewhat as the word denotes--what is your time worth? Is the price worth the convenience? This will depend upon your particular family situation.

## INSPECTION, REGULATION AND GRADING

487. How often are food stores inspected?

Food stores in Ohio are subject to inspection by local boards of health and the Ohio Department of Agriculture on a random basis. Inspections are much more rigorous now, especially in the meat department, than a few years ago. It is still mostly the responsibility of store management to maintain cleanliness in everyday operations.

488. Produce department vegetables are supposed to be fresh. Why is this law not enforced?

There is no "law" relating to freshness. Produce items have relatively short lives, and some items in particular must be sold and used quickly. If the store doesn't have large enough sales volume, these items become "over aged" quickly. If the item is not fresh, don't buy it.

489. How do we know the foods we buy are safe for consumption?

No manufacturer or retailer will knowingly sell items which are unsafe. Fortunately, local and State Departments of Health, State and Federal Departments of Agriculture, and the Federal Food and Drug Administration all have responsibility in seeing that regulations are observed. They also have the responsibility of seeing that risky situations are cleared up and possibly contaminated foods are removed from the market.

490. Is all poultry sold in Ohio in chain stores government inspected?

All poultry that crosses state lines is federally inspected. Since most poultry sold in Ohio comes from other areas of the country, most is federally inspected. Look for the round inspection seal on most poultry, especially that that is prepackaged.

491. How do I know what quality food I buy, and how do I determine grades?
492. What do the different grades which the government has mean in meat and in eggs?
493. How can we get processors to grade canned fruits and vegetables as to quality?

For meat, USDA grades of beef are usually considered the standard for quality. The grades indicate quality in meat and are a guide to tenderness. The beef grades are USDA Prime, USDA Choice, USDA Good, and USDA Standard. There are additional grades, but those are largely used in processed beef. There are also retail grades for lamb and veal. The Choice grade is the one found in most retail markets.

For eggs, the USDA grades also indicate quality. There are three grades: U.S. Grade AA, U. S. Grade A, and U.S. Grade B. The top two grades are the only ones usually found in Ohio retail markets, and both are desirable for poaching and frying because they stand up well. Of course, they are good for cooking, too.

For canned fruits and vegetables there are also three grades: U.S. Grade A (Fancy), U.S. Grade B (Choice or Extra Standard) and U.S. Grade C (Standard). Not many canned products carry U.S. grade marks on their labels, though they are packed according to the grade standards. These grades are used more in the marketing trade than at the retail level. Consumers seem to prefer to buy by brand rather than by grade in this instance. For further information on grades, ask your County Extension Office for a copy of "How to Use USDA Grades in Buying Food," Bulletin PA 708.

494. Is water really injected into hams, and if so, how much?

When ham is cured, water is often injected. Consumers seem to prefer the flavor of these hams over those that are cured without added water. Regulations indicate that if the ham, after being cured, weighs no more than its green (original) weight, then it is not necessary to label it "water added." Those hams which weigh more than their green weight after curing must have the "water added" label.

495. Do retailers follow the practice of grinding ice with hamburger?

This is not a usual practice. It would have the advantage of keeping the product cooler as grinding tends to heat the meat. However, moisture content of a meat product cannot exceed the amount of moisture in the original beef. To add additional ice would result in a "watered" or adulterated product which would be illegal to sell.

496. How do you know when you are getting fresh hamburger when they put food coloring in it?

497. How can you be sure that when you buy hamburg that they are not adding coloring?

In Ohio it is illegal to add coloring to hamburg or to any other meat product. If you suspect coloring, contact your local health department, or the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

498. Do all states limit the amount of fat in ground meat? Or, is this a federally controlled item? Does the amount vary from state to state?

There are both Ohio and Federal regulations about fat content. There is some variation between states. For example, Federal regulations limit the fat content of ground beef to 30 percent. Ohio permits 30 percent fat in hamburg, but only 20 percent fat content in a package labeled "ground beef." The differences between state regulations are becoming less as more states adopt recommended uniform standards.

499. Is 30 percent fat in weiners good or bad?

The 30 percent fat regulations in weiners was recently adopted to provide a standard similar to that of ground beef. A processor may use less. Although a common recommendation these days is to use less fat, most consumers still want a "good" taste and texture in the product. Cutting the fat drastically produces a less tasty, drier weiner. The 30 percent figure is a realistic compromise.

500. Is chicken added to weiners? If so, how much?

Federal regulations allow up to 30 percent chicken meat in weiners. However, we are not aware of any processors using chicken meat at the present time. Use of chicken meat would perhaps reduce the cost of the weiners, since chicken meat is often less expensive than beef, for example.

501. When canned goods are sold with labels stating that they are from some other country, for example, Mandarin oranges, are these canned under health standards like our own?
502. Why isn't it always written on a package or can whether or not a food is an import?
503. How can you tell imported cheese when it is sold under a store name?
504. How is the inspection of canned foods from other countries carried out?

All foods that come into the United States must meet the standards established by U. S. inspection. There has been criticism that the plants are not checked often enough by U. S. inspectors. Just as cities and states recognize inspections of other cities and states, national governments work out mutually acceptable inspection standards and spot checks are made to see that these programs are carried out.

Identification of imported foods is usually made for most products-- Danish hams, Taiwan pineapple, etc. However, if the product is further processed or packaged in this country, identification of the origin of the food may not be made. An example of a problem area might be ground beef. Australia produces a frozen, lean beef product that may be used in ground beef here. Some of the finished product is imported, some of it is local product. Some margarine will contain some imported vegetable fats. At the present time, there is no label requirement that imported ingredients need to be identified.

505. Some substitutes for dairy products and milk are high in cholesterol. If coconut oil is used in whipped cream substitutes, why aren't the ingredients listed on the container?

The ingredients used must appear on the label unless the product is one for which standards have been established, such as jelly or white bread. As long as the product meets the standards established, the ingredients do not have to be listed for a "standardized" product. Also, the type of oil does not have to be specified; it may be listed just as "vegetable oil," and can be corn, coconut, soybean, cottonseed, or whatever. To find out what kind of oil is used, contact the processor.

506. Will there be a uniform date marking on products?

This is difficult to answer at this time, as there are many unanswered questions related to what the date would mean, would all processors adopt the same dating procedure, how would the retailer sell products that are still good wholesome food, yet older than some of the newer stock, etc. Also unanswered--should the date code show the packing date or date indicating when the product should be removed from the shelf?

507. Why don't more states sell Milnot? It's less expensive than evaporated milk.

Milnot is a non-dairy product similar to evaporated milk. Over the years, some labeling requirements and standardization procedures were enacted that had the effect of protecting existing products. Thus in dairy states, substitute products were penalized or prohibited. These restrictive regulations have to a large extent been broken down, but there are still labeling problems. For example, what do you call a mixture of butter and margarine--artificial butter or artificial margarine? The former restrictions on Milnot have largely been overcome; now it's a labeling problem.

### WHO GETS THE FOOD DOLLAR?

508. What portion of the consumer's food dollar pays for stamps and games?

Trading stamps generally cost around 2 cents of each dollar of sales. Remember, however, that this is a part of the store's advertising and promotion budget, and if the expenditure is not used for stamps it will likely be used for some other form of advertising. Usually such promotions will bring enough extra volume in sales to pay for the cost of the promotion.

509. When prices for food go higher, who receives the increase? It certainly isn't the farmer.

When prices for food products increase, the added amount you pay is shared by many. The farmer may get some of it, as may all those involved in getting the product from the farm to you in the form you want it, at the time you want it, at the place you want it, and at a price you are willing to pay. In the last two or three years, higher farm prices, along with higher labor costs, have been largely responsible for increased food prices. In inflationary times costs all along the way--rent, interest, everything--go up, and this must be reflected in prices.

Of the dollar spent today for food, the farmer gets 41¢ and the marketing system gets 59¢. This division of the food dollar has fluctuated around 40¢ for the farmer ever since the end of World War II. Increased costs of marketing come about from having more volume to handle, increased costs for labor (as mentioned above), higher costs for packaging materials, and other goods and services. Because consumers demand more services with their food, there are more services performed per unit of product marketed and this, too, has increased costs. Had it not been for increases in farm production and distribution efficiency, prices would be even higher.

510. Why are foods so high when inputs are so low?

511. Why the increase in cost of prepared cereals? Grain prices paid to the farmer are so much lower.

512. Why does the market get so much more for a product than the farmer does?

513. Why is meat so high when the farmer's selling price is so low?

We have to recognize that food as the farmer produced it is not usually in the form that the consumer wants it, nor is it in the right place at the right time. Thus, we need a marketing system to perform these services so that the farmer's product is a salable and useful one. Consumers today prefer to buy many of the services that grandmother used to do herself because she had no other choice. She churned the butter; bought only the staples such as flour, salt, coffee, tea; never expected to have out-of-season items; served chicken only on Sunday and meat perhaps three times a week; when the cow went dry, the family did without milk; pork was a cold weather food only, and oranges were regarded as Christmas fare.