

## MRS. ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'S OWN PROGRAM

June 13, 1940

Description: Broadcast time 1:15-1:30 PM over the NBC Red network. ER discusses food and various types of formal and informal meal services at the White House.

Participants: Ben Grauer, Eleanor Roosevelt, NBC Announcer

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(00:25)

[Ben Grauer:] This is *Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt's Own Program*, presented by the makers of SweetHeart Soap.

[Theme music 00:30-01:00]

[Ben Grauer:] And again, the nation tunes in its beloved radio personality, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. Today Mrs. Roosevelt joins her thousands of listening friends from Washington. These stimulating visits come to you with the compliments of SweetHeart Soap, whose wonderful purity makes it an ideal summer beauty soap. And now, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt.

[ER:] Good day, ladies and gentlemen. It has seemed to us in going over the letters that come in as a result of these broadcasts, that one of the things which interests people most is what we eat in the White House. I think that some people have an idea that food in the White House is different from that which is served anywhere else. As a matter of fact, it is sometimes harder because of the quantity which has to be cooked, to have it as good as it would be in a smaller household. But on the whole, it varies very little from the food eaten by any other American family throughout the United States.

Breakfast for the president and for me is not a very large meal. Orange juice or grapefruit, a cup of coffee with cream for the president, but with hot milk for me because I learned to drink coffee when I was fifteen years old in France, and they drink it that way. I've learned since to drink my coffee with cream or black or with or without sugar, though I really like it better hot coffee and hot, hot milk. Perhaps I'd better say that very few things which I eat or drink matter to me a great deal and it is more or less habit how I happen to take them. A piece of toast or a roll or a muffin is all that either of us care for in addition, though occasionally the president indulges himself in kippered herring or a boiled egg.

Lunch, again, is a simple meal. Tomato juice or clear soup, with an egg dish or some fish, a vegetable and either cooked or fresh fruit, or a simple dessert. Sometimes we have a chowder or a cream soup with cheese and a salad or a simple dessert. (3:11)

For informal dinners we have soup, meat or fish, vegetables and salad and cheese and after-dinner coffee. Of course, if we have a number of guests at an informal dinner we change a little, usually having a dessert because so many people like dessert. We ourselves really like sweets, but regard for our health and figures restrains us as a rule.

A formal dinner is rather different and I've asked the housekeeper, Mrs. [Henrietta] Nesbitt for menus of two dinners served this past winter. For the dinner given to the vice president we had consommé au fromage, parmesan and gruyere with whole wheat crackers, curled celery and ripe olives, fillet of trout with sauce italian, sliced tomatoes and rolls, turkey with giblet stuffing, corn timbales, hominy, string

beans, hearts of lettuce with Russian dressing and saltines, cherry custard with cakes and after-dinner coffee. (4:21)

For the dinner which is given for the members of the Diplomatic Corps, we had clam cocktails with saltines, calf's head soup with whole wheat thinsies, curled celery, stuffed olives, boiled fillet flounder with mushroom sauce, potato balls with parsley, rolls, broiled duck with brandied peaches, scalloped apples and pineapple and green peas, sweet potato cones with marshmallow, lettuce with jellied bouillon, puff paste with parmesan cheese, caramel and salted almond ice cream, confections and coffee.

When we first came to the White House, a very interesting woman, Mrs. Sheila Hibben, who has written a cookbook giving early American recipes, asked if I would be interested in having a look into some of the early historical menus which were served in the White House in the early days. Out of this research came a delicious crab soup which was Mrs. George Washington's recipe, and a number of other interesting and delicious dishes from Jefferson's own book, which as I think I told you before, he kept in his own handwriting. The list of things bought for the White House, the minutes of Cabinet meetings, and recipes for good food and drink, are found side by side.

State dinners in the old days were very different from what they are today. So I thought you might be interested in one of the menus by way of contrast. This dinner was given on February 20, 1834: soup in the French style, beef veloute, wild turkey boned and dressed with braze, fish, cold chicken interlaced with slices of tongue garnished with dressed salad, canvasback duck and celery, partridges with sweet breads, pheasants, and old Virginia ham. The dishes were placed in succession on the table so as to give full effect to the appearance, then removed and carved on the side tables by the servants. The dessert was jelly and small tarts, candy with dried fruits in them, then preserves of various kinds. After that, ice cream and lastly, grapes and oranges. They certainly were hardy eaters in those days, and I do not see how they ever survived! Life was more leisurely. They could spend a longer time in eating, and perhaps even their digestions were geared to cope with such quantities of food. And now, let's listen to a message Mr. Grauer has for us. (7:15)

[Ben Grauer:] Thank you, Mrs. Roosevelt. Ladies, do your children like to take a bath? Well, they'll love a bath with SweetHeart Soap. The way it foams into great handfuls of rich lather and the handy oval shape that's so much easier for little fingers to hold, make this soap an outstanding favorite with the very young set. And you're sure SweetHeart Soap is pure. It's mild and kind to tender young skin. So you know you're making no mistake when you let your little folks revel to their hearts content in their SweetHeart bath. See if this pure, delightful soap can't win the favor of your young soap and water rebels. If the experience of others is any guide, you'll quickly find that pure SweetHeart Soap is the only toilet soap you need in your home. The cost? Just a few pennies for a big, generous, oval cake. Accept no substitute when you ask for SweetHeart Soap. And the microphone is again yours, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. (08:23)

[ER:] We did another thing that first year in the White House in regard to food. At Cornell University, the Home Economics department developed the menus for five and seven cent dinners to be used by people who were living on very limited budgets. And so I undertook to try these menus out in the White House. My children teased me considerably and offered to pay me the difference in cost for a glass of milk so they would feel better nourished. But as a matter of fact, while I do not think the meals were adequate for a steady diet, they would certainly do none any harm for a short time. (9:11) Those meals consisted of hot stuffed eggs, tomato sauce, mashed potatoes, whole wheat bread and butter, prune pudding, and milk for the children. Or liver and gravy, baked potatoes, scalloped onions, whole wheat bread and butter, rice pudding and again, milk for the children.

Our main hospitality, however, in the White House, is extended to guests at tea. Their number is greater than the guests that we have for lunch or dinner. Ordinarily in winter we serve tea and coffee, little sandwiches, and cakes of various kinds. In the spring when we're out in the garden and it is warm weather, we usually serve only lemonade and fruit punch and cookies of various kinds.

One of the things which my husband enjoys most in the food line is the variety of game that is sent to him in the proper seasons such as quail, wild duck, venison, et cetera. He is particular about the way this game is cooked and about having the proper things served with it. I dread the appearance on the table of wild ducks because he only likes them if they've literally flown through the kitchen. (10:17)

One of my husband's great skills is his carving. He can carve any kind of a bird with greater precision and economy than anyone else in the family. At Thanksgiving and at Christmas, when several turkeys are carved, my husband always takes pride in serving more people, more quickly than any of our boys.

It is fortunate for us that in the White House, the housekeeper has ample room for storage because we always keep on hand such things as ham and cold meat and more food of all kinds than we think we're going to need every day. This may seem foolish, but one is never sure of what the day will bring.

Often when I see the housekeeper in the morning, I tell her that we will be four or five for lunch and three or four for dinner, and before lunch time arrives, we may be twelve. The same thing happens often before we sit down for dinner. This is because during the day, both the president and I will hear of people who've come to Washington for just a short time while there will be some reason for seeing someone, and we will have no other time except during a meal hour. I see a great many people at lunchtime and I've really become quite adept at talking privately to the two people on either side of me even though I may have a large number of other guests.

In addition to the storage space for food, Mrs. Nesbitt has to have a great deal of space in which to keep the silver, glass, and china which is used only on State occasions. We have a very beautiful gold service bought in President Monroe's day which is kept in the vault most of the time and used only for the State dinners. There are also the lovely silver bowls which are filled with flowers when the silver boat with the high water legend inscribed on it is used as the centerpiece. (12:11)

The kitchen in the White House has been done over many times. Originally of course, like all the early kitchens, there was an enormous fireplace with the ovens on the side, a roasting spit and cranes. This is still preserved in the servants dining room. But today the entire kitchen is electrified with a center table which has ample space for keeping food hot until it is served. This is a marvelous convenience. There is a large soup kettle on one side of the room, waffle irons, electric mixers, electric squeezers, and choppers on the other.

The stove itself has one section where the coils are so arranged as to heat up very quickly. There is a special place for cooking in deep fat, and the ovens and broilers seem to me quite confusing. I was worried that some day the electricity would go off and we would have a terrible pause in the middle of dinner, but I was assured that everything would go on cooking for at least two hours if something happened to the electric current. I relied on this very comfortably until one day when luncheon was strangely delayed, and after a long time during which I ran through in my mind the things which might have happened to the food, I was told that the electricity had gone off for a short time, but was on again and we would shortly be able to serve our guest.

When I was young, I used to suffer greatly over every little mischance that occurred in my housekeeping until I heard an older woman say "that really one's friends preferred to find you a poor

housekeeper because then they could pat themselves on the back and think how much better they were themselves.” Since then, I’ve never been as concerned about it and though I try to have things go smoothly, if mistakes occur, I’ve learned to make light of them. Everybody is happier in the long run and no one really worries about it if the hostess herself is calm. (14:10)

[Ben Grauer:] Thank you very much, Mrs. Roosevelt. Friends, why suffer from the heat? Why not enjoy the warm weather? Next time you feel hot and cross, try this: take a cake of SweetHeart Soap in one hand and draw a warm tub or shower with the other. Now whisk up that famous, rich SweetHeart lather, and let it stream over your skin from head to foot. Right away you begin to feel as good as new again. And when you rinse away that grand lather, the clinging surface impurities that made you so uncomfortable are gone along with it. You feel sparkling, clean, refreshed, ready to enjoy life again. You’ll say a SweetHeart bath is a grand hot weather pick-me-up. And you don’t need to stint yourself on it because SweetHeart Soap is pure, and therefore mild and agreeable even to normally sensitive skin. Use it as often as you want to look and feel your best. Remember the name: SweetHeart Soap, and treat yourself to half a dozen cakes today. (15:16)

[Theme music 15:17-15:30]

[Ben Grauer:] [Speaking over music] And this brings to a close another radio visit with Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. Mrs. Roosevelt comes to call again next Tuesday, same time, same station, and we cordially invite each and every one of you to be with us. We also want to thank you for your splendid letters and your praise of the fine product that brings you these programs: SweetHeart Soap, famous for fifty years as the soap that agrees with your skin. Now it’s au revoir until next Tuesday when you’ll again hear [music crescendos, cuts] *Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt’s Own Program*. This is Ben Grauer speaking.

[NBC Announcer:] This is the National Broadcasting Company.

[NBC Chimes]

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