

Coming in the Back Door: Women's Entry into Advertising Through the Brand Test Kitchen

As branded food products spread in the early 1900s, advertisers began speaking directly to women shoppers. Adopting a women-advertising-to-women approach, national brands and advertising agencies hired home economics professionals and charged them with creating test kitchens to develop and test recipes, write advertising copy, correspond with consumers, and test products. They became the face and voice of brands, providing women entry into the male-dominated advertising profession. These professional women brought an understanding of the needs of the housewife, knowledge of the emerging fields of dietetics and home economics, and a scientific approach to solving "home problems." Brand test kitchens became a symbol of trust, signifying that the product was reliable, pure, and economical. Though no longer as salient as they once were, major food brands such as Kraft, Heinz, General Mills, and Kellogg's still maintain test kitchens to meet consumer needs, educate consumers on proper product use, and produce new branded recipes.

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