

## Real Eating Treat: Plain Old Potato, Boiled at Home

**H**OME cooking seems to be on the way out, another victim of progress. First, prepared, partially cooked foods relieved home cooks of opportunities to add their own pinches of flavor.

Then came entire meals, frozen dinners that needed only to be warmed before serving. Substitute and ersatz foods have followed and are increasing in number.

Now experts say that within 10 years people will be eating more than half of their meals away from home, compared to about one-third now. Besides saving energy for cooking and cooks, they say that institutionalized preparation of meals is less wasteful than family cooking. This is something to think about, since the world already has more population than food.

Even so, something good will be lost when home cooking disappears. We may survive. Humans are not nearly as discerning about food taste as we like to think we are. We have become accustomed to mass-produced, artificially flavored and colored foods with synthetic texture. Food manufacturers have just about given up trying to sell anything else.

One food processor spent millions to capture the natural flavor of the tomato and preserve its aromatic qualities in catsup. The overcooked flavor was eliminated. So was the catsup, because customers weren't used to the natural flavor and wouldn't buy it.

Vine-ripened taste of fruits, melons and tomatoes have been sacrificed for uniformity, shippability and long shelf life.

Few of today's youngsters have tasted rich, creamy milk. They have been raised on milk that has been pasteurized, fortified, homogenized, defatted and perhaps reconstituted. Oleomargarine made from vegetable oils as a butter substitute now accounts for two-thirds of all table spread sales.

Totally artificial foods are selling well, too. More than a fifth of all citrus-flavored beverages consist of water, flavoring and Vitamin C. The versatile soybean is used to make such things as "powdered eggs" that are claimed to be free from cholesterol, hamlike "breakfast slices" and sausagelike "breakfast links".

Meals now run heavily to condensed, reconstituted and canned products. One official predicted use of prepared foods will be encouraged by portable units that can keep a casserole hot and ice cream cold at the same time. On-the-run meals, portion controlled, precooked, prepackaged and sold in vending machines are on the way in. Home cooking is on the way out.

Scientists are looking for more food sources, too, and some don't sound very appetizing. Fish protein concentrate is one. Others include yeast, fungi, bacteria and algae grown in such media as petroleum, garbage and wood pulp.

If present trends continue, the real eating treat may be a plain old potato, boiled at home.