



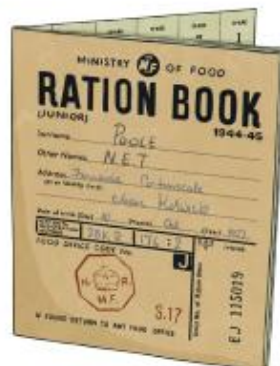
Food rationing began in Britain in January 1940, starting with limitations on butter, bacon and sugar. Over the course of the war, other items were added to the rationing list and quantities available varied depending on availability.

Ration Books

In order to ensure that everybody got their fair share of available foods, ration books were issued to everybody.

There were three types of ration books that each had slightly different allowances:

- a buff book for adults;
- a blue book for children aged five to sixteen – children got extra eggs and milk but half the allowance of meat;
- a green book for children under five and pregnant or nursing mothers, who also got extra eggs and milk and the first pick of any fruit.



Coupons in the ration books showed people how much of each item they were allowed and the shopkeepers would remove or stamp the coupons when they were used.

Everybody had to register with certain shops where they could go each week to purchase their allowance. As there were no large supermarkets in Britain during the war, people had to travel to different shops to purchase their goods, e.g. the baker for bread and greengrocer for vegetables. Often long queues formed outside the shops when stocks of certain foods became available and shopkeepers would put up signs when they had run out of things, e.g. 'no tomatoes today'. Having a ration book was not a guarantee that you could get the items but it was a fair way to ensure that everybody had equal access to available goods.



The Ministry of Food

During the war, the government appointed a Minister of Food to help control and regulate the food supplies available. From April 1940 until November 1943, the Minister of Food was Frederick Marquis, the Lord Woolton.

Lord Woolton was responsible for organising the rationing system and encouraging people to make the most of what they had. He worked closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, who established the 'Dig for Victory' propaganda campaign. This initiative had great success in encouraging people to grow their own food.

Lord Woolton also worked hard to promote a simpler, healthy diet and encouraged people to be creative with the foods they had and to try new things like whale meat. A meat-less pie was developed by the head chef at the Savoy Hotel in London in Woolton's name. The Woolton Pie and Lord Woolton helped to advertise it.



Eating Out

For those who could afford it, eating out at restaurants meant they could save a lot of their rations. Restaurants were not rationed at the beginning of the war and people were able to buy a good meal. However, over time, some people started to complain that it was unfair that people who could afford to eat out regularly were able to eat better. From 1942, the government ensured that restaurants could not charge more than five shillings for a meal, which meant they were more accessible to everybody.

People who worked were usually able to eat a good meal fairly cheaply during their working day and Lord Woolton ensured that children attending school got a free lunch each day and extra milk.

Other Rationing

Food was not the only thing rationed during the war. Petrol, soap, clothing and timber were also only available in limited supply. Clothing ration books were issued and people were encouraged to 'make do and mend'.





Rationing



1. When did food rationing begin and why?
2. How and why did ration books vary?
3. Who was Lord Woolton and did people like him? Why/why not?
4. What do you think was likely to be in Woolton Pie?
5. Why do you think people were healthier during the war?
6. How were people encouraged to help during food shortages?
7. Explain what other items were rationed during the war and why you think this was the case.
8. Explain what you think is meant by the term 'make do and mend'.
9. Why do you think children got extra clothing coupons?
10. Why did rationing continue after the war?