

# On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



It was a dark and...not really a stormy night.

Actually the moon was shining. But a brisk, chilly wind sailed flocks of clouds over the moon's face at regular intervals, abruptly darkening the night brightness and tossing mysterious shadows all about. Standing corn in nearby fields rustled uneasily in the chilling breeze. I tugged the turtle-neck collar a little higher around my neck and picked up my walking-jogging pace.

Earlier, a few trick-or-treaters had visited at the door. Now it was my time to enjoy this Halloween night, complete with the ideal weather and its eerie changes from bright moon to black-lit shadows. These late evening runs along our fairly-isolated country road, after barn chores are finished, are enjoyable to both of us. The dog and I.

Then, just a few yards on the road in front of us, something black streaked across the road. Skunk!

With an appropriate Halloween-scream, I did an instant, still-running, 180-degree about face. Halfway back to the house, I slowed down enough to decide that, since it was so dark that I really hadn't seen the small animal clearly, maybe it had been a black cat, just checking to see if I had my broom along.

Seeing nothing in pursuit, common sense suggested it was probably some groundhog out tricking-or-treating in the alfalfa. Of the choices of small, dark animals to run into by moonlight, the black cat would be my preference.

While black cats figure into various superstitions, Halloween and

otherwise, so have some other commonplace objects. The rich folklore and superstitions that are a part of our often focus around commonplace things—many of them having ) to do with bad luck. With or without a black cat, you can cause yourself a lot of bad luck.

One local superstition warns that, if someone lays a broom across your front door, you'll have bad luck. A friend who's been sharing with me the superstitions of her family relates that it's bad luck to wash on Wednesdays. (Tell your hubby that the next time he's hunting clean socks)

"See a pin, leave it lay, have bad luck all the day," goes a rhyming superstition. For those of us who like to run around the house bare-foot, it makes perfect sense.

If you leave the house without something, remember this: If you go out the door and have to come back in to retrieve what you forgot, sit down and count to ten before you go back out. Otherwise, you'll have bad luck.

In a house with a new baby in it, don't go in one door of the house and promptly exit by another. You'll take the baby's rest away if you do. And two friends walking together must not split apart to walk around a pole—or they will quarrel. Definitely bad luck.

Dairy producers, we must not kill a toad or the cows will give bloody milk. I'm dying to hear an explanation to that one.

And speaking of dying, many superstitions surround loss of life. One my Mom has often repeated warns that if you transplant parsley, you'll plant someone into the

# Cooking With Low-Fat Spreads May Be Recipe For Disaster

UNIVERSITY PARK, (Centre Co.)—A double layer cake, lovingly prepared for a birthday celebration, is about to emerge from the oven. Unfortunately, the finished result is as flat as a DeSoto spare tire. What went wrong?

The answer could be fat—or more specifically, the lack of it. According to Arun Kilara, professor of food science in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, America's love affair with no-fat or low-fat margarine may be at the heart of many a failed recipe.

"Twenty years ago, if you substituted margarine for butter in recipes, you wouldn't have seen much difference," Kilara says.

When recipes fail today, Kilara explains, the blame often can be laid at the door of low-fat margarine. "To make these margarines more attractive to consumers, fat is reduced and water is added," Kilara says. "These spreads taste fine on muffins or toast, but if you put some in a pan to fry an egg, the water evaporates quickly and there is every little fat left to fry anything."

ground. More recently, I heard this one: if a bird hits your window, someone just did or will die.

But back on the lighter side, don't set a new pair of shoes on the table or they'll pinch your feet. And of course, avoid ladders, doing anything on Friday the 13th, and steer clear of those black cats.

Not that I believe any of those fascinating bits of superstitious folklore. But before I go dog-running after dark on Halloween, I intend to throw some salt over my shoulder against bad luck. Just in case the skunks are out.

Kilara says Americans have cooked up a double whammy from the margarine vs. butter quandary. Not only have health-conscious consumers been trained to look for low-or no-fat products, but cooking skills have changed in the age of the microwave. "The person who buys the low-fat margarine may not realize you have to use more than the recipe calls for to get enough fat content to make the recipe work," he says.

Kilara points out that butter is about 80 percent milk fat and 16 percent water. Margarine is made from vegetable oils that are chemically transformed into solids, creating a different kind of fat, which contains trans-fatty acids. The ratio of fat to water in regular margarine is about the same as in butter.

After margarine became popular during World War II due to butter rationing and lower prices), consumers asked for soft-spread margarines. These spreads are typically about 60 percent fat, 40 percent water. In the '80s and '90s, consumers demanded "lite" products. Kilara says lite margarines have about 30 percent fat and 70 percent water. No-fat margarines, usually made from starches and other additives, have about 5 percent fat.

"Fat is what gives a pastry or a pie crust its structure and other foods their crispiness," Kilara explains. "If you replace fat with low-fat products it is very difficult to get the recipe to come out right. In food science we say, 'Fat is what makes the world beautiful.'" Kilara says cooks can use lite margarines but they must use enough fat to make the recipe

work. For example, a pound cake requires a pound of butter, a pound of sugar and a pound of flour. To make the recipe work with lite margarines, a cook would have to use 2 1/2 pounds of a lite margarine or 16 pounds of a no-fat spread.

Margarine also has lost some of its luster as a healthier alternative to butter. One recent study linked the trans-fatty acids in margarine and processed foods to heart disease and some types of cancer. Another study found that trans-fatty acids increase low-density lipoprotein ("bad" cholesterol) and decreased high-density lipoproteins ("good" cholesterol).

Butter, of course, has been linked to cholesterol and contains saturated fats that are thought to promote heart disease. Kilara says butter is about 50 percent saturated fats.

"The pendulum is swinging the other way," Kilara says of increasing use of butter. "Certainly the flavor of butter can't be beat. Mother Nature is much better at these things than chemists."

"It has been used for millennia, so the safety record for butter cannot be disputed," he adds. Kilara recommends using butter for recipes, simply because it provides better flavor. "Don't be afraid to experiment and use a little less to reduce calories without sacrificing taste and texture," he says.

Federal recommendations say that fat should account for no more than 30 percent of total calories in an adult diet. "We should get away from the concept of good food/bad food. It's the overall diet that matters," Kilara says.



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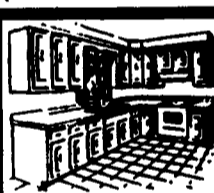
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