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A Graduate Describes *Food Publicity*

Winnifred Cannon, home economics director for the American Meat Institute, explains her work

THE American Meat Institute, the trade, research and educational organization of the meat packing industry, has evolved a wartime program, to broaden the homemaker's knowledge of meat buying and cooking. It also stresses the nutritional value of meat and its place in the daily diet and explains the work of the meat industry in serving consumer interests. Meat publicity has been directed toward homemakers who have had to change habits of meat buying and cooking. It has explained rationing to consumers, giving menu plans to help meet it and stressing the need for good nutrition.

Every month photographs and articles are sent to 4,000 newspapers and magazines and many more syndicates. Special releases are also issued from time to time and exclusive stories and photographs are sent monthly to large city newspapers.

Weekly radio scripts as well as special releases are sent exclusively to 200 radio stations and a script, "Meat the Menu," is prepared weekly for use by Martha Crane and Helen Joyce on their "Food Feature Program" over station WLS, Chicago.

The Institute sometimes provides women's magazines with articles and illustrations and often they are supplied with basic meat information. The smaller women's magazines are anxious for food material for some of them do not have facilities for taking photographs and aren't staffed to write all of their stories. Much of AMI publicity is directed towards trade magazines, grocery consumer publications, farm magazines and industrial papers.

Meat recipes and first-hand information concerning current costs and ration points accompany all photographs sent out from the American Meat Institute



Typical of low point meat dishes is this leg of lamb costing approximately two points per serving

Food publicity is one of the most interesting and vital phases of the home economics business world. It involves not only the writing but the strategic placing of it. After publicity channels are mapped out, editors must be convinced of the value of the publicity material. The style of presentation must be suited to the largest number of them and respect must be given to exclusive demands of competitive publications or radio stations.

Photographs and stories are exclusive for some newspapers, magazines and radio stations. Above all, food publicists must keep the confidence of editors with whom they deal. Should the same photograph be sent by error to two papers in the same city, the danger of both food pages printing it simultaneously makes them reluctant to use material from that source again.

Information in stories must hold the confidence of editors, too. Recipes must be accurate, for several thousand newspapers, and in turn, several million readers are relying on those recipes. If for no other reason, prevention of waste compels every food publicist to check her material. One error in ingredients may mean many thousands of meat casseroles wasted.

Publicity is often confused with public relations, another fairly new development in business. A public relations department is what it says . . . a liaison between an organization and its public. Publicity, on the other hand, is a tool of public relations.

Women out of college shouldn't aspire to immediate positions in food publicity. Eventually they may become a part of a publicity association or a public relations department of a company. But while the field of food publicity is relatively new and expanding, it is highly specialized and usually requires other experience. Many food publicists have newspaper and magazine background. Test kitchen work, as well as merchandising, advertising and consumer experience is invaluable. One food publicist says that "publicity calls for peculiar people," meaning that they need an unusual set of qualifications and experiences. No one can know how she'll fit into publicity work until she's tried. The work is spasmodic and there are long hours of hard work. But to every food publicist the tension and drive is what makes her feel that she is in the most exciting field in home economics.