Romance, Adventure Tied In With Man's World-Wide Search For Spices

The very word "spice" brings to mind thoughts of adventure and romance. Through the ages man has pursued these products for their flavor, preservative and medicinal qualities. Through the years many new names have been added to the list.

Malkin's import spices and herbs from all over the world. They select only the finest and carry substantial stocks at all times. It is interesting to note that in black pepper alone several tons are ground and packed by Malkin's every month.

Under the general heading of "seasonings" are grouped three major classes; these are spices, seeds and herbs. Probably the most important group is spice, for in this group is included the historical, age-old kitchen favourites—pepper, nutmeg, cassia, cinnamon and ginger, etc. A far greater quantity of this group is used than the other two groups, but each single item has its own particular use and all of them increase in popularity from year to year.

The products in the spice group, unlike the seeds and herbs do not all come from the same part of the parent plant. Some, like pepper, are the dried fruit. Some, like cloves, are the bud. Again cinnamon, is the bark, whereas ginger and tumeric are roots.

The seeds are just the dried aromatic seeds or seed pods. Herbs are the dried leaves of their various kinds.

Among the more important spices and seasonings are the following:

SPICES

Allspice—Largely from Jamaica and Mexico. It is harvested in the form of a berry.

Cinnamon and Cassia—Is the bark of a tree. Cassia is the variety used most frequently in cooking. Cinnamon is the finer quality but much more costly.

CLOVES—From the East Indies (Padang and Amboyna) also from Zanzibar, Madagascar and Pemba. Cloves are little buds from trees which grow to a height of 30 or 40 feet.

Ginger—One of the few spices which grow below ground. It is root grown chiefly in China, Japan, Africa, India and Jamaica.

Mustard—Comes from England, Holland, California, Montana and Western Canada.

Pepper—The world consumes more pepper than any other spice.

Nutmeg—A product of both East and West Indies, much prized by all cooks and housewives.

Mace—This is a distinctly flavored spice originating in close proximity to nutmeg, in fact the nutmeg in its natural state is covered with the membraneous substance which becomes mace after curing but which has an entirely different flavor from nutmeg. The only plant which produces two distinctly different flavored spices at the same time.

Then there are the seeds, anise caraway, cardamon, celery, sesame, dill, etc. which also come from many parts of the world.

Herbs, too, have a long and interesting history. Bay leaves, marjoram, mint, oregano, sage, thyme, are some of them.

When spices are harvested, cured, and cleaned in the country of their origin, they are packed in bags, bales, cases, and barrels, for export to the countries which consume them. The type of packing depends to a great extent on the character of the spice. If it is fragile, it is usually packed in cases or barrels, but if it can stand relatively rough handling it is packed in bags or bales. Then the shipment takes its ocean voyage in the hold of a modern freighter.

When the shipment is received into the warehouse at Malkin's it is given a rigid cleaning to remove small quantities of foreign material, which might be present. Spices which are not to be sold in their whole state are then ground in modern mills which reduce the material to the desired fineness. Where an extremely fine powder is required, the goods are passed over fine sieves, or in some cases they are sieved (or bolted) through silk screens. After packaging, the goods are ready for market, and it is a Canadian Government regulation that spices labelled "Pure" must be 100 per cent the pure material.

Spices, seeds, and herbs get their flavor and aroma by the essential oils which they contain. These oils are very delicate and volatile, and as a result it is most essential that they be kept in containers which are as near airtight as possible. It is not a good principle to buy spices to last for too long ahead, for there is more virtue in freshly ground material than in spice that has been stored for a very long time. It is a good plan to buy or store spice in sealed containers and to replenish stocks frequently.

It is quite often asked how much spice one should use. This is a question which cannot be answered in a general way. Some like their food flavored more highly than others, and on this account the cook must bear in mind the particular taste of the people for whom the dish is being prepared. However, it is a good thing to remember that most dishes are more enticing if the flavor is to some extent elusive. After all, the seasoning should complement the natural flavor of the dish it is seasoning. It is better to "under-flavor" than to "over-flavor."

QUIET STATION

BEALINGS, Eng. (AP) — British Railways are considering closing the station in this Suffolk community. Station operations cost £1,000 annually but only four regular passengers use it.

Robin Hood Scholarships Announced

Robin Hood Flour Mills Limited has announced the award of four Robin Hood scholarships to sons and daughters of its employees.

The winners are Richard A. Elliott, Humberstone, Ontario, Barry W. Holt, Fort William, Jean P. Ruel, Quebec, and Allan L. Engler, Moose Jaw.

Each scholarship is for $250 or as much larger as necessary to cover tuition fees up to $500.

The scholarship selections were based on a nation-wide competition and were made on the basis of scholastic ability, character and leadership. The selection committee comprised of prominent educators not connected with Robin Hood Flour Mills Limited met in Montreal.

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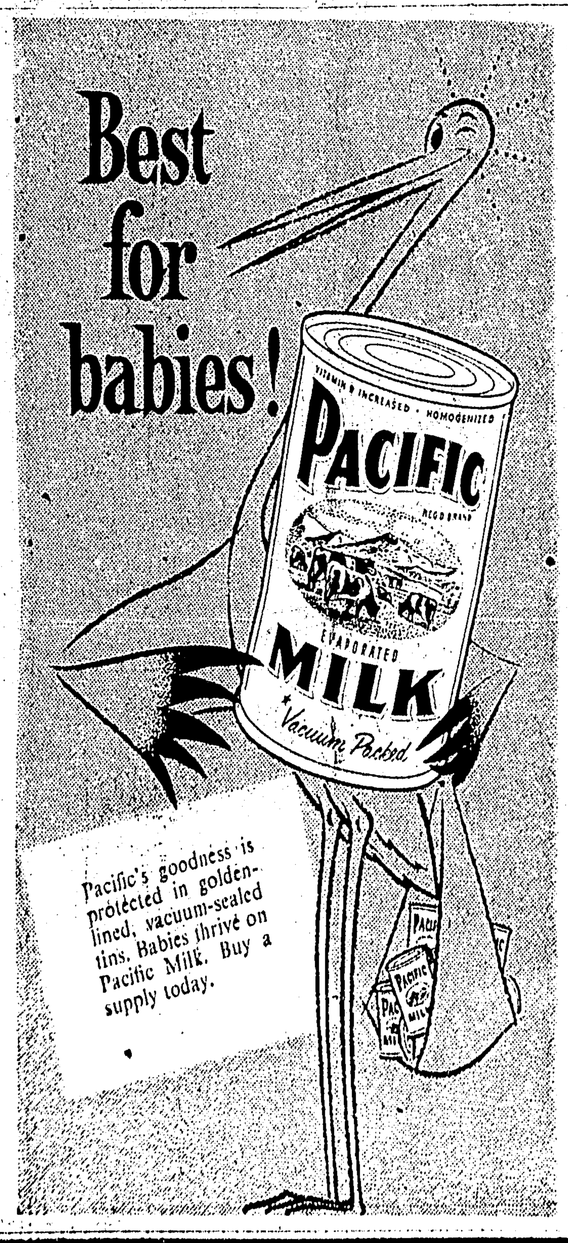

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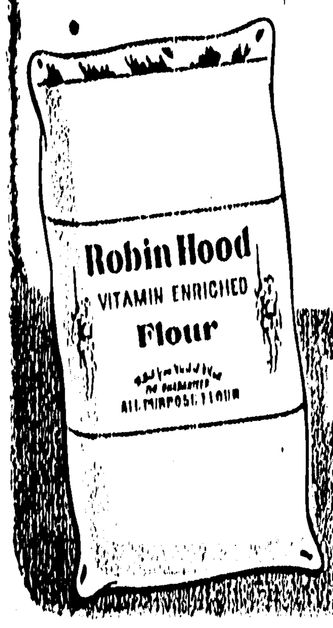
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