

So you like your beer—



AFTER spending a decade perfecting processes for extracting yeast from food and beverage, we are now beginning to wonder why we did it. Or at least, scientists have been doing the wondering for us, in the light of research findings which have served to restore yeast to its rightful place as a food.

Baker and brewer have long employed yeast as allies in their respective trades. Without it the simple process of fermentation as it is known today would be impossible. Yeast is the potent agent in the production of alcohol from sugar; added with warm water to flour it commences the fermentation that gives sponginess to the loaf in breadmaking. And yet, because of the demands of eye and palate, we have done our best to disguise its presence and, even after it has performed the task assigned to it, to eliminate it altogether.

With the growing demand in the nineteenth century for purity and sterility in food of all descriptions, scientists undertook an examination of the "harmful forms of microscopic life". The result of the inquiries both then and in the intervening years has been to give proof of the beneficial part many micro-organisms play in the nutrition of man and animals. Present day research has shown, too, that the indiscriminating quest for sterility in all things eaten and drunk has resulted in the destruction not only of harmful micro-organisms, but beneficial ones as well.

Beer is a case in point. Modern palates require that beer, in the finished product, must be a clear

beverage from which all traces of yeast have been removed by filtration. Contrast this with the days when good English barley corn ale was drunk by all classes at all times of the day—even children drank it in volume. Beer as it was known in the Middle Ages contained a large proportion of the yeast grown in it during brewing, and sufficient yeast must have been consumed by beer-drinkers to rank it as a food as well as a drink.

In the post-war years, when meat and other animal proteins are likely to be in short supply, at least till the destroyed herds of war-damaged countries can be built up again, yeast will come into its own. Nineteenth-century science established that brewer's yeast contained a large percentage of protein, a constituent which, together with fats and hydrocarbons, is indispensable in food, and it has since been found that yeast protein contains a nutritive value little inferior to a good animal protein. Further, it has been shown that micro-organisms are a most potent source of the important vitamin B.

Brewer's yeast gained attention during the war of 1914-18, when Germany began to look about for her means to replace the overseas sources of protein concentrates from which she had been cut off. The outcome was a synthetic "mineral yeast" which, however, was soon discarded as unsuitable because of Germany's shortage of the carbohydrates (sugars) necessary for its development. During the past three