Valley Women in Agriculture—

Davis Food Expert Runs Laboratory Studying Tastes

 McClatchy Newspapers Service

DAVIS, Yolo Co.—Some of the most significant crop research of the University of California at Davis is being done in a bright new kitchen and behind a row of sliding panels in the kitchen’s wall.

It is the acceptance laboratory of the college’s food technology department, where panels of college students, faculty and staff members make taste tests of a wide variety of foods.

This whole effort is under the direction of a young doctor of chemistry named Elly H. Hinreiner. Miss Hinreiner was an instructor in organic chemistry at the University of California at Los Angeles before she moved to Davis slightly more than a year ago to help institute the research in the new food technology building on the Yolo campus.

Far Afield

Running taste panels on food products seemed far afield from her chemistry work when she started it, but she says the connection is really pretty close.

“There is a definite tieup between the food chemicals causing taste and flavor factors,” she declared. “One of the big differences in what they want on their dinner table.”

She hastens to add her acceptance laboratory is not concerned primarily with consumer preferences. “We are not set up to handle the widespread sampling that studies of that sort require,” she says. “Besides, the food companies handle that themselves. What we want to find out is what, if any, the actual difference in taste and odor is in a food.”

Direct Answers

The laboratory answers may directly affect California agriculture in many ways. Sherman Leonard of the Davis staff is working with the Cling Peach Advisory Board on variety tests and in work to find out which state of maturity is best for canned peaches. The acceptance laboratory taste panels tell him what effects these factors have on flavor.

Dr. William V. Cruesse of the Berkeley campus has been devising extra uses for surplus California dried fruits, particularly raisins. The laboratory tries out his sundae toppings, pie fillings and raisin spreads.

Wine Tests

The nearest approach to wide

TASTE TEST—Elly Hinreiner, a food technologist who is in charge of the acceptance laboratory at the University of California at Davis, Yolo County, shows how a taste test panel member samples peaches for off flavor.

Bee Photo

tests. They all work closely with other divisions of the college, particularly entomology, which wants to see what insecticides and other chemical treatments do to flavor; poultry husbandry, which is interested in meat and egg flavors, and the home economics department.

The tests themselves are run with panel members sitting in one of a series of small cubicles.