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## A Call for Foods Writers

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# A Call for Foods Writers

*In a reprint from Mademoiselle, March, '45, Polly Weaver presents the opportunities for combining journalism with training in foods*

"SEND us a girl who can write, too." This is the plea that goes out today with the calls for graduates in home economics, of which food is the biggest field. Helen Hostetter, editor of the American Home Economics Association publications, says that many home economics graduates might be earning at least \$1,000 more a year—if they can write.

Calls for home economists have multiplied in every field within the last two years—experimental cookery, nutrition, teaching, testing, research, hospital dietetics, school-lunch supervision, industrial feeding, but the demand for home economists to fill journalism and public relations jobs has increased nine and sevenfold, respectively.

One reason for this demand is the Government's program to improve the health of the nation, and the demand doesn't look like "duration hysteria"; better nutrition for the American family is a peacetime objective as well as a wartime need. And behind the factory lunchbox campaigns to educate workers and their wives to "Pack a lunch a man can work on," behind the bulletins on how to eat correctly on a limited budget, behind the newspaper food columns and the magazine articles offering menus planned around the rationing program are nutrition pamphleteers, slogan coiners, food market reporters, recipe broadcasters and cooking schools of the air, food package label writers and the product promoters of the food and equipment companies.

And in public service there must be nutrition advisers in Federal, city and state departments of health, in the extension services, in welfare organizations—women who can break down food prejudices and build up better eating habits through lectures, classes, writing articles, radio talks with homemakers. Yes, there's power in cooking with words; it's the recipe for getting a home economics major out of the rut and into the groove. For there's many a well trained home economics graduate who never gets out of the kitchen—demonstrating for the gas company or preparing food. In working with all people a sensible, scientific, both-feet-on-the-ground approach to food isn't enough; to most of us food is more than calories, vitamins, oven temperatures or menus to promote Krispy Krackles . . .

You don't have to go far from home to get a good home economics education. . . . The Midwestern colleges are several years ahead of the East in recognizing the importance not only of journalism, but of cultural subjects, too. Check the opportunities for writing and journalistic electives before you buy your ticket to college. Writing can't be learned entirely from courses, but courses help. You can at least learn how to organize your material in orderly fashion, put simple nutri-

tion information into simple English and write cooking directions that Mrs. Jones can follow. More than that, you can get practice in writing, perhaps even a little self confidence. Or, you may find out you don't want to write. But have a try, at least. Journalism classes will give you your basic recipe; you can add your own dash of seasonings later.

Some schools of home economics require no writing courses beyond the usual freshman English. At universities and colleges with both schools of journalism and schools of home economics, like Syracuse University, Ohio State, Kansas State, Iowa State College and the University of Georgia, dual enrollment is possible, or there's the chance to sprinkle your home economics with journalism courses, and vice versa.

The University of Wisconsin and Iowa State College are among the few that give a Bachelor of Science degree in home economics journalism. The school of home economics at Iowa State, whose graduates have an enviable reputation with magazines, newspapers and food companies, has a divisional student publication *The Iowa Homemaker*, which gives students fine experience in practical home economics journalism. Work on any campus publication is good training.

Helen Ridley, a home economist and head of food and nutrition public relations at J. Walter Thompson, says that although home economics is a necessary foundation for sound food writing, the typical course has too many applied sciences instead of the solid basic sciences, chemistry, physics, bacteriology, physiology. The application of these basics to specific problems is only limited by smartness, she thinks. She advises students to take all the writing and liberal arts subjects they can get, and to read, go to concerts, travel—in other words, keep on growing and broadening their education and their understanding of people. . . .

Your first job after college is very important. The kind of supervision you get may decide your future. Your college placement bureau can advise you; so can the vocational guidance chairman of the Home Economics in Business Department of the American Home Economics Association, if you're interested in a business job rather than one in public service. Don't force yourself into a job that requires writing just because it sounds glamorous. . . .

Salaries in the business field begin as low as \$30 to \$35 a week, depending on the person and the company. The top-paying jobs in food and nutrition writing are: editor of a food page, magazine or newspaper; head of a consumer service department in a food or equipment company; successful freelance writer with a book or two to her credit and perhaps a radio program or a syndicated column; head of a government food agency; executive or group head in an advertising agency that handles accounts for nationally advertised food or equipment. Salaries for these jobs might run up to \$6,000 or \$8,000 annually, with a few at \$10,000 or more.