

UNL professors research space food

"I couldn't eat my sandwich today, mom; it was hard as a rock!"

"Don't get mad, get Nebraska Space Bread."

Ads such as this could be seen on TV someday if space bread is cleared for commercial use, according to Ted Hartung, dean of the College of Agriculture.

Two UNL professors in Food Science and Technology, Burt Maxcy and Lloyd Bullerman, have been working with Hartung on irradiation of bread and other fresh foods. Irradiation kills micro-organisms which cause spoilage.

Bullerman is working on irradiation of fresh bakery goods and Maxcy has been studying effects of the process on other foods, such as fresh meats, under a grant from the Department of Agriculture.

The baked goods are used on space flights, Hartung said. Last week he was at the Natick Laboratories in Massachusetts

where irradiated bread and pastries were prepared for astronauts on the Apollo-Soyuz flight scheduled for July.

The bread, now frozen, is used to make fresh sandwiches on the flight and the pastries will be for breakfasts, Hartung said.

The irradiation process involves passing gamma rays through the already-packaged food and destroying micro-organisms to prevent spoilage, according to Hartung.

"Pasturizing" as the process is called, is still experimental, he said, but the defense department is working on long-term feeding trials with irradiated foods to clear the process for commercial use.

Low-rate radiation is used and no radioactive particles are left in the food, he added.

"The process itself is inexpensive and could replace chemical spoilage

retardants," Hartung commented, "but the problem is the expense of setting up irradiation centers." Processing would cost about two or three cents for a pound of meat, for instance, he said.

Gamma ray source centers would need to be centrally located he explained, because they are too expensive to build in many locations.

Large bakeries are one possible location, he said, but emphasized that "the process is still experimental at this point," and "no future locations have been suggested." An irradiation center was built in Lincoln for the experiments he said.

Irradiation was used on breads in the Apollo 11 flight in 1969 and was also used on foods for Skylab missions, Hartung said.

Since 1969, researchers at UNL have been working with a NASA grant to develop the process and expand its uses to other foods.

Corrections course studies justice, humanities

Robert Pierce teaches what one colleague in Texas calls the "only course of its kind in America."

Pierce, an instructor of English at UNL, teaches two sections of English 215D—Literature in Corrections.

"One English Department member thought I was teaching

a course in correcting papers," Pierce said.

He said the purpose of the course is to explore the relationship between criminal justice and the humanities.

The course examines the writings, both fiction and nonfiction, of prisoners, corrections officers and outside

observers.

Uncertain for next semester

Pierce, who will not be teaching at UNL next year, said he is uncertain whether the course will be offered next semester. Students interested in such a class should contact John Robinson, chairman of the English Department.

Dee Lofgreen, director of corrections for the Nebraska

State Crime Commission, is assisting Pierce with the class. Lofgreen is qualified to teach in the Extension Division.

Literature in Corrections is a branch from Pierce's courses on police literature.

"It proved so popular and successful that I thought it would be important to have a course in corrections as a

sequel," he said.

Warden is student

Robert Parratt, warden of the Nebraska Penal and Correctional Complex, is a student in the class. Other class members include the captain of the guards at the penitentiary, a lieutenant colonel in the state patrol and several members of the Lincoln Police force.

The class reads books by Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Truman Capote, among others. The material includes satire, black humor, TV dramas and a poetry anthology. The class studies the writings of ex-guards, memoirs by wardens and inmate writings.

Purpose to reform

The class examines prison literature, whether its purpose is to reform or entertain.

Themes include suffering, both physical and spiritual; human dignity, freedom, or lack of it; and institutionalization and its effects on the human psyche.

One of the more interesting aspects of the course, according to Pierce, is the study of inmate jargon. Pierce has a list of examples—such as "big house" for prison and "rip off" for steal.

Pierce said inmates at the Nebraska penitentiary use this type of slang along with their own form of Pig Latin. Called "carney talk" it's used to keep the guards from knowing what the prisoners are talking about.

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