Know-how important in purchasing beef

Beef consumption is on the increase as prices remain attractively low for the shopper, says Georgia Stevens Nerud, Consumer and Food Economics Specialist, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Maryland.

Meat takes the biggest chunk of the family food dollar so it is important to know how to purchase meat. This is an especially good spring to enjoy beef with prices seasonally low.

Increased meat production, plus a Lent-related seasonal drop in demand has kept beef prices low. Prices are economical on chuck cuts and on a number of steaks for broiling. Consider hamburger, round steak and liver for variety in the menu.

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USDA grades are important to the smart beef shopper. They are a reliable guide to meat quality because they are based on nationally uniform federal standards of quality and are applied by USDA graders.

Grades sold in the retail grocery market include prime, choice and good. Quality with each varies as to the amount of marbling — flecks of fat within the lean — which enhances both flavor and juiciness. Select the quality and cut of beef to suit the method of preparation.

Prime grade beef is considered to be the finest meat dish available. Prime grade roasts of round, rump and sirloin tip are the best for dry-heat (oven) cooking.

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Choice grade beef is the most widely sold quality at the retail level. USDA choice rib, rump, round and sirloin tip roasts can also be oven roasted. Choice grade beef has slightly less marbling than Prime, but still is of very high quality.

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USDA good grade beef is often sold as the "house" brand rather than as good grade beef and will appeal to thrifty shoppers. It is somewhat more lean so that cooking preparation should be longer and slower.

Keep in mind the following pointers in selecting any grade of beef: a large amount of meat in proportion to bone; a covering of firm, creamy-white fat; firm fine-textured lean; lean of a uniform bright color — light red to deep red; streaks of fat through the lean, called marbling; and red porous bones.

HUNGARIAN GOULASH
2 pounds beef from chuck roast
2 cups boiling water (or part tomato juice)
2 teaspoons paprika
1 large onion, thinly sliced
3 tablespoons margarine, or bacon fat
2 teaspoons salt
1 large green pepper, chopped

Cut beef in two inch cubes. Brown in fat in heavy skillet. Remove to Dutch oven or skillet. Lightly brown onions and chopped green pepper; stir in paprika and salt; and add to meat. Add water to juices in skillet, and pour over meat. Cover and cook slowly over low heat for about an hour and a half until meat is tender but not soft. (If necessary, add more liquid to make 2 cups). If desired, add ½ cup sour cream. Serve with buttered noodles.

Did you know that dairy products in 1975 supplied three fourths of the calcium in U.S. diets? They also provided 34.7 per cent of the phosphorus, 39.8 per cent of the riboflavin, 22 per cent of the protein, 21.1 per cent of the magnesium and 19.8 per cent of vitamin B 12, but only 11.4 per cent of the calories.

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An ounce of prevention means good plant care

So, you've been talking to your plants and you think they now understand you.

Well, remember, no matter what, your plants still have the final word when it comes to decorating your home.

And basically they're saying, "I might look great in that corner over there or on that ledge in the bedroom, but put me over there and I promise I'll die."

A rather drastic threat, agreed, but if you understand this plant's "attitude" you're on the way to solving all your plant problems.

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"Plants depend upon the consumer for their attractiveness and lasting qualities," points out Carroll Radebaugh, president of the Allied Florists Growers' Division. "It is the consumer who must provide the plant the proper environment in the home."

Plants simply must have light to carry on growth processes. Too much light for some plants will cause damage. However, most plants in the home require more light than is usually given to them.

Mr. Radebaugh advised, "If plants lean toward the window, turn them every time they are watered. If new leaves are small and thin, move the plant closer to the light. Most large woody plants require light of the intensity found near an unobstructed bright window (south, east or west). Keep them there most of the time but move, if desired, to a more decorative spot when company arrives.

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"Humidity is also important," he continues. "Most tropical and flowering plants require more humidity than is found in the average home. But each home is different. For example, a new home is drier than a lived-in, seasoned home. Also, humidity is higher in summer than in winter. Many plants just fall apart when the humidity is too low, especially those that are extremely vegetative.

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Spraying and misting may help a little, but this practice usually makes the homeowner "feel better" without benefiting the plants much. Keeping plants close together helps; this makes a small plant community. Keeping plants out of warm or cold drafts is desirable. Using trays of water will also help. But don't place the pots down in the water; instead, stage them on inverted pots or stands just above the water in the tray. It's not a bad idea to grow plants where there usually is relatively high humidity, such as in the bathroom, kitchen, or utility room, then move them when you want to decorate with them.

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"Temperature," Mr. Radebaugh added, "in the comfort range for human beings, 60 to 75 degrees are also required by most plants. Hanging plants or those placed high in the home will be in a warmer climate than those by a window at lower area in the room."

"Avoid placing plants on television sets, by fireplaces or close to stoves, heat vents, water heaters or other places where you would expect excessive heat. When you leave on vacation in winter or summer, don't drastically change the thermostat setting. Sudden drops in temperature will make the plants drop or lose their leaves or they may turn yellow. Too high temperatures without a rise in the humidity will cause excessive drying of the foliage and also discoloration."

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Containers: Containers should have drainage holes in the base or sides so that excessive water will not remain around the soil ball. It is difficult to tell someone how to water if the excessive moisture can't drain away. Choose containers in keeping with the volume of roots and the size of the top growth. Overpotting will often cause problems because the plant can be overwatered very easily.

If you want to use a decorative container without drainage, keep the plant in a conventional clay or plastic pot with a drainage hole and place it inside the decorative container. In other words, choose a plant with a smaller pot size than the decorative container and place it on a layer of gravel or other drainage material in the bottom. Excess water can then drain from the plant pot and easily be removed from the outer container. Sand, peat moss or other materials can be placed around the sides of the pot to keep it from wobbling and to conserve moisture in the soil ball.

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Soil: Soil: Sterilized soil should be used for repotting and mixture should be as similar as possible to that in the original pot. Well-drained soil is a must. Usually one part soil, one part sphagnum peat moss and one part sand, vermiculite or perlite is a satisfactory blend.

Very fiberous (small) rotted plants require an additional amount of sphagnum peat moss. If the roots are very heavy or matted (pot bound), then cut through to loosen them from the soil ball. Have the soil moist when you pot. Be sure the soil under the plant ball is moist; otherwise, you may have excessive drying of the roots. After potting, water two or three times to be certain that soil settles around the roots.

Never, never pack or over-firm soil around the roots. Lightly fill in the soil around the ball, water as mentioned above, and then fill in again with more soil.

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Watering: A simple statement can be made about watering. Water when the soil is dry but before the plant wilts. Don't try to put plants on a schedule. Sometimes they will only have to be watered once a week, and at other times, twice a week, once a day, etc. The amount or frequency depends upon pot size, kind of plant, type of soil, kind of container and other factors.

If the soil is very dry, water twice until the water comes out of the drainage hole. But don't let the water stand in the water saucer or tray for a long period of time; it will keep the plants much too wet.

All too many people think that all of their plant problems will be solved by feeding — feeding — feeding. True, the plant manufactures food and fertilizer is necessary in this process, but it will not solve environmental problems involving light, temperature and humidity.

Light feedings with soluble fertilizer during active growth in spring, summer and fall is recommended, usually at every third or fourth watering. During winter or low light periods just attempt to maintain the plants rather than trying to make them grow rapidly.

Foster children need 'very special' parents

Foster children often go through periods of depression and rebellion because they feel abandoned, worthless, and even responsible for the family breakdown. A great deal of skill and understanding is required of the foster parents in helping foster children to resolve intense feelings of anger and loss. Yet, foster parents have few opportunities for specialized training.

Under a Federal grant, the Child Welfare League of America has developed a new introductory curriculum on foster parenting which is expected to be widely used by child welfare agencies. New Jersey has taken the lead in training social service workers to use the curriculum with new foster parents, and five other States will begin similar training for caseworkers soon.

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"This is the best training which I have ever been exposed to in the 8½ years I have worked in the agency," commented a New Jersey caseworker. A series of six, 2-hour training sessions, the curriculum covers the responsibilities of foster parents, the role of caseworkers, and the importance of natural parents. Grief and anger over separation from natural parents and the typical behavior patterns of foster children are among the topics covered.

The course is designed for use by any agency is providing basic training to foster parents in the U.S., who now care for more than a quarter of a million foster children. (For information, Helen Stone, Child Welfare League of America, Inc., 67 Irving Place, New York, N.Y., 10003 (21) 254-7410).

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

The Baltimore Regional Planning Council is inviting interested firms and individuals to submit a proposal for services in connection with developing the Regulatory and Management Program of the RPC's Section 208 Water Quality Management Planning Program. Copies of the RFP are available at the Council's offices at 701 St. Paul Street.

A pre-bid conference will be held on Friday, March 25, 1977 at 10:00 A.M. at the Regional Planning Council, 701 St. Paul Street, Third Floor Conference Room. It is required that proposals be submitted on or before April 15, 1977. If you have any questions regarding the RFP, please direct your inquiries to Mr. Carroll Sauer, telephone (301) 383-5861.

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