



SHSI (DES MOINES), DES MOINES REGISTER AND TRIBUNE

Left: Rebecca Simms planned and served meals in Russell public school, December 1944. Below: Food service worker at Waterloo's Logan Intermediate School, about 1981, with holiday cookies.

Capitalists Coleslaw and the Two Bite Club: Cooking for Iowa Students

HERE'S THE CHALLENGE: Work with limited facilities, take advantage of government surpluses, plan affordable, nutritious, and appealing menus, and don't despair if some students turn up their noses at what you've just offered them. These circumstances have faced the women who have planned, prepared, and served food for Iowa's schoolchildren since early in this century.

Anna Johnson was a rural teacher from 1925 to 1967. "We really were not cooks, but had to heat soup and beans, bake potatoes in the ashes and heat food which was brought to school after a hot lunch program was started. . . . One family each day was to see that a hot dish was furnished," she recalled in the Winter 1975 *Annals of Iowa*. "Some days we got nothing because mother forgot, or two meals were brought the same day, or it was brought just as we were about to start our classes."

In the 1940s Norma Miller attended a rural Guthrie County school. She recalls going with her father, the school director, to pick up government commodities at the railroad siding. Her teacher's cooking unit on a heating stove was surrounded by a metal box casing to protect children who might fall against it. (Miller later joined Iowa's school lunch program staff, and has worked there for forty-three years.)

By the 1960s and 1970s, food service personnel encountered new terms like engineered foods (nutritionally enriched), competitive foods ("junk" foods), and multicultural foods (reflecting ethnic diversity). But new terms didn't change finicky appetites. Adele Voss of Council Bluffs bemoaned

this in 1970: "There goes the buzzer, our lunch hour's begun, / Sore and aching feet, but smile at everyone. / Hands are working fast to fill up the trays, / Everybody rushing by, but not one word of praise." Kitchen camaraderie helped; she ended her poem: "A nicer bunch of 'gals,' I'm sure I'll never meet."

In Waterloo, food service staff Doris Bishop and Paul McClain began the "Two Bite Club" in 1974. Roosevelt Elementary students who tried at least two bites of everything on their trays received special pins. "Quite a few students still wore their pins at the end of the year, and plate waste was noticeably reduced," reported home economics coordinator Fern Hammelman.

In 1976, schools might have offered dishes like Can't-Tell-A-Lie Cherry Pie, Covered Wagon Chili, Nuts and Bolts Mixed Vegetables, and Capitalists Coleslaw. The national Child Nutrition Bicentennial Project had distributed thirteen historical theme menus to school lunch programs. Martian Milk and 2001 Biscuits saluted the future.

"There's more to school lunches than just cooking and serving them," Frances Crawford told the *Des Moines Register* in April 1967. "You have to have talents in math, business, psychology and home economics in addition to cooking skills." Crawford directed Tipton's school lunch staff and was regional director for the American School Food Service Association. "School lunches are like plays," she added. "You give a little better performance when you have a little applause."

—The Editor



COURTESY DORIS BISHOP