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Rationing was imposed in stages: ration books were issued in January 1940 for butter, bacon and sugar; meat coupons issued in March the same year; for clothing in June `41; and soap in `42. We saved remaining pieces of soap until we had sufficient to melt together in a cup standing in a saucepan of boiling water and then left to cool into a usuable lump. I have often wondered whether this remained in the mind of the person who invented `liquid soap` after the war.

Rationing was a pain, more so when we became aware of the illegal trafficking in rationed goods on what was called `the Black Market`. Sweets became a forgotten item. Sugar being rationed prompted us to become versatile and inventive. My mother declared that henceforth she did not want sugar in her tea and we were treated to the occasional toffee apple, after she melted her sugar and poured a thin layer over the apples-on-a-stick. We had toi make do with podered eggs and National Dried Milk, but this had its virtues. Powdered milk, a small amount of sugar and cocoa powder mixed with a little water,then rolled into balls and left to dry became treasured wartime sweets. With a few of these together with Horlicks tablets to suck the novelty assuaged sweet-tooth yearnings. Children born during the war had never seen a real banana but a passable substitute could be made from boiled parsnips to which banana essence was added. Other strange recipes were published such as `Carrot Marmalade`.

When they rationed meat we were luckier than most. Our friend across the street was a butcher, and having a generous heart he often gave us a bag of fresh bones, these provided us with healthy soups, tasty casseroles and stews when vegetables from our allotmment were added. We learned a valuable lesson: healthy, satisfying meals need not cost the earth. Now there is a consequence of war no-one ever writes about! Clothes rationing began in the middle of 1941

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I would like to comment here on how severe wartime rationing was. At the very start ration books were issued to everyone, and included coupons (or units) for all foodstuffs - including coffee, tea and milk, and there were also coupons for clothes.

Each person was allowed weekly amounts, such as two ounces of cheese, two ounces of lard, two ounces of margarine, butter only on occasions, one egg - but you could get powdered milk and powdered egg. Meat was rationed by units, which were equal to two ounces, and this had to be taken whatever was on offer. Sweets, sugar, flour, bread and sometimes cakes could be obtained by submitting coupons, but you could only get them from certain shops, which would mean queuing. It was better if you had a big family, then the chances of concocting a meal was easier. Apples, pears and tomatoes were often available (in season), but such things as bananas, oranges and lemons were not.

Everyone was on the look out for extras. You could sometimes pick up garden produce from friends, and occasionally local farmers would have sales, which provided potatoes, turnips, carrots and onions. You would get to know about these sales by word of mouth, and it would sometimes be a very long tiring journey, carrying the heavy vegetables home, but it was worth it.

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**Coping with rationing**

My mother was a wonderful manager as far as food was concerned: I don't ever remember going hungry. Mind you, I'm sure she often went without to make sure we were OK. She was very clever because, as there were six [**ration books**](https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/timeline/) in our house, she registered with two grocers and two butchers - three books with each one - and that way, when she wanted meat, she was almost sure to get a little bit extra because the butcher couldn't always weigh out the exact amount we were allowed. The same applied to things like butter and bacon.

We were always given some money when we went into town and if ever we saw a queue outside a shop we would stand in line and get whatever was going. Sometimes it would be sausage at the port butchers or perhaps the greengrocer would have some rabbits.

Carrots and potatoes came into their own during the war too. If what they say about carrots being good for the eyesight is true, then the wartime population must have had 20-20 vision all round as we used carrots grated up in cake and biscuit recipes and we were encouraged to drink carrot juice too. It was the same with potatoes.

Clothes rationing was difficult too but, as I was tall for my age and had large feet, I always qualified for some extra clothing coupons, which made it as bit easier for my Mum.

As the war churned on rationing bit very deeply, and sometimes the rations were cut to incredibly small amounts, even to half an egg per person each week. That was a challenge to the shopkeeper!