

The Survival Foods And Gardening Section

HUNGER IN AMERICA

By Kurt Saxon

Last week PBS aired a weird program entitled "Hunger In America". It was weird because not one of the families shown as examples of hungry Americans were destitute. They all had living quarters, some had jobs and even land and each had the money or food stamps which should have provided them with a more than adequate diet.

The commentator was in full sympathy with those hungry people and lamented the fact that nothing more was done. I watched this bizarre exhibition of the helplessness of the otherwise able and heard the pity of the "there but for the grace of God go I crowd". I harked back to tales of other starvelings.

In 1845 the Irish potato blight raged and hundreds of thousands starved in the resulting famine. Yet, it was found that on farms where whole families had starved, the barns held corn, oats, rye and barley in the cattle feed bins.

In France and Belgium, millions were starving after WW I. America sent boatload after boatload of corn and the people were insulted at being sent food for horses and cattle.

Stalin deliberately starved millions of kulaks in the '30's. When his henchmen moved in to cart off the bodies of the rebellious farmers, there too, was found plenty of grain in the feed bins. Of course, the livestock had been eaten but the livestock's food was not considered fit for humans to eat.

That people would starve to death before eating corn is a misleading concept. Had the corn been ground and made into cornmeal mush those people would have survived. But they simply didn't relate to corn as food.

Of course, you've heard of the African Bushmen and the Australian Aborigines. They can thrive where Europeans wouldn't see any food at all. But that is an extreme. The point is that people tend to see as food, only that which they are accustomed to eating.

The people on the program were accustomed only to prepared foods bought at the supermarket. One couple with four kids got \$390.00 a month in food stamps. The man was an auto mechanic who had quit work since he couldn't afford his wife's

medical expenses and his loafing would entitle her to Medicare.

They had four children and lamented the fact that the \$390.00 in food stamps were all used up before the next month's dole. Oh, you know food prices today and how \$390.00 for a family of six doesn't go far. I don't suppose they spent every bit of it on TV dinners and in the deli section. Nonetheless, to a Survivalist family, \$390.00 would buy about four months' food for six; maybe more.

That reminds me of 1967 when I was a bum in San Francisco. I was living in a \$10.00 a week sleeping room and worked off and on as a fry cook and a freelance house-painter. For a no-sweat \$5.00 a week I was selling my blood and so contracted infectious hepatitis.

That's a very debilitating illness and its effects last about a month when not fatal. Anyway, I was barely able to get around and I couldn't work. I wasn't hospitalized since the illness wasn't communicable except through dirty needles, as in my case. But the hospital gave me some pills and arranged for me to get welfare.

To a single person with what I had, short term, the welfare people paid my rent and gave me a \$6.00 food voucher each week. With that food voucher I bought sugar, yeast, cheap fruit, margarine, pinto beans, bacon ends, corn meal, raisins, rice, canned milk and odds and ends. Quite a box of food for only \$6.00, even then.

I had a hot-plate I'd bought earlier in a Salvation Army store for a dollar and odd pots and pans. One of my favorite dishes was rice and raisins and canned milk. Delicious, nutritious and cheap. Of course, \$6.00 wouldn't go that far now, but I'd do just as well on its equivalent today.

Notice, I didn't buy any prepared food, nothing in cans or ready to eat. The sugar, yeast and fruit was for booze I started in several one gallon wine bottles. Five days later and from then on I had all the booze I wanted and just as good as store-bought.

Another group interviewed on the program was a farm worker who had fathered fifteen children. He had a wife and eight children living with him. His wife was preparing boiled baloney and rice. They were hungry.

Yet, he was shown plowing around onions and some kind of greens. The children, strapping, albeit ill-favored, were shown in the yard. Behind them was a great stand of weeds. Now, why didn't the man use from the field he was cultivating, as was his right? Why weren't his children cultivating a garden?

These people didn't want to be hungry. Obviously, he spent his food budget on food which was cheap enough but too expensive to supply ten people. But again, why didn't the man have a garden for all those children to work?

Naturally, the narrator never mentioned the fact that too many children born to incompetents was a major contributing factor to hunger; and most other social and economic ills.

The farm worker and his brood were in Alabama but I've seen the same thing in Appalachian coal country on other programs. Run-down shacks with whole families of unemployed adults and their many children loafing on the porch. No gardens! They were hungry too, as the narrator of that program gloated in an attempt to make the viewers feel guilty.

Another family in "Hunger In America" was Mexican migrant farm labor. The father was heavy and the others were sturdy-looking. Of course, they wouldn't have much choice in food from the fields, since stuffing oneself with cucumbers for a week would hardly make a balanced diet.

I suppose they also had inadequate living quarters and kitchen facilities. Maybe they didn't even have a super-market close by. Even so, they could have bought masa in bulk for making tortillas, and pinto beans by the 25 pound sack, and with gleanings could have eaten as well as if they were earning the equivalent in Mexico. But as it was, they didn't speak English, migrant labor was their lifestyle and they had chosen, directly or indirectly, to live on a day-to-day basis. They simply lacked the adaptability to make that lifestyle as efficient as it could have been.

Another family on the program owned a dairy farm. They weren't doing very well at it so they were hungry. But with even a small dairy they had milk, and from it, butter, buttermilk, cheese and yogurt. There were no chickens in evidence, although several dozen could have lived off spilled feed and undigested grain in the cow lot. Why weren't they supplied with chickens and eggs? Where was their garden?

In all these cases there was no reason for hunger. But each family was too ignorant of food, as such, to prepare nourishing meals from cheaper, more basic ingredients. Instead, they unrealistically paid others to process their foods. Consequently, they could afford only about a third of the food they would have had, had they processed it themselves.

A while back I read a Reader's Digest article on hunger in America. Their argument was that there was no reason for hunger here, as I've pointed out. But their idea was that those who weren't eating as much as they needed was because they didn't know where to apply for more aid!

What amazed me was that neither the narrator of the program nor the writer of the article considered educating such people in simple home economics. Knowing how to cook and knowing what foods give energy would have enabled them to shop for foods which would have been cheaper but more filling and more nutritious.

Several years ago this idea was brought home to me while watching a local San Francisco news story on malnutrition among the aged there. Featured was an old man on a fixed income who ran out of food about a week before his next Social Security check was due.

He was shown cooking his supper. His main course was Canadian bacon. In case you aren't familiar with it, it was in a roll rather than slices. It cost three times as much as regular bacon. He was buying gourmet food on his income from Social Security!

That's the problem with the families on the program. They were buying, in effect, gourmet food on welfare budgets. No wonder they were underfed and malnourished.

Most of us have seen people paying with food stamps for TV dinners, steaks and other highly processed foods. They just don't know how to buy food. All they know about food is what they see on TV. If they can't afford it; if they spend all they have on what intelligent wage-earners can't afford, no wonder they're hungry!

But the bleeding hearts would only have us give them more money. For them to eat like they must if they can't economize like the rest of us, we might as well give them all food vouchers to take all their meals at fancy French restaurants. It won't work. As things get worse, they'll starve.

More rational sympathizers might suggest TV programs (hosted by rock-n-roll stars, Jim and Tammy Bakker and sports heroes, to keep their attention) demonstrating the buying and preparation of inexpensive and nutritious foods. Of course this would have to be on PBS, which they never watch. Otherwise, the makers of Captain Stupid's Sugared Breakfast Crunchies would protest, along with all the other advertisers of the equally debilitating carcinogens and brain-rotting delectables morons have been sold as staples for years.

The point is, millions of Americans are so ignorant about food that without the media they wouldn't know what to eat at all. And with the inevitable rise in food prices and cuts in welfare, those millions are going to starve.

But that's not the half of it. Next time you go to the supermarket look at the foolish people with their carts piled to overflowing with expensively packaged foods hardly fit for human consumption. One doesn't have to be a health nut to shudder at what most of that does to the body and brain. Most people who make good livings don't know any more about staple foods and their preparation than do the welfare morons.

This is because, in our prosperous culture, food is usually taken for granted. Urbanites really had no time, and seldom the facilities for preparing foods from basic staples. Also not too long ago, food's cheapness, even processed and packaged, make it impractical for the homemaker to process staples.

But now, with the rising costs of food, energy, packaging, etc., food has become a major budget outlay. Therefore, it is becoming more practical to buy in bulk and process one's own food. But since Granny baked bread weekly, made sausages in the fall, had a kitchen garden even in the city, and distrusted canned foods, people have suffered a kind of cultural amnesia concerning food.

So people are hungry in the midst of plenty. And fewer people are left to pass on the basic techniques to fewer people who care to learn them.

I was fortunate in having nothing but peasant ancestors who were too poor to hire commercial food processors to prepare their food. In my misspent youth I never hungered because I knew food and how to prepare it.

This ability really came in handy when I had the accident which damaged my hand and left me nearly blind for months. In 1970 I was getting \$87.00 per month County Welfare. My little apartment cost \$50.00, leaving me only \$37.00 a month for food and incidentals. I spent less than \$5.00 a week on food and ate better and tastier foods than I had when I could afford anything I wanted.

Most of the processes I knew and developed then are in SURVIVOR Volume I. They will guarantee anyone an abundance of nutritious food for about a quarter of today's food prices. This book is the most important in my whole line and could save you enough to afford all my books and tapes with a couple of month's savings.

Many of the processes are shown in my tape, "The Poor Man's James Bond Strikes Again". The information was given there to illustrate the fact that the embattled Survivalist can hold out almost forever with the right kind of food supplies. Without such foods, any survival program may fail.

Unfortunately, less than half my subscribers have bought Survivor Vol I. Some take pride in having stocked up on "survival foods", a snare and a delusion which will doom many. This is because such foods are simply stored. They don't increase in food value as do grains used for sprouting. They need no processing except for adding water.

They also cost up to ten times what I recommend and are not nearly so good tasting or nutritious. The worst thing about them is that the Survivalist doesn't learn the skills insuring survival on a long-term basis. Without such knowledge and skills the "Survivalist" will be useless to his neighbors and so may be driven from the community when his supplies run out or are looted.

On the other hand, unprocessed foods are the last items a looter would want or would even recognize as food. Not nearly so portable and lootable as the neatly packaged and labeled meals like Mountain House Freeze-Dried Foods, for instance.

Another class of Survivalists are those fixated on weaponry and personal defense; and maybe offense. That type saddens me as they are incomplete and also contributes to the negative side of Survivalism.

The media image of the Survivalist is a camouflage-clothed dingbat living in a hole in the ground and waving guns at everybody. I made up the term and that's not my definition. But all too many of my readers seem to try to live up to it.

But the arms-crazy type won't make it. Banditry is self-defeating. Say you take food by force from one, two, maybe three families. Logic and the law of averages should show you that you're only working your way to a real Survivalist who will destroy you.

Bandits are just as dependent as any other losers. You must be self-sufficient in many areas in order to survive the coming collapse. And self-sufficiency in food is the most basic and most important survival skill.

Surprisingly, self-sufficiency in food is the simplest and also the most profitable survival skill. As shown, it will take care of you now and save over half your food bill. When it becomes an absolute necessity, you will be among the most valued members of your community.

So sure, there's hunger in America. There will be more and only those who have become independent of the food conglomerates will be prepared for a future which will doom millions.

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