



What were ration books?

They were books which contained coupons that shopkeepers cut out or signed when people bought food and other items. (People still paid for the goods with money.)

Why were there different colour ration books?

The colour of your ration book was very important as it made sure you got the right amount and types of food needed for your health.

Buff-coloured ration books - Most adults had this colour

Green ration books - Pregnant women, nursing mothers and children under 5. They had first choice of fruit, a daily pint of milk and a double supply of eggs.

Blue ration books - Children between 5 and 16 years of age. It was felt important that children had fruit, the full meat ration and half a pint of milk a day.

Why did the Government Issue ration books?

To make sure that everybody got a fair share of the food available. The government was worried that as food and other items became scarcer, prices would rise and poorer people might not be able to afford things. There was also a danger that some people might hoard items, leaving none for others. Rationing was introduced to make sure that everyone had a fair share of the items that were hard to get hold of during the war.

When was rationing introduced?

Rationing was introduced at the beginning of 1940.

National Registration Day

On National Registration Day on 29 September 1939, every householder had to fill in a form giving details of the people who lived in their house.

How did rationing work?

Using the information gathered on National Registration Day, the government issued every one with an identity card and ration book.

Register with local shops

Each family or individual had to register with a local supplier from whom the ration would be bought. These details were stamped in the book and you could only buy your ration from that supplier.

Coupons

The books contained coupons that had to be handed to or signed by the shopkeeper every time rationed goods were bought. This meant that people could only buy the amount they were allowed.

Was rationing fair?

Some people considered food rationing to be very unfair. Eggs, butter and meat could be obtained fairly easily without coupons in rural areas. By the summer of 1941 greengrocers in the towns were taking their lorries into the country to buy vegetables direct from growers.

When did food rationing stop?

Fourteen years of food rationing in Britain ended at midnight on 4 July 1954, when restrictions on the sale and purchase of meat and bacon were lifted. This happened nine years after the end of the war.

Rationing experience from one of the visitors to our website

"I lived in Godalming & London during WW2. I was 12 at the start, 18 at its end (an apprentice in an aircraft factory).

Eating out

One point that your pages on rationing did not bring out was, that in most families at least one person was working & consequently relieved the ration situation at home by eating out. I for example had a lunch in the works canteen and a sandwich with tea at the two other breaks during the day.

Even classified as a "Boy" I was **working 54 hours a week** and did evening classes on three nights (having supper at the 'tech canteen).

Another member of my family was a shop assistant during this period. Because of the shortage of staff, her lunch break was too short to go home so she eat at a restaurant (Often Lyons, where Welsh Rabbit (cheese on toast) cost 4d or a hot meat pie 7d).

Many schools also had school dinners.

All in all, many families really had double the official ration because they ate at their place of work."

Don Joseph

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

