

# LADIES HAVE YOU HEARD?



By Doris Thomas, Extension Home Economist

### Prevent Puckering In Sewing

There is nothing more exasperating to the seamstress than a fabric which puckers as you sew. The puckering problem happens more with soft sheer fabrics because they are noted for their tendency to pucker as you stitch on the machine.

Puckering is most likely to occur on fabrics with relatively little "give," such as firm, closely-woven materials, soft woven sheers, and on woven fabrics with special finishes, such as permanent press. Puckering is also more likely to happen when stitching on the length-

wise grain of fabric rather than crosswise or on the bias.

If one or both of the thread tensions of the sewing machine are too tight, stitching on any fabric can be puckered. You may need to learn to loosen the tension. You can sometimes control puckering by loosening only the upper tension, but if loosening both tensions is necessary, follow the advice in the instruction book of your machine. The lower tension cannot be changed in some machines.

You may have to make a choice between an unbalanced stitch and seam

pucker. If the machine stitch doesn't look perfect, you wouldn't want to use it for top stitching. But top stitching would be a poor choice anyway for a fabric that is likely to pucker.

The choice of thread and how you handle fabric as it is sewn will also make a difference. Select the size of thread and needle in relation to the fabric. A sheer fabric requires a fine thread and a small needle. Polyester or polyester core thread has elasticity and strength. Use very light machine tensions, however, and hold the fabric taut as it feeds through the machine.

Stitch with a long stitch — about 8 to 10 stitches per inch. A ball point needle may give better results. Modern fabrics dull machine needles quickly and needles may need frequent replacement. Always test stitch a piece of fabric you expect to use. Stitch and set it aside for a while to see if the thread relaxes and puckers.

Try to sew at a moderate and even speed. Change of

speed and rapid stitching are more apt to cause skipped stitches and puckering. The needle hole should be small. The straight stitch throat plate is best rather than the all purpose zig-zag plate.

### Open Code Dating on Foods

Open dates on some packages of perishable foods allow store personnel and consumers to rotate their stock and use the oldest packages first.

Open dates do not indicate when a product will spoil. They frequently are referred to as "sell by" or "expiration dates." These dates tell you the last day the product should be sold. But products are safe to eat and are not spoiled after that date. However, flavor and texture may not be as good as when fresh.

The cost of open dating and the return of products is paid for by increased food prices. Yet, buying products with the latest open date doesn't assure you of quality.

The key to keeping quality of perishable foods is proper

handling of these foods in homes and stores. Maintaining temperatures of all perishable foods below 40 degrees, or zero degrees for frozen foods is essential.

Processors have no control over how stores and consumers handle food. But the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture has regulations covering dairy products and frozen food handling in stores.

Manufacturers welcome your comments on open code dating so they can locate problems in distribution channels. Most manufacturers guarantee their

products and will replace any which spoil. But, make sure you maintain proper storage temperatures in your home for perishable foods.

### Welt Seam

For bulky fabrics, a welt seam can help eliminate some of the bulk. After stitching a plain seam, press both seam allowances to one side of seamline. Trim the under seam allowance to ¼". From the right side, topstitch ¼" from the seam line catching the untrimmed seam allowance on the underside.

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