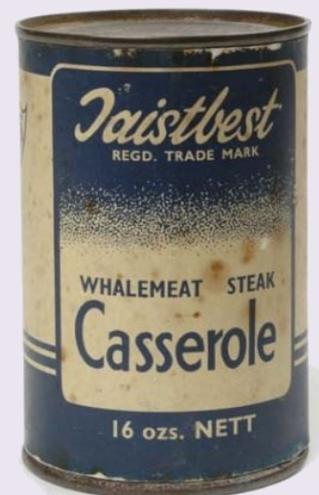
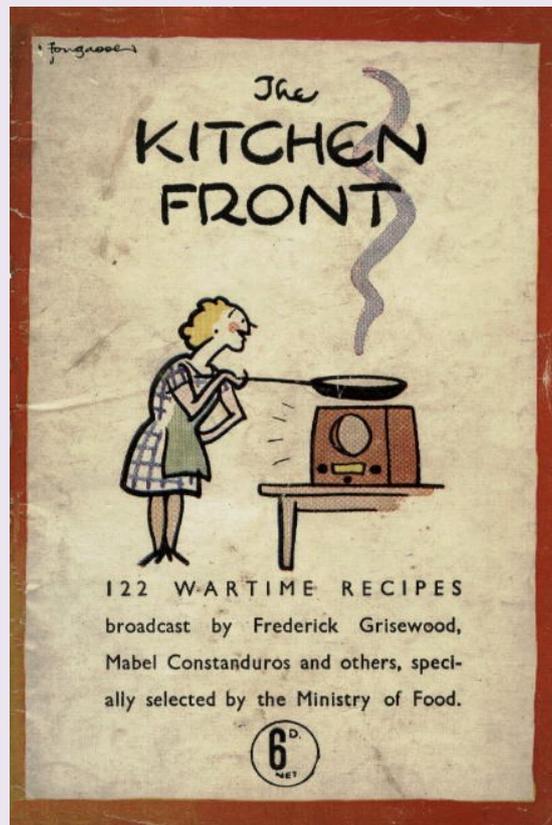


We'll Eat Again!

Food and Farming during the Second World War

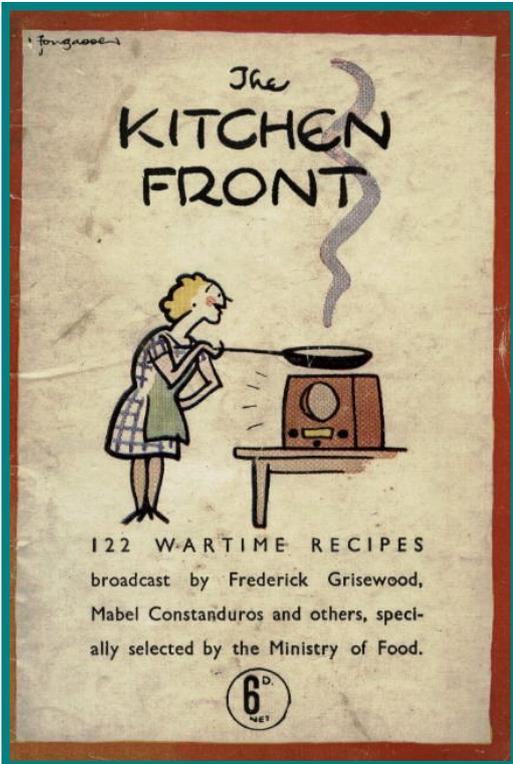
I. Food Rationing



Rutland County Museum

We'll Eat Again! Food & Farming During WW2

The Ministry of Food



When Britain entered the war less than 40% of the country's food needs were produced at home. In order to ensure there was enough food for all the population during the war, the Government established the Ministry of Food. Formed on 8 September 1939, with William Morrison as Minister, it came under the direction of Lord Woolton in April 1940.

The Ministry of Food was responsible for the adequate supply and fair distribution of foodstuffs. It became the sole buyer and importer of food and regulated prices. It guaranteed farmer's prices and also markets for their produce.

A Food Advice Division was established within the Ministry of Food to help ensure that the public kept fit on the rations and enjoyed the dishes they could make with the food available. Staff at the headquarters in London were responsible for nutritional information and the recipes issued by the Ministry.

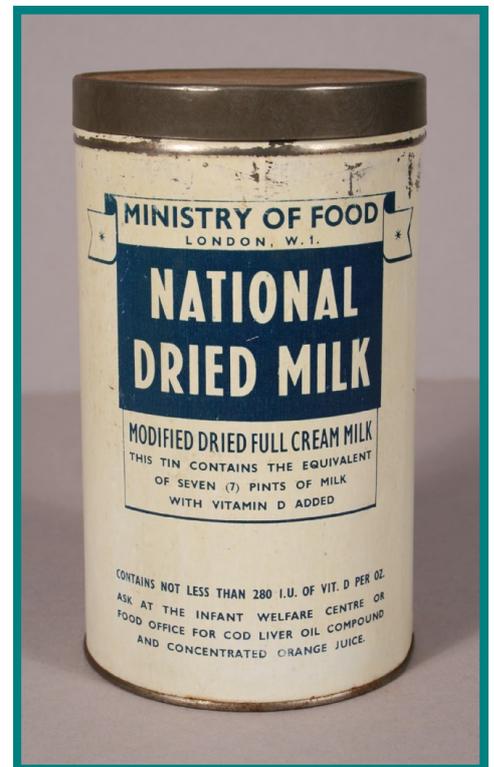


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The Ministry of Food

The Ministry realised that families might be struggling with ideas of what to use to make meals and it used adverts in magazines, free recipe leaflets, Food Facts leaflets and 'food flashes' in cinemas. There was also a popular radio programme called 'The Kitchen Front' which was on every morning after the eight o'clock news.

Throughout Britain, Food Advice Centres were established, staffed by Home Economists. With the help of small portable cookers they gave demonstrations in large shops, markets and canteens of factories. They also visited the outpatients departments in hospitals and welfare clinics to talk to patients and mothers.



Householders were told they were on the 'Kitchen Front' and that they had a duty to use foods to their greatest advantage. Information was provided encouraging people to save scraps, eat all the food on their plate and grow their own food. The Ministry devised characters such as 'Potato Pete' and 'Dr Carrot' to put their message across.



We'll Eat Again! Food & Farming During WW2

The Food Rations

Rations varied month by month as foods became more or less plentiful. The average weekly ration for an adult was:

Bacon and ham, 4oz (100g)

Meat, to the value of 1s.2d. (6p), about 1lb 3oz (525g)

Butter, 2oz (50g)

Cheese, 2oz (50g) sometimes it rose to 4oz or 8oz

Margarine, 4oz (100g)

Lard, 4oz (100g) often dropping to 2oz (50g)

Milk, 3 pints, sometimes dropping to 2 pints

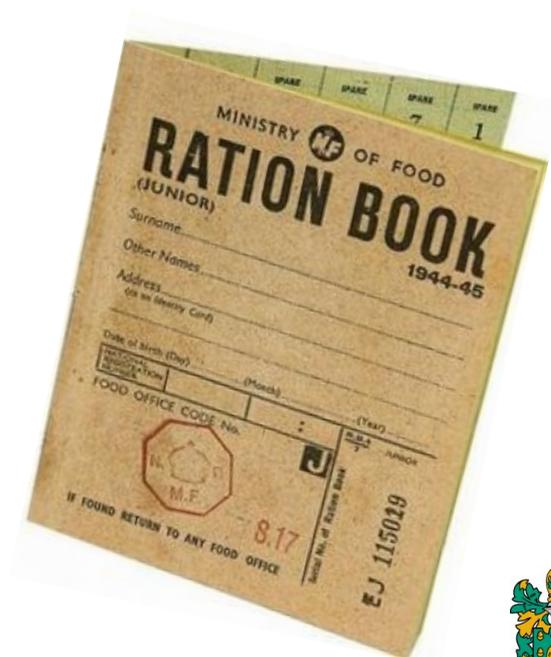
Sugar, 8oz (225g)

Preserves, 2oz (50g)

Tea, 2oz (50g)

Eggs, 1 egg and 1 packet of dried egg each 4 weeks

Sweets, 3oz (75g)



We'll Eat Again! Food & Farming During WW2

Food Rationing

The first months of the war weren't too bad as people still had reserve food stocks. This changed in the New Year when shortages began to hit. Merchant shipping routes were under attack from German U-boats and bomber aircraft. By the end of 1940, 728,000 tons of foodstuffs had been sunk and between March and May 1941, over 320 merchant ships were lost at sea.

In January 1940 food rationing began, ensuring food was distributed fairly. The country was split into nine areas and shopkeepers could obtain supplies only from their local area. Ration books were issued with coupons for different foods. People registered with a shop and the shopkeeper was issued with enough food for those on his list.



To start with only a few basic foods such as butter, meat and sugar were rationed, but more foods were added over the years. A 'points' scheme was introduced for un-rationed foods. Each person was given 16 points a month, later rising to 20, to spend at any shop on whatever was available.

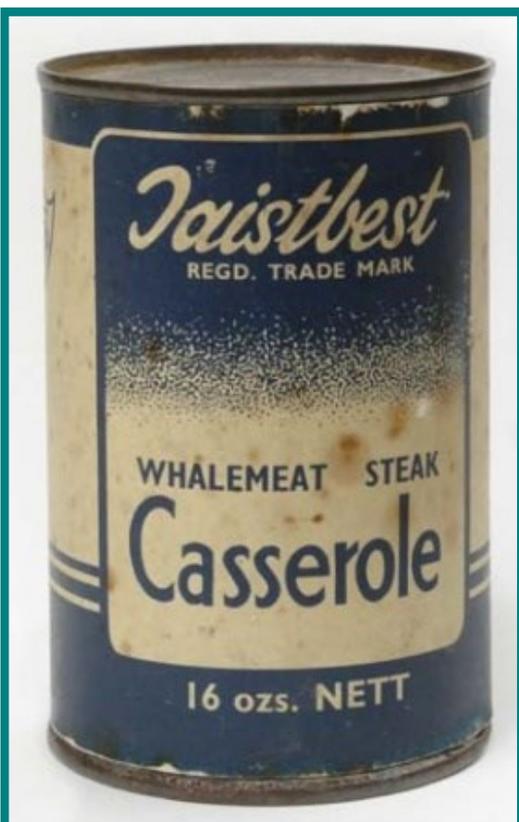


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Food Rationing

Choice and variety in food decreased noticeably, for example, before the war there were 350 varieties of biscuits, this dropped to 20. However, some unusual food products were imported such as canned whale meat, snoek (a canned, strong-tasting fish) and Spam (luncheon meat).

Beer and cigarettes were scarce but never rationed as they were seen as morale boosters. When you could get beer, it was watery due to the Ministry of Food reducing the average gravity of beer in order to conserve barley stocks. From October 1941, most imports of alcohol ceased.



Although rationing guaranteed the necessities, luxuries were scarce. The Ministry of Food employed over 900 inspectors to detect Black Market activity. Food rationing carried on until 1954 as it took time for trade and production to return to normal.



We'll Eat Again! Food & Farming During WW2

Food Rationing Timeline

Not all basic foods were placed on the ration at one time; foods were introduced gradually:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 8 January 1940 | Rationing introduced. Bacon, ham, sugar and butter rationed. |
| 11 March 1940 | All meat rationed. |
| July 1940 | Tea, margarine, cooking fat and cheese rationed. |
| March 1941 | Jam, marmalade, treacle and syrup rationed. |
| July 1941 | Distribution of eggs controlled. |
| January 1942 | Rice and dried fruit rationed. |
| 26 July 1942 | Sweets and chocolate rationed. |
| August 1942 | Biscuits rationed. |



We'll Eat Again! Food & Farming During WW2

De-Rationing Timeline

Food rationing lasted for 14 years from 1940 to 1954. Two new foods were rationed after the war. Bread was rationed from 1946 to 1948 and potatoes for a year from 1947. Gradually foods came off ration:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| July 1948 | Bread came off ration. |
| December 1948 | Marmalade, jam, treacle and syrup came off ration. |
| May 1950 | Canned and dried fruit came off ration. |
| October 1952 | Tea came off ration. |
| February 1953 | Sweets came off ration. |
| March 1953 | Egg distribution no longer controlled. |
| September 1953 | Sugar came off ration. |
| May 1954 | Butter, margarine, cooking fat and cheese came off ration. |
| June 1954 | Meat no longer rationed. |
| 4 July 1954 | All food rationing ends. |

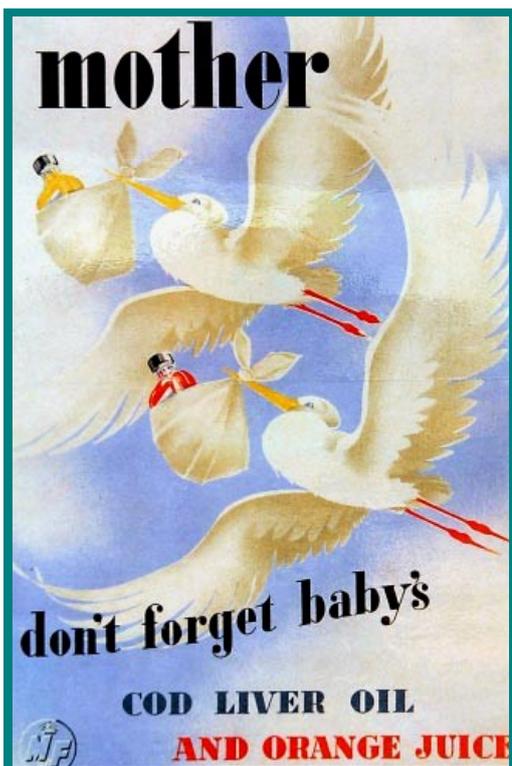


We'll Eat Again! Food & Farming During WW2

Rationing - Benefits for Health

World War Two proved an ideal opportunity to improve the nation's diet. The Government was aware that the war could cause malnutrition and was determined that the British people should be fit to carry on the fight. They set out to improve the nutritional content of the nation's diet.

People at all levels of society took nutrition seriously and the wartime food shortages forced people to adopt new eating patterns. Families ate sensibly with the rations and whatever vegetables and fruit were available. Most ate less meat, fat, eggs and sugar than they had before the war.

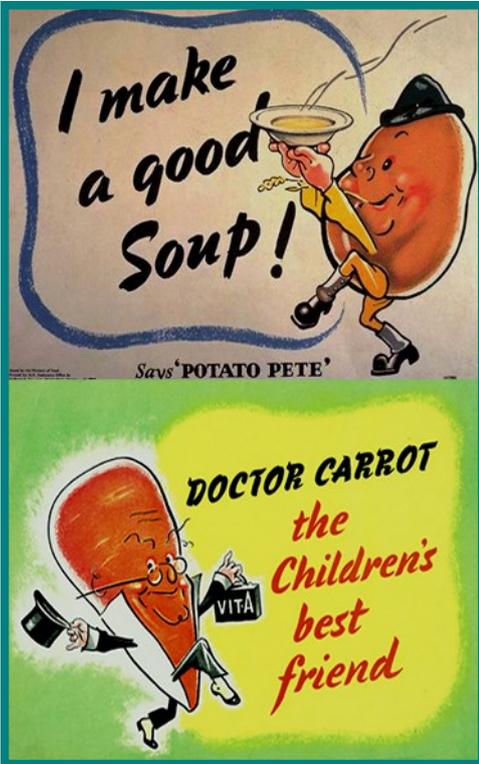


Special arrangements were made for young children and expectant and nursing mothers to receive free cod-liver oil, orange juice and milk from welfare clinics. When oranges were available, children under six years of age were entitled to receive 1lb each week. Free school meals were introduced for children from poorer families.



We'll Eat Again! Food & Farming During WW2

Rationing - Benefits for Health



The government's food control gave society a good mixed diet and many people were better fed than before the war. Many poor people were able to afford to feed themselves properly due to low unemployment and the rationing system, with its fixed prices. Their intake of protein and vitamins increased as they received the same rations as everybody else.

Rationing also resulted in a lower child mortality rate and a significant decrease in TB cases. Fewer sweet snacks meant there was less tooth decay. The average age at which people died from natural causes increased. Children were taller and heavier and fewer mothers died in childbirth.

As a whole the population was slimmer and healthier than it is today. When the war ended, it was found that the average food intake was much higher than when it began. All this whilst there were fewer doctors and nurses available on the Home Front.

