Assignment: What's for Dinner

Introduction:

Have you heard of Meatless Mondays? Did you know that this first started during WWI and then was revived in WWII? And has become a movement since then? It started as a way to save meat during the war as a way to better help soldiers.

Also during WWII, Americans were required to ration food use. One of the most basic human needs is to eat. Even during a global pandemic, we all need to eat. For today's lesson, read this ***short*** *article from the Wall Street Journal about food ration books in WWII and how the author saw the connection to today's coronavirus and the letter to the editor about the article that follows. Then respond by discussing any or all of the following in as creative a way as possible:*

- *your family's current experiences with mealtimes, cooking, or grocery shopping. I sincerely hope that your family has not had a problem with being able to get food. If you are not up to doing this assignment for that reason, I understand.*
- *think about things you are eating or not eating because of the current situation--could be specific foods, recipes, or restaurant/take-out food experiences*
- *share a recipe and tell me a story about it about how this will make you think of the coronavirus years from now.*
- *something else you come up with*

The 1 requirement: please reference SOMETHING from the article. It doesn't have to be a quote. It can be something as simple as, "just how during WWII people...., today my family is....."

See article on next page.

Coronavirus and the Ration Book

During a dark American time, some used their coveted ration coupons to provide sustenance for others.

By *Bob Greene* March 27, 2020



From the next aisle of a supermarket in southwest Florida the other morning, it sounded as if a fistfight might break out. I followed the raised voices and shouldn't have been surprised: Toilet paper. The argument was over the last four packages on the shelves. One man wanted all of them for himself; the other was furious that the first fellow wasn't willing to share.

As I watched the men get in each others' faces, a memory came back, of a tattered little booklet I found in western Nebraska while doing research about American life during World War II, when essentials, including food, were in genuine short supply. I'd heard of such publications, but had never seen one: a ration book.

It had been issued in 1942 to a woman named Irene P. McKain, 50, whose address was listed only as Rural Route 2. The U.S. Office of Price Administration granted ration stamps for all kinds of items that were in scant supply: sugar, coffee, meat, lard, shortening, cheese,

butter. If your family needed such staples, you had to make your case in person before a local ration board.

The warning printed inside Ms. McKain's ration book was stark: "Any attempt to violate the rules is an effort to deny someone his share and will create hardship and discontent."

For some Americans, such an admonition was unnecessary. Irene McKain was one of the Nebraska women who donated their coveted ration coupons to the railroad-depot canteen in North Platte, where trainloads of soldiers and sailors passing through were fed all during the war.

From a single day's logbook: "Contributions from the Moorefield group yesterday were 25 birthday cakes, 149 dozen cookies, 87 fried chickens, 70 dozen eggs, 17½ quarts of salad dressing, 40½ dozen doughnuts, 20 pounds of coffee, 22 quarts of pickles, 22 pounds of butter, 13½ quarts of cream . . ."

That is how, during a dark American time, those ration coupons were used: to provide sustenance for others. It was the opposite of every man for himself.

Do we still have that spirit inside us today? When supplies are short, sharing them with strangers may not be easy, yet it can send a precious message, one that begs to be heard in terrible times:

You are not alone.

Letter to the Editor

Bob Greene's "Coronavirus and the Ration Book" (op-ed, March 28) about the ration books issued during World War II brought back many memories to me. My father, Joseph Scuderi, had an Italian grocery in South Philadelphia. Many of his customers were immigrants who spoke very little English and found it difficult to manage the ration books. They trusted Dad and asked him to keep the books and take out whatever stamps were needed, though it was illegal to do so. After adding the purchase price, he would take off the correct stamps. I was a teenager at the time and it was my job to add them up and deposit them at the bank just like money. One day a salesman came into the store and told my father that there were two government agents at a neighboring grocery. Dad was adding up the groceries for one of his oldest customers when the two agents entered the store. After telling her the dollar amount, Dad also told her the amount of stamps she

owed. She was indignant and said that he was supposed to take care of them for her. He remained adamant about the stamps. This was all carried out in Italian. She stomped out of the store and said that she would not come back. Shortly afterward, the agents left. Dad immediately picked up her groceries and ran after her shouting, “Comare! Comare!” His explanation was accepted by her, and this remained a great story in our family.

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https://www.wsj.com/articles/coronavirus-and-the-ration-book-11585350435?mod=article_inline
https://www.wsj.com/articles/ration-books-from-the-shortage-of-long-ago-11585953543