

“AUNT JEAN’S MARSHMALLOW FUDGE DIET”

by Jean Kerr

I can remember when conversation used to crackle with wit and intelligence because we talked about IDEAS. Go to a party now and the couple next to you won't say a word about how practical it's been to buy bunk beds for the twins. They won't talk about anything whatsoever except their diets – the one they've just come off, the one they're on now, or the one they're going to have to start on Monday if they keep it up like this.

Today, with the science of nutrition advancing so rapidly, there is plenty of food for conversation, if for nothing else. We have the Rockefeller diet, the Mayo diet, high-protein diets, low-protein diets, “blitz” diets. ...

Where do people get all these diets, anyway? Obviously from the magazines; it's impossible to get a diet from a newspaper. For one thing, in a newspaper you can never catch the diet when it STARTS. It's always the fourth day of Ada May's Wonder Diet where Ada May gives you the menu for the day: one glass of skim milk, eight prunes, and three lamb kidneys. This settles the matter for most people, who figure that if this is the FOURTH day, heaven deliver them from the first.

Once in a great while a diet will stick in your mind. I'll never forget one I read about last summer. It urged the dieter to follow up his low-calorie meals by performing a series of calisthenics in the bathtub. Not in the bathROOM. I read it twice, and it said the bathTUB. What a clever plan! Clearly, after you've broken both your arms, you won't be able to eat much (if at all) and the pounds will just melt away.

And where is all this dieting getting us? NO place at all. It's taken the fun out of conversation and all joy out of cooking. Furthermore, it leads to acts of irrational violence.

But let's get to the heart of the matter. All these diets that appear in flossy magazines – who are they for? Are they aimed at men? Certainly not; most men don't read these magazines. Are they intended for fat teenagers? Probably not; teenagers can't afford them. Do not ask for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for you, Married Woman, lumpy, dumpy Mother of Three. And why? I'll tell you why.

First, it is presumed that when you're thinner you live longer. Second, it is felt that when you are skin and bones you have so much extra energy that you can climb up and shingle the roof. Third – and this is what they're really getting at – when you're thin you are so tasty and desirable that strange men will pinch you at the A & P. Meanwhile your husband will follow you around the kitchen breathing heavily and will stop to smother you with kisses as you try to put the butter back in the icebox. This – and I hope those in the back of the room are listening – is hogwash.

Think of the happy marriages you know about. How many of the ladies are still wearing size twelve? I have been examining marriages and I have taken a cross section of divorces (Cross? My dear, they were irate!) What I have discovered is that the women who are being ditched are one and all willowy, wand-like and slim as a blade. In fact, six of them require extensive padding even to look flat-chested. This may be nothing more than a coincidence. Or it may just prove that men don't divorce fat wives because they feel sorry for them.

However, the real reason, I believe, that men hang onto their well-endowed spouses is because they're comfy and nice to have around the house. What actually holds a husband through thick and thick is a girl who is fun to be with. And any girl who has had nothing to eat since nine o'clock this morning but three hard-boiled eggs will be about as jolly and companionable as an income-tax inspector.

So I say, Ladies, switch to the MODERN way: No exercise, no dangerous drugs, no weight loss. (And what do they mean, "Ugly fat"? It's YOU isn't it?) Try eating three full meals a day with a candy bar after dinner and pizza at eleven o'clock. Just sit thee smiling on that size twenty backside and say, "Guess what we're having for dinner, dear? Your favorite – stuffed breast of veal and corn fritters." All of your friends will say, "Oh, Blanche is a mess, the size of a house, but he's crazy about her, just CRAZY about her!"