



## THE NUTRITIVE VALUE OF THE LESS-IMPORTANT FOODS

THE large number of foods commonly called "protective foods" by dietitians contain, as well as their calorie or energy value, which all foods have to a greater or less extent, the essential nutrients—vitamins, minerals, and protein—in sufficient amounts to make an important contribution to the body's requirement of one or more of them. The special nutrient content and therefore the importance of these protective foods, most of which happen to be "natural" or unrefined foods such as milk, vegetables, eggs, and fruit, have been discussed in two previous articles by Evelyn E. Moore, Rural Sociologist, Department of Agriculture, Palmerston North. This article deals with the value of foods which, generally because of their poorer nutrient content, are not to be recommended as substitutes or often even partial substitutes for the protective foods.

THESE foods may be used in addition to the protective foods to improve flavour and provide greater variety in the menu, and some of them, especially fats, are most important contributors to the energy value of the diet, particularly of hard-working men and women and energetic adolescents. They also include beverages, which are a very important part of the menu from the gastronomical point of view, though sometimes of negligible value nutritionally.

### Oils and Fats

Though they may appear slightly different, all oils and fats have practically the same energy content. They are particularly good energy foods, containing slightly more than twice as many calories as sugar, and the latest scientific evidence indicates that a combination of fats with starchy or sweet

foods is more economical of the essential vitamin B<sub>1</sub> or thiamine than starches and sugars used alone.

In addition, fish-liver oils and butter are protective foods. Butter is the most nutritious of the common culinary fats and oils, containing appreciable amounts of vitamin A. Fish oils are also excellent sources of vitamin A and contain vitamin D and iodine as well; in fact, they are the only foods which contain vitamin D in sufficient amounts to meet the requirements of babies and expectant and nursing mothers, who often are not able to obtain sufficient by exposure to sunshine.

As all other fats contain negligible amounts of nutrients, they are of less value and should not appear too frequently in the menus of other than people doing hard manual work, athletes, or energetic children and adolescents, for their very high energy value

and small bulk may lead to their consumption in excess of energy requirements by sedentary people, causing overweight. Pastries, fried foods, roasted vegetables, and other fat foods, though certainly not harmful, are most suitable for energetic people, and certainly should be eschewed by all with a tendency to be overweight.

### Sugars

Sugar, golden syrup, honey, jam, and other sweets are all good energy foods, but otherwise are of negligible value nutritionally. In addition, the popularity of sweets and sugar is regarded by nutritional authorities and dentists as one of the important causes of the high incidence of tooth decay among New Zealanders.

Different forms of sugar, such as ordinary cane sugar (sucrose), glucose, honey, and milk sugar (lactose), are often supposed, quite without reason, to vary in their nutritive value, honey, glucose, and milk sugar generally having the reputation of being better for health than ordinary sugar. That glucose does not require digestion is true, but as sugar is very easily digested, no advantage is gained by

HEADING PHOTOGRAPH—Apart from their mild stimulating effect, tea and coffee are of almost-negligible value nutritionally and have no energy or calorie value, but there seems to be no reason why people who prefer them to water as a drink should forgo that pleasure. National Publicity Studios photo.