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## FOOD PREFERENCES AND FOOD CONSUMPTION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Regardless of the fact that the United States is supposed to have plenty of food, many people still have unsatisfactory diets. The underlying causes of this condition have been given as lack of money, failure to realize the importance of a good diet or a refusal to eat what people know they should eat. College students many times have an inadequate diet. It is important to find means of improving their diets.

The present study was made at one of the state colleges in Oklahoma. At the beginning, a letter was sent to all of the men and women students

in the dormitories explaining the plan of the study and asking their cooperation. A check list of the most common and important foods, classified in groups, was given each student together with a request that they check each food as to whether it was liked, disliked or never eaten. One hundred men and the same number of women students were selected. They were also asked to check the types of meal service, the method of preparing the various foods and the beverages they preferred, whether they had ever had any nutrition instruction, and to answer similar questions.

To get further information on the food preferences and food waste, the actual food intakes of the students were checked one full day out of each of the months of February, March, April and May. The day before each of these surveys was made, the menu was obtained from the dietitian at the dormitories and a stencil was cut of each of the menus. Questions were included also as to whether all of the foods on the menu were selected, what part of the serving was eaten, if not all, the reason, whether additional servings were desired, whether the food was eaten only because it was filling. Each student was given a sheet for each meal, with the questions as indicated, and was asked to fill out the questionnaire before leaving the dining room.

The students were all very cooperative, responded well and tried to answer the questions accurately.

There was considerable variation in the likes and dislikes of foods by both the men and women. Of the green and yellow vegetables, green peas were most liked by both groups. Corn also was well liked. Winter squash was disliked by over one-half of each group, and asparagus and yellow squash were not favorites of over one-half of the men. Over one-third of both groups had never eaten broccoli, and about one-fourth of the women had never eaten okra. Spinach, greens and brussels sprouts were not well liked.

Citrus fruits, white and purple cabbage, and lettuce were well liked by the women, and fairly well liked by the men, although almost one-half of the men disliked purple cabbage. One or two had never eaten grapefruit, oranges, tomatoes and cabbage.

Potatoes were acceptable to practically all of the students. Also, grapes, peaches, cantaloupe, pineapple, watermelon, apples, apricots, plums, bananas and strawberries were favorites of most of the students. In general, fruits were better accepted than vegetables. Parsnips, turnips and rhubarb were disliked. Several fruits and vegetables had never been eaten by the students.

Milk, cream soups, cheese and ice cream were well liked by the women and most of them fairly so by the men. One-fourth of the men disliked buttermilk and cottage cheese, and about one-fifth of the men disliked cream, cream cheese and cream soups.

Breads and cereals were liked by at least two-thirds of the group although about one-third disliked oatmeal, hominy grits, cream of wheat, puffed rice and wheat, rye bread and whole cereal products. Several of these products had never been eaten by a few students.

In general protein foods were fairly acceptable to both groups. Organ meats were the most disliked and the ones most often never eaten. Many of the meat, fish and poultry foods had never been eaten by at least a few persons.

The other part of the study showed that considerable food was wasted, most of it by the women. Usually this fact was due to dislike of the food, although sometimes it was due to the method of preparation or to too large a serving. A few students omitted breakfast, usually because of insufficient time or because they had formed the habit of going without breakfast. A good many of the students did not care for juices, for the cereals served

or for the method of preparation of the meats. Vegetables and salads were wasted mostly by the women, either because of dislike of the foods or the method of preparation. Desserts were not often wasted. There was some between meal eating, mostly sweets.

The recommendations to the students are that they should try to develop a taste for green vegetables and a variety of foods, and that they should eat more citrus fruits, raw salad greens, eggs, whole cereals and organ meats. These foods belong to our protective foods and are important to the diet. Another recommendation is that the students should eat breakfast.

The dietitian should pay more attention to the preparation and attractiveness of the foods, and more attention to improving the palatability. Whenever possible smaller amounts of the less well liked foods should be served, and there should be a greater choice of fruits.

In nutrition classes in school more emphasis should be placed upon the values of the protective foods, upon the importance of breakfast, upon developing an appreciation for all foods and upon economy, particularly upon less waste because of the world food shortage.

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