CHAPTER 9

Food Standards Established by the Department of Commerce

The Department of Commerce activities in two of its parts relate to food standards. Weights, measures and numbers are basic to discussions, calculations, and trade in foods. The National Bureau of Standards, a division of the U.S. Department of Commerce, is responsible for many standards among which are those of weights and measures. The National Bureau of Standards, with postal address at Washington 25, D.C. is located in the northwest sector of the city. Plans are to establish within a few years new and larger laboratories for the National Bureau of Standards near Gaithersburg, Maryland, about 20 miles northwest of its present site.

Weights and Measures

"Units of Weight and Measure" (1) is the comprehensive and primary publication which contains extensive data including many which are applicable to foods.

"Household Weights and Measures" (2) are clearly and conveniently printed on two sides of a card (8½ × 11 inches) by the National Bureau of Standards [A-94]. The subtitles give a clear impression of the contents. They include: Equivalents of the Common Capacity Units Used in the Kitchen; Approximate Weights of Some Commodities in Avoirdupois Ounces per Cup; Liquid and Dry Measure; plus a paragraph about the metric system, and a table of "Metric-U.S. Equivalents."

Office of Technical Services

The Commodity Standards Division, Office of Technical Services, Business and Defense Services Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce cooperates with manufacturers, distributors and users of products. That program includes, but is not limited to, foods. Widespread voluntary adoption of the Simplified Practice Recommendations, as the Division states, "... avoids wasteful overdiversification, and enables producers and suppliers to give better service to customers" (3). The cover page of the leaflet provides suggestions how one can obtain information. Inner pages list leaflets available on subjects such as: milk and cream bottles, grocers' paper bags, cans for fruits and vegetables (names,
dimensions, capacities, and designated use), one-pound Elgin-style butter-carton sizes, and others.

Coffee Grinds and Other Subjects

The recommendation for coffee grinds is a good example of the establishment of a useful standard of practice. Its purpose is to provide certain granulations or grinds which will give the best results in brewing coffee. The “purpose and scope,” “development of the recommendation,” the “Standing Committee,” and the “effective date” are described in a leaflet entitled “Coffee Grinds” (4). “Regular,” “Drip,” and “Fine” grind designations for coffee are described as to their particular size. The kind of commercial sieves suitable for such measurements and their equivalents in U.S. Standard Sieves, Nos. 12, 16, 20, and 30, are stated, and their method of use is described.

Additional subjects in the Simplified Practice Recommendations include: grocers' paper bags; food dishes made of waxed paper, wood pulp or wood; one-pound eastern flat margarine cartons; one-pound Elgin-style butter cartons; and glass containers for green olives and for maraschino cherries.

Radioiodine Isotopes in Foods

This section relates to an eighteen-page leaflet (5) on this subject, authored by a contractor with the Atomic Energy Commission. The AEC is an independent agency of the federal government, not in any way a part of the U.S. Department of Commerce. However, the fact that the Department of Commerce distributes the report by the AEC causes this citation. It is believed also that other contractors with the AEC may have authored reports on the same general subject. The Federal Radiation Council, however, is the central and topmost agency on radiation matters in relation to health and to foods as pointed out in Part C, PHS, HEW, Chapter 4. References to the most pertinent documents on radiation are numbers 15–19 at the end of Chapter 4.

It will best suffice here to quote in full the abstract as published on page 2 of the leaflet (5) which is entitled “Suggested RCG Values For Radioiodine Isotopes In Food.” It follows:

ABSTRACT

Radioactivity concentration guides (RCG) are suggested for radioiodine isotopes in milk, eggs, fruits and vegetables, meat, white and sweet potatoes, flour and cereal, fats and oils and sugar, syrup and preserves. The anatomical, dietary and physiological characteristics of 19 categories
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of people were used to calculate values for both chronic and acute exposure. The RCG values for all foods except fats and oils were established by the characteristics of children less than six years of age. Typical chronic exposure RCG values for $^{131}\text{I}$ were milk $5.5 \times 10^{-7} \mu\text{c/ml}$, eggs $6 \times 10^{-4} \mu\text{c/egg}$, and fruits and vegetables $1.1 \times 10^{-5} \mu\text{c/g}$ (dry weight).

References


