12.

Just Getting Read Isn't Enough

WHEN *Wallaces Farmer* BEGAN its first readership studies in 1938, we could say that a certain number of readers of the issue had actually read some or most or none of the article on page six or the advertisement on page 21. But presently it dawned on us, as on many others, that this kind of readership figure wasn't enough.

Fortunately, the readership survey can be handled so as to tell us much more. We can find out how readership is affected by age, education and other factors. We can even approach a more vital question: What do our subscribers think of what they read?

A reader may go through an article and still wind up with a poor opinion of the article and of the magazine. High readership may be associated with either favorable or unfavorable response. How can we find out which it is?

We are using on *Wallaces Farmer* and *Wisconsin Agriculturist* some simple devices that may give us some clues as to what farm readers think of what they read.

We started out with the most obvious of tests. In repeated surveys, conducted both by ourselves and by the Statistical Laboratory of Iowa State, we have found that farmers want practical information on timely production problems. The perfect tribute to us comes from the farmer who says, "I was just going to write you. But when I got your paper out of the mailbox, I found you had answered the question I had in mind."

So in the reader-interest survey of the January 18, 1958 issue of *Wallaces Farmer,* we prepared a card that asked these questions:

If you read most of the story, "Wet Corn Makes Top Feed," on page nine how would you rate this article on the points below?

1. Real practical help for me.
2. A few things here I can use.
3. Nothing practical here for me.

1. Article told about something new to me.
2. I'd heard about it before, but not as much.
3. Nothing new in this article.

In this test, we hoped to find out whether the article was of practical help, and also whether some of the information was new. These points, in our minds, weren't the same. A farmer could be reminded of standard information and still get practical help.

Interviewers waited until they got to page nine and listened to the report of the respondent on that page. If he said he had read most of the wet corn article, he was handed the card.

Here is the response:

	No.	Per cent
Real practical help for me . .	32	24.1
A few things in it I can use . .	70	60.1
Nothing practical here for me	21	15.8
	123	100.0
Article told about something new to me	29	23.6
I'd heard about it before, but not as much	80	65.0
Nothing new in this article . .	7	5.7
No comment	7	5.7
	123	100.0

Since this was the first attempt, we weren't sure what it meant. What is par for the course? Our guess was that the article did pretty well.

To check again, we took the reader-interest survey of *Wisconsin Agriculturist* (April, 1958). When the interviewer got to page 76 and the respondent indicated he had read most of the article, "Spray Yellow Rocket in Hay Fields," he was given a card which asked him to rate the article. Scores for men follow:

	No.	Per cent
Real practical help for me . .	20	23.0
A few things in it I can use . .	40	46.0
Nothing practical here for me	18	20.7
No comment	9	10.3
	87	100.0
Article told about something new to me	25	28.7
I'd heard about it before, but not so much	41	47.1
Nothing new in this article . .	5	5.8
No comment	16	18.4
	87	100.0

To get a little more light on what to expect from a "practical help" vote on a dirt copy theme, we asked the same questions about three articles in *Wallaces Farmer* (January 17, 1959). The three scored an average vote on "real practical help" of around 38 per cent among the men who read some or most of the copy. If we measure these enthusiastic readers against the whole sample, they made up 25 per cent of the total.

What kind of men were these enthusiastic readers? There were 77 men out of the sample of 200 who voted "real practical help" on one or more of the three articles. These enthusiastic readers had slightly more education, more income, took more farm papers and had bigger farms than the non-enthusiasts.

We had another problem allied to this one. On it, we used a similar device. We were running two departments about whose merits we were doubtful. For the test, we added a third department whose long-time record was excellent and on which we had no doubts at all.

To the folks — both men and women — who read some or most of the three departments, the interviewers handed out a card which said:

The editors of *Wallaces Farmer* are wondering whether to drop this department. They'd like your advice. Which of the statements below comes nearest to representing your views:

1. Don't take the department out. I like it very much.
2. I usually read it, but I could get along without it.
3. Take it out if you want to. I won't care.
4. No opinion.

We had interviewer trouble on this one. Some interviewers didn't present the card to all the Read Somes and Read Mosts. But the main disappointment was the general amiability of the comments. Very few wanted to get rid of any of the departments. The following scores list those who said, "Don't take it out."

	Men		Women	
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
Workday Pointers	**103**	**86.5**	**63**	**80.1**
(This was the strong department, according to other tests.)				
Rural Route Ramblings . .	**93**	**77.5**	**82**	**78.8**
(This was the department, humorous in intent, on which we had doubts.)				
Country Air	**32**	**80.0**	**82**	**85.4**

On this test, all three departments earned the right to stay in. However, I'm not satisfied with the answer. Maybe our respondents were too amiable. A less brutal third choice than "Take it out" might have showed us more about farm attitudes.

We had another problem with the department dealing with recipes. Readership scores don't show much about recipe reading. Scores are always high. But surely there are differences between one set of recipes and another. Yet you wouldn't think so from the usual scores.

In the reader-interest survey of *Wallaces Farmer* (January 17, 1959) (Figure 12.6), we had interviewers find women who said they had read some or most of the recipe column. Then each respondent who had read the department was given a card which said:

Since you read some or most of this Cookery Corner department, I'd like to know a little more about your use of the recipes:

1. Have you tried out any of the recipes on this page?
   1. Yes 2. No
2. If Yes, how did the family like the recipe?
   1. Liked it 2. Didn't like it 3. No comment
3. Are you planning to use in the future any of the recipes on this page?
   1. Yes 2. No 3. Undecided

A similar study was made in *Wisconsin Agriculturist* (April 4, 1959). Here are the results for both papers:

	Wallaces Farmer		Wisconsin Ag	
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent
1. Have you tried out any of the recipes on this page?				
Yes	34	24.3	41	26.6
No	106	75.7	113	73.4
	140	100.0	154	100.0
2. If Yes, how did the family like the recipe?				
Liked it	26	65.0	32	55.2
Didn't like it	2	5.0	7	12.0
No comment	12	30.0	19	32.8
	40	100.0	58	100.0
3. Are you planning to use in the future any of the recipes on this page?				
Yes	82	62.1	133	82.1
No	19	14.4	6	3.7
Undecided	31	23.5	23	14.2
	132	100.0	162	100.0

The main value of the experiment was to establish a base line that would mean more than the standard one: "Every recipe column should get a Read Most score from 60 to 65 per cent." Now we are inclined to say, "If less than 20 per cent of the recipe readers have tried out a recipe in the column, we're slipping."

Another study of women's readership came in *Wallaces Farmer* (January 16, 1960). We ran an article about selecting, cooking and serving a prime rib roast (Figure 12.5).

The Poll asked: "Have you ever cooked and served a beef roast in the way described?

	No.	Per cent
Yes	51	41.5
No	72	58.5
	123	100.0

We found here that our farm women were less familiar with this kind of meat cookery than we had guessed.

We also asked: "If No, did the article make you want to try it some time?"

	No.	Per cent
Yes	68	80.7
No	9	10.9
Undecided	7	8.4
	84	100.0

Apparently a large number were interested in trying out what, for them, was a new method in cooking meat.

The Poll also asked: "Would you like to see more articles of this type in *Wallaces Farmer?*"

	No.	Per cent
Yes	**121**	**95.3**
No	**2**	**1.6**
Undecided	**4**	**3.1**
	127	**100.0**

The editors learned that there was a demand for this kind of copy and that for many women, it was a fairly new field. We had not expected as many to be unfamiliar with the subject; neither had we expected so much interest in more articles.

The over-all score (Read Most 56.5 per cent) was good, but it did not convey any of the information secured through the questions above.

Advertisers are even more anxious than editors to find out whether farmers believe what they read. In a reader interest survey of *Wisconsin Agriculturist* in 1959 one advertiser asked us to find out whether farmers believed the claims in copy about the efficiency of the feed being advertised.

We found 47 men in the sample who had read some or most of the ad copy, and who expressed an opinion on the ad. These men were given a card which restated the claim in the ad. We then asked the respondent to check one of the following:

1. Sounds reasonable to me.
2. Might be possible, but I'm not sure.
3. Don't think you could do it.
4. Undecided.

Of the 47 men who checked an answer to the question, 19 had serious doubts about the claim. The scores follow:

	No.	Per cent
1. Sounds reasonable to me	7	14.9
2. Might be possible, but I'm not sure	17	36.2
3. Don't think you could do it	19	40.4
4. Undecided	4	8.5
	47	100.0

This seemed to show that the claim in the ad wasn't getting across. A change in copy was indicated.

Another advertiser wanted to find out whether a testimonial, using the picture and name of a farmer, was believed. This MoorMan's ad appeared in the *Wallaces Farmer* (September 20, 1958) (Figure 12.2). The card asked whether an average farmer could be as successful in feeding hogs as was the man in the testimonial. There were 42 men who read some or most of this copy. They expressed themselves as follows:

	No.	Per cent
1. Yes, seems likely	22	52.4
2. No, he was lucky	10	23.8
3. I didn't pay much attention to his experiences	10	23.8
	42	100.0

While the sample is smaller than we like, the testimonial does seem to get a fair vote of confidence. Of the 42 farmers who read this copy, 20 were large hog raisers who had marketed 100 hogs or more in the past

year. Of these 20 prospective buyers of hog feed, 14 accepted the testimonial and only two rejected it. This approval by men who were presumably the better prospective buyers of hog feed gave additional weight to the results.

Another advertisement also ran testimonial copy on a feed ad. Farmers who read the ad were asked, "You've read the report of the experience of John Doe in feeding livestock. Do you think it likely that he could really do this well?"

The farmer readers of the ad answered:

"Yes, I think he could probably do that well"	**43%**
"Seems like the ad claims a little too much"	**35**
"It claims a lot too much"	**8**
"No opinion"	**14**

This advertisement had a good readership score. But was the believability score high enough? The advertiser had some doubts. The copy is getting another look.

In the three feed ads discussed above, much the same kind of sales argument was used.

In all three ads, layouts were of almost equal merit. All three had good readership scores. What made the difference in believability?

One of the lower ranking ads ordered the farmer to buy the product and shouted in large type what the benefits would be. The better ad tackled the theme with this head:

"Good results — as reported by Marvin Gesell, Howard County, Iowa."

The copy following gave a detailed report of what happened on the Gesell farm. The conclusion —

reached in the twentieth short line under the head — presented a feed cost about the same as that reported in one of the less successful ads.

Questions can throw more light on reader response to articles. Two articles may have the same readership score. Yet one may be enthusiastically received and the other cast aside with the bored remark, "That's old stuff."

Tests like these have the great merit of being fairly easy to handle in connection with a standard reader-interest survey. They answer, easily and inexpensively, one of the major questions every editor asks about readership. (1)

Figure 12.1

Agri-Vision

WISCONSIN Agriculturist

To help you make the right decision

Farm Management Panel

Dairy

Should I sell my 130 acre dairy farm on the edge of town and move out 10 miles where I can get 160 acres for the same money? Buildings are about the same on both places.

Bertram: If no city expansion likely, sell the 130 and get the extra land.

Kutish: You will make more money off the extra 30 acres than from the closeness to town.

Bohnen: Cost of running the two places is about the same. If the 160 is on a good all-weather road, consider making the switch.

Holl: A farm at the edge of town should sell for more money than rural farm now.

Dowell: If near a large city, wait for increased value for subdivision. But if you need the extra income each year now, don't overlook a 40 per cent increase for free.

Summing up: Distance doesn't mean much these days.

Hogs

Should I breed my usual number of sows for September farrow this year, or increase?

Bottum and Kutish: Hold steady. Your September farrowed pigs likely to reach market when about average hog-corn ratio is prevailing.

Bohnen: Stay by your usual program. But feel is not the best time to step up hog production.

Holl: Breed your normal number.

Dowell: Prices likely won't be as high a year from now.

Summing up: The hog business doesn't look rosy enough to expand at this time.

Beef

I have just weaned my 9-month-old Angus calves. They got oats, hay and corn all winter and are in good flesh. Should I: (1) full feed them on good bluegrass pasture and sell as fat cattle in the fall; (2) limit feed them and sell as feeders in the fall; or (3) run on bluegrass alone and sell as feeders in the fall?

Kutish: Full feed to sell as fat cattle. They should more than pay for the grain.

Holl: With those calves in good flesh now, your best bet is to go on and feed them out.

Bohnen: Your calves average 450 pounds now. Their present value is about $125 per head. If you grain them with no grain until November, they would weigh 700 pounds and probably would bring about $180 per head, or a gross profit of around $55. If you grain them on grass to 1,000 pounds, your feed cost would be about $100. Your investment now would be about $300 or $12.50 per 100 pounds. They should get well enough to pay to feed them out.

Bottum: Full feed on grass — or sell as feeder now.

Dowell: Look like the fat cattle market still be better this autumn and fall than the feeder market.

Summing up: The vote is to full feed on grass.

* * * *

Last fall I bought 50 head of choice 400-pound calves with the intention of feeding them on grass this spring and summer. With an open winter I now find they weigh 750 pounds. Should I go ahead with my plan to feed them out on grass, or should I depict them and push? I like to feed to 1,200 pounds or better.

Holl: These calves have done well. So push them to choice in the drylot.

Bottum: Go ahead with your plan to full-feed on grass.

Kutish: Run them on grass alone for 60 days. Then full-feed on grass. You will get the most good from grass this way. Your cattle will be maybe a little large, but you may get a better market that way.

Dowell: Full-feed on grass until October 1. Then 30 days more in the drylot.

Bohnen: This boils down to a matter of trying to out-guess the market. I'd fullfeed on grass until the first of August then drylot and point toward the November-December market.

Summing up: Each man has a little different slant.

Crops

I have been growing 80 acres of corn and 20 of beans. I feed all my corn and don't plan to participate in the feed grains program. Should I step up my bean acreage, cut back my corn and buy the extra corn needed?

Bohnen: Beans supported at $3.90 and corn stepped at $1.20 make the per acre return from beans at normal, swathe higher for corn than for beans.

Bottum: Probably just as well stick by your normal rotation.

Holl: Look for a big jump in bean acreage which could reduce prices. I wouldn't boost bean acreage.

Kutish: If you raise beans, best harvest market probably will be making them. All some point to a big boost in beans.

Dowell: If you can get $2.50 per bushel for your beans, anything over $1's, basket yield for beans with 15 corn, yielding 80 bushels per acre will favor beans.

Summing up: If you boost bean acreage, be sure you have storage place to seal your beans.

Farm Management

What is the long time outlook for the young farmer who has a chance to go in farming with his father on an adequate sized unit for both of them?

Dowell: About the same as for the last 30 years.

Bottum: Long run outlook good for man who can obtain adequate resources and capacity to manage.

Holl: Prospect good for farm boy who can work into good sized business and handle it.

Kutish: Short run outlook is not so much. But longer term look is it for man who is a good farmer and can get hold of adequate size unit.

Bohnen: Long time outlook is good. If you like farming and have ability to manage, stay with the farm.

Summing up: Key answer here is adequate sized unit—and it's larger than majority of farmers operate today.

Poultry

Is it better to raise your pullets in confinement or on the range?

Dowell: Many large commercial operations still stick to raising pullets on the range.

Bottum: Can be done satisfactorily and economically either way. Depends upon your individual situation.

Bohnen: Raising them on range and range does not supplement costs low money for labor and feed.

Holl: It is much cheaper to raise on range and usually should get a better pullet in your laying house.

Kutish: Confinement raising has better feed and building costs, but you have a little less death loss from lice and other predators.

Summing up: The vote is for raising pullets on range.

OUR PANEL MEMBERS: E. Carroll Bottum, agricultural economist, Purdue University; Jesse Dowell, farm manager, Dowell Agricultural Specialists, Chicago, Ill.; Ike Holl, farm manager, Madison, Wis.; Francis A. Kutish, agricultural outlook economist, Iowa State University; J. A. Bohnen, president, Farmers State Bank, Schleswig, Iowa.

April 15, 1961

Wisconsin Agriculturist

Page Score

Men 72.5%

Women 44.0%

"Help" and "Enjoyment"

Men who read this department were asked, "What did you think of it?"

"The article made suggestions that will be of practical help to me" 42.3%

"It has a few points I can use" 32.4

Men readers were also asked whether they enjoyed reading the article — thus, "enjoyment" as contrasted with "help." And 92.8 per cent of readers of the department reported they "enjoyed" the copy.

Farmers may find it harder to admit "help" than "enjoyment." Both sets of questions throw some light on the meaning of the readership score.

Wisconsin Agriculturist, April 15, 1961

GOOD RESULTS

——as reported by Marvin Gesell, Howard County, Iowa

"In terms of results MoorMan's Mintrates are the lowest cost concentrates we've ever fed.

"Take this present bunch of pigs. At 8 weeks they averaged better than 50 pounds—and at 90 days they averaged 160 pounds. We're feeding all the way according to the MoorMan Plan.

"Our sows were on MoorMan's Sow Mintrate. The pigs they gave us were big pigs. They were strong and sturdy and took right off from the start. We started them on Creep Concentrate and our sows too, then switched to Pig Mintrate and corn.

"We keep accurate feeding records and at 90 days our total feed cost, figuring corn at $1.12 a bu., and including weaning, came to exactly $61.52. That's $5.14 feed cost per pig. This is 1.4 pounds of feed (exclusive of sow's milk) per pound of pork. Total Mintrate cost was $2.92 per pig.

"That's what we call good results."

Pigs will make hogs of themselves in record time on a minimum amount of feed if, like Marvin Gesell, you follow the MoorMan Program . . . Sow Mintrate* to help get large litters of thrifty pigs . . . Creep Concentrate to get them off to a fast start . . . Pig Mintrate to keep them gaining, and Hog Mintrate for fast, economical finish. Thousands of other hog producers who are on this complete Mintrate Program will also tell you—"In terms of results—in terms of feed, harvest gain—MoorMan's Mintrates are the lowest priced concentrates you can find anywhere." If your MoorMan Man doesn't call soon, write Moorman Mfg. Co., Dept. 389, Quincy, Illinois.

MoorMan's
Mintrates for
Pigs and Hogs

Figure 12.2

Page Split A

Page Score

Men 42%

Women 26%

"Did You Believe Gesell?"

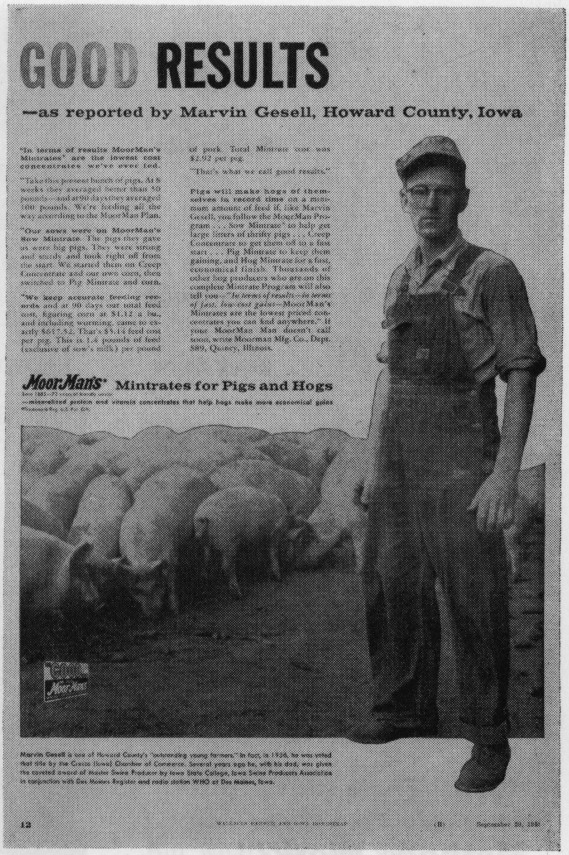
These two pages came out almost even in scores, with one marked exception. The sales copy in B, pushed up to the top of the page, did better with men (Read Some 27 per cent to 16 per cent) than the sales copy in A.

Readers of the page were also asked, "Do you think an average farmer could be as successful in feeding hogs as Mr. Gesell was in the case reported here?"

Over half (52.3 per cent) answered, "Yes, seems likely." Other experiments on the believability of testimonials indicate that a 50 per cent approval is an unusually strong vote of confidence.

Figure 12.3

Page Split B



Page Score

Men 48%

Women 24%

Women showed less interest in the ad, more skepticism about the testimonial. Only one-third of the women readers of the ad said, "Yes, seems likely."

The A reader may note that this cutout did about as well as the square photograph. This is contrary to the result in Figures 4.10, 4.11. In that case, the square photograph out pulled the cutout. One explanation may be that in 12.3, no damage was done to the hogs; in 4.11 the cows were badly chopped up. The mutilated cut in 4.11 destroyed the appeal of one part of the photograph; in 12.3, the hogs were allowed to make their usual appeal.

Wallaces Farmer, September 20, 1958

Figure 12.4

Copy Score

Read Some

Men 65.5%

Women 33.5%

"Will These Methods Work?"

Men who read this article on dairying were asked if they thought "the methods reported would work on my farm."

Of the men readers of the article, 43.7 per cent said "Yes." And another 22.2 per cent checked, "These methods might work on my farm." Only 6.3 per cent said, "They wouldn't work on my farm."

Wisconsin Agriculturist, October 3, 1959

High Production is the rule in this herd owned by John and Kathryn Bartlett, Winnebago county. Good milking and feeding practices have helped to bring record production.

Good Management Means More Milk

Feeding and milking practices have big influence on dairy production

FEEDING and milking practices influence more milk records than any other management factor.

That's the report from University of Wisconsin dairy specialists who point out that the difference between poor and excellent milking practices alone is around 100 pounds of butterfat per cow every year. That amounts to 3,000 pounds for a 30-cow herd.

"Production records are now being broken because of better feeds and better management," points out E. E. Heizer, University of Wisconsin dairy specialist. "In past decades, high energy feeds weren't considered as important and cows just weren't producing at the highest rate possible."

Regularity Is Important to Good Management

Some dairymen like Oliver Propst, Dodge county, consider regularity one of the most important management points.

"Chores come first on my farm," he says. Once you get a system, sudden changes are hard on the cows, so I like to be as regular with milking as possible."

The Propst herd was one of 43 Wisconsin Holstein herds analyzed by researchers to pin down the degree to which milk and fat production are influenced by "environmental factors."

Specialists rated each of these herds on regularity, availability of feed, vacuum levels on the milking line, sanitation, udder stimulation, milking machine time and mastitis control. Results were combined with other feeding and management practices.

Taking care of dry cows was one of the important production-boosting practices investigated. Within reasonable limits, say the specialists, days in the dry period are not a total loss as far as production is concerned.

"I like to give my cows about 60 days dry period," says Nelson Mason, whose Dodge county herd was surveyed by investigators.

In the study, cows receiving eight weeks rest period averaged around 10 pounds more fat during the next milking year than those which had dry periods of only three weeks. For a 30-cow herd, such as Mason's, this could mean around 300 pounds more fat in a year.

Of the factors studied, adequate feeding and milking practices seemed to be the most important. If you underfeed cows by only one pound of TDN daily, report the researchers, you'll be losing around 12 pounds of fat per cow per year on the average. For a 30-cow herd, that's about 360 pounds of fat each year.

How you feed is even more important than how much you feed. Cows in a herd where feeding practices rated excellent would produce some 75 pounds more fat during the year than if they were in a herd where the feeding practices rated poor. For a 30 cow herd, this could mean more than 2,000 pounds of fat yearly.

The study also underscored the advantage of large cows and cows with a long productive life in the herd. Seven cows in the John and Kathryn Bartlett herd in Winnebago county proved that point in January when their total lifetime production went over a million pounds of milk.

Takes 40 Average Cows to Equal 7 High Ones

Dairy experts point out that it would take 40 average U. S. cows to equal the million pound lifetime mark of the seven Bartlett Holsteins.

It should be remembered that cows don't reach their highest level of production until they are 6 or 7 years old. And they do not decline to any extent for another five years.

This points up the value of keeping cows in the herd as many years as possible.

But for most dairymen, what counts is the combined influence of inheritance and environment (feeding and management practices).

The cow that's going to make you the most money is one that's bred for high production, then managed in such a way that she can produce at the peak of her inherited ability.

Figure 12.5

Department

Score

Women 88.5%

They Tried Out Recipes

This department "Cookery Corner" always has a high score. But what does the score mean?

One way to find out is to ask, "Have you tried out any of the recipes on this page?" The women were interviewed from 10 days to two weeks after they received the paper. Of the women readers of the department, 24.3 per cent answered "Yes."

And 62 per cent said they planned to use one or more of the recipes in the future.

Wallaces Farmer, January 17, 1959

Cookery Corner

Cottage Cheese Salad

1 package lime gelatin
2 cups cottage cheese
¼ teaspoon salt
Juice of ½ lemon
Small can crushed pineapple (drained)
½ cup chopped nuts
1 pimento sliced (canned)

Make gelatin according to directions on package. Let set until firm and beat until fluffy. Add rest of ingredients. Put into salad molds (individual or large one) which have been rinsed in cold water. Let set. Serve on salad greens. Can be topped with a maraschino cherry.

Baked Stuffed Pork Chops

4 rib pork chops (cut 1 inch thick)
1 tablespoon chopped onion
¼ cup diced celery
2 tablespoons fat
2 cups dry bread crumbs
½ teaspoon salt
Dash of pepper
½ teaspoon sage
½ cup water
Salt and pepper

Slit a pocket along the bone side of each chop. Prepare the stuffing by browning the onion and celery in fat and then combining with crumbs, salt, sage and water. Stuff each chop with this mixture. Season chops, place in a baking pan. Cover pan and bake in a 350 degree oven for one hour. Uncover and continue baking 30 minutes to brown.

Stuffed Cabbage

1 large head cabbage
1 lb. chopped beef or half beef and half sausage
1 egg
3 sliced onions
½ cup bread crumbs
¼ cup catsup
Salt and pepper to taste

Fry onions slowly in butter until soft and yellow. Add chopped meat and stir with a fork for 5 minutes. Combine meat mixture with egg, catsup, bread crumbs and seasoning. Stuff cabbage that has been topped and cored. Replace the top and tie cabbage securely with clean string. Steam about an hour in a small amount of water or until cabbage is tender. Serve with sour cream.

WANDA MILES, Ida county, Iowa, exhibits some of her home baked bread. Wanda says that, of her high school studies, home economics is her favorite.

January 17, 1959 WALLACES FARMER

Homemaking Today

Edited by ZOE MURPHY

Select, cook and serve a delicious

Prime Rib ROAST

Standing rib roast, properly cooked, should be carved carefully and served with ceremony. This can be one of the most important contributions to a successful meal—whether it's a family or a party for special guests.

YOU ARE planning a meal—maybe it's for the family or perhaps for some special guests. Your meal will, of course, be planned around your choice of meat. Let's say you decide on a prime rib of beef.

You visualize a meal with a delicately browned roast, served on your prettiest platter, and carved expertly by the head of your house.

What do you end up with? If you are like a lot of us, the roast you take from the oven is shrunken to half the size it should be. It is dark brown in color, and often dry.

Then, perhaps, to finish things off you are forced to "hunk" it in the kitchen. Or if your husband is persuaded to do the carving at the table, he decides it's easier to cut straight down instead of across the grain of the meat.

Immediately the meal loses some of its festive flavor!

Actually, there is no cut of meat that is more delicious and delicately flavored than a properly cooked standing rib roast. Yet all too often, it is poorly cooked and inexpertly carved.

Following directions can make the preparation as simple as preparing hamburgers. And the roast can be easier to carve than a chicken.

Even a slight variation in temperature affects the time required to cook meat just to your liking. The size and shape of the roast makes a difference. In general, the longer the cut, the fewer minutes per pound required to cook it. However a chunky cut requires longer cooking time than a flat one.

Probably before you select your roast, you should get yourself a meat thermometer. You'll find one at almost any hardware store. They are relatively inexpensive and will last a lifetime with good care.

A meat thermometer is the accurate guide to the right degree of doneness for oven-cooked meat.

Care of the meat after you buy it is important, too. Unwrap it as soon as you get home from the market. Then, store, either uncovered or loosely wrapped, in the coldest part of your refrigerator that it should not be held for more than three days.

If your supply of meat is stored in a home freezer, take it out the day before you plan to cook it. If space permits, let it thaw slowly in your refrigerator.

Roasting is simply cooking in the oven with dry heat. It takes a high quality cut of beef to come out of the oven tender and juicy, when dry-roasted. But today we have large supplies of corn fed beef. The standing rib from any carcass grading U. S. Good or better makes an excellent sweet roast.

So select a roast that has a smooth covering of firm, creamy white fat evenly distributed over the exterior. The lean beef should be uniform and bright. Its color may range anywhere from a pale to a deep red.

The lean also should be well marbled with white fat. The texture of the lean in a good piece of meat will be firm, velvety, and fine in grain.

Season the roast with salt and pepper, if desired. It makes little difference whether the roast is salted before cooking. When the roast is done, the salt has penetrated only a half-inch deep anyway.

Place the meat fat side up on a rack in a shallow, open roasting pan. The rack holds the roast out of the drippings. With the fat on top, the roast will do its own basting.

Insert your new meat thermometer so the bulb is in the center of the lean area. The bulb should not hit the bone or rest in the fat.

Add no water—and don't cover the roast. If the pan is covered, your lovely roast is braised (pot-roasted). This is fine for the less tender cuts of meat. But dry-roasting develops a different flavor which adds a pleasant variety to your meals.

Set your oven at 300 to 350 degrees. It can be started just as the roast is put in. Roast to the desired degree of doneness. You may think you must have your meat well-done, but you might be pleasantly surprised with the added flavor and juiciness of a roast that is pink in the center.

Oven roasting, like broiling, does not make meat more tender. So there's no reason to cook it well done unless your family prefers this type of beef roast.

Figure 12.6

Page Score

Men 11.5%

Women 85.0%

"Do You Want To Try This?"

Women readers on this page were told about selecting and cooking a prime rib roast. Then they were asked, "Have you ever cooked and served a beef roast in the way described?"

Less than half (41.5 per cent) said, "Yes."

We also asked, "If No, did the article make you want to try it some time?" Of this group, 80.6 per cent said they'd like to try it. And of the whole number of readers of the article, 95.7 per cent said they'd like to see more articles like it in the paper.

Farm women were less familiar with this kind of cookery than we had guessed. They were also more eager than we had expected for more copy of this kind.

Wallaces Farmer, January 16, 1960

From this series of ads and from similar studies, is it possible to draw any conclusions that will help copy writers to anticipate trouble in this field? Plainly more data is needed, but the following suggestions may be helpful:

1. The best ad didn't claim too much and didn't shout too loud. An almost diffident approach, coupled with a conservative claim, seemed to help believability.
2. Testimonial copy apparently can be either good or bad. It is bad if it sounds like the farmer quoted was bragging. A farmer talking across the fence to his neighbor doesn't brag too openly. He is more apt to say, "I was lucky this year. Got a bigger crop than usual."
3. Easy reading of copy is important. In terms of a Flesch "reading ease" score, the copy lead in the top ranking ad had 13 words to the sentence and 132 syllables per 100 words. The copy lead in one of the other ads had an average sentence length of 20 words and a syllable count of 156 per 100 words.
4. If the advertiser's experiments show that he can, most of the time, cut feed costs 50 per cent under those shown by the average farm, this is good news for the product. Yet it may not pay to make so strong a claim — even if well documented — in the ad. Farmers discount big claims.
5. Copy that issues orders: "Buy this, etc.," is not likely to do as well as a more indirect approach that says, in effect, "John Doe is doing pretty good with this feed. Maybe you'll have the same experience."