Our affluent society with the continuous development of all kinds of new foods has caused a revolution in agriculture. For decades before the Civil War, an American farmer produced enough food for himself and three other people. When we entered World War II, 100 years later, with new machines and techniques, he had raised the figure to himself and eleven. Today, he feeds himself and 42 more. This has resulted in American tables loaded with food of a variety and quality unrivaled anywhere else in the world. The calendar has no more seasons. You can have strawberries in winter; oranges in summer. There are 6000-8000 items on the shelves of supermarkets today, of which 40% were not even there 10 years ago.

Actually, there have been three agricultural revolutions. The first came when animal power substituted for human muscle; the 2nd, when machines replaced animal power and research began to be applied to farming and the third when the farmer adopted skilled management methods to put today's technology into practice. The Secretary of Agriculture says, "The sophisticated enterprise the farmer runs today calls for a wider range of managerial decisions and skills than does the average family-owned factory or business in the city."

Most farmers have more horsepower working for them than factory employees with the result they can produce with one hour's labor seven times as much as they did 50 years ago and this abundance is evidenced by the new foods that are continually coming into the market.

One reason given for the rising cost of living is the increasing use of convenience foods, which, of course, in some instances, cost more than ones prepared completely at home. This may give you pause but it tells only half the story. Your time and the quality of the finished dish, as well as its actual cost all should be considered. I imagine if most of us put a dollar and cents value on our efforts, the shorter preparation time would offset the initial higher cost. Sometimes packaged dinners are a family favorite and the few extra cents seem well worth while. We happen to like Stouffer's scalloped chicken and noodles, which I can use very handily in a pinch. Also, some convenience foods actually cost less to make than their home-prepared counterparts. Frozen orange juice concentrate, instant coffee, canned spaghetti, canned chicken chow mein and devil's food cake mix are examples.
One rainy morning early I went to Foodtown in Highland Park (a small and not particularly well-stocked store), parked in front of the frozen food section and noted some of the packages available. There were 3 different kinds of broccoli, 8 of string beans and peas galore: plain, tiny, in butter sauce, with pearl onions, with mushrooms, with potatoes in cream sauce and with mushrooms and rice. Italian food abounded: ravioli with meat, or with cheese, eggplant parmigiana, manicotti, 3 kinds of lasagna and innumerable varieties of pizzas. Chinese food was a close rival with shrimp chow mein, shrimp and fried rice, shrimp and egg rolls, chicken chow mein and pea pods.

The desserts were just as plentiful. I saw coffee rings, cakes, strudel, turnovers, deep dish pies, cheesecake, blintzes and Bavarian cream puffs. Incidentally there are frozen pie crusts waiting to be baked and filled which are delicious. Howard Johnson has about half of his ice cream list on hand. There are frozen dinners and entrees ad infinitum and maybe ad nauseam.

While we're on this subject, you might be interested in the Frozen Food Code of the Association of Food and Drug Officials of the US. As its key provision it requires all frozen foods to be maintained at 0°F. through warehouse storage, shipping and display in retail cabinets. A limited tolerance of up to 10°F. is permitted for brief periods during the cycling of freezers or while frozen products are being loaded or unloaded. To date, only a few states have enacted the code into local law. However, the kitchens of Sara Lee have recently announced that they will sell only to distributors who adhere to the key requirements.

Just as a quick illustration of the proliferation I was talking about, did you know that there are about 75 different kinds of cereal on the market, at least one-third of them new within the past 5 years? Most of them are tricked-up to make children cry for them - they are in brighter boxes, kookier shapes, have catchier names, yummier flavors or have giveaways or sendaways concealed inside, all calculated to make mother's life miserable unless she buys them instantly. And yet with all this, a survey discovered that plain old cornflakes are still the country's number 1 favorite.
Such a commonplace food as potatoes has found its way into packages, cans, jars and freezer. You can buy them mashed, French fried, julienne, hash browned, baked, souffle, au gratin, home fried, cottage fried, duchess and even plain boiled. A recent issue of the American Home GAVE 8 RECIPES FOR FIXING POTATOES, first version showed them made with fresh and immediately following came recipes for doing the same thing with packaged or frozen potatoes.

At long last, mixes have become highly respectable. I remember buying a cake mix about 20 years ago and having a neighbor look at it scornfully and say smugly that she made all her cakes from scratch. I slunk out of the store feeling as tho I had short changed the family and was starving them to death. The first mix I remember using was the one made right here in New Brunswick and I used it in Florida. Of course, I'm talking about Flako. Then came the cake mixes and after that the flood gates opened. Now everyone uses them all the time. An article I read a little while ago amused me for it said that some women still feel guilty about using mixes and for that reason and no other, cake mixes always call for the use of fresh eggs. They could perfectly well be added in the mix but it makes women feel better about it all to have a little bit of extra work beating them up.

I checked out some frozen pies in Consumer Reports and found this: of 33 frozen fruit pies, Morton Deluxe Old Fashioned Apple was the choice since it was consistently and markedly superior to the rest. Next in order were Morton (not deluxe), Banquet, Bel-Air, Mrs. Smith's Golden Deluxe Deep-Dish (which I've used and liked), Morton Home Style, etc. In cherry pies, Morton Deluxe Montmorency rated first with Morton home style and Mrs. Smith's Golden Deluxe next. In blueberry pies, Mrs. Smith's Golden Deluxe Deep-Dish was relatively high in overall quality while Mrs. Smith's Deep-Dish was rated lowest of all. So the message in these ratings is always to try for a deluxe model.

Since Sara Lee has decided to sell only to distributors who adhere to the ARIM code, it is not surprising that in chocolate, iced yellow, pound and marble cake, this brand is rated at the top. As for cream cheese cake, Lambrecht's was rated the best. This is a Chicago distributor and I do not know if it is on the market here.
 Quickly, I'd like to mention some of the new kitchen equipment on which all this convenience food can be prepared. As for stoves, they come in an infinite number. You can get space saving ranges that have a choice of smoking surface, such as 5 surface units or 4 units and a covered griddle; a range with six burners and a one-piece lift-off top; one that has a range, dishwasher and hood in a 30" space; a range with hot water on tap that makes a kettle obsolete by delivering via push button 185° water for beverages and soaking soiled pans; one that has an electric broiler that does both sides of meat at the same time; and finally, one, either gas or electric, that masterminds cooking by automatically defrosting frozen food, starting cooking at a preselected time and temperature, turning the heat down when done and holding at serving temperature up to four hours.

Today, there are 2 "self-cleaning" techniques — a high heat process and one using specially treated panels or liners to be used in both gas and electric stoves. The high heat system burns off all oven spatters and takes about 3 hours during which the oven is locked. The kitchen is kept cool by double insulation. When the cycle finishes the window, light and racks are clean. It adds $60-$120 to the cost of a regular range. The continuous cleaning has special porcelain enamel coating on its liners, which come clean at normal baking temperatures. The window, light and racks are not coated and have to be cleaned by the usual methods. The panel finish is very delicate, so no detergents, soaps, sprays or oven cleaners can be used. This costs $32-$50 extra. Roper has a self-cleaning gas range that cleans the oven, broiler and top burners automatically without smoke or odors and without heating up the kitchen or using outside venting in 45 minutes for 2¢ per month.

Electronic cooking is just being developed and the number of such stoves on the market is limited. This has 4 big advantages: it takes only seconds or minutes to thaw frozen foods or heat precooked ones; foods cooked with microwaves retain their vitamin content and shrink less; microwaves pass through glass, paper or the plastic used to hold the food and, it is simplicity itself, the cooking being controlled by one timer. These are not cheap, they retail for $900-$1000. Amana has one advertised that cooks a hamburger in 60 seconds, or a 5-lb. roast in 37 1/2 minutes. It fits on the counter top, you cook on glass, china or paper and clean the oven with a damp cloth. We talked last month about the counter that cooks and I found a picture of it. The glass-ceramic top hides the heating elements, burners and drip trays.
The old fashioned one-door refrigerator is disappearing and two-door combination refrigerator-freezers are coming in. These side-by-sides generally have larger freezer compartments, which are much easier to get at. Food in today's refrigerators keeps better and longer, particularly meat and milk. Defrosting is a forgotten chore. They are adapting to existing space, no matter how small. Amana has one of 25 cubic feet that fits the typical 36" space; Westinghouse has a split-door that won't stop traffic even with the doors open; General Electric has one that delivers both ice and cold water at a touch—push the crank marked "ice" and cubes drop into your glass, push the other one and get a drink of cold water. You can use both at the same time without opening a door. Several companies make refrigerators with convertible storage. Sears has a box that stores more fresh food in summer and frozen food in winter by means of a dial that controls the temperature range; GE has a lever that lowers temperature for meat chilling and raises it for vegetable crisping. There are several compact models, one by Westinghouse is only 12½" wide; a Frigidaire at 19" wide has a hydrator and 3 shelves and 5 door shelves.

Finally, to complete this cycle, just a word about garbage disposal. One of the convenient new methods is the paper bag. It is made of durable, weatherproof kraft paper, has a capacity of 30 gallons, 10 more than most cans, and can hold up to 50 lbs. of refuse. When they are full, you shut the top and leave it for the collector. The bags are hung off the ground in metal holders with metal lids. They are so successful that a number of cities are passing ordinances requiring their use by all property owners. The first of these was College Park, Md, which in 1962 ordered the use of bags by everyone served by the city sanitation dept.

Plastic bags are readily available and when lining garbage cans make for a fast, neat and noiseless pick-up. They take up very little space and can be used for wrapping and storing anything from potting soil to your finest blankets.

As for the garbage disposer, 14 million dwelling units already are equipped with them and the figure rises by 1½ million units every year. Ask most homemakers why and you get the same answer: "If I had to give up my appliances, the disposer would be the last to go."

Finally, one of the most intriguing new possibilities is the "compactor", a husky device that compresses dry waste material into relatively small, solid cubes which can be
stored in a small space until they are hauled away. Sears, Roebuck and Whirlpool are test-marketing one now for residential use. Designed for under-counter installation, the Sears compactor is only 15" wide and plugs into any outlet. Each time the loading door is opened, an aerosol automatically sprays a deodorizer on the block of refuse, which is enclosed in polyethylene film. You can compress the equivalent of more than 3 full cans of trash into a cube only 10x16x16. The cost of a unit is about $200 and the bags cost about 45¢. But the nicest thing of all is that you can dispose of all trash without going out of the kitchen, a convenience not matched by any other disposer.