



Who are Ontario Professional Home Economists?

What do they do?

Prepared in reply to a question by Clarence Lochhead,
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For the Ontario Home Economics Association

Who are Ontario Professional Home Economists?

Professional Home Economists are university graduates. Depending on the university, the program of study may be called Home Economics, Human Ecology, Family Studies, Nutrition and Food Sciences or Consumer Studies. Professional Home Economists work in all areas of the public and private sector. They utilize their specialized education and training to assist families and individuals in enhancing their daily lives.

A provincial Act respecting the Ontario Home Economics Association (OHEA) recognizes those who have met the membership qualifications to use the designation Professional Home Economist (P.H.Ec.). This registered status provides for self-regulation of member home economists by their peers via an established code of ethics, rules of professional conduct and standards of practice.

OHEA is a member of the Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education.

The Scope of Home Economics

A home economist may choose to specialize in one home economics-related area or may be a generalist in many facets of home economics. Examples of the fields in which home economists are active include:

- Community Service/Development
- Marketing and Sales
- Product Research
- Food Editor
- Promotion and Public Relations
- Journalism
- Dietetics
- Media Relations
- Recipe Development/Food Styling
- Co-op Housing
- Teaching
- International Development
- Resource Management
- Textile Design
- Financial Counselling
- Fashion/Craft Editor
- Public Health Nutritionist
- Consumer Consultant

What do Home Economists do?

Training and specialization differ, but home economists generally have training and experience in money management, consumer education, food, nutrition, housing, clothing, textiles, family studies and human development.

Many home economists teach Family Studies, part of the Social Sciences and Humanities curriculum at the secondary level, while others teach special interest courses or adult education. Ontario home economists work in consumer, food-related or finance-counselling roles. Many are cookbook authors whose work in developing recipes for healthy eating may also include specializations such as lactose-free, gluten-free or diabetic diets. Some home economists are also dietitians.

Several home economists work in government and industry in policy-making or in regulatory roles that impact families and individuals. Several conduct market assessments and regulatory compliance, working with the food industry, government and academia. Quite a few work in areas such as food safety, food styling for TV and print media, or as spokespersons and marketing representatives for the food industry or commodity groups.

Included below is a cross-section of current job descriptions submitted by a handful of OHEA members:

Sample job descriptions of Ontario Professional Home Economists

1) Cathy Enright, P.H.Ec., Ottawa, Director of Consumer Services and Outreach, Office of Consumer Affairs, Industry Canada:

- responsible for overseeing development, implementation and management of information products for Canadian consumers;
- develops and maintains effective working relationships with consumer interest NGOs;
- manages human/financial resources;
- analyzes policy issues, being aware of national and international socio-economic trends while relating them to consumers;
- involved with the management and evaluation of grants and contributions programs;
- dedicated to families as consumers and how they interact in the marketplace;
- makes a difference in the quality of life for many families by ensuring the production of relevant and timely information products, on a variety of marketplace issues;
- advocates in the workplace the importance of closer ties with Home Economics through consumer-related research.

2) Ruth McDonald, P.H.Ec., Resource Teacher, Experiential Learning (Low Incidence) with Toronto District School Board:

- works on a team with 2 Physio-Occupational Therapists and 2 job coaches;
- facilitates work experience (experiential learning) for high school students 14-21 years of age with developmental and/or physical disability, blind/low vision or deaf/hearing loss (opportunity could be in the classroom, school or community – this is in preparation to transition the students at age 21 to community programs, work/supported work, post-secondary programs, volunteerism, leisure/recreation, etc.);
- provides support with co-operative education placements for physically disabled credit students (students receiving an OSSD upon graduation);
- provides opportunity information for persons with developmental or physical disabilities, e.g. government programs (ODSP Income/Support, Special Services at Home - websites www.dsto.com), respite, day programs, leisure/recreation, group homes.

3) Amy Snider, P.H.Ec., VP Sensory Excellence, Dana McCauley & Associates Ltd., Toronto

- supervises and manages a Sensory Excellence Program and all test kitchen activity;
- develops nutrition programs;
- guides food marketers at large food companies such as H.J. Heinz, DineWise and Clover Leaf Seafood to use health and diet messages responsibly and meaningfully;
- employs a battery of nutrition databases and has frequent contact with CFIA, USDA, FDA and ADA;
- consults to help client companies make responsible claims that can help consumers to lead healthier lives;
- advises client companies about how to comply and work within official guidelines as they position their products in health and nutrition niches;
- writes consumer recipes that enhance daily meals and special occasions to provide a nutritious alternative to less wholesome packaged or restaurant options.

4) Deb Campbell, P.H.Ec., Field Rep, Ontario Pork , Exeter, ON

- liaises with producers and others in the Ontario pork industry;
- pork recipe development, cooking demonstrations as promotion and community development;
- facilitates Ag in the Classroom events, fairs, plowing matches and community festivals (where pork is served);
- works with other commodity groups locally, provincially and nationally as well as government and industry;

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- works closely with Ontario pork producer families who are currently in a crisis due to low pork prices. A decision to make a career change can be devastating as it could mean the dissolution of the family farm. Meetings are currently very stressful due to problems such as the value of the Canadian dollar, cost of inputs and the impact of world markets;
- works with Health Units and other Agriculture commodity groups doing training and writing.

5) June Kinniburgh, P.H.Ec., Director, Feed the Need in Durham Steering Committee, Food Secure Canada, Part-time Professor, Whitby, ON

- teaching, ensuring the students receive all learning activities as outlined in the course description;
- evaluating, grading, coaching, counseling students;
- developing courses such as Communications and Customer Service, training in communication including diversity training, understanding human needs and developing a greater understanding of oneself and others. When people are educated in these areas, they come to understand themselves better, which assists them in achieving a desirable quality of life, and by passing their new attitudes along to others, they also enhance the lives of others;
- re-launched Feed the Need in Durham program in 2005, with the objective to increase the collection and distribution of available food resources to emergency food providers. Project now employs a full-time coordinator and will very likely be receiving significant funding this year to develop a repository to help those in Durham Region, an eight-region municipality with over 500,000 population.

6) Mary Wiley, P.H.Ec., Marketing Communications, Consumer Education & Project Management Consultant, Mary Wiley Communications & Niagara Peninsula Agri-Tours, St. Catharines, ON

- provides clients with outsourced agri-food and agri-culinary tourism expertise in marketing communications and project management;
- provides consumers with credible information on which to base healthy choices around locally-grown Ontario food and agri-culinary tourism;
- helps consumers maximize their use of healthy products (food, tourism, or information in general) through effective communication of factual, science-based knowledge.

7) Susan Donaldson, P.H.Ec., CEO, Ontario Association of Community Care Access Centres (OACCAC) (recently retired), Caesarea (south of Peterborough), ON

- represented agencies that provide care in the community not only to seniors, but also to people with disabilities and children. Previous to setting up the OACCAC, was Executive Director of Home Care and then CCAC;

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- acted as a lobbyist with the Government of Ontario and worked with the range of disciplines who provided that care;
- the "client " was rarely an individual; it was the client and family (or equivalent infrastructure that supported that individual);
- continues to be involved in family issues as a volunteer not only at the community level, but also at the provincial level as a voice for the community on several committees;
- currently President of the Ontario Home Economics Association.

8) Mary Cunningham, P.H.Ec., Secondary School Teacher (recently retired), currently Parenting Consultant/FASD Educator and Advocate; Co-Founder, Ontario Coalition for Mandatory Parenting Education (OCMPE), Kitchener, ON

- shares knowledge on effective parenting, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder in an effort to prevent FASD and help those living with/caring for individuals with FASD;
- promotes mandatory parenting education in Ontario (OCMPE seeks to have all Ontario high school graduates take and pass a senior level parenting course) essential to a strong social fabric that every adult understands the challenges of parenting and has some tools before they embark on this important part of their lives;
- makes FASD education presentations for local groups, municipal groups, and at provincial, national and international FASD conferences, and to media;
- writes FASD prevention and intervention/support resources, specialty educational success for students with FASD and FASD in the justice system - website www.fasdjustice.on.ca;
- works with young offenders, many of whom show signs of FASD, in John Howard extra-judicial sanction programs relating to anger management, shoplifting and drug and alcohol abuse;
- parents an adopted daughter with Alcohol-Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder (ARND), a form of FASD.

9) Margaret Dickenson, P.H.Ec., supportive spouse of a Canadian Foreign Service Officer for 28 years (8 as Ambassador). Currently Columnist, Food writer, TV host, Cookbook author, Instructor, Ottawa, ON

- developed recipes and menus for and entertained tens of thousands as guests - from royalty to rogues - in 8 foreign countries;
- authored 2 multi-international award-winning cookbooks;
- created and hosted TV shows, including an award-winning 26-episode series;
- columnist for Diplomat & International Canada magazine;
- presenter of courses across Canada on Business Protocol, Social and Dining Etiquette;
- creator and presenter of team-building sessions for companies and government agencies;

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- judge of Ottawa & Gatineau Gold Medal Plates Chefs' competition and judge of senior students at Le Cordon Bleu Ottawa;
- presenter of cooking demonstrations at the LCBO and at various cooking schools across Canada;
- host of many charity fund-raising events;
- introduces the art of food presentation and decor to everyday meals as well as to entertaining;
- creates unique and innovative "No Time, No Talent" (i.e., quick and easy) recipes for those who wish to offer something creative;
- shares 40 years of entertaining experience with vast audiences via cookbooks, TV shows, magazine articles, cooking demonstrations;
- opens her home to many guests annually (200 in 2007);
- teaches how to present food attractively;
- pleased to have had formal education as a Home Economist (major in Foods and Nutrition) put to practical use at home and around the world.

10) Mairlyn Smith, P.H.Ec., Freelance Professional Home Economist, Toronto

- fulfills many different roles from writing cookbooks, developing recipes, food writing for magazines and blog, media spokesperson, healthy food educator, motivational speaker;
- works on the front lines with consumers making nutritional information consumer-friendly, translating dietitians' lingo into consumer lingo, giving consumers doable behaviours to follow, writing healthy recipes;
- writing a weekly blog @ yahoo Canada! on healthy eating called *The Healthy Plate* – website <http://ca.lifestyle.yahoo.com:80/food-entertaining/blog/thehealthyplate/>

11) Carol T. Culhane, P.H.Ec., President of International Food Focus Ltd., Toronto

- as the owner of a food industry analysis firm, conducts market assessments and regulatory compliance, works with food industry, government and academia;
- drafts regulatory compliant strategies which results in:
 - truthful package labels, compliant with the regulations;
 - new products and ingredients brought to market which are safe for consumers to eat and manufacturers to use, most of which offer high nutrient density;
- writes communication to assist consumers to read and understand package labels and label claims;
- performs market assessments and evaluations to determine potential for new products and ingredients (this service helps manufacturers put their research dollars to maximum use and prevents products reaching the market which have no use for either consumers or manufacturers - it also identifies unmet market needs);

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- works to provide truthful labelling and safe composition of foods;
- reviews consumer instructions on package labels and claims;
- answering consumer questions about topics pertinent to food such as trans fat, saturated fat, whole wheat verses whole grain, genetically-modified food;
- works to increase likelihood of useful food products reaching the marketplace.

12) Annie Woo, P.H.Ec., Senior Market Development Officer, Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, Ottawa

- works with food manufacturers, consumers, entrepreneurs in the following sectors: food ingredients, processed fruits and vegetables, snack foods, private labels, seasonings/dressings, ethnic specialty and frozen foods;
- advises management on food issues pertaining to above sectors;
- managed outgoing missions to SE Asia;
- conducted market research in the Russian market;
- previously worked in business-to-business marketing environments ranging from nutritionist for supplement company, customer service rep for mutual funds, international market development for food ingredient company, market development for public sector.