



**SUPPLY
LINE**

Kate Aitken

Radio Host and Home Expert

Kate maintained a busy broadcasting and writing career, teaching women how to stretch wartime food rations, grow gardens, remake clothes and more.

Kate Aitken riding a bicycle, setting an example of alternative transportation during gas shortages and wartime rationing.

Courtesy of the Museum of the Boyne



Early Years

Kate, or “Mrs. A.,” as she was known to her audiences, turned her success as a farmer – along with her knowledge of cooking and

homemaking – into a mini-empire of radio shows, newspaper columns, cookbooks, and lectures.

A Household Name

Born in Beeton, Ontario in 1891, Kate began building a reputation as a “home expert” in the 1920s. By the time the Second World War rolled around in 1939, she was already a radio star in Canada, with a popular program in Toronto, Ontario.

In an era before television, radio was an important source of entertainment and information. Kate – heard multiple times a day across the country – attracted millions of listeners.

During the war, Kate’s radio shows and newspaper columns discussed current events and familiar homemaking topics, but with a twist. She offered cooking tips and recipes reflecting rationing, shortages, and wartime nutrition. She also gave advice on running a household in wartime, along with conservation techniques, and other ways of coping with the changes war brought to everyday life.

In 1943, the Wartime Prices and Trade Board (the government agency set up to manage Canada’s domestic war economy) made Kate the national supervisor of conservation for the Consumer Branch. Her role was to teach Canadian women how to save materials for the war effort.

“Make Over, Mend and Make Do” was the slogan of the Remake Revue tour Kate organized. Travelling across Canada, the Revue was part fashion show, part conservation class.

The Revue demonstrated how to make new clothes out of old, thus freeing up textiles for the armed forces. Booklets with patterns, tips and instructions were handed out to audience members, and dozens of “remake centres” were set up across the country.

Kate resigned from the Wartime Prices and Trade Board in November 1944, and returned to full-time broadcasting. In 1945, she published the first edition of Kate Aitken’s Canadian Cookbook, which is still in use today.

Post-War Success

Kate Aitken’s fame grew in the post-war years. Expanding into television, she began appearing regularly on Canadian programs, where she discussed current events and presented her own documentaries.

She quit broadcasting in 1957, but served on the Board of Directors of the CBC, wrote a column for the Globe and Mail, and continued to write books. She died in 1971.