

WW2 Civilian Food Rationing.

Food rationing began on 8th January 1940 with the first things being bacon, butter and sugar. The war made it almost impossible to import things , prior to war starting we imported over 55 million tons of food each year from overseas , the sinking of shipping by German submarines had a massive impact, not just in the loss of food but of lives. Because of this the government decided to introduce rationing to ensure that all people could get a set amount of food to live.

Each man woman and child was issued with a food ration book, which lasted one year and was then replaced with another. The owner had to complete their name and address on the cover. Inside was a page with the headings : Meat, Bacon, Cheese, Fats, Eggs , Sugar/Preserves. Under each of these you had to complete (or get the shop in question to place their stamp) who you were going to purchase that item from : i.e. Jones The Butcher, High Street, Walmington On Sea might be your supplier of Meat . This meant that you could only get any Meats from Joneses and could not go anywhere else. This stopped people flitting from one supplier to another if say one butcher had sausages that week or Liver where another did not.

Each week you took your ration book to the shops and the Butcher or Grocer would tell you what your allocation that week was for each item i.e.: 2 oz Sugar, 2oz cheese etc.

Meat was an exception being done by money not weight, therefore if you chose steak you would not get very much, so cheaper cuts would go further..

The government added items and removed items for rationing as the war progressed (see timeline list).

The coupon for that week would then be removed from the book by that supplier to show that the persons allowance had been used. The coupons then had to be kept by the supplier as spot checks by the government inspectors took place to make sure no “fiddling” was going on—a jail sentence would be the punishment.

Because of the shortages everyone was encouraged to “Dig For Victory” and grow their own, people also kept chickens and rabbits (for food). Pig keeping was also encouraged , being fed what few scraps there were.

Potatoes, vegetables, fish, and fruit were never rationed—though obviously foreign ones such as oranges, bananas etc were almost impossible to get—you could make “Mock versions though such as mock banana which is boiled up parsnip, mashed then flavoured with banana flavouring. Other popular “Mock” foods were Duck, Goose, Crab, Marzipan & Cream.

The average ration amounts were :-

Bacon / Ham	4oz	Cheese	2 oz	Butter	2oz	Cooking Fat	4oz
Margarine	4 oz	Sugar	8 oz	Tea	2 oz	Sweets	3oz

Eggs 1 shell egg , plus 1 pkt of 24 dried each month .

Preserves/jam 1 lb each month.

Meat to the value of 1s 2d (Offal & sausages were never rationed though sometimes difficult to get)

TIMELINE OF RATIONING

1939 World War Two begins

1939 - Petrol rationing (ended May 1950)

8 January 1940 - Rationing of bacon, butter and sugar

11 March 1940 - All meat was rationed

July 1940 - Tea and margarine were added to the list of rationed foods.

March 1941 - Jam was put on ration.

May 1941 - Cheese was rationed

1 June 1941 - Rationing of clothing (ended 15 March 1949)

June 1941 - Eggs were put on ration

July 1941 - Coal was rationed because more and more miners were called up to serve in the forces.

January 1942 - Rice and dried fruit were added to the list of rationed foods.

February 1942 - Soap was rationed so that oils and fats could be saved for food.

Tinned tomatoes and peas were added to the list of rationed food.

By 17 March 1942, coal, gas and electricity were all rationed

26 July 1942 - Rationing of sweets and chocolate. Each person was allowed about 2oz (55 grams) a week

August 1942 - Biscuits rationed

1943 - Sausages are rationed

1945 World War Two Ends

Rationing continued on many items until 1954.

1948 - The end of rationing begins. It is another 5 years before rationing of all products is stopped.

25 July 1948 - end of flour rationing

15 March 1949 - end of clothes rationing

19 May 1950 - rationing ended for canned and dried fruit, chocolate biscuits, treacle, syrup, jellies and mincemeat.

September 1950 - rationing ended for soap

3 October 1952 - Tea rationing ended

February 1953 - Sweet and sugar rationing ends

4 July 1954 - Food rationing ends