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# young families

## Minnesota's Food

Crops and livestock from Minnesota's farms are the starting point for much of our food. Here in Minnesota we have a varied agriculture which puts us close to vegetables, bread and cereal products, dairy products, meat and poultry, sugar, and oils. Of course, if we want to eat oranges, coffee, and fresh tomatoes in the winter, we must pay for added delivery costs.

A varied agriculture generates many businesses and industries that are also a part of our food supply system. One of every three Minnesotans is employed in farming or in related food and agriculture business and industry. These include (1) the manufacturing and providing of farm supplies and services to farmers, and (2) the assembling, processing, storing, and distributing of farm products and items made from them.

Are you aware of Minnesota's food products? Where they come from and where they go? And in what form we get them?

If you've driven through the southern half of the state and thought there was more corn than anything else—you're right. There are more acres of corn, grown and harvested in Minnesota, than any other crop. We may eat corn (not sweet corn) in the form of corn meal, oil, or flakes, but this use accounts for less than one percent of the total corn produced. Most corn is used as a feed grain; it is fed to livestock which we eventually consume as meat, eggs, or dairy products. Corn is also an important export product for the farmers in Minnesota.

Wheat, Minnesota's second major crop, is used mainly for food products (flour into bread, etc.) both in this country and abroad. Wheat is grown in the Red River Valley area and much of the processing or milling is done within Minnesota.

Soybeans have had limited use as a food product in this country, but this is increasing. Have you purchased any soy products recently? You may not think so, but read the labels of frozen convenience foods or cereal products. Like corn, the soybeans grown in southern and western Minnesota are used mainly for feed in the form of soybean meal, or exported for use as oil or meal. Some processing of soybean meal is done within the state.

Oats and barley are grown primarily as feed for livestock. A small amount of oats ends up in food products. Barley, grown in the Red River Valley counties, is also used in the production of beer and liquor. Throughout Minnesota you will see alfalfa, clover and timothy hay grown for winter livestock feed.

Flax rarely ends up on our dining table unless it's a wooden table and linseed oil was used to give the wood its finish. Flax, which is grown in small amounts all along the western part of

Minnesota, is used primarily for linseed oil in paint products. A small amount is used as linseed meal for feed.

The Red River Valley is also the land of sugar beets and sunflowers. Sugar beets are used almost entirely as a food product and the processing into sugar is done within the state. Sunflower seeds are grown mainly for cooking oil. A smaller amount of seeds is grown for confectionary uses as food for humans or birds.

Minnesota is almost the exclusive producer of the gourmet food, wild rice, grown in the north central counties.

Vegetables are grown on Minnesota farms, too. The Minnesota River valley and southeastern Minnesota produce sweet corn and peas for the nation. The processing is done locally in canneries close to the fields. Many of the vegetables we purchase fresh in summer and fall are grown on southern Minnesota farms including many around the Twin Cities. Carrots, onions, and potatoes are the vegetables grown in most abundance. The Red River Valley is the largest potato producing area in the state.

There are more dairy farms in Minnesota than grain or hog farms. Of course, dairy farmers grow grain and hay on their farms to feed their cattle. Most of the dairy farms are in the counties southeast and northwest of the Twin Cities. Consumption is either in liquid form or as butter, cheese, or non-fat dry milk.

Do you know the difference between a hog and a pig? The agricultural economists and statisticians call it hog raising, but a pig crop. Either way we consume it as pork, and the farmers in the southern-most row of counties raise most of it. Much of the processing—meat packing—is done there, too.

You've probably heard that Minnesota is the leading turkey producing state with turkeys being distributed throughout the country. Other livestock raised for food in Minnesota in varying amounts are chickens (both for meat and egg production), beef, sheep, and lambs.

At your next meal pick one of the foods and trace it back to its starting point. Where was it grown? How much processing and delivery has it undergone? Who are the people involved in the total food supply system? Take it through the product life cycle shown in the last issue of this newsletter: Grow—Process—Assemble—Use—Disposal. The chances are it's a "home grown" product.



## Children and TV

Children spend more time viewing television than in any other single form of leisure activity. In a year children spend more

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time viewing television than they spend in school. What kind of programs are they watching?

Children, like adults, choose programs which entertain rather than educate. Even if educational programs are available, entertainment programs are preferred, although the really well-produced educational programs for children—"Sesame Street," "The Electric Company," and "Mr. Rogers Neighborhood" are quite popular and entertaining at the same time. This does not say children do not learn from television. Interestingly, but probably not surprising to you, a study in central Minnesota showed that pre-schoolers prefer the commercial. By the time a child graduates from high school he/she could have received 350,000 commercial messages, totaling 5,000 hours! A large amount of children's viewing time (approximately 40 percent of a 6-year-old's viewing time) is spent on programs intended primarily for adults.

Why do children view television? As already pointed out, the strongest reason is for entertainment or enjoyment. A less frequent reason is for information. A third and important reason is that television is accessible. Reading ability is not needed and no admission fee is required. There is evidence to show that if we cannot get what we like (on television) we come to like what we get. Finally, a child may seek TV to escape the problems and frustrations of real relationships, and obtain satisfactions vicariously through fantasy on television.

One cannot deny that television affects children. It has become a fourth force, along with home, school, and church that helps to shape children's hopes, fears, values, and ambitions. The kind of effect that television has on children has not yet been clearly determined. One effect, regardless of the type of programs viewed, is that it keeps children from other activities. If the other activities would be harmful, then the effect of television could be regarded as wholesome. If, however, TV-watching is taking the child away from needed physical exercise, educational and cultural activities, or family interaction, then the effects are likely to be judged harmful.

Here are some guidelines to help you evaluate your family's television viewing habits:

1. Use the same common sense guidance with regard to TV that you use in other areas of your child's life.

2. Review your own viewing habits. Be more selective in the programs you watch.
3. Encourage your child to explore many types of programs.
4. Eliminate programs for awhile if your child becomes overly excited. Check to see if there might be a deeper cause for the reaction.
5. Help your child plan his/her entire day or week so there is time for a variety of activities.
6. Realize that children need children's thrills, action, and sheer nonsense.
7. Evaluate specific programs for your child's viewing with these questions:
  - does the program have real meaning and appeal, or does it just fill time?
  - does the program present information, raise questions, or arouse curiosity that will stimulate efforts to learn?
  - if the program presents an imaginary world, does the child recognize it as such?
  - does the program present positive images of various occupations, races, religions, and males and females?
  - does the program present the picture of family life you prefer?
  - does the program reflect sound standards and values for relations between people and groups?

Remember that television need not force you to abdicate your role as guide, teacher, and censor for your young child. As a parent you should be able to make rules about what may or may not be watched, when, and for how long. Even more important than this approach, is the example you set in your own television viewing choices and habits.

*(Compiled by Ron Pitzer, extension family life specialist, University of Minnesota)*

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