



Mrs. Fontaine (center) frequently demonstrates fish cookery on television programs.

Home economists from far and wide travel to Pascagoula, Mississippi, to learn the art of seafood preparation at

Bertha Fontaine's Finishing School

BY MARY RYDER

Like most other women, Bertha Fontaine spends a lot of time in the kitchen. But the kitchen where she works, as a seafood home economist for the National Marine Fisheries Service, may be anywhere in the southeastern United States.

A single week's activity for Mrs. Fontaine could include developing seafood recipes in the test kitchen at the NMFS Exploratory Fishing and Gear and Research Station in Pascagoula, Mississippi, driving 70 miles to conduct an out-of-town fish cookery demonstration, flying several hundred miles in a different direction to give more demonstrations, taping a few television shows, and holding training sessions for state home economists.

The Pascagoula test kitchen, her home base, is part of the Division of Marketing Research and Services for the Southeast Region of NMFS. Mrs. Fontaine's supervisor is the regional division chief, whose office is across the Gulf of Mexico, in St. Petersburg, Florida. Her basic responsibilities include training home economists in the arts and sciences of fish cooking, recipe research and development, and giving educational programs.

In carrying out these responsibilities, she travels 16 states. The job has no set routine

and offers new challenges every week.

Variety and challenge were precisely what Mrs. Fontaine had in mind when she applied for the job. Teaching home economics in a Pascagoula high school had begun to pall because "it was the same thing over again every year."

Now, after nearly 15 years with the fisheries agency, she can honestly claim that she has "just loved every minute of it, because every day is different."

Her career in seafood home economics has been marked by professional success as well as by personal satisfaction.

In December 1971, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, parent organization of NMFS, presented Mrs. Fontaine with the coveted NOAA Public Service Award. This consisted of a plaque and \$1,000, for "unusually significant contributions to the quality and effectiveness of NOAA's public service programs, contributions having such merit as to bring extraordinary credit to NOAA and the U.S. Department of Commerce."

Jack T. Brawner, chief of the Regional Marketing Research and Services Division, describes the energetic lady as "a professional through and through," and a large collection of awards and honors recognizing

her talent and dedication are evidence that his opinion is shared by her employers in Washington as well as by state officials and representatives of the region's food and fishing industries.

Florida's former Governor Claude T. Kirk presented her with a plaque recognizing her contributions to Florida's seafood marketing program; the Southeastern Fisheries Association, a five-state trade fishery organization, has honored her for her services to the fishing industry; the Alabama Fisheries Association awarded her a plaque and an honorary membership in recognition of her services to the seafood industry of that state. She also serves as a seafood consultant to the Alcorn A & M University, and was special consultant to *Better Homes and Gardens* for a seafood cookbook recently published by that company.

Summing things up, Mr. Brawner says that "Mrs. Fontaine has had a dramatic impact on the entire fishing industry of the Southeast and even other sections of the country. Professional foods people and professional foods educators with whom she works recognize her superior talent and recognize her as a competent and imaginative professional."

One rather unexpected side effect of her

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