

Why Not Sooner Sorghum Molasses?

NEW ENGLAND is noted for its maple syrup, possibly the nation's favorite pancake sweetener. Now it is sweeter than ever.

Prices reached record highs in 1980 for the 15th straight season. They ranged up to \$22 a gallon in New Hampshire and production was higher in most places than it had been in years.

Oklahoma farmers used to produce a good deal of sorghum molasses, but very few mills are left. The last one we saw was near Hugo about two years ago. The price was \$9 per gallon at the mill, but the molasses was not quite ready, and we couldn't wait.

Many people recall how good sorghum molasses tasted on a stack of steaming pancakes on a cold morning, but few youngsters have enjoyed the thick-brown "long sweetenin'."

We may be overlooking an opportunity. Sorghum (or red top cane) molasses isn't an original Oklahoma food, but the first settlers made it because they might not have had cash to buy sugar. Maybe we ought

to try giving pancake eaters a choice of syrups — with Oklahoma molasses.

Food sources are continually searching for new products, testing hundreds of items annually. Although about 60 percent are said to fail, many prove popular and yield large returns.

The Wall Street Journal reports that "John's Original Pork Chop Sandwich" flopped as a franchise in Missoula, Mont., but the owner still hopes to challenge the big hamburger chains with it.

If spotless manufacturing plants can duplicate the natural flavor of farm-produced sorghum molasses, it ought to click.

Food preferences are continually changing. Regardless of campaigns for nutrition and diet fads, most people eat what they enjoy.

What some diet authorities call "junk foods" are among the more popular food items. This may not necessarily be because they contain nutritional ingredients such as milk, eggs, nuts, fruit and chocolate. More probably they are popular because people enjoy them.

A current report says that soda pop now accounts for 26 percent of total consumption of drinks other than water and that it may reach 31 percent by 1990. Officials of the soft drink industry predict that beer will replace milk in second place by then.

The National Live Stock and Meat Board found in a survey that roast beef leads all other red meats in frequency of menu appearances. In the sandwich category, hamburgers hit 78.4 percent of menus.

Incidentally, some weeks ago when this column bemoaned the lack of genuine Oklahoma grub, we turned up one food item named for our state: the Okieburger, served at Tony Reiger's T&J Drive-In in Hammon, 15 miles north of Elk City. Perhaps there are others.

It could be that people worry too much sometimes about what they eat and not enough about how to enjoy life. A bit of sage advice is attributed to the ageless baseball star, Satchel Paige, who said: "If your stomach disputes you, lie down and pacify it with cool thoughts."