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# *Ideas and Ingenuity*

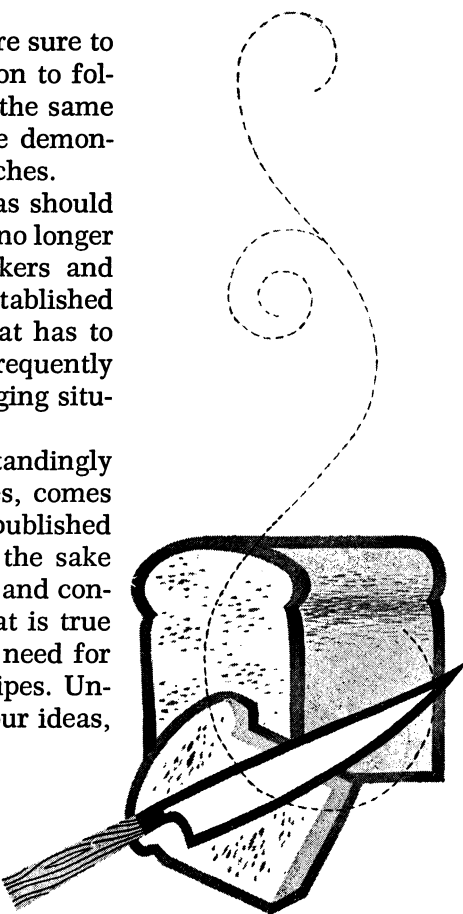
There's great need for  
"yeasty" thinking

WHEN YOU WORK under pressure, as you're sure to do at times, there is always the temptation to follow familiar patterns. To use and re-use the same recipes, the same lesson plans, the same demonstrations, the same photographic approaches.

Certainly, good recipes and sound ideas should not be discarded simply because they are no longer new. There are always young homemakers and students coming along to whom those established facts are "news." Even so, everything that has to do with communications needs to be frequently re-examined to bring it in line with changing situations.

Let's look at recipes. When an outstandingly popular one, such as Toll House Cookies, comes out of a test kitchen, it deserves to be republished frequently, as it has been, not only for the sake of young homemakers but as a reminder and convenience for older homemakers, too. That is true of many recipes. But there is also great need for originality and ingenuity in creating recipes. Unless you develop these assets, you, like your ideas, may soon be out of step!

*A fresh idea is the yeast  
that leavens and livens  
solid loaves of information.*



But, you ask, how does one go about developing originality? How does one "invent" a new recipe? Perhaps it's simpler than you realize.

### ***The R/C System for Originating Recipes***

It is true, of course, that all so-called new recipes have their roots in old established ones. But it is equally true that new twists and fresh adaptations can always be figured out for old-time favorites.

#### **IT'S A THOUGHT**

Much is said about the processes of learning. Something might well be said about the process of unlearning. That is, recognizing when to forget established patterns of thinking in order to explore new ones.

#### **DEFINITION**

Ingenuity has been defined as a fresh idea generated by the engine of an active brain. Interesting, isn't it, that the words engine, generate, genius, and ingenuity are all related rhythmically? And that each word suggests power?

Suppose you are working in the canned foods field, and this week you are expected to develop some special uses for red kidney beans.

Or you are on the staff of a home magazine; your assignment is to work out fresh ideas for outdoor meals — especially some new ways with ever-popular canned beans which would help to round out a grill-cooked meal in the garden. Canned kidney beans are, of course, one of the types of beans you will feature.

Or you are a nutritionist, seeking as always to help your public to have more of the protein they need, in forms that are convenient to use and not too expensive to buy. You know that canned kidney beans live up to those requirements, and that they are generally liked. You know, too, that a good recipe will be more effective than any amount of nutrition-talk as such in encouraging homemakers to use more beans.

Whichever one of those home economists you may be, you are faced with the same dismaying thought: Surely every possible use for kidney beans has already been exploited! But has it?

Let's start with the known — the product and problem — and let our minds roam into the known or little known. Let's try inventing a new recipe featuring canned kidney beans.

Try putting the problem into your Unconscious, and turn it over from time to time. Don't be sur-

prised if out of the blue comes the memory of the jelly bean candies you liked as a child. This is your key.

"Why not a Jelly Bean Salad?" you ask yourself. That is, a bean salad in gelatin. You like the idea. You are amused by the name. And you go to work on it, realizing all the while that the idea may or may not be workable.

First on the agenda is to think what would be needed to make beans-in-gelatin taste good and look attractive. Again your Unconscious may remind you of the bean salads frequently served in Italian restaurants — those appetizers made by mixing kidney beans or lima beans with chopped onion, mashed garlic, vinegar, and seasonings. It occurs to you that you might stir such a bean mixture into gelatin and mold it.

With that established, start on your recipe. Go at it first in a free-hand creative way. Drain and rinse the beans, then stir up your onion-garlic-vinegar-bean mixture, tasting as you go. Let stand while you make a batch of lemon-flavored gelatin, cutting down the liquid to balance the addition of vinegar, of course. Then stir the two together while the gelatin is still warm. When the salad is chilled and firm, test it, taste it — then go on to perfect your recipe.

When your idea has jelled literally, you may decide it is worth having its picture taken. This time you may chill the salad mixture in a ring mold, and serve it filled with cottage cheese, garnished with cucumber and radish slices.

Whatever direction your idea eventually takes, you will be rather pleased with yourself because you have created a practical new recipe that homemakers will enjoy using again and again.

If you're working with a particular food product and find fresh ideas slow in coming, try out the advice given by an outstanding woman in the advertising field.

#### TO SPARK AN IDEA

The primitive way to start a fire is to rub two sticks together until a spark is struck. To spark an idea, rub an open mind against a problem.

*Good homemaking information, like convenience foods and drip-dry clothing, is in step with the times.*

#### LOOK TO TV

When you study television commercials, you realize that back of every one of them there is ingenuity, fresh thinking. That is why those commercials are remembered; why they influence the thinking of homemakers — and of children!

In a speech before a large group of home economists she said (among other things): "It's easy to get new ideas. You just ask questions and turn things inside out, or backwards, or upside down . . . Change the size . . . Change the flavor . . . Change the color . . .

"If it's a dessert, maybe it could be a first course or a salad. If it's a vegetable, perhaps it can make a full meal, or be served as a snack. . . . Could your product make something simpler — as soup makes an easy gravy or sauce? If it's usually sweetened, try adding salt; if it's usually salted, try sugar." And so on and on.

In other words, look at your product with fresh eyes. Eventually your eyes may return to rest on a familiar and accepted way of doing, but somewhere along the line you will have freshened your approach, so that the old familiar takes on new interest for you and your homemakers.

Ingenuity is not limited, of course, to creating new recipes for publication. The same mental processes produce fresh ideas along any line.

Often ingenuity is prompted by necessity or thrift. For example, the need for several large flower vases for a Mother's Day reception in one school suggested this artistic solution. Tall tin cans were neatly covered with newspaper classified advertising pages, giving the effect of interesting texture and design.

Frequently it is sparked by spontaneity. One student in child development started a chain of teaching fun by showing a preschooler a picture of a telephone in a magazine advertisement, and letting him "call up" his friends. So much more range for his imagination than either a real or toy phone could give!

Ingenuity can also be the starting point of discoveries. "What would happen if —" is often the magic line that leads to more interest in learning and in teaching.

(P.S. That Jelly Bean Salad is really good!)

#### A TEACHER SPEAKS UP

"I found my sewing class took on new interest when I suggested that each bring to class some worn or out-of-style garment for group discussion as to what might be done to make it wearable. Those students showed more ingenuity than I had thought possible."