

**PACKAGED CONVENIENCE AND EDUCATION--  
KEYS TO THE REVITALIZATION OF THE PRODUCE DEPARTMENT**

by

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# THESIS

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Age of Convenience

This is the age of speed--jet speed. This is the age of power--atomic power. This is the age of modern living--the age of convenience.

The trend toward buying modern convenience products is higher and higher each year. The use of electric shavers has increased from 38.9 per cent of men surveyed in 1955 to 45.7 per cent in 1957. Shaving cream in pressurized cans has increased from 14.5 per cent to 23.1 per cent during the same two short years.<sup>1</sup>

Ladies, likewise, have become convenience conscious. In 1958 housewives bought over \$500 million worth of frozen prepared dishes, most of which were in convenient built-in containers that went from oven to table to trash can. Today almost one out of every three cups of coffee is made with instant coffee. "Postwar sales of prepared baby foods have grown some 230% to a quarter-billion-dollar industry, and sales of cake mixes and other prepared mixes have more than doubled to \$253 million."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"'Convenience' Sets the Consumer Pace," Executive Digest, August, 1957, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>"Modern Living--Just Heat and Serve," Time, December 7, 1959, p. 94.



This trend is in line with the fast pace of living of the American people of today. More and more stores and businesses are catering to the American housewife today and are helping her reduce the time she spends on her time-consuming chores of washing, ironing, cleaning, shopping, and cooking so that she will have more time for P.T.A. and church activities, taking the children to music and dancing lessons, reading the bestsellers, and keeping up with the many other new interests and responsibilities in the home and the community.

The super market and food manufacturers have joined forces to give the housewife quality food in a convenient form in an effort to make two of her household jobs less tedious and more enjoyable, namely grocery shopping and cooking. One only has to look down the wide aisles of a modern super market and he can see convenience on almost every shelf and in every refrigerated case: instant coffee in three size jars; over 70 different kinds of cake, pie, frosting, and dessert mixes; a choice of ten different frozen TV dinners; casserole dishes in plastic bags that can be tossed whole into a pot of water, cooked, and served; horseradish and garlic whip in aerosol cans; complete pizza mix in a tube; frozen potatoes whipped, French fried, crinkle cut, hashed, puffed, pattied, diced, stuffed baked, escalloped, creamed and home fried; and prepackaged fresh meats and produce that have previously been cleaned, trimmed, weighed, labeled, and packaged in clear film.

This list of convenience foods is growing every day as is evidenced by the long lists of new products published in the trade periodicals every month and the samples of products that keep appearing on the desks of grocery buyers across the country every week.

### Scope, Purpose, and Limits of Paper

What has caused this increased demand for convenience? Where can convenience be improved in the super market? How can it be further developed and merchandised? What are the housewives like who are demanding this built-in maid service?

These are some of the questions that will be analyzed in greater detail in this paper. This paper will deal with convenience, however, only as it relates to the produce department of a super market.

Although there have been a few articles written on the convenience of individual produce items or small groups of produce items, according to the 1960 Directory of Research Reports Relating to Produce Packaging there have been no papers written that develop how to merchandise all these items. As far as the writer knows, this paper is also unique in that it directly analyzes and compares the convenience of processed fruits and vegetables with fresh produce.

It will first analyze reports and surveys of industrial leaders on the subject and then it will compare the convenience offered by the produce department with that offered by other departments of the store. Next the paper

will describe methods and the rationale behind the methods that can be used in developing and merchandising convenience in the produce department. It will also attempt to explain and examine some of the implications and controlling factors of convenience as it relates to government regulations and equipment involved.

This paper will not deal with the technicalities of specific packaging materials that should be used or at what level in the marketing channel the packaging should take place. Rather the paper is designed to give an insight into how far the produce department is behind other departments in the store in giving the customers convenience. It is also designed to give ideas on convenience that can be adapted to individual store situations.

The second half of the paper will investigate the modern young housewife of today as portrayed through a personal survey and secondary reports. Using this background the paper will then deal with specific ways of educating the modern housewife in relation to the conveniences and ideas expressed in the first part of the paper. The paper will end with an educational program designed for the personnel in the produce department itself so they can more effectively sell Mrs. Consumer on their department and the convenience it has to offer.

One other limiting factor of this paper is the limited scope of the personal surveys that are being used as part of the background material for this paper. Because



of the limited time factor, the writer could only interview a very small sample of the desired universe, but it is hoped that the ideas gained from this sample will be of some value in gaining some insight into the true population characteristics. Regardless of the true value of the information gathered, the interviews were a very stimulating and educational experience for the writer.

### The Fading Produce Department

As convenience has become more and more important in today's marketing picture, fresh fruit and vegetable sales have continued to decline as a per cent of total store sales. The inroads made into the produce department sales and prestige have been reflected in the "cramped preparation areas, the inability of many produce departments to get their full share of advertising space and promotional effort, fewer training programs."<sup>3</sup>

During the past year super market operators and executives throughout the country have become quite concerned over the depressed state of affairs in their produce departments. At this year's annual convention of Super Market Institute at Bal Harbour, Florida, the emphasis was on perishables and specifically on the decreased use of fresh produce and what could be done to combat this decline.

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<sup>3</sup>Glenn Snyder, "Why Your Produce Department Will Make a Comeback in the '60's," Progressive Grocer, XXXIX, No. 2 (February, 1960), p. 48.



The findings and recommendations of the much discussed and important Loewy Report emphasized the importance of the produce department in creating a store image and personality and the report warned that "the produce department's declining share of total store sales will continue into the new decade unless super market operators take quick action."<sup>4</sup>

At this year's National American Wholesale Grocers' Association annual convention in Chicago the role of perishables was stressed in the form of a workshop session devoted exclusively to the subject. At this workshop, Mr. Robert Bull, produce specialist from the University of Delaware and the Produce Packaging Association and also Marketing Counsel for NAWGA, gave the results of a survey that covered top produce executives in the United States and Canada. Much of the survey dealt with the importance of prepackaging of fresh fruits and vegetables as a method of increasing fresh produce volume. It was indicated that prepackaging will aid the produce industry to "hold its own" during the next few years.<sup>5</sup>

The independents were also advised to stress produce in their stores during the recent National Association of

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<sup>4</sup>"SMI Members Hear Report on Competition, Loewy Survey," Chain Store Age, XXXVI, No. 2 (February, 1960), p. 17.

<sup>5</sup>"NAWGA Stresses Perishables Role," Super Market News, IX, No. 12 (March 21, 1960), p. 35.



Retail Grocers convention at Dallas, Texas. Mr. Don Grimes, president of Independent Grocers Alliance of Chicago, said that "progressive retailers find paying attention to fresh fruits and vegetables and buying only quality merchandise can increase their sales from eight per cent to ten per cent of total store sales."<sup>6</sup> Other interesting figures that Mr. Grimes pointed out to the NARGUS independents were that the meat, produce, dairy, and bakery departments "took up 25 per cent of store space--do 50 per cent of the volume--and make 75 per cent of the profit."<sup>7</sup>

There is good reason for this great concern over one department in the store because in the last ten years the per capita consumption of fresh fruits has declined 35 per cent and fresh vegetables has declined 20 per cent according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture figures.<sup>8</sup> Per capita consumption of all fruits and vegetables declined from 424 pounds to 398 pounds during the last ten years.<sup>9</sup>

This decline is especially significant in the produce department because this department is first in gross

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<sup>6</sup>"Stress Perishables, Independents Advised at NARGUS," Super Market News, IX, No. 24 (June 13, 1960), p. 20.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Super Markets of the Sixties, A report to Super Market Institute, Inc., Prepared by the Raymond Loewy Corporation at convention, January, 1960, p. 62.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.



profit return on investment in inventory, as shown by the following chart based on Progressive Grocer's Super Valu Study, and also because the average per cent margin on sales, 30.8, is higher for the produce department than for any other department in the store by 9.5 per cent.

TABLE 1

PRODUCE DEPARTMENT FIRST  
IN GROSS PROFIT RETURN ON INVESTMENT IN INVENTORY<sup>a</sup>

Department	Annual Turnover	Annual Sales	Fully Stocked Retail Value	Annual Gross \$ Margin	Gross Profit Return Per \$ Invested
Produce	75	\$109,772	\$1,464	\$ 33,800	\$ 33.40
Meats	72	280,072	3,890	59,800	19.56
Grocery*	18	859,481	47,343	49,613	3.85

\*Includes dry groceries, dairy, frozen foods and baked goods.

<sup>a</sup>Snyder, op. cit., p. 53.

It must be remembered that it is not only the retail stores that are affected by the decline of fresh produce consumption but also the grocers and shippers. Last year sales of the United Fruit Company decreased by some \$11,464,472 from 1958.<sup>10</sup>

As the produce problem came up for discussion at the many conventions and meetings during the past few years, the speakers offered many reasons for the declining sales and consumption figures. Some of the reasons were frozen foods, sales increases of other prepared foods,

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<sup>10</sup>"United Fruit Sales, Profits Decline in '59," Super Market News, IX, No. 3 (January 18, 1960), produce section.

new service departments in the store such as bakery and delicatessen, growth of the nonfood department, and the fact that relatively few of the store managers or members of top management are produce men but rather grocery or meat specialists.

After reading and comparing the different reports and comments of top men in the food field, it seems that one idea seems to stand out as being paramount in importance as to why produce sales have declined. This idea goes deeper than the mere words frozen foods or prepared foods, which are often cited as being the biggest factors affecting fresh produce sales. The underlying idea which seemed to be present in competing products of fresh produce but was absent from the produce department was CONVENIENCE.



## CHAPTER II

### MODERN HOUSEWIVES WANT CONVENIENCE

A closer look at the reports and speeches made thus far by top produce and food experts is now in order to see exactly what recommendations have been made.

#### The Loewy Report

Super Market Institute sponsored the 13-month, \$75,000 survey made by the Raymond Loewy Corporation. The main emphasis of the report centered around the importance and improvement of the produce, meat, and general merchandise departments of the modern super market.

The report pointed out the changes in eating habits of modern Americans. The decrease in per capita consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables that were previously mentioned were offset to some extent by increased sales in other departments. Increased sales of frozen peas, beans, and spinach, fresh vegetables requiring consumer processing, were noted as accounting for much of the decrease in fresh sales of these vegetables. The convenience of pre-trimming, pre-shelling, and pre-cleaning is a must if fresh vegetables are to begin to compete with frozen. Generally the fresh vegetable decrease was offset by either an increase in frozen or canned.

This was not the case, however, in the decrease of fruits. Here sales of fresh fruits have declined per



capita and people have purchased more sweets and instant puddings and desserts for snacks and desserts.

Walter Stern, the Loewy technical director of packaging, noted customers also want convenience in the form of portion control and individual servings in the sizes of produce packages offered as well as pan-ready vegetables. He advocated unit packaging of related use items for greater convenience. Mr. Stern seemed to be strongly recommending a prepackaged produce department in today's modern super market when at this year's SMI convention he stated, "We found that many consumers seem to feel produce shopping is distasteful in the areas where it becomes necessary to wait for the services of an over-worked clerk to have produce bagged, weighed and price-marked. While the entire store is self-service, the consumer has to mentally shift back 20 years when entering the produce area and be satisfied willy-nilly with cracker-barrel packaging methods."<sup>11</sup>

In looking to the future and the expected income growth the report said that the marketing implications of this increase in income would mean that consumers would not be as price conscious as they presently are. This prediction is in accord with the USDA analysis of food purchases by the public which shows that as incomes rise, expenditures for fresh produce also rise. This report is based on the government economists' prediction that there

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<sup>11</sup> "SMI Meeting," Super Market News, IX, No. 3 (January 18, 1960), p. 30.

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will be a steady rise in consumer buying power during the '60's which may be a 50 per cent increase by 1970 over 1959.<sup>12</sup>

Another marketing implication is that people will want, and will pay for, delivery and other special services. It is hard to say to what extent these services will be offered and how much the people will actually pay for them, but it is reported that one super market has purchased its own taxi and for an additional 50 cents, the customer, and her order, will be delivered to her door.<sup>13</sup> There is also a truck delivery available for 25 cents as well as a phone order service available at the store.

The above implications would seem to suggest several things. First, that it would pay a produce department to include some of the more unusual and expensive types of fruits and vegetables in its regular assortment of merchandise. Such items as Banana squash, artichokes, Persian melons, mangoes, and tangelces suggest themselves.

Second, consumers might be willing to pay a little extra for special services and convenience features in a produce department, features which the later part of this paper will recommend.

### Food Leaders Talk Convenience

Many food leaders have been aware of the drop in

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<sup>12</sup>Snyder, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>13</sup>"Here is a Retail Feature in a Supermarket," Roundy's Reporter, VIII, No. 19 (May 12, 1960), p. 6.

sales in this high profit department and have voiced their opinions as to the causes and solutions to the problem. It might be well to look at some of these opinions to see if there is some basic thought or idea underlying all the opinions and facts.

Mr. Harley V. McNamara, president of National Tea Company, stated in a speech given before the Merchandising Executives Club of Chicago that prepared convenience foods will make the biggest gain in the coming decade. Mr. McNamara said he based this on "the growing number of working homemakers who want food requiring little or no preparation time."<sup>14</sup>

At the 9th Annual National Conference on Produce Packaging, Mr. Paul J. Cupp, president of the American Stores Company, was speaking to shippers and growers as well as to retailers when he pointed out that where the objective of the shipper was to maximize profitable sales of only produce, the objective of the retailer was to please the consumer with quality, variety, and service. Therefore, "whether more beans are sold fresh or canned is a secondary consideration for us in the attainment of our overall objectives as a business."<sup>15</sup> Mr. Cupp quickly

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<sup>14</sup>"Coupon, Sweepstakes Use Hit by Nat'l. Tea President," Super Market News, IX, No. 17 (April 25, 1960), p. 4.

<sup>15</sup>Paul J. Cupp, "Produce, Packaging, and Profits--The Retail Point of View," Speech given before the 9th Annual National Conference on Produce Packaging, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, September 14, 1959.



went on to say that in spite of this, retailers are interested in improving the produce department because: 1) it's the fresh merchandise that gives stores their reputation and character, 2) there is greater opportunity for developing a competitive advantage in terms of lowering operating costs in handling fresh merchandise, and 3) the store is not **treating** customers fairly if it offers them inferior produce because it then forces them to buy processed produce.

In closing Mr. Cupp suggested that produce men look to **other** packaged products and learn some fundamental lessons **from** them in an effort to improve produce packaging. The first lesson he suggested was convenience.

At the same produce convention mentioned above, Mr. Donald R. Stokes of the Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S.D.A., presented a talk on "The Next Ten Years of Produce Packaging." Mr. Stokes also noted the decline in per capita consumption of many fresh fruits and vegetables and told the convention members that they should take this decline as a challenge by doing a better job and offering more services and convenience to the consumers.

In discussing seven of the important deciduous fruits and their decreased consumption, Mr. Stokes mentioned that sales of each could be improved by more attractive, protective, and convenient packaging. A very piercing question that seemed to get at the very heart of the produce problem was asked by Mr. Stokes. "Why should consumers,"



he asked, "who like to save a few minutes buying ready-mixed or ready-prepared foods, go to the trouble of buying hard green pears which take a week to ripen?"<sup>16</sup> This question brought out the fact that convenience pertains not only to the processing time of cleaning or trimming produce, but the actual ripening time itself. Why should Mrs. Housewife have to use her refrigerator or valuable kitchen space as a warehouse or ripening room? Turnover is just as important in the home as it is in the store.

Mr. Stokes also mentioned eight vegetables for which inconvenience was the major marketing problem.

Convenience was also a key issue in a survey conducted by the Produce Packaging Association in cooperation with marketing specialists from the University of Delaware. The Association surveyed chain store executives heading produce divisions of companies such as Steinberg's, National Tea, Safeway, Dillon's, American Stores, Bonham's, Super Valu, Kroger, Colonial Stores, Thorofare, Stop and Shop, Publix, and other chains.

Two-thirds of the executives said that frozen and canned fruits and vegetables are still cutting into fresh produce volume. Some executives noted that "the produce industry has not kept its products fully competitive in

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<sup>16</sup>Donald R. Stokes, "The Next Ten Years of Produce Packaging," Speech given before the 9th Annual National Conference on Produce Packaging, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, September 16, 1954.

terms of built-in consumer conveniences and quality."<sup>17</sup>

When asked what recommendations they had for keeping produce more competitive, every executive mentioned more consumer unit packaging. Two-thirds of the executives considered the partial preparation of all produce in a convenient ready-to-use form as essential to making fresh produce more competitive.<sup>18</sup>

Mr. W. B. Murphy, president of Campbell Soup Company, once stated that thirty years ago the average housewife spent five to six hours of her day in the kitchen preparing meals and today she only spends half that time. He attributed this reduction to her use of foods that have "built-in services".<sup>19</sup> Since servants have priced themselves out of the market, it means the burden of meal planning and preparation is shifted back to the housewife who in many cases is working at a full or part time job outside of the home. She is therefore anxious to do anything that will reduce her kitchen work. Mr. Murphy concluded that this is why "what's been zooming in foods is the matter of building convenience into foods."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Robert L. Bull, "What America's Key Food Distributors in Voluntary Groups and Corporate Chains Think About the Future for Packaged Produce," Speech given before the 54th Annual NAWGA Convention, Chicago, Illinois, March 15, 1960.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>W. B. Murphy, "Revolution in the Kitchen," U.S. News & World Report, XLVI, No. 7 (February 15, 1957), p. 56.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

1. The first part of the document is a title page. It contains the title of the document, the author's name, and the date of the document. The title is "The First Part of the Document". The author's name is "John Doe". The date is "1999-12-31".

Mr. Charles G. Mortimer, chairman and chief executive of General Foods Corporation, contends that if the relative costs of regular foods and convenience foods were computed versus the time spent by the housewife in preparation, "the housewife is getting the services of a maid for 45 cents an hour."<sup>21</sup> The growth of convenience foods is just beginning according to Mr. Mortimer.

Actually the cost of convenience foods is very low. A U.S. Department of Agriculture study showed that if a typical consumer bought \$100. worth of regular food, it would only cost him 61 cents less than if he would have bought the same foods in a serviced convenient form.<sup>22</sup>

All these reports and articles then, seem to point to convenience as an important element in modern foods and an element that the housewife demands. If foods do not have the convenience that the consumer wants, she will quickly change and buy the many foods available that do offer her the extra service. The Loewy Reports and the speeches by Mr. Cupp, Mr. Stokes, and Mr. Bull all indicated that consumers want but have not found the convenience they want in today's produce department.

### A Survey

In an effort to discover the trend in shopping and eating habits of the younger generation of housewives, the

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<sup>21</sup> "Modern Living--Just Heat and Serve," op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

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author interviewed 25 housewives. All the ladies interviewed were wives of Michigan State University students and their average age was 26. In order that the housewives interviewed would not be completely "green" as to family grocery shopping and meal planning, most of the ladies were wives of graduate students and therefore a little older than the undergraduates. The average number of children the families had was 1.4. The families came from a number of states other than Michigan including New York, Texas, Colorado, Tennessee, Wisconsin, and Ohio and some of the husbands held jobs before coming back to school for graduate work.

The wives were asked eleven questions. Some were direct, objective, multiple-choice questions and others were subjective questions which allowed the housewife to freely give her thoughts and ideas on subjects such as frozen foods, prepackaged produce, and the produce department in general.

The first eight questions were objective and were designed to find out how much the housewives actually knew about the selection, preparation, and uses for specific produce items. After the interviewer found out what the housewives seemed to know and what they didn't know, he could more intelligently design an educational program geared to help the housewives buy and prepare fresh produce more knowingly. This part of the survey will be dealt with in the second part of this paper.



The last three questions in the survey were designed to find out if the housewives would really admit that they wanted convenience and if so, what specific convenience features they wanted, especially as related to the produce department.

The first of these subjective questions was, "do you prefer prepackaged or bulk produce and why?" Six of the wives or 24 per cent said they preferred prepackaged, 56 per cent preferred bulk, and 20 per cent were undecided. The consumers who preferred prepackaged produce said they enjoyed the convenience, individual price on each package, freshness, and cleanliness of prepackaging.

Of the wives who preferred bulk produce, 71 per cent said they had tried prepackaged but found it contained bad merchandise when they opened it at home. In 35 per cent of the cases the bad item mentioned was potatoes. One lady strongly stated that "there's just bound to be something bad in the package or bag." Other reasons given for preferring bulk were "I just like to pick and pinch my own produce", "prepackaged packages are too big for only two people", and "soft fruits and vegetables are especially bad prepackaged."

The women who were undecided said that they bought both prepackaged and bulk "depending on what looked the best at the time they bought it".

The author concluded from this question that most women when asked directly, will say they prefer bulk over

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prepackaged produce. The main reason for this preference is not that the prepackaged does not offer them convenience, but because of the bad merchandise the ladies have found in the packages, they are forced to buy bulk. In other words, they have not really been given an equal choice of products and therefore they were compelled to buy bulk after their bad experiences with packaged.

The second question in this section asked "what do you think about frozen fruits and vegetables and if you buy them, what kinds do you purchase?" Of the 25 young housewives interviewed, 24 per cent said they never or hardly ever purchase any kind of frozen foods. The reasons given were "it's too expensive", "lack freezer space", "no flavor to frozen foods", and "too big a package size for only two people". Thirty-two per cent of the wives said they bought frozen fruits and vegetables only occasionally such as when the fresh were out of season.

The remaining 44 per cent said they bought frozen fruits and vegetables regularly. Of this 44 per cent, 54 per cent said they bought frozen fruits and especially vegetables because they were convenient and easy to prepare. Other reasons given for their regular use were "economy of the larger bag, packs, or pouches of vegetables", "fresher flavor and more vitamins than canned", "no spoilage", "they last longer in the refrigerator than fresh if the entire package is not eaten at the first meal", and "they are not

messy and they don't take much time to prepare". One housewife with four children remarked that frozen vegetables look greener than canned and sometimes fresh, therefore her children thought they looked fresher and would always eat all their frozen vegetables. This was in contrast to another housewife who especially didn't like frozen peas because they looked too green.

From this question it would seem that the young housewives of today really do want convenience. Over 50 per cent of the wives regularly buying frozen fruits and vegetables said they were buying it because it was convenient, easy to prepare, and took less time to fix than fresh. Those housewives who were not buying the frozen fruits and vegetables regularly or who were only buying them occasionally were buying other forms not because they didn't like the convenience the frozen offered, but because they didn't like the flavor of frozen foods or because they preferred the flavor of fresh or canned over frozen.

The third question was, "what would you suggest the super market do to improve its produce department?" The most frequent reply to this question was, "have a person on the floor to weigh produce and answer questions at all times." The ladies freely spoke of the many times they had to stand in line and wait for produce to be weighed either because there were not enough scales or because there was no one on the floor to weigh the produce. Twenty-one per cent of the housewives wanted menu ideas either in

the form of printed recipes or pictures. Some of the ladies noted this was especially important for unusual items in the department. Other features that were suggested were a sample table where consumers could try unusual produce items, signs telling how to select ripe fruits and vegetables, wider aisles in the produce department so the women could easily browse through the department without bumping into other people's carts, putting the produce department at the end of the store layout, more tie-in merchandising with other departments, and a list of best weekly buys. It was also interesting to note that 21 per cent of the women interviewed said that a produce department that had the vegetables iced was definitely fresher than a department that didn't use ice (even if they had refrigerated cases). It seems that just the fact that they could see the ice covering or surrounding the produce, psychologically gave them the feeling that the produce was fresh. A few ladies mentioned that it was a good idea to have a buzzer in the produce department just like they have in the meat department. If the consumer wanted a special type or quantity of produce she could easily summon the produce clerk. One housewife was perturbed by the fact that there was so little variety in the produce department. "I get tired of seeing the same old lettuce, carrots, apples, and oranges every time I go into the produce department. I'd like to see more weird fruits and vegetables when I go into the store," she stated.

Since all but three of the housewives interviewed had some criticism for the produce department, it would seem that the main value of this question was that it showed there is definite room for improvement in the produce department especially in the areas of personal service and in offering meal planning and shopping suggestions to the consumers. If the produce department is supposed to convey the personality of the store to the consumer, it seems that these improvements should be made quickly in all stores where these services are not now available. Some of the ladies were so dissatisfied with the produce quality, variety, and service they were receiving at the super market that they were now doing their produce shopping at the local farmers' green market or produce specialty store.

#### Analysis of Canned and Frozen Vegetables

According to the Agricultural Marketing Service reports, the average person today is buying over 50 per cent more frozen and canned vegetables and nearly 12 per cent fewer fresh ones than he did 20 years ago.<sup>23</sup> Almost all the items mentioned in the report as having increased in frozen and canned consumption and decreased in fresh were items such as snap and lima beans, green peas, broccoli, asparagus, and spinach that require quite a bit of consumer processing when sold in the natural fresh form. It would

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<sup>23</sup>"Frozen and Canned Vegetable Consumption Up," Super Market Merchandising, XXV, No. 5 (May, 1960), p. 127.

be, however, a hasty conclusion to assume that it is only the convenience of preparation that entices the consumer to buy these produce items in the frozen or canned form rather than the fresh. Therefore let us now look a little closer at the frozen food cabinet and the canned vegetable shelves to see if there is something else that tempts the consumer to buy the merchandise in these processed forms.

To make a comparison of the three different departments, frozen, canned, and fresh, the writer went into a large national chain store in Lansing and first checked the labels on some of the canned vegetables. This store had three different brands of asparagus and also offered three different sizes. A national brand was offered in a 303 can and an eight ounce can. The 303 can offered several good serving suggestions on the label. Another national brand was offered in a 1 lb. 3 oz. can. The suggestion on this label read "heat and serve or serve cold in salads". A private label was also offered in a 303 can. There were also several serving suggestions on this label. All the labels included the size can, size of asparagus, net weight, number of cups, and number of servings.

Looking at some of the labels of the peas and carrots he found these clever and catchy "sales talks":

**Jiffy Stew--Pantry--Quick for You**

**Enjoy your favorite stew minus the problem and mess of cleaning vegetables. Just open and heat a can of ----- peas and carrots to top your casserole.**

**Use ----- mixed garden vegetables for hearty main dish casseroles. Mold ----- mixed garden vegetables**

in gelatin for a colorful salad. (Pictures showing colorful salad and casserole.) Cut on dotted line. See reverse side for appetizing recipe ideas.

Special notice should be made of the first "sales talk" which aims its arrow directly at the fresh produce department competition by directly stating it's a mess to clean fresh vegetables.

Another sales point was used by a national brand packer who freely used descriptive adjectives to put this information on a 303 can of asparagus:

Selected, tender, young leaves, carefully hand-sorted, washed clean and free from grit. Cooked to retain its fine, natural flavor and uniformly green color. An excellent source of Vitamin A (as carotene) and Vitamin C. It also contributes nutritionally valuable quantities of riboflavin (Vitamin B<sub>2</sub>) and of iron to the diet.

Five serving suggestions followed this information.

The above label information was not "hunted for" but was selected at random as the writer walked down the canned vegetable aisle. He spot-checked many other vegetables and they too had a variety of recipes, serving suggestions, colored pictures of appetizing menu ideas, and other point-of-sale information about the particular vegetables in the can.

Next he examined some of the packages of frozen vegetables. This was the information printed on the back of a package of lima beans:

----- Fordhook Lima Beans are quick frozen to retain their garden-fresh flavor, color, and food value. They are washed and all ready to cook without further preparation. These beans require less cooking time than ordinary beans. (10-12 minutes)

There were also several serving suggestions on the package. This package was a national brand of frozen foods and looking at some of the other vegetable packages, it was noticed that they too had the same type of information on the package including the fact that they could be prepared faster than the particular fresh vegetable, and the fact that they were "garden-fresh".

Even the private label brand frozen vegetables had serving suggestions on the package. Packages of okra, squash, cut wax beans, and blackeye peas each had three different serving suggestions on the rear of the package.

Finally the writer looked at the produce department of this same chain store. Most of the produce was not pre-packaged. The avacados and eggplant were overripe and soft and had no identifying signs or serving suggestions. The green beans were not packaged and they looked old and wilted. The display of strawberries looked like it was closing time on Friday night. There were very few signs of identification for the fruits and vegetables much less any serving suggestions or take-home recipes. The produce manager was putting up celery as customers walked past him while going through the department, but did he offer a "good morning" or "have you tried our delicious grapes we have on sale this week" to any of the customers who walked past him? No, he didn't.

From this quick comparison it seems only too obvious that the convenience of processing offered by frozen and

canned vegetables is not the only reason for their increasing consumer acceptance. It would seem from this brief survey that the pictures of appetizing dishes, serving suggestions, recipes, identification of contents, catchy point-of-sale information as to vitamin content, previous processing, and easy cooking instructions, and the direct comparisons made with fresh produce on the labels of frozen and canned vegetables are all contributing factors to the increased sale of these processed products. They are also factors that are usually not found in the produce department. Therefore, we might classify the serving, cooking, and identification information as convenience factors that are not offered in the produce department. It would seem logical then for women who had a choice of three forms to pick the one that gave them the most cooking and serving information. This would be especially true if the consumer had not previously purchased the item or if he did not know how to prepare the product.

According to some reports, the frozen campaign against fresh fruits and vegetables is just beginning. An official of the frozen food division of Stokely Van Camp, Inc. announced that "Frozen freshness exceeds produce much of the time, and frozen substitutes for fresh produce are nutritionally superior to their fresh counterparts every day of the year."<sup>24</sup> These claims were made after produce was

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<sup>24</sup>"'Fresh' Public Relations," The Produce Packager, IV, No. 4 (January 27, 1960), p. 4.

purchased fresh in the store and compared to similar frozen products. The results were fantastic enough to warrant Stokely to start a major advertising campaign across the nation with such claims as: "110% more vitamin A in frozen green beans", "212% more vitamin C in frozen spinach", and "36% more vitamin A in frozen lima beans".

It seems that the frozen food processors have caught the fresh produce shippers and produce associations napping in this respect; little has been publicized either on a national or retail store level as to the real nutritional value of fresh produce and the fact that no sugar or salt has been added to it.

From this frozen and canned analysis one can see that the convenience of processing is not the only enticing factor that the processed vegetables have over the fresh, but it is also the convenience of the point-of-sale information given on the packages of the processed products and the general national advertising campaign conducted by the processed food manufacturers promoting their products.

## CHAPTER III

### HOW TO DEVELOP AND MERCHANDISE CONVENIENCE IN THE PRODUCE DEPARTMENT

Reports of produce executives, speeches by produce and food experts, personal surveys of young housewives, and an analysis of the sales and labels of frozen and canned fruits and vegetables all indicate that convenience is the essential factor that is needed in the produce department if it is to survive the inroads that other departments are making into fresh produce department sales.

Since prepackaging in general is a prerequisite for developing convenience in a produce department, this chapter will begin with a review of the advantages of prepackaged produce for both the retailer and the customers and it will then develop some suggestions for promoting prepackaging and building consumer faith in the package as well as in the store.

#### Prepackaging for Convenience

##### Introduction of Prepackaging

When first introduced, prepackaged produce met resistance from both consumers and retailers. Resistance to prepackaging has been decreasing, however, and in 1957 a survey by DuPont showed that 52 per cent of the consumers

in America today prefer prepackaged fruits and vegetables.<sup>25</sup> Since this is only about half of the consumers in America, there is a large number of people who have to be shown the advantages of this new type of merchandising. What is needed, therefore, is an educational program for the customers that is planned and promoted by the produce department. Actually the entire store would help promote this program, so faith can be built not only in a package or a department, but in the entire store or food chain.

#### Advantages to the Retailer

In order to do a good selling job of prepackaging, the produce department itself must first believe in the system. The entire produce staff should be told why they are prepackaging, how to prepackage, and what its advantages are. Only after this has been done can the produce department work as an efficient team and gain all the benefits of the system.

Possibly the biggest advantage of prepackaging is the reduction in spoilage. In a bulk operation the spoilage usually amounts to four to six per cent of sales. Using prepackaging, however, spoilage is cut to one and one-half to two per cent of sales.<sup>26</sup> This saving in waste is often

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<sup>25</sup>"1959 Guide to Profitable Retail Selling," Booklet prepared by The American Institute of Food Distribution, Inc. (New York 17, New York, 1959), pp. 28-29.

<sup>26</sup>George E. Kline, "Cut Produce Spoilage to 1½% of Sales," Progressive Grocer, XXXIII, No. 1 (January, 1954), p. 45.

more than enough to cover the material costs of prepackaging. Waste reduction takes place in several ways. First, spoilage is reduced from excessive customer handling. Secondly, prepackaging reduces a lot of retrimming because the produce stays fresh longer. Finally, the wrapping over the produce curtails the loss of moisture and therefore reduces wilting, discoloration, and the dehydration of the items. A test under ideal conditions gave these results on the shelf life of produce.

TABLE 2  
SHELF LIFE OF PRODUCE<sup>b</sup>

Bulk	not refrigerated	3	days shelf life
Bulk	refrigerated	5½	days shelf life
Prepackaged	not refrigerated	4	days shelf life
Prepackaged	refrigerated	10	days shelf life

<sup>b</sup> Ezra Lapidus, "Techniques in Produce Prepackaging," Super Market Merchandising, XIX, No. 10 (October, 1954), p. 52.

A second important advantage to the retailer is the decrease in labor costs and increase in volume and profits. The ease of picking up a ten pound bag of potatoes rather than individually selecting ten pounds of bulk potatoes exemplifies why impulse sales are also so much greater with prepackaging than with bulk. Following is a case study of seven super markets in St. Louis, which provides a concise and typical survey of the positive results of prepackaging.

TABLE 3

COMPARISON OF PREPACKAGED AND BULK PRODUCE OPERATIONS<sup>c</sup>

Store	Annual Volume	Produce Volume		Produce Net Profit		Produce Spoilage		Labor Cost
		Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	
A	1½ Mil- lion	10%	13%	6%	10%	7%	2%	Down 1/3
B	1¼ "	8½%	11%	5%	14%	8%	2%	Same for 30% more volume
C	1 "	10%	11%	Up	3%	8%	3%	Down 1/3
D	1 "	10%	13%	9%	14%	7%	1%	Same for more vol.
E	½ "	-	8%	-	12%	-	2%	Same for more vol.
F	250,000	8%	11%	Not Stated		7%	1%	Same for more vol.
G	125,000	7%	13%	Not Stated		11%	2%	Same for double volume

<sup>c</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

A study, which has become almost a classic in the field of prepackaging, was made by the DuPont Company of 10,000 produce shoppers. The careful observation showed that the average shopper spends twenty-four per cent less time in the self service produce department than in the service department; yet she buys sixteen per cent more produce.<sup>27</sup> This documents the theory that customers buy more produce and in less time when the items are prepackaged.

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<sup>27</sup>"Prepackaging--An Approach to Produce Profits," Pamphlet published by E. I. DuPont de Nemours and Company, Inc., Wilmington, Delaware, 1951, p. 9.

Packaged produce is very conducive to gummed labels and twist-on price tags which makes pricing easier and faster. It also saves time at the check-out stands where the checkers can clearly see the price on every package. Legible and accurate price markings also speed customers through the produce department. This is especially important during peak shopping periods.

Stock rotation can be easily facilitated with pre-packaging because of the ease of coding each package to assure proper rotation.

Attractive displays can be quickly built with relatively few units of each item when a store uses prepackaging. This advantage is especially important during a slow period or at the close of the day when few items are needed but there must be enough on display to make the department look attractive. It is also quite easy to set up tie-in displays in other parts of the store with pre-packaged produce.

Another advantage to the retailer is that prepackaged produce is conducive to a smooth flow of operations, therefore increasing the efficiency of the produce department as each member of the department works as part of the "human chain", packaging, sealing, weighing, marking, and displaying the produce. Accurate weighing in the back room minimizes "giving away" merchandising from fast service weighing.

Lastly, prepackaged produce gives the produce department a clean and neat appearance. There are no messy and

slippery leaves on the floor that can cause an accident.

These advantages can be realized in various degrees in different stores depending on each store's present operations, personnel, volume, and degree to which it goes into prepackaging. They may not all be apparent right after adoption of a prepackaging plan because it sometimes takes several months to realize fully the savings and profits of the system.

#### Advantages to the Consumer

Since produce is only touched once, by the packer, and is not handled again until the consumer opens the package in her home, prepackaged produce is very sanitary. Dust and dirt is also kept out so the merchandise stays clean after it has been washed by the produce department.

In response to some people who say they can't select their produce when it is all wrapped, it should be noted that "instead of taking away the customer's right to select the merchandise she wants, produce prepackaging actually offers her a double check. First, by quality-trained and quality-conscious produce personnel when they make up the package and second, by the customer herself, as she has a variety of packages and sizes from which she can make her selection."<sup>28</sup> Therefore, the produce is of better quality because of the double check, and it is also fresher, be-

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<sup>28</sup>George E. Kline, "Tests in Sixty Stores Prove Pre-Packaging Lifts Produce Sales, Margins, Profits," Progressive Grocer, XXXIII, No. 7 (July, 1954), p. 45.

cause the wrapping keeps moisture from escaping into the dry store air.

Of major importance to the consumer should be the increased speed at which she can shop when the store has prepackaged produce. There is no waiting in line to have merchandise weighed and priced, no doubt as to amount or price of a unit because it is clearly marked, and finally, she can move through the check-out line faster because the price is easier to read by the checker.

Finally, there is no waste with prepackaged produce. All excess waste is trimmed off before the item is packaged. The customer is therefore assured that she can use all the produce that she is paying for. Also, when she gets home, she won't have to wash, trim and package the produce, but simply put it in the refrigerator in its own reusable plastic refrigerator bag or convenient paper tray.

#### Building Consumer Confidence

Because the housewife has many doubts as to the quality and freshness of prepackaged produce and because she wonders if the produce men in the back room can be trusted to pick out the kind of produce that she will be proud to serve to her family, the produce department must plan and promote a definite educational campaign especially geared to dispelling the fears and doubts that Mrs. Consumer has about prepackaged produce, and build up her faith in this new method of merchandising and packaging. This program

can be promoted on two levels, one in the store and the other outside of the store.

### Promotion in the Store

The first and most important step in any prepackaging program is to pack only top-quality merchandise. Since customers are used to picking out their own fruits and vegetables of only the finest quality, they will not give up the right unless they are convinced that the produce man can do a better job of selection. "Withered grapes, bruised peaches, spotted apples and similar items can put any packaging program in the doghouse as far as customers are concerned" despite all the signs and ads and personal sales work a store might try to do to convince customers otherwise.<sup>29</sup> The best place to begin the educational program, therefore, is with the people in the produce department itself. Instructions on what and how to package, constant checking of incoming produce, and buying and accepting only top-quality merchandise is an important prerequisite for any prepackaging program. A standard approach to selecting merchandise for packing is to tell the packers to pack only items they would select if they were customers. Once these packages are put in the display case, a periodic check should be made of the merchandise throughout the day to be sure it looks good and that there is no damaged pro-

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<sup>29</sup>"What's in the Package," Chain Store Age, XXXV, No. 11 (August, 1959), p. 126.

duce on display. Only if one has quality merchandise in every package will he benefit from the following factors of the program.

To complement this top-quality merchandise it must be packaged in materials that enhance the appearance of the produce. Sparkling cellophane and shimmering polyethelene can give real impulse and increased sales potential to fruits and vegetables that already have a beautiful natural color of their own. It behooves every produce manager not to detract or cover up this natural color by using packaging material that has advertising or distracting pictures on it. Some stores prefer to use backing boards instead of trays to package their produce. This increases customer faith in the commodities in that Mrs. Consumer can get a better look at the sides of the items to be sure they measure up to her high quality standards. Other stores use trays with arm lock hinges that cross the top of the tray to keep the produce from slipping out, yet they allow the consumer to touch and smell the produce itself.

All produce managers should always be on the lookout for new types of packages that offer the consumer more convenience. Two examples of some of the latest are the collapsible bags, which might be a possible package for pre-shelled limas or peas, and the waterproof asparagus container. The container can be used by growers, packers, shippers, and retailers. It allows a large handful of

asparagus to be placed upright in the container to which water can be added to keep the asparagus fresh. Market tests of the container have been very successful.<sup>30</sup>

A criticism often directed at prepackaged produce is that it doesn't offer the consumer merchandise in the size or amount she wants. A good produce man can easily overcome this criticism by offering the consumer different size units within one type of fruit or vegetable. He can quickly recognize in a few weeks what the size and weight preferences are of a community. Piggly Wiggly Stores use fifteen different size trays plus pliofilm or acetate bags to prepack their produce.<sup>31</sup> This is an unusually large number, however, but it illustrates how far some companies will go to make sure that Mrs. Consumer is offered produce in varying sizes and weights. No matter how many sizes a store has on display, it should always be ready to fill special requests of customers. If a customer does ask for a smaller amount than is offered, a produce man should break open a bag on display and satisfy her request. Experienced dealers say it's bad psychology to go to the back room to break open or get a small unit of an item because the customer then thinks that the clerk doesn't have confidence in the packaged

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<sup>30</sup>"Waterproof Asparagus Merchandiser, A New Brand Name Package," The Produce Packager, III, No. 10 (June 17, 1959), p. 3.

<sup>31</sup>Peter Bundrick, "Stores' Profits Rise with 100% Packaged Produce," NARGUS Bulletin, XLIV, No. 4 (April, 1957), p. 45.

produce and has to go to the back room to be sure of getting top quality.

Although the packages themselves are very attractive and promote impulse sales, the consumer doesn't always realize all the benefits that she actually is receiving from prepackaged produce. The following slogans are excellent reminders to Mrs. Consumer of the "extras" she receives with every package:

- "Quality produce in every package, every day"
- "Packaged fresh daily--cleaner, more sanitary (Protected from dirt, dust, and handling)"
- "More convenient (Makes shopping faster and easier)"
- "Easier to prepare (Pre-washed, trimmed, and graded)"
- "A size for every table need"
- "No waste (All unusable parts trimmed prior to packaging)"
- "Fresh prepackaged produce at no increase in price to you"<sup>32</sup>

A few of these slogans can be posted in the produce department each week and rotated regularly. A slogan could also be included right on a label or twist-tag. This would carry the message home with the customer. Special twist-tags with tasty produce recipes or cooking instructions also could be easily attached to a package. These slogans are especially effective when a store is first starting a prepackaging program and customers are completely unaware of the many benefits it offers.

Since prepackaging operations are done basically in the back room, personal service is often forgotten. It is

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<sup>32</sup>Lapides, op. cit., XX, No. 1 (January, 1955), p. 110.

a good practice to try to have someone on the selling floor whenever possible to answer questions and help customers select produce. They can also check the racks for damaged goods and do some simple bagging operations and put the finished units right on the rack. A self service button is also a helpful aid when there is no one on the sales floor. These suggestions help keep the personal touch in the department.

A suggestion which is especially pertinent to operators and management thinking about building new stores is to consider the possibility of building the prepackaging room with a glass front so the customers can see the operation. "The sight of white-uniformed operators washing, trimming, weighing, and prepackaging the fine-quality fresh fruits and vegetables has a lot to do with attracting customers to the store and particularly the produce department."<sup>33</sup> This feature of the store takes some of the mystery out of prepackaging and increases customer faith in the department as well as the whole store, especially if this feature is also carried out in the meat department.

Finally, in order to gain the confidence of the consumers in this new system, the items must be priced the same as the bulk items. Since the housewife is not sure if she

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<sup>33</sup> Jeannette Formby, "Piggly Wiggly Adopts Refrigerated Produce Pre-Packaging Program" The Voluntary and Cooperative Groups Magazine, XXVII, No. 2 (February, 1957), p. 17.

really is receiving any benefits from prepackaging, she certainly will not pay extra for it. Saving in waste will offset a large amount of the cost of materials and increased sales will take care of the rest so the customer should not be required to pay extra for this added convenience.

#### Promotion Out of the Store

The top-quality of the produce itself is the greatest confidence builder the produce department has. It can be supplemented by signs, service, etc. in the store. This confidence can also be established before the customer gets into the store. Radio and television spots emphasizing the convenience, economy, freshness, and quality of prepackaged produce make the customers more aware of the advantages of packaging. If the change to packaging is being made in a community where it is a relatively new idea, special publicity releases and pictures could be given to radio, TV, and newspapers as a news item, as well as being free publicity for the store. Following is a newspaper ad that was used very effectively by Super Valu to educate the public to prepackaging:

"Have you realized how much ----- new Cello-wrapped produce means to your health and well being, not to mention the fact that you are receiving the freshest produce obtainable through this new method of selling produce? Almost within the hour of the time you purchase this dewy fresh produce, it has been graded, trimmed and wrapped in protective cellophane, a sure guard against dust, air and numerous handlings. You can see exactly what you buy through this clear wrapping and each item is labeled and priced for your

shopping convenience. And remember, if you can't find the size or amount desired, you may break any package and get the amount you wish. All this is furnished to you by ----- at no extra cost. Just look at these ----- bargains for the weekend."<sup>34</sup>

### Building Faith in the Store

Building consumer faith in a package or in a produce department is only a small segment of a much larger problem, namely building faith in the entire store or, if it is a chain, in the integrity of the entire firm. This requires the cooperation of all store personnel if it is to be successful.

The prepackaged meat department must also offer the customers only the top-quality meats. The same is true of the dairy and grocery departments. Checkers, baggers, stock men, and all people working in the store must be helpful, courteous, and truthful to all customers if a planned program of building customer faith in the store is to be a success.

The tray of peaches with the bruised sides turned down will create a feeling of mistrust and suspicion against the whole store in the mind of Mrs. Consumer and not just against the produce department. The risk involved in losing repeat business by displaying bad merchandise is tremendous. Even greater is the task of trying to win back lost confidence of Mrs. Consumer in the entire store,

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<sup>34</sup>George E. Kline, "How to Merchandise Prepackaged Produce for Better Sales, Margins, Profits," Progressive Grocer, XXXIII, No. 9 (September, 1954), p. 62.

which was lost because a few bruised peaches were put in a tray and put on display.

### Preparation for Convenience

"You can be sure that the people who really want to peel, pare, shell, husk, and scrape produce are in the minority."<sup>35</sup> Because of this fact, one of the most important ways to give housewives convenience in the produce department is by preparing the food for them so it is in a table-ready or pan-ready form. Operators who have gone into prepared produce items have found it to be very successful in increasing sales and profits for the department. Mr. Richard Gromer, president of Gromer Super Markets, has called the table-ready and pan-ready produce items "the biggest opportunity for building traffic and increasing sales of fresh fruits and vegetables since the advent of modern refrigeration."<sup>36</sup>

### Types of Preparation

Fruits and vegetables can be prepared in a variety of ways to make them more convenient for the housewife in addition to the fact that they can be packaged for convenience. Vegetables can be washed and trimmed, sliced, shredded, shelled, segmented, peeled, and husked for consumer convenience. Some fruits may be cored, sliced, or

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<sup>35</sup>Cupp, loc. cit.

<sup>36</sup>Richard Gromer, "Table-Ready and Pan-Ready Produce is Building Traffic for Out Produce Departments," Super Market Manager, XX, No. 5 (May, 1959).

divided in halves or quarters for convenience.

Generally there are three basic types of preparation into which convenience produce items may be classified.

First is a combination form. This is where a variety of fruits or vegetables are grouped and packaged together for some convenient purpose such as a fruit bowl mix or soup mix. The second category of preparations is salads. Since there is such a great variety of salad combinations possible, the writer thought that the salad combinations deserved a separate grouping. The third group of preparations includes single packaged produce items that have had some special processing to make them pan-ready or table-ready in addition to the regular packaging. Each of these preparations will be discussed in more detail.

### Combinations

This is possibly one of the best types of convenience to offer consumers for a store that does not want to make an immediate investment in slicing or processing equipment that is needed for some of the other preparations. Many of the combinations suggested in this section only need the regular packaging materials that a prepackaged produce department has on hand.

A combination that offers a large variety of possibilities is the assorted fruit combination. A molded pulp tray containing two apples, two oranges, and two pears or a banana, some grapes, two apples, and two oranges might

be good sellers especially if labeled "Lunchbox Special" or "Family Fruitbowl Special". A good variety, colorful arrangement, and fair price can make this a winning combination especially for a small family who doesn't want to purchase a dozen bagged oranges or a large bunch of bananas, but still would like a variety of fruit in the home.

Another good combination is the soup mix. A colorful mix can be made by putting a few small whole turnips, carrots, onions, green beans, and celery trimmings in a rectangular molded pulp tray. Whenever trimmings are used in any combination, the packer should be sure that it is top quality merchandise that is being used and not wilted and old produce that is ready for the garbage pail. Combination packs and salads are a very expedient and profitable way to salvage produce trimmings or whole merchandise that is too good to throw away but not quite good enough to sell in the original form.

Relish trays also make attractive combination packages. Busy housewives who are looking for ways to perk up their regular meals are good customers for a tray of clean, fresh celery trimmings cut into four or five inch lengths and stuffed with cream cheese. Celery can also be stuffed with peanut butter for children's after-school snacks. Other relish trays can be made up with such items as green onions, radishes, carrot strips, celery strips, green pepper strips, and green or ripe olives. The roots

should be removed and the tops of the onions evenly clipped. About one inch of the radish top should be left and the radish itself should be washed and cut into rosebud form if desired.

Prices of these trays may range from 29¢ to 39¢ depending on the quantity, price of ingredients, and the labor involved. The color, appetite-appeal, and convenience that these relish trays offer the consumer "makes them sell on sight, even though the mark-up is double or triple that of the unprocessed commodities."<sup>37</sup>

Another convenient packaged combination is the beef stew mix. Small cubes of boneless stewing beef are put in a small, one pound tray. Then potatoes, celery, turnips and carrots are cut into small pieces sizeable for stew. A crinkle-type cutter may be used to give the vegetables more eye-appeal. Small onions may also be included in the vegetable mix; they are peeled but left whole. The potatoes and turnips should both be treated with a deoxidant solution so they do not turn brown. The mixed vegetables should be placed in a separate tray and then both trays should be placed side by side in a larger tray, over-wrapped with film, and appropriately labeled. These trays should be displayed in the meat case so the proper meat temperature can be maintained.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>A. A. Irwin, "Merchandising Pan-Ready and Table-Ready Produce Items," Part 3, Super Market Manager, XX, No. 2 (February, 1959), p. 15.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., Part 1, IX, No. 11 (November, 1958), p. 10.

The mixed vegetable tray can, of course, be merchandised separately in the produce case in several size trays for customers who prefer to use them in a soup or in some other way.

## Salads

Salads usually require a certain amount of backroom processing, but with the proper equipment this can be done very quickly and efficiently in most cases. Salads can be very simple, such as a plain cole slaw, or they can be very colorful and elaborate, such as the large fresh vegetable salads. There are no set recipes for making salads. Only the imagination of the salad maker limits the number of combinations that can be made. Once again, salads provide a good place for the produce department to use some of its slightly bruised or misshapen cucumbers, peppers, celery, or tomatoes. Also small heads of lettuce or cabbage may be easily used in a salad. Salads should be prepared in a variety of sizes so the consumers have a choice depending on the size family they have.

Cole slaw is probably the easiest salad to make if the department has a commercial vegetable slicer and shredder. Many times the slaw can be purchased in five or ten pound bags and then packed in smaller trays in the produce backroom. Since two out of every three heads of cabbage now purchased are used to make cole slaw, it seems only natural that the produce department should offer Mrs.

Consumer the finished table-ready product minus all the hard work of preparing it.<sup>39</sup> Cole slaw or cabbage salad can be merchandised in a variety of ways. The contrasting colors of shredded red cabbage next to green cabbage makes an appetizing package. A narrow row of shredded carrots in the same package would also add color and flavor appeal. These three ingredients may be mixed or arranged in uniform rows in the tray. These packages may range in weight from eight ounces to one pound.

Waldorf salad is a good salad to promote when there are good crisp eating apples available that are not too expensive. The basic ingredients for it are small  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch wedges of crisp apple, crisp diced celery, raisins, and a few walnut meats on top. The apples should be treated with a deoxidant after cutting.

Shredded carrot and raisin salads are another easy and profitable item for the produce department to merchandise. After the carrots are washed and peeled, they are shredded in a commercial shredder. A few seedless raisins are added to top off this salad favorite.

Fresh vegetable salads offer an endless opportunity for originality because of the many ingredients the packer has to work with. Usually these salads start with a base of shredded or small broken pieces of head lettuce, endive,

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<sup>39</sup>"Super Market Meet Draws Record 13,000," The Packer, LXVI, No. 13 (May 3, 1960), p. 11.

escarole, or romaine. One or two of these base ingredients can be used alone or all of them may be mixed together. These leafy vegetables may be packaged alone for people who enjoy eating a simple green tossed salad. Other ingredients are usually placed on top of this base, however.

A green pepper ring enclosing a whole tomato, whole hard-cooked egg, or several cherry tomatoes makes a very eye-catching vegetable salad. Around this center attraction may be placed cucumber or radish slices, whole but cleaned green onions, diced celery, carrot or green pepper strips, whole radishes, or quartered tomatoes. All these ingredients should not be put into one salad but a few should be laid on each lettuce base in an attractive manner to give it color and taste appeal rather than a cluttered look.

A plain tossed salad consisting only of green leafy vegetables may be displayed in both small ventilated film bags or in an overwrapped molded pulp tray. The other salads with additional ingredients should only be sold in the overwrapped trays because their impulse sales appeal is in the attractive way the vegetables are placed on the green base.

Other variations of the vegetable salad would be to place cooked canned tuna or shrimp together with a few tomato slices and radishes on top of a lettuce base. A small can of anchovies could also be placed on a bed of greens and surrounded with green onions and slices of cucum-

ber. Small sample bottles or envelopes of salad dressing might be included in the tray with the salad but the dressing should not be put directly on the salad itself.

Some stores have even put cubes of American or Swiss cheese and strips of cold boiled ham on top of the mixed salads.<sup>40</sup> Larger trays of these mixed salads containing such meat and dairy items might be appropriately labeled "A Complete Summertime Meal". Large "talking signs" displayed above these salads should call to the attention of the housewife the convenience as well as the nutritious value and vitamin content of the salads.

A ring of canned pineapple on a bed of shredded greens or on a few whole leaves of lettuce topped off with a dab of cream cheese and cherry garnish makes an attractive pineapple cream-cheese salad. Melon balls or segments from watermelon, cantaloupe, and honeydews placed on a lettuce bed makes an attractive fruit salad. They can also be placed in polystyrene cups and sold as fruit salad ingredients.

The best time to merchandise these table-ready salads is in the summer time when the fresh fruits and vegetables used are plentiful and inexpensive. This is the time that people eat lighter meals and therefore enjoy salads.

Almost all the salads are sold on a one-day turnover basis. In this way the freshness and quality is assured

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<sup>40</sup>Gromer, loc. cit.

and the customers will be quickly coming back for more. Because there are so many varieties of salads that can be made, a store should not attempt to merchandise them all at once but should vary the assortment to give the consumers a different choice whenever they come into the store.

The following lists provide a quick summary of the popular vegetables and accompaniments that can be used in making fresh salads.

#### A LIST OF POPULAR SALAD VEGETABLES

Lettuce	Peanuts
Romaine	Carrots
Chicory	Scallions
Endive, curly and Belgian	Onions
Spinach	Beets, cooked
Chard	Asparagus, cooked
Chinese cabbage	Corn, cooked
Escarole	Lima beans, cooked
Dandelion greens	Green beans, cooked
Celery	Kidney beans, cooked
Radishes	Potatoes, cooked
Tomatoes	Pimiento
Peppers	Watercress
Cauliflower	Cherry Tomatoes
Cucumbers	Cabbage
Water chestnuts	Parsley

#### ACCOMPANIMENTS FOR VARIETY

Green, ripe and stuffed olives	Canned pineapple
Walnuts, almonds, pecans	Raisins (seedless)
Dates, figs	Currants
Oranges, grapefruit	Hard-cooked eggs
Anchovies	Shredded dried beef
Swiss, American cheese	Apricots, prunes
Cottage cheese and Roquefort	Malaga or Tokay grapes <sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Irwin, op. cit., Part 2, XX, No. 1 (January, 1959), p. 21.

### Special Processing

The third type of preparation includes produce items that have gone through some special processing such as slicing, peeling, or shelling to make them pan-ready or table-ready.

Potatoes may be pre-peeled and then cut into strips for French frying, sliced for home-style frying, or cut Julienne style. Potatoes should always be treated with a deoxidant after cutting to retard discoloration.

Large dry onions are another example of a vegetable that can be peeled and sliced for customer convenience. These can be displayed in the produce department or next to the ground beef in the meat case.

Other fruits and vegetables that can be sliced for convenience are apples, eggplant, cucumbers, and turnips. The eggplant, apples, and turnips should be treated with a deoxidant after slicing them about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch thick. It is usually better to use natural or white rather than colored trays for treated items.<sup>42</sup>

Both green peas and lima beans can be pre-shelled and packaged in convenient consumer-size plastic bags or pouches. Because "the days of successfully selling fresh lima beans in the pod have long since passed," an attempt was made in 1959 to market pre-shelled limas.<sup>43</sup> The

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Robert L. Bull, "Shelled Lima Beans for Fresh Market," Abstract #103, University of Delaware, p. 1 (Mimeographed).

results were encouraging and it will be promoted again in 1960.

Some produce items are so large that many housewives hesitate to buy the item because they only need enough for two people or because they are not sure that they will like the item and only want to buy a small quantity. The items can conveniently be offered to these people by cutting the large item in halves or quarters. Examples of such items are large squash, watermelons, cantaloupe, Persian and casaba melons, large heads of cabbage, and large rutabagas. The squash and melons can be made to look more attractive if the seeds are cleaned out with a wooden spoon or a scoop. The cantaloupe can be filled with a small bunch of grapes, some strawberries, blueberries or a bright red plum and then covered with saran wrap. It makes a beautiful fruit cup that can be advertised as a "Breakfast Treat", "Luncheon Dessert", and an "Appetizer for Dinner". A similar type of fruit cup could be merchandised by cutting a pineapple lengthwise, cutting out most of the fresh pineapple, and then filling it with melon ball, small bits of pineapple, and some strawberries or blueberries. If the produce department is short of help or doesn't have the time to make many of these fruit cups for sale, it can make one and place it above the display of all the ingredients as a serving suggestion for the passing customers. A sign could be placed above the display indicating how easy it is to make this "Summertime

Family Favorite". The same idea could be used by scooping out the inside of a watermelon, which has been cut in half lengthwise, and then using it as a large picnic fruit bowl containing melon balls, strawberries, chunks of pineapple, and a few sprigs of mint.

Other vegetables and methods of preparation for convenience are peeled, diced, and bagged rutabagas and Hubbard and Butternut squash, segmented cauliflower, well trimmed and cleaned brussel sprouts and broccoli, sliced rhubarb, and sliced and trimmed bruised peppers and celery properly labeled "salad peppers" and "salad celery".

In preparing all the produce items in a pan-ready or table-ready form it should always be remembered that this processing is not a cover-up for old wilted merchandise. Only top-quality produce can be used. With proper advertising, variety, in-store merchandising, packaging, and pricing these convenience items can give the produce department increased traffic, sales, and profits as well as giving the customers convenience that is equal to products in many of the other departments in the store.

Stores that have been selling convenience produce items have reported great success. Richard Gromer considers these items one of the best drawing cards in his produce departments.<sup>44</sup> Harry Deaktor, vice-president of Star Markets, stated that "the chain sells about 300 salads

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<sup>44</sup>Gromer, loc. cit.

per week per store, and about 400 packages of French-fried potato slices" with a markup of 40 to 50 per cent.<sup>45</sup> A personal interview with the produce manager of one of the Sentry Food Stores in Milwaukee during March, 1960, revealed that the produce department was getting ten per cent of its sales from the seven foot refrigerated case that contained convenience salads, relish dishes, and pre-peeled and sliced potatoes.

For a more complete description and more information on the technical aspects of preparing produce in a convenience form, the writer suggests reading the three articles by Mr. A. A. Irwin that appeared in the November, 1958, and January and February, 1959 issues of Super Market Manager.

#### Tie-In Merchandising for Convenience

"The practice of associating items by the way they're used by the customer is one of the most dynamic selling techniques in the retail food business today."<sup>46</sup> The housewife is being offered convenience in her produce shopping when tie-in displays are used to suggest related items that she might otherwise forget or not bother to buy. It is especially important for a produce department that is in the first aisle of the store layout to use related item merchandising. This is because when a woman gets past the first

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<sup>45</sup>Saul Berliner, "Packing Ups Star's Produce Sales," Reprint from Super Market News, (June 3, 1957), p. 31.

<sup>46</sup>Glenn Snyder, "101 Produce Merchandising Ideas to Boost Department Volume," Progressive Grocer, XXXIX, No.3 (March, 1960), p. 62.

aisle, she seldom comes back. Therefore, if a lady didn't know that she was going to buy iced tea when she got to the beverage aisle or didn't know that she was going to buy corned beef until she got to the meat case, she would not buy lemons or cabbage when she first passed through the produce department. However, if a tie-in display of iced tea and lemons was put up in the produce department and a tie-in display of corned beef and cabbage was featured in the produce department or the meat department, the customer would probably buy both items and it would mean a satisfied customer and a double sale and double profits for the store.

Related item displays may be set up in a variety of different ways. First, the related item, such as salad dressing, may be put side by side with the related item, lettuce, directly in the produce rack. Another place the related product could be displayed would be in a shopping cart, on a small table, or on a shelf extender directly in front of the item in the rack. A fourth place could be a special-display end table where weekly specials are featured or on a table in the middle of the produce aisle if it is wide enough. It must be remembered that when related items are placed in the actual produce racks, it means giving up valuable produce space for another department's product. This can be offset, however, by allowing some produce items to be featured in the meat case or in other departments of the store. In many cases the store manager may coordinate the space requirements needed for tie-in displays.

An actual display does not have to be built to feature related items. Signs such as "Try these bananas on your cereal" or "Garnish your meat with a sprig of parsley" can suggest to the customer the related items they should buy.

The following items from the general merchandise department have a high margin as well as high impulse appeal when displayed with the related item in the produce department: potato and carrot peelers, orange reamers, apple and pear corers and slicers, melon scoops, paring knives, vegetable slicers, corn skewers, grapefruit spoons, tomato slicers, individual and large salad bowls, salad serving tongs, collanders, and cabbage and carrot shredders. Around canning time the necessary canning funnels and other utensils along with the jars, caps, lids, wax, and jell should be tied in with bushels and lugs of peaches, pears, plums and other canning fruits.

The following related items give an idea of some of the shopping tie-ins that will be appreciated by Mrs. Consumer as she goes through the produce department looking for convenient shopping and mealtime suggestions.

ITEM	TIE-IN	FOR USE IN
Broccoli and cauliflower	cheese spread	melted topping
Cabbage	corned beef	main dish
Celery	cream cheese peanut butter	appetizer snacks

ITEM	TIE-IN	FOR USE IN
Lettuce	salad dressings	salads
	oil	"
	vinegar	"
	mandarin oranges	"
	canned sliced pineapple	"
	cottage cheese	"
	bacon and tomatoes	sandwiches
Mushrooms	steaks	-----
Onions	ground beef	-----
Parsley and watercress	meat	garnish
Green peppers	ground beef	stuffed peppers
Potatoes	eggs	potato salad
	mayonnaise	" "
	cheese spread	melted topping
	tin foil wrap	baking
Sweet Potatoes or yams	ham	main dish
	brown sugar	topping
	marshmallows	topping
Apples	pie crust mixes	pies
	brown sugar	baked apples
	caramels, syrup	apples on a stick
Avocados	cream cheese	appetizer spread
Bananas	cold cereals	breakfast
	ice cream	banana split
	Jello	dessert
	pie crust mix	pie
Berries	shortcake	dessert
	cream	"
	ice cream	"
	cereal	breakfast
	whipped cream in cans	shortcake topping
Cantaloupe	ice cream	dessert
Cranberries	fowl	relish
Lemons	tea	-----
	fish	-----
	sugar	lemonade
	glasses	"

There is a large enough assortment of related items that can be merchandised with produce items that an imaginative produce manager could feature a different related-item display every week of the year. Certain seasons, of course, suggest different tie-in displays. In the fall of the year small gourds from produce could be tied in with rattan or bamboo baskets from non-foods to make attractive table decorations. Large glass or wooden bowls from non-foods, when filled with a few apples, oranges, grapes, and bananas, make an eye-catching, as well as healthful, family fruitbowl for the summer months. Large gift baskets of fruit could be easily merchandised around Christmas time.

Appropriate signs over all the tie-in displays are always important to get the maximum sales. The signs can suggest many uses for the items as well as help create impulse sales by being catchy or humorous. Grocery manufacturers and produce shipper and grower groups often have valuable point-of-sale material that can be effectively used with the signs.

### Portion Control for Convenience

Although it was mentioned briefly in the section on prepackaged produce, portion control should again be emphasized as an important method for giving the consumer convenience.

Several housewives in the Michigan State survey, presented in the second chapter of this paper, indicated that

because there were only two in their household they did not like prepackaged produce because it offered the produce in units that were too large for only two people.

These feelings supported the results of the Customers' Relation Panel set up by Mr. Joseph P. Mott, owner of Mott's Super Markets in Connecticut. The ladies on the panel indicated they wanted "produce wrapped in a variety of weights."<sup>47</sup>

Mr. Fred Spannagel, a produce packaging expert from American Viscose Corporation stated that a common cause for produce packaging failure is the fact that the store offers only a large size unit.<sup>48</sup>

In order to give the consumer more convenience, different size trays should be used in packing each item. Catch weights should also be used on everything that is weighed. In some cases where items such as apples or oranges are bagged in three pound or one or two dozen unit bags, it might be good to offer a small bulk display next to the bagged, so the customers may purchase smaller quantities if they so desire. Another suggestion would be to post signs above the items that are packaged in large quantities saying that the customers may break open any package if they want a smaller amount than offered. The department

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<sup>47</sup>Clementine Paddleford, "The Ladies Take Over," This Week Magazine (May 24, 1959), p. 26.

<sup>48</sup>Fred Spannagel, "The Why, How, Where of Packaged Produce," Report to Meat and Food Merchandising's Editorial Consulting Board, August, 1957. (Reprint).

could be kept completely packaged in this way and at the same time offer all sizes and weights of merchandise.

Another concept of portion control is that for some items it is important that they are offered not only in smaller quantities but the contents are approximately the same size. This is true of baking potatoes where people put them in the oven all at the same time and like to have them all finished at the same time--and uniformly done. From the writer's own experience in the produce department, he was very often asked by a housewife for only two or four large potatoes the same size for baking. Since this is what the customers want, why not give it to them? To increase sales of these special packages, signs should be posted above the packages to make the customers aware of the convenience that they are being offered and to create more impulse sales. The same technique could be used for large, well shaped green peppers that could be used for stuffed peppers.

In preparing a variety of sizes it should always be remembered that for increased volume and sales the packages should be a little bigger when the particular fruit or vegetable is in season. In other words, grapefruit should be packaged in units of a dozen during the winter and spring months when they are most plentiful. In the summer months, however, they should be packaged in units of two, three, or six. Since they are more expensive and not as plentiful.

In conclusion of this chapter it is well to keep in mind that stores as well as customers are different all over the United States. Therefore, what might be a good convenience item in New York might not go over at all in St. Louis. It is up to the produce manager in each store to get to know his customers well enough so he can offer them the produce they want the way they want it. Communication as well as imagination are important for maximum sales.

## CHAPTER IV

### IMPLICATIONS OF GIVING CONVENIENCE

#### State and Federal Laws

After checking with the Wisconsin State Department of Agriculture and the Michigan Food Standardization Department, it was learned that the combinations of corned beef and cabbage, ham and lettuce, can of anchovies and lettuce, and the other combinations suggested in the previous chapter would not violate the food laws in those states. It should be noted, however, that these laws vary with different states; therefore, the laws should be checked before the combinations are put on sale.

It is also recommended that the produce manager check the new federal food-additive laws pertaining to the types of deoxidants that may be used, since the burden of proof is now on the user that the additives are not harmful, rather than on the government to prove that they are harmful.

#### Equipment and Supplies

A certain investment is necessary if a produce department is going to offer its customers convenience. For regular prepackaged operation the usual transparent film sheets and bags, molded pulp packaging trays, labels, and tape are needed in addition to the heat sealing equipment.

Many convenience items can be prepared using only these supplies. If a department plans on going into further processing such as peeled and sliced potatoes and prepared salads, it will need a commercial slicing and shredding machine. There are several good makes on the market, but the author does not feel qualified to recommend any one brand or type.

If the store has a service delicatessen department the produce department could share the slicing machine as well as the overhead with that department.

Deoxidants such as "Whitato", "Sno-Spui", or "Spud-Nu" are also needed if the department plans to slice potatoes, eggplant, or apples. The shelf life of cole slaw may also be lengthened by using a commercial deoxidant or by using a simple one-minute dip in a 0.5 to 2.0 per cent salt solution.<sup>49</sup>

The produce department might also wish to invest in a few shelf extenders for merchandising small houseware items from the non-food department in front of the related produce items. Another convenience service the produce department might want to offer is freshly squeezed orange juice. An automatic orange juicing machine is available that provides fresh juice for pint and quart sale as well as dispensing by-the-cup drinks.

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<sup>49</sup> Jacob Kaufman and J. M. Lutz, "Lengthening the Shelf Life of Packaged Cole Slaw," Pre-Pack-Age, VIII, No. 1 (September, 1954), p. 25.

**F**or more information on where produce equipment and supplies may be purchased, the author suggests the "Annual Chain **S**tore Directory of Equipment Manufacturers" published by Chain Store Age.

## CHAPTER V

### WOMEN NEED PRODUCE EDUCATION

#### A Survey

This chapter will point out the need for more consumer education in the produce department by looking first at a survey made by the author of twenty-five young wives of students at Michigan State University, and then by looking at the reports and speeches of produce and food experts.

The survey on consumer education was made at the same time as the survey on convenience; therefore, the background information for this survey is the same as previously presented in Chapter II. This part of the interview was made up of eight questions, most of which were the objective multiple-choice type.

The first question asked was, "are you eating more or less fresh fruits and vegetables now that you are married than when you were living with your parents?" Twenty-four per cent said they were eating more, 48 per cent said less, and 28 per cent said it was just about the same. This question was designed to find out what the general trend in fresh produce consumption was, and the answers turned out as expected according to U.S.D A. figures that the trend was down. Two ladies blamed the decrease on their husbands by saying that they don't eat much fresh produce.

One wife, whose husband had been promoted in his job previous to being sent to school, stated that she was now buying more fresh rather than frozen because her husband now had a higher income. She thought that in most items fresh was more expensive than frozen fruits and vegetables. This answer pointed up a definite area for consumer education--comparison of prices.

The second question was, "have you ever purchased eggplant, squash, avocados, fresh asparagus, or fresh green beans since you were married?" The results were: eggplant - 84% no, 16% yes; squash - 56% no, 44% yes; avocados - 84% no, 16% yes; fresh asparagus - 52% no, 48% yes; fresh green beans - 48% no, 52% yes. It can be seen that the "off beat" items, eggplant and avacados, are definitely low on the consumer consumption list and the other three items are purchased by only about half of the people surveyed. These three items all require consumer processing before they are ready for the cooking pan or table.

The housewives were next asked if they knew how to prepare eggplant or squash. Forty-eight per cent indicated they did know how, 12 per cent said they were not sure, and 40 per cent said they did not know how to prepare either eggplant or squash. One might conclude from these facts that one reason housewives don't buy more "off beat" or unusual produce items is that they don't know how to prepare them. More support will be given this conclusion later.

In order to find out how imaginative housewives are,

the interviewer asked, "how many uses can you think of for the banana besides eating it out of your hand?" Two wives thought of as many as five different uses while three only named one other use. The average was 2.5 uses they could think of for the banana. The following uses were named and the number of wives indicating that use is also noted: pie - 10; salads - 10; cake - 7; cereal - 7; bread - 4; Jello - 4; cream and sugar - 4; pudding - 3; mashed for babies - 2; with ice cream - 2; fried - 2; milk shakes - 1. The real purpose of this question was to see how imaginative housewives are when they go shopping. The more ways a housewife can think of to use a product, the more chance there is that she will purchase it. If she only knows how to use it one or two ways, she will soon get tired of buying it. If a produce department wants to increase sales, it would seem logical that they would educate the housewives as to the many different ways the produce items may be used, so the shopper and her family do not get tired of always eating the same items prepared in the same way. It was interesting to note that only 16 per cent of the people thought of using bananas in Jello and only 3 per cent thought of using them with ice cream for banana splits.

The next two questions were grouped together. The first was, "do you bake very much?" Forty-four per cent said they baked very little or not at all, 20 per cent said they baked sometimes, and 36 per cent said they baked regularly. The follow-up question was, "if you were going to

bake an apple pie and had a choice of Winesap, Delicious, or McIntosh apples, which would you choose for baking?" Fifty-two per cent said McIntosh, 24 per cent said Winesap, and 4 per cent said Delicious. Twenty per cent said they didn't know and several of these indicated they thought green apples were best. This question pointed out the need for educating consumers as to the best uses of fruits when you have several varieties within one fruit family.

The wives were next asked which potato they thought was best for baking: Red, Idaho, or California White. Eighty per cent responded with Idaho, 10 per cent said California White and 10 per cent said they didn't know. Twenty of the twenty-five wives were asked this question. The response to the right answer here was very good, but it still showed a need for some education. Signs over the potato racks indicating which variety should be used for what purpose would be helpful to the consumers.

Another similar question was "which of these three onions is the strongest and should be used for cooking: Bermuda, Spanish or Yellow?" Forty-four per cent correctly named the Yellow onion as being the strongest. Sixteen per cent picked the Bermuda and 20 per cent picked the Spanish, both of which are sweet mild onions. Twenty per cent confessed they did not know which was the strongest. The answers to this question also pointed up the need for education.

The last question was, "how do you pick out a ripe

cantaloupe?" Thirty-two per cent said they felt soft if they were ripe, 20 per cent said they could smell a ripe cantaloupe, 12 per cent said they shook them, and another 12 per cent said a ripe cantaloupe was any one that was not green. Twenty-four per cent of the wives said they did not know how to pick a ripe one, so they just picked any one that "looked good".

Signs above different fruits indicating the ripeness would help the consumer pick the fruit that had the degree of ripeness she desired and at the same time it would prevent the fruit from being picked over, squeezed, and damaged.

The answers to these questions as well as suggestions from the wives themselves seem to indicate that the produce department should help educate the shoppers by providing information as to what the different varieties of fruits and vegetables are, how to tell the difference between them, what each variety can be best used for, how to tell ripe produce, and how to prepare the fruits and vegetables, especially the unusual ones, for a tasty meal.

### Food Experts Talk Education

As the writer mentioned in the introduction, the previous survey was only a very small survey and has little reliability by itself. This section will therefore point out that several food and produce experts too believe that consumer education is essential to increasing the sales of the produce department.

The Loewy Report, in addition to stressing convenience

also stressed the need for "communication" between the young housewives who believe that "produce is hard to cook and easy to spoil" and the produce department.<sup>50</sup> Mr. Snaith, president of Loewy, Inc., noted in the report that the education of a new generation of housewives and brides, who have never squeezed an orange, pulled the husk off corn, or peeled a potato, was very important because many are "not sufficiently familiar with the preparation and value of fresh produce."<sup>51</sup>

Another report previously cited was that given by Mr. Donald Stokes who also advocated convenience. Mr. Stokes strongly indicated through his discussion of individual produce items that there was a great lack of knowledge about fresh fruits and vegetables. Mr. Stokes contends, and the author agrees, that "recipes are not enough" but the customers should be educated with more imaginative use of informative labeling giving cooking instructions, packaging and transportation costs, labor costs of packaging, and information on the different varieties of produce and their best uses.<sup>52</sup>

Mr. Robert L. Carey, executive secretary of the Produce Packaging Association, Inc., believes that "much remains to be done in the area of point of sale promotion,

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<sup>50</sup>"S.M.I. Meeting," loc. cit.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Stokes, loc. cit.

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especially variety identification and the use of uncommon produce items such as avocados, nectarines, etc."<sup>53</sup>

The results of consumer produce education seem to be best summed up in the thoughts of Mr. Robert Bull when he stated that "people must understand what they see, and know how to use it, if they are going to be tempted to try new commodities. Herein lies the greatest challenge and the greatest potential for increasing fresh fruit and vegetable volume."<sup>54</sup>

A more striking example of the size of the educational job the produce department and, in fact, the entire store has on its hands was presented by Mrs. Marie Kiefer, executive director of the National Association of Retail Grocers of the United States, to the Utah Retail Grocers Association on May 2, 1960. Mrs. Kiefer informed the group that the 1960's will have over 9,000,000 new brides ages 19 or younger and today six out of ten of these teenagers suffer from diet deficiencies. "This is part of the new generation that we have to cater to or be classified by the young housewives as a square," Mrs. Kiefer concluded.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Letter from Mr. Robert L. Carey, Executive Secretary of the Produce Packaging Association, Inc., Newark, New Jersey, March 2, 1960.

<sup>54</sup>Letter from Mr. Robert L. Bull, Department of Agricultural Economics, Newark, Delaware, May 7, 1960.

<sup>55</sup>Mrs. Marie Kiefer, "Sees 'Split Personalities' for Food Stores in 1960's," The Packer, LXVI, No. 14 (May 14, 1960), p. 35.

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These opinions were echoed on about the same day in Atlantic City where the president of SMI, Mr. Richard Waxenberg, pointed out that one of the six areas of effort for super market operators in the next decade was "to educate the public on good eating habits and good nutrition and particularly the young people of the nation."<sup>56</sup>

Both the comments by Mrs. Kiefer and Mr. Waxenberg indicate that they are aware of a much bigger problem than educating the young housewives of the '60's with produce information. It is an educational problem that involves all departments because it involves all foods. But the author is sure that in these two statements is reflected the special need for produce education because of all the departments in the super market, the produce department offers the least convenience in the way of preparation, packaging, and serving information and because of these facts, per capita consumption figures for fresh produce are falling. Yet of all the departments, a well-kept and fresh produce department probably offers the consumer more vitamins and nutrition than any other department in the store. This paradox is partly caused by lack of produce education in the young housewives of today. The educational program of the produce department must therefore be extended to cover not only names of the varieties of apples and tell which ones are best for baking, but it must include why

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<sup>56</sup>"Super Market Meet Draws Record 13,000," op. cit., p. 6.

apples are good for a person, how many they should eat, what vitamins and minerals they contain, etcetera. Using this approach, a produce department is not only helping to increase its sales, but it is doing a real service to the customers by helping them live better and more healthful lives.

## CHAPTER VI

### HOW TO EDUCATE CONSUMERS

Having established the fact that shoppers need education through the results of a survey and reports from food and produce experts, the question now becomes what information should housewives be given and how can they be educated.

In the area of what information should be given, it would seem that first the consumers want to know what the price of the item is. One cannot deny that even though other information is very important, customers usually are always concerned with the price of merchandise they buy. Customers also want to know the names of the fruits and vegetables in the racks. Proper signs of identification are therefore also important especially where the item is relatively unknown or if there is a variety of fruits or vegetables within one family such as the many varieties of apples, oranges, potatoes, onions, melons, grapefruit, grapes, plums, berries, and green leafy vegetables. Information as to the best use for each variety, taste differences, and ways of serving are also appreciated by the consumer.

Many customers are not aware of the color differences of different varieties of ripe fruits such as pears, plums, and grapes. They may think that all plums should have a

blood red color before they are ripe and ready for eating. This is true for the Santa Roas plum but the President plum has a greenish to purple color when ripe and Duarte has a dark red with brownish dot coloring; therefore, these two plums might be passed up by the consumer as being unripe or overripe just because the customer lacked the proper information as to the color characteristics of these plums and the store would have lost a sale.

Other information shoppers are interested in is the amount of time it takes to prepare certain vegetables; how to prepare unusual items such as avocados and artichokes; new ways to prepare and serve the old standbys such as green beans, tomatoes, and carrots; vitamin and calorie counts of produce items; and cost, cooking time, and nutritional comparisons between fresh, frozen, and canned fruits and vegetables. Because housewives are not always aware of the advantages of prepackaging and the convenience being offered to them through such items as prepared salads, pre-sliced potatoes, unitized and uniform packages of baking potatoes, they should be constantly reminded of these things through proper signs and other educational devices.

### Produce Personnel

Shoppers expect the people working in the produce department to be able to answer most of the questions they might ask relating to produce. They should rightly expect correct answers to their questions because this is the job

of the produce manager and clerks to know their job and know something about the products they are working with. In addition to just knowing that the produce department just got in sweet, juicy Texas strawberries or sweet and tender home-grown sweet corn, the produce personnel should do a selling job when they happen to be on the selling floor and customers pass them. After greeting the customers with a friendly "good morning" the produce clerk or manager should go on and educate the customers as to the best produce buys for the day as well as making a comment about the preparation or convenience of the item. Briefly, produce personnel should be more than lettuce trimmers and apple baggers; they should be educators, salesmen, and merchandisers for their department.

### Signs

Not all customers will be so brave as to admit their ignorance and ask the produce personnel "what potato is best for baking?" or "how do you prepare avacados?" Typically they will either guess and possibly make a bad selection or they will pass up the item completely and not make any purchase. Therefore, alert managers should recognize this tendency in shoppers and make use of easy-to-read and easy-to-understand signs to sell, instruct, inform, and amuse the shoppers.

Signs should always be used to give the price and the name of the product. Small tags that fit right into

the molding of the produce racks are often used for this purpose. Larger shop-printed or home-made signs may be used to tell the consumers about the advantages of prepackaging, point out new convenience items, invite consumers to break open packages if they are too large, suggest ways to use or prepare items, indicate the ripeness of merchandise, give the vitamin and calorie count of a product or of one average serving of a product, suggest related items, and offer a humorous touch to the department with phrases such as "Two heads are better than one" over a display of lettuce or "How are you fixed for blades?" over a display of grass seed.

It is reported that one super market in New England has a three by six foot colored mural installed on its produce department wall stating, "----- ready to use fresh vegetables No Work! . No Fuss! All Prepared"<sup>57</sup> The mural includes a picture of a beautiful large package of clean U.S. grade A spinach.

### Labels and Packages

The produce labels and the package or tray itself can give consumers quite a bit of information. They are especially important because unlike the signs or comments by produce personnel, information given on the package or label is taken home with the consumer.

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<sup>57</sup>"Super Market Wall Mural Promotes 'Packaged'." The Produce Packer, III, No. 22 (November 30, 1959), p. 1.

The labels of prepackaged produce items should include the name of the store, the name of the item, the type or variety of the item, net weight or count, unit price, price per pound, and the code date. The size of these labels is usually about 1 5/8" x 2 1/4" and can be inserted in the package or the thermoplastic labels can be applied with heat to the outside of the package. Saddle labels, which are stapled over the top opening of bags, are larger and therefore could include more information such as a recipe or suggestions for preparation.

Some cardboard packaging trays are printable so recipes and other information can be printed right on the back of the package. Publix Super Markets of Florida use a Tripl-Tite Folding Tray for packaging their produce. The trays are manufactured in different sizes and each size tray has a different recipe printed on the rear.<sup>58</sup> The recipes are printed within a three by five inch dotted line so the housewife can easily cut it out and file the recipe. These tasty recipes provide a real incentive for the consumer to purchase the packaged produce because they don't get the recipe unless they buy the package.

### Handouts

Another way to educate the modern housewives of today is to provide handouts for them that can be taken home. The

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<sup>58</sup>Letter from Mr. Lee Korn, Vice-President of Standard Folding Trays Corp., Jackson Heights 69, New York, April 27, 1960.

most popular handouts offered by super markets today are recipes. Most often these are provided by the shippers and grower associations such as Sunkist or Calavo or by trade associations such as United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association. These pads of recipes can easily be taped to the produce case canopy or they can be attached to the chrome price card holder and placed right in the middle of the merchandise needed for the recipe. It is so easy to offer this information to the consumers that one wonders why so few managers do not take advantage of this free material. Some super markets go so far as to print their own recipes on three by five cards and offer them to their customers. Stop and Shop Super Markets print their own recipe cards to boost the volume of little known varieties or commodities such as Zucchini squash.<sup>59</sup>

Recipes are especially well received when the item is a little known variety or a brand new commodity. Part of the successful introduction of Banana squash in the East in 1958 was attributed to the availability of recipes. It was reported that the "majority of consumers purchasing Banana squash for the first time did take advantage of the recipe information."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Sample card from Mr. Robert Bull, University of Delaware Extension Division, Newark, Delaware.

<sup>60</sup> Robert L. Bull and Charles L. Sutton, "Banana Squash, A Promising New Crop," Marketing Report, University of Delaware, Agricultural Extension Service, Newark, Delaware, February, 1959, p. 9.

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## Display

Displays are usually thought of only in terms of how much merchandise they can sell. It is true that this is their main purpose, but they can be used for other things too. Displays can suggest buying related items, it can focus attention on a particular department, and it can educate the customers by suggesting menu ideas through pictures, real-life exhibits of produce recipes, and point-of-sale material supplied by the grower or shipper.

A beautiful colored picture above a related item display of shortcake, strawberries, and cream would be a taste tempting suggestion to anyone who passed. Likewise, a cantaloupe fruit cup made up in the produce back room and set on a small stand over a display of the ingredients would be a helpful serving suggestion to all who passed. Plenty of fresh produce and easy-to-read signs are essential to good produce displays.

During the past few years grocery manufacturers have been spending millions of dollars on promotions that tie-in with produce items.<sup>61</sup> This trend is expected to continue and it would pay produce merchandisers to get some of this free publicity and point-of-sale material to use in their departments.

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<sup>61</sup>Snyder, "Why Your Produce Department ---," p. 144.

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### Demonstrations

There are a few items in the produce department that could benefit from a demonstration of preparation and best use. A demonstrator in the produce department could show customers how to peel, slice, and serve fresh pineapple or how to peel and serve avocados in salads and as an appetizer spread.

For other items such as mangoes and special varieties of pears, apples, and melons, small segments can be placed on a plate with toothpicks inserted in them with a sign urging the customers to "taste for yourself" the delicious flavor of this new product.

### Hostess

The larger super market or the super market chain might consider the idea of having a full-time or part-time hostess in the store to help answer, "what will I have for dinner tonight?"<sup>62</sup> This was one of the suggestions made by Joe Mott's Customers' Relation Panel members. As a result of the suggestion, Mr. Mott hired a hostess to answer customers' questions on planning meals, food preparation, and new products. She also has a special weekly main dish which she has out for sampling. Printed recipes are given out so the women may try the new dish at home.

A few months ago Mr. Joseph Hall, president of Kroger Company, went out to survey a group of housewives. He too

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<sup>62</sup>Paddleford, loc. cit.

found that they wanted a hostess to give them information on foods. As a result of his interviews, Kroger is "trying out a hostess system, in which competent home economists will be on hand to talk over possible menus with housewives."<sup>63</sup>

A hostess would answer questions pertaining to foods in the entire store, not just the produce department; but because the consumers need so much information about produce items, there is little doubt that a hostess would greatly benefit the produce department by educating the housewives about the many items and their preparation and many uses.

#### Newspaper Advertising

The produce department can carry its educational campaign right into the consumers' homes through effective newspaper advertising. People get tired of the same old food ads screaming price, price, price every week of the year.

For a change of pace, the produce part of the ad should try a more institutional approach using pictures of fresh produce items and giving recipes, serving suggestions, an explanation of why produce is prepackaged and what nutritional benefits fresh produce has to offer the consumer. The ad should also invite the customers to come into the produce department and try the tasty tropical

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<sup>63</sup>"Housewife, You're My Boss," The Saturday Evening Post, CCXXXII, No. 49 (June 4, 1960), p. 96.

mango, fresh Hawaiian pineapple, the season's first home grown corn, and the large variety of convenient, prepackaged, table-ready vegetable salads. These features could be real traffic drawers because these are the features that give a store a personality and distinctiveness. As one flips through the food ads in the paper, he can easily find the same national brand merchandise and same prices in almost all the stores. Readers will not be impressed by two stores that offer X brand of peas at the same low price of 15¢ a can. The customers will be impressed, however, with a store that can offer something in addition to price such as the produce features mentioned above.

To aid the produce department in advertising, the Metro Newspaper Service in cooperation with United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association has worked out a series of photographic illustrations of fruits and vegetables in two different sizes.<sup>64</sup> The series contains over 40 mats of single items, groups of produce items, and packages of produce. The reproductions are much clearer than previous mats offered and should be a real aid in making the produce department's newspaper ads really eye-appealing.

### Summary

Although it may not be possible to use all eight of the methods just described at one time, most of them should

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<sup>64</sup>"Advertising Mats for 'Fresh' Produce Available," The Packer, LXVI, No. 11 (April 23, 1960), p. 4.

be used regularly.

The produce personnel should always be ready to answer questions dealing with the commodities they sell. If they do not know the answer to a question, they should make an effort to find out the right answer. It is always good to have one or two signs posted in the department stressing the convenience of packaging or giving specific serving or nutritional information on some items. Price signs and signs of identification should be posted for all products at all times. Packages should always be labeled with the proper price and other relevant information. It is usually a good idea to have some type of recipe handout and one or two displays in the department every week. The demonstration and hostess ideas are optional suggestions but they may prove to be very valuable if the store is large enough and can afford them. The institutional advertising approach should be used occasionally as previously mentioned. These methods can do much to educate the young housewives of today so they can serve their families large and well prepared varieties of fresh fruits and vegetables.

## CHAPTER VII

### PRODUCE PERSONNEL NEEDS EDUCATION

#### A Survey

A survey by the writer of eighteen independent and chain super markets in Lansing and East Lansing, Michigan, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, indicated that consumer education and packaged convenience were not enough for the revitalization of the produce department. The produce personnel in the super markets also needs to be educated, it was found.

The writer went into nine stores of three national chains, four stores of three local chains, and five independent super markets for a total of eighteen stores in Milwaukee, Lansing, and East Lansing. All store visits were made on Saturday mornings. The writer proceeded to the produce department and asked whomever was on the selling floor at the time, produce manager and/or clerk, typical questions that might be asked by a shopper.

The questions were, "how do you prepare summer squash?", "how do you pick out a ripe pineapple?", "how do you prepare an avocado?", "how do you prepare eggplant?", "which potatoes are best for baking?", "which onions are the strongest and can be used for cooking?", "how do you prepare artichokes?", and "how do you pick out a ripe avocado?" One of



these questions was asked at random depending on what items were offered for sale in the store. It will be noted that some of these questions are the same ones asked of the housewives in the earlier survey, and questions to which many did not know the answers.

In seven out of the eighteen stores or in 39 per cent of the stores entered, the produce manager himself was on the floor. All seven, or 100 per cent, answered the questions correctly.

In 61 per cent of the stores a produce clerk was on the selling floor. In one store there was both a produce clerk and manager on the floor, and in one other store there were just three clerks on the floor at the same time.

The writer asked a total of thirteen produce clerks typical questions. Only 23 per cent knew the correct answers. It is interesting to note that of the three who knew the right answers, two of the three were older women clerks. All other clerks were younger men and teen agers. The other 77 per cent either admitted they did not know the answers, or they answered the question wrong.

Some of the interesting comments of the young produce clerks, most of whom looked like teen agers, were, "I don't know how to fix that squash. I just weigh it and sell it." Another clerk, when asked how to prepare avocados, replied in true produce fashion, "I don't know beans about them myself, but I think we have some recipes around here somewhere." He then proceeded to dig out a crumpled



little piece of paper that had been buried under the pile of avocados that gave instructions on serving. One can just imagine the enthusiasm a young housewife would have for buying these unusual items if she asked these same questions and received the same replies from the young clerks.

In 22 per cent of the stores there was no one on the sales floor when the author entered the department, and he had to wait for several minutes before anyone appeared. None of these stores had a produce buzzer, so the customers could not call for help if they wanted something weighed or wanted a question answered.

From this survey the author concluded that it is the produce clerks who need to be educated as to the different varieties of produce in the department, how they can be prepared, how to pick ripe produce, and how the different varieties of produce can be best used. The writer contends that education for the clerks is just as important as for the produce manager, because in over half the stores entered it was the produce clerk alone who was on the floor and not the manager. It is not up to the housewife to first find the manager and then ask her questions. She should rightly assume that all people working in the produce department as a full or part-time job should know something about the commodities they are working with every day, and be expected to intelligently answer questions.



## Secondary Reports

The previous survey is not a group of isolated cases that only took place at a certain time in certain stores, but it is typical of situations that take place over and over again in various parts of the country.

An excellent example of what happens when the produce man does not know how to answer his customers' questions, and then what can happen if the customer is given the proper information, is summed up very well in the following experience of Mrs. A. S. Day, director of the Home Economics Department of the United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association.

"Recently I stopped by the produce counter of my local super market, and while I was shopping another customer passed near me to ask the produce man a question. "How do you serve mangoes--how are they used?"

He looked embarrassed and confessed he didn't know. The customer turned away, disappointed, and started to go to another department. At that point I stopped her and told her a little about this tropical fruit--what it tastes like, how I prepare it and serve it.

I didn't try to sell her on mangoes, simply educate her a little. But the happy result was she wound up making a purchase of three."<sup>65</sup>

Mrs. Day continued the article by saying that she has seen this same situation occur many times with items other than mangoes.

One of the questions in the survey of the country's top produce executive, presented in Chapter II, was, "what

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<sup>65</sup>Mrs. A. S. Day, "An Open Letter to the Produce Department," Progressive Grocer, XL, No. 4 (April, 1960), p. 152.

is your most serious single problem in the sales management of the fresh produce division of your firm?"<sup>66</sup> The answer that received the greatest number of mentions as being the biggest problem the retailers faced was "stimulating store-level personnel to take a genuine interest in the produce they handle and to accept new packaging ideas."<sup>67</sup>

The answer to this question is significant because it shows that the produce leaders are aware of the problem. The results of the survey in the stores and other sources of information, however, seem to indicate either the produce leaders are doing nothing to remedy the situation, or their efforts have not been too successful.

#### Suggestions for Educating Produce Personnel

Because of the wide variety of produce departments now in existence in terms of size, man power requirements, merchandise carried, and store policy, it is felt that a series of suggestions for educating produce personnel under present conditions, rather than a complete plan to "overhaul" the department, are in order. The following suggestions are made with that thought in mind..

1. Produce clerks will only want to know more about produce if they are enthused about the department. This

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<sup>66</sup>Bull, "What America's Key Food . . .", loc. cit.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.



enthusiasm must come from the produce manager as well as the store manager.

2. The produce manager should teach the clerks how to trim, package, and display all items and the reason for doing it in the explained way.

3. Periodicals and papers such as Chain Store Age, Progressive Grocer, and Super Market News should be made available to the clerks on their lunch hour and coffee breaks in the store. The Chain Store Age Produce Manual should be given to each clerk to read after it has been read, and the important points checked, by the produce manager.

4. The manager should send for produce calorie and vitamin tables, prepackaging charts, and other relevant information for each of his clerks from United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Merchandising Institute and the many trade and commodity promotional groups.

5. The produce manager should pass around the weekly produce flyers or bulletins from the chain, voluntary, or cooperative group headquarters so all the clerks will know what is going on and take more of an interest in their department.

6. The manager should point out to the clerks as they handle and package different items what the item is and how it can best be prepared and used. This gradual introduction to the uses for each item might be more effective than an all out drive to teach them everything at once.



A "classroom" session on company time might be more effective with some groups, however.

7. As merchandise is delivered to the store the manager should point out to the clerks how to tell if it is ripe and how the ripening process can be quickened or slowed down depending on the store movement.

8. A produce department meeting of all produce personnel should be held at the beginning of each season to inform the clerks about coming promotions, plentiful produce of the season, tie-in sales, new products and their uses, and produce department policy. The manager could ask for suggestions for improving the department to make the clerks feel more important.

9. The clerks should be allowed to try a new item or taste a regular one prepared in a different way so when the customers ask them how it tastes, they will know from experience.

10. Post signs in the back room giving general information about which items should be sprinkled and which should be kept dry, what the shelf life of produce items is, and when the various fruits and vegetables are in season.

11. A brochure could be printed by the chain or wholesaler group and made available to all new produce department employees listing the names, uses, and methods of preparation for the unusual produce items in the department.

It should be remembered that it is only after the produce clerks on the sales floor have been educated about



items they are selling that they can answer the questions of the housewives intelligently and thereby stimulate the sale of more fresh fruits and vegetables.



## CHAPTER VIII

### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the causes for the decrease in per capita consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables and then to make recommendations as to how this decrease in consumption and in produce department sales could be increased.

The material for much of the project was a result of personal surveys of young wives of Michigan State University students and of produce personnel of super markets in Lansing, East Lansing, and Milwaukee.

The format of the paper was first, to analyze the results of the personal survey; second, to back up these findings with secondary reports and surveys of food and produce experts of the United States; and third, to make recommendations as to how the situations discovered in steps one and two could be improved.

The paper dealt with two main issues that are vital to increased produce sales. One was increased convenience in the produce items offered for sale and the second area of concentration was education. First, education of the housewives as to how to serve, prepare, choose and use different varieties of produce, and second, education of



the produce clerks in the store so they can be more helpful to the customers in doing their shopping.

### Findings

1. Housewives have been buying more and more convenience foods from the super market each year, as manufacturers have continued to offer a larger variety of prepared and ready-to-serve foods.

2. Fresh fruit and vegetable sales have continued to decline as a per cent of total store sales.

3. Per capita consumption of all fresh fruits and vegetables have decreased by an average of 27 per cent in the last ten years.

4. The survey of housewives indicated that they were increasing their use of frozen fruits and vegetables because they were more convenient to prepare.

5. Produce and food experts have found that housewives want convenience, but they have not found it in the produce department.

6. An analysis of frozen and canned vegetables showed that these two processed forms offer not only convenience of preparation but convenient serving suggestions, recipes, and other point-of-sale information on the label, which most produce items do not offer.

7. The Michigan State survey of housewives showed that most housewives need to be educated as to how to select, use, and prepare many varieties of unusual produce



items and several of the more popular items.

8. Food experts advocate more consumer education of produce items so the housewives will understand what they see, know how to use it, and purchase the commodities.

9. A survey of produce clerks and managers showed that although produce managers could answer typical consumer questions on produce items, the produce clerks in the majority of cases could not answer the questions.

10. Secondary reports from produce experts confirmed the survey results that many produce men do not know how answer consumers' questions, and as a result the produce department has lost many sales.

### Recommendations

1. The produce department should give the housewives convenience by offering them:

- a) Prepackaged produce
- b) Table-ready and pan-ready prepared  
produce items
- c) Tie-in merchandising displays
- d) Produce in a variety of packaged sizes
- e) Helpful personal service when needed

2. The produce department should educate the consumers as to the best use for each variety, methods of preparing and serving different varieties, nutritional value of fresh produce, methods of determining ripeness, price and name of each items, advantages of prepackaging, and what



special convenience items are available such as pre-peeled potatoes and prepared salads.

3. The educational campaign should be carried on through all produce personnel, signs, labels and package information, handouts, displays, demonstrations, a hostess, and newspaper advertising.

4. Produce clerks should be educated by the produce and store managers, food periodicals, and warehouse headquarters publications as to the information they will need so they can intelligently answer the questions of consumers and help educate them about fresh fruits and vegetables.

### Conclusion

The housewife doesn't really know what she wants until someone offers it to her. Grocery manufacturers and frozen food processors have offered the housewife something new--convenience. Sales of convenience food items have been booming during the last ten years.

Unfortunately, most produce departments have not tied on to this new trend and as a result their percentage of total store sales has decreased. Another reason for this decline is that the housewife is generally not very well educated as to the best uses for items, methods of preparation, etcetera, and the produce department has not been giving her the kind of education and help she needs. In some cases the produce personnel themselves do not know the answers to her questions.

As a result, she has shifted to buying those items which do give her convenience and do educate her as to use and preparation, namely frozen and canned fruits and vegetables.

Fifteen years ago the major produce problem was handling and shelf life.<sup>68</sup> Today the key problem is sales, and the sales can only be increased if the consumers are offered more convenience and educated as to why they should buy fresh produce, and how to prepare it once they have made their purchase.

Packaged convenience and education will be the keys to the revitalization of the produce department.

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<sup>68</sup>"1960 Produce Manual," Chain Store Age, XXXVI, No. 3 (March, 1960), p. 169.

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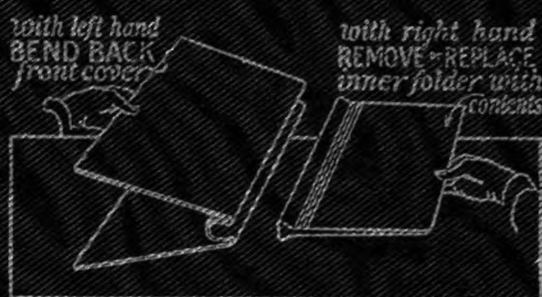
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