**Meal management**

From the day that Eve and Adam Shared an apple in the Garden of Eden, food and the part taking of food have been of infinite significance in the life of man. Tribes have perished, kings have fallen, Dictators have risen and nations have been born for the want of bread. In great sections themselves with a minimum of minimum of food, shelter and clothing and food is the most important of these shelter can be improvised, clothing patched a little more, but food must be taken daily.

We eat food for pleasure, for comfort, for status, for tradition, for celebration, for punishment and sometimes for pure adventure. Food is a main topic of conversation and it serves as the principle event at many social gatherings. Eating can be either dull, monotonous or a routine that merely satisfies hunger, or a pleasurable experience that is both nourishing and aesthetically satisfying. The difference depends on the manager's skills in planning and implementation.

From time immemorial physical and spiritual nurturing of the family members has been an important function of the home maker. She not only satisfies their physiological need of hunger but also creates a cheerful environment in her home by providing nutritious food. Food preparation and services are two important household tasks which consume nearly two thirds of the home makers total available time offering good food to the family members or guests is a creative activity for most home makers.

Providing good food according to different tastes and meeting the nutritional needs of each individual requires skillful efforts on the part of the homemaker. Food is not only for satisfying the creature comfort of hunger, but also it should be a social enjoyment.

Food has two related factors one is the taste and the other is the nutritional aspect, it is agreed upon that cooking is an art as well as science, For this effort, the home maker has to spend a great deal of time and energy. However meal preparation is not to be hurried, just to save time and plays a vital role in building strong bodies and providing health.

An attempt to secure every nutritional essential at each meal would make meals complicated and expensive. On the other hand, there is no assurance that an expensive diet is an adequate one, and experts insists that there are large numbers of people with quite adequate incomes whose diets are deficient.

We want more than just nutrition out of one food. We want food that tastes good. We also want food that is easy to prepare. And yet we want to keep expenditure on food as low as we can. When good taste and good nutritional contents are combined the food is generally rather expensive and same foods that seem expensive are much easier to prepare.

Generally the daily meal pattern in India includes four meals, Breakfast, Lunch, Tea and Dinner. Preparation of these four meals involves a lot of cooking in limited time. This is very difficult for the home makers who have small children and who are also gainfully employed outside the home. Numbers of body movements for each preparation also consumes more energy.

Modern food technology has brought in certain changes in meal preparation. The introduction of instant and convenience foods leaves more time at the disposal of the modern home makers for child care outside activities and greater leisure. Meal related activities include both decision making and action. The meal manager makes decisions as what to serve at meals, at what hour to serve meals, have to equip the kitchen, and so on. She makes decisions in her kitchen and in the market place.

The meal manager engages in a variety of tastes, she is a hostess, a dietitian, a purchasing agent, an organizer of things and tastes, and a supervisor, she is a chef, waitress and maid in the kitchen. she may also be an artist when she sets here table and serves her meals.

Meal times are often the only times of the day when families are together, this caters to the social and emotional development of children. The more a home maker knows how to plan, prepare and serve meals, the most fruitful meal times can be in the life of her family.

To provide meals for a family, time must be invested in Planning meals, shopping for food, the care and storage of food, preparing and serving meals, clean up after meals, the care of the kitchen and its equipment. Energy is spent in shopping, the care of food, cooking, table setting, waiting at the table, clean-up after meals and the kitchen and its equipment.

Very important among the house makers resources are her knowledge, skills, and abilities. They determine to no small extent, how much money, time and energy she spends on the meals responsibility, for the uses of her resources are inter related. The more knowledge, abilities and skills she has, the less money, time and energy she need spend to achieve a given end.

At least four general rules related to meals can be mentioned. The first rule is this, meals for each day should meet the nutritive needs of all members of the family. The second rule is meals must fit the budget for food. The third rule is meal must provide "eating satisfaction" so that everyone enjoys them or "relishes his victual (food)". The fourth and last rule is, meals should be reasonable in the demands they make on the home makers time and energy.

Since these goals are several, planning to achieve them involves decisions Among many alternatives, went to serve which foods, so that meals may be varied and pleasing, how best to use available time; what foods among those on the market are right for the budget; what convenient items fit the budget and which are too expensive at this time.

To sum-up, meal management is decision making and action. The more a home maker knows about how to plan, prepare and serve meals, the more fruitful meal time can be in the life of her family.

By Aseema Nuzhath, M.Sc.B.Ed (Home Science)

H.O.D. Home Science

Abbas Khan PU College for Women,

Cubbonpet, Bangalore.