

Foods People Won't Eat Because of the Names

Dogfish Not at All Popular Until It Came to be Called Grayfish—

Dainty Morsels from the Muskrat and Field Mouse

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FOR years Arthur H. Bailey and I labored to liberate the potential of the common sea dogfish in human kinetics. The dogfish is good eating, but give a fish a bad name by adding "dog" to it, and people appear not to eat that fish without picturing dog mentally during the process.

Mr. Bailey and I tried to interest legislators and business men. Legislators were suspicious in the feeling that somebody might be personally benefited by the propaganda. Business men, when asked to put money into the project, asked if a market for the fish had been established anywhere. Unless such a market had been established by somebody else, they could not, as wise business men, put money into any scheme looking toward public welfare. The dogfish question had an expansive vista at a concise point of human food, and extending into the fact that dogfish when unconfined destroyed millions of dollars' worth of established market food fish annually, including lobsters and crabs in their dietary. Furthermore, some of the already slender chances for getting into heaven on the part of fishermen were lost because of their necessary profanity when the morning trawls were found hung all full of dogfish instead of cod.

When seeking to find a suitable place on land for the dogfish, I named it "squallfish," as suggested by its Latin name *Squalus*, and Mr. Bailey tried to lead it ashore with the name of "Ungada whitefish." Neither one of these names proved to have hooks attached to it, and furthermore, information came from Washington to the effect that we might

be prosecuted for misbranding if we sent out pushcarts at our own expense in the public interest, with the dogfish for sale under any other name. All at once somebody suggested the name "grayfish"; that cognomen carried it to the goal, and grayfish are now rolling into the people's market baskets by the quintal.

During the coming ten years, I shall make an effort to serve public interest by talking and writing of certain other classes of abundant food supply neglected by a public which does not seem to worry about playing for porterhouse at high stakes.

Two of the voles are most delicious for food purposes, and in the case of one of them we have again an expansive vista beginning at the point of eating an animal that makes away with a vast quantity of our other established foods. The food of the voles is the food of hares and rabbits, but their flesh is of a better average quality.

The first vole to receive attention will be the muskrat. As in case of the dogfish, the muskrat (*Fiber zibethicus*) is not eaten generally because somebody gave it the name "rat." Having given it the name "rat," people then decided not to eat it because of the association of ideas belonging to the name which they had bestowed upon a helpless recipient. This fine, fat vole may be found in the Philadelphia and Washington markets for special customers, and I have made it a *pièce de résistance* for weeks at a time during Summer explorations when I did not care to shoot large animals like deer or bears, the flesh of which would not keep well at that time of year in camp.

If the Food Commission at Washington

advertises through the trappers' journals this Fall, offering 5 cents a pound for 100,000 tons of muskrat meat, and if the commission will put out an impressive quantity in a few large cities under some well-selected name, thousands of tons of this excellent food which would otherwise be thrown away by the trappers will furnish enjoyable calories for the public.

Another vole, and one which opens an expansive vista looking toward conservation of the grain and root crops which this animal now eats, is the common field mouse. Because it is called "mouse," the good housewife will use her broom upon any one suggesting the employment of this vole for table purposes. A field mouse which has been fattened upon buckwheat and potatoes, and then fed on a final round of corn, is a most delectable tidbit in a fricassee. It will almost rival the reed bird.

I believe that 100,000 tons of muskrat meat could easily be obtained by advertising for it at 5 cents a pound. The capture of 100,000 tons of field mice would be another matter. The chubby little rascals are very elusive, not easily trapped, and a committee of ways and means would have to be appointed for getting this particular food supply over the rim of the skillet.

Nuts have been generally looked upon, like candy, as something to be eaten between meals at a time when they would cause indigestion. This is another one of the funny "psychos" belonging to man.

Nuts as a group furnish freely those fats and proteins which are so highly prized by the student of edeconomics. The general public has carried in mind

the fixed idea of luxury in the habit-thought of nuts, but in some parts of the world this food practically takes the place of potatoes. When considered in the light of an important food supply as distinguished from luxurious diet, coconuts probably stand first, pine nuts second, and chestnuts third in order. After these three would come, perhaps, almonds, walnuts, and hazels in that respective order, and then perhaps 200 other kinds of nuts. During the last five years the peanut has been moved up to a point where it will soon become a rival of the pine nuts and Asiatic chestnuts for substantial food purposes.

The raising of nuts in this country for food purposes has been neglected until recent years, but the owner of one chestnut orchard of 300 acres in Pennsylvania told me that he made \$30,000 profit over expenses on one year's crop, and no tree in the orchard over 14 years of age. The British Government has protected one pine forest of bunya bunya pines thirty miles in length by twelve miles in width. In this country we have neglected the pine nuts very largely, although a friend of mine at Battle Creek says that he buys them by the ton for his customers.

It will probably not be difficult for the Food Commission to obtain 100,000 pounds of pine nuts by advertising through the nut growers' journals, and if these nuts are placed upon the market in large quantities in a few cities at one time, a lasting impression will be made.

At the next meeting of the Northern Nut Growers' Association the subject of nut-bearing water plants will be discussed.