

NEW DAYS AHEAD

March blows in with 31 days—to lionize events, sample what's new in the supermarket.

- It's Town Meeting Day all over Vermont, March 1. Be open-minded (and warm) with a single mug of instant Cream of Mushroom soup; Nestlé.

- Hoot and Holler. Texas Independence Day (March 2) calls for hot-bloodedness. For a bang, try a peppery new Bloody Mary mix; Tabasco Brand.

- Honor Elizabeth Barrett Browning (March 6) who gave the world: "How do I love thee/Let me count the ways." Start off easy with refrigerator corn muffins; Pillsbury.

- Amerigo Vespucci (March 9) may have named the Americas, but we're even more international now. There's a French bread pizza the family will love; Stouffers.

- It was way back in '88 (March 12) when the Great Blizzard drifted in. Prepare; stock up on Chunky Soups: chicken, chili beef and bean with ham; Campbells.

- Walking the long green line at the St. Patrick's Day parade (March 17), works up a real appetite. Top off the day with a new mate for pork, Stove Top stuffing; General Foods.

- When Earth Day, March 21, dawns, celebrate things natural. A healthy opener is a crunchy, high fiber cereal—Cracklin' Bran; Kelloggs.

- If your child is as adept at

avoiding things nutritious as Houdini (March 24) was at slipping from handcuffs, this might work like magic. Looking and tasting like an orange popsicle, Ten Plus is filled with protein and vitamin C; Consolidated Foods.

KNOW YOUR SUGAR

Now that sugar prices have come down from the stratosphere, it's a safe subject to talk about without blood pressures rising. Here are some once-over-lightly facts we find interesting. All plants contain sugar, but sugar cane and sugar beets are principal sources: cane is a subtropical plant growing up to 15 feet; beets are a temperate root that look like regular beets but are white and weigh up to 2 pounds each. Sugars they produce are indistinguishable. Refinement leads to these principal types of sugar: **Granulated**—the commonest, can be "fine" or "ultra-fine" and the types are interchangeable. Stores indefinitely; there is no difference in brands of granulated. **Powdered** (or confectioners') with varying number of X's for candies or frostings has a small amount of cornstarch added to prevent lumping. Not interchangeable with granulated. **Brown**—dark or light—gets its color from molasses, the liquid that dries out if sugar is not carefully stored in airtight containers. (All sugar naturally contains molasses, but it is washed out in white-sugar processing.) Can be used in place of granulated if flavor is not a critical factor. **Substitutes**—

liquid or dry, are generally acceptable in most foods except for baking. And that's a matter of chemistry, another subject for another time.

REMEMBER FONDUE?

Several years ago pots of hot oil sizzled across the land as we dipped raw vegetables, cubes of meat and tiny chunks of pound cake in our enthusiasm for fondue. Sales of the requisite pots and forks zoomed. Then the fad waned in a backwash of scorched tongues and general impatience with the ritual.

We're not trying to start a fad again, but we do think it's time to dust off the fondue pot and try again. It is a diverting and entertaining way to eat, and food cooked this way can be delicious. We think fondue parties, as such, were a mistake. A group of four sitting around a fondue setup is perfect—more than that dipping into a pot of hot liquid can be dodgy. And make it festive and relaxed—for family or friends—with candlelight, fire in the fireplace, fancy napkins. Fondue is not your hurry-up supper, eat-on-the-run scene. These fondue pots can also be used as chafing dishes, another fad that seems to have undeservedly waned.

And, irreverently, there are still other ways to press forgotten fondue pots into service: planter, candy dish, container for matchbooks, cents-off coupons, decorative soaps in the bathroom. All in all, a pot of many uses.

Illustration by Rodica Prato.

Change-of-season food news and tips.

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ABOUT HOME

Make a chocolate cream pie go crunch.