

IOWA HISTORY



Courtesy Library of Congress

Not all Iowa homemakers enjoyed modern kitchens like this in 1924.

Homemakers Learn Timesaving Tips in 1924

“I always know everyone is enjoying the dinner if nothing is said,” an Iowa homemaker said. “If it isn’t all right I hear about it.”

It would have been easy for an Iowa homemaker to become discouraged in 1924. After all, it was her responsibility to establish a home “which is loved by all its members” according to an Iowa State College publication called *The Iowa Homemaker*.

To help women accomplish their daunting task the college, working through the county extension services, had completed studies that revealed some interesting information. The findings, along with useful tips, were intended to improve a homemaker’s life. The focus was on labor-saving equipment, step-saving arrangements and well-planned schedules.

One woman who participated in a study learned that a new piece of inexpensive equipment could relieve her of the back-breaking duties of carrying waste water from her kitchen, a habit she had endured for 22 years. After learning that the cost of a sink was only \$6.50, she immediately ordered one for her kitchen. The woman had mistakenly assumed an indoor draining sink would require the installation of an expensive water system. Although she wouldn’t have running water in her house, the drain system was an affordable luxury.

“I realized how stupid I had been, and I never would have dreamed it would be such a help,” she said.

Sixty-five women in one Iowa county discovered the advantages of oil cloth when they installed it on all their pantry shelves. A study revealed it required one-fourth as much time to

clean. A group of women learned that using a pressure cooker reduced the time for watching and tending food by two-thirds. In addition, it cut the gas bill in half. In Black Hawk County a woman put down linoleum on her kitchen floors and found she had to scrub only half as often as with bare floors.

Devising a regular schedule for activities helped reduce stress, and assigning tasks to family members also improved a homemaker's day-to-day routines. And an afternoon nap was very beneficial.

A farm woman agreed to use a pedometer to track the number of steps she took when preparing a meal for her family. The five-mile jaunt around her kitchen was more exercise than she needed. By implementing step-saving practices recommended by the college, the woman cut her steps in half. By grouping together articles and by keeping frequently used items in convenient places, she was able to save six weeks' of 10-hour days in a year. All that efficiency freed up more time for reading, writing and the "serenities of sewing, patching and darning," according to a New York newspaper that reported the outcome of the study.

Sources

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