

# COOKING FOR SEASONAL WORKERS



**T**HE thought of having to cook for perhaps a dozen extra men may worry the inexperienced person, not because she cannot cook, but because she does not know either the quantity to cook or how long the preparation and cooking will take. Because of the difficulties which may arise in the cooking of a large quantity of food on the household range or electric stove, this article by Nell Macpherson, Rural Sociologist, Department of Agriculture, Auckland, includes two sample menus and outlines for each day.

**L**ARGE-SCALE catering often presents a problem to the person who has had little experience of it, particularly if the occasion is a busy one for the whole family. Most people cope successfully with an influx of visitors on a special occasion, as the meals are served in the house, but for an occasion like haymaking, shearing, or fruit picking a different technique must be used, as often it is impossible to seat all the people round the table, to "stagger" the meal hours, or to use a buffet style of service.

The problem has varying aspects, as the housewife may be called on to provide for meals and two "smokos" in the day, and quite often the meals must be first cooked and then carried some distance. Therefore it is essential when planning large-scale catering of this type not only to organise the meals and their preparation, but also to leave time for their transportation to the field. Of course, the cardinal rules of all meal service apply: Hot dishes must be hot, cold ones must be cold, and the food should be served as attractively as possible.

To attain these objectives more easily it is wise to try to serve cold meals in the field. They should be plain; fussy, time-consuming details are attractive at afternoon tea, but quite often the garnishes have become wilted and unappetising by the time they reach the field.

The meals which approximate to breakfast and dinner are usually served in or close to the house, and the "teas" and lunch, which must be substantial meals, are those with which difficulty sometimes arises. In the menus and directions which follow, the instructions may clash with normal good practice in preparation of foods to retain their nutritive value, but these are not normal practices to be followed every day of the year; rather are they designed to cope with a special occasion which may reasonably be called a housewife's emergency. The day before the first menu is to be served certain preparations can be made which materially lessen the work on the days when the menus are served without making this day too exacting in view of the usual housework to be done.

