**Tackle anything and taste everything’: The Australian home cook and Sri Lankan cuisine in newspapers, magazines, cookery books and restaurant guides 1895 - 2023**

The first Australian curry I ate was in the early 1970’s cooked by one of four university students in a share-house. It was some cheap cut of meat diced and cooked in a gravy heavily featuring curry powder (probably Keen’s Curry Powder of which more later), apples and sultanas. It was nothing like the Sri Lankan curries of my youth nor those of my father’s when we settled in Australia. I set out to learn how to make these curries turning to my grandmother’s cookery book, my father’s knowledge, and later Sri Lankan Hilda Deutrom’s 1929 *Ceylon Daily News Cookery Book*.[[1]](#footnote-1) I began to cook curries and soon developed a reputation for them. I went on to teach Sri Lankan cookery for three years.

For the last twenty years I have been a food historian/ food writer focusing on Australian cuisine. In the course of doing research for my book *True to the Land. A History of Food in Australia[[2]](#footnote-2)* I had occasion to write about Doris Ady[[3]](#footnote-3) and Charmaine Solomon[[4]](#footnote-4) two Australian cookery book authors who included Sri Lankan recipes in their books. Reading Ady again recently I was struck by this from her Foreword:

I have written this book for the Australian and New Zealand housewife, for whom I have the greatest admiration, who is game to tackle anything and taste everything, and whose adventurous spirit has raised the standard of local cuisine to international heights. …There is one branch of cooking, however, in which she is a little inexperienced, that of the cuisine of South East Asia[1](#_bookmark0) … So I hope this this little book will open up to her the infinite connotations of the word ‘curry’ and introduce to her the art of spice cooking, an art which her neighbours on the vast Asian continent have practiced for centuries.[[5]](#footnote-5)

I wondered what opportunities Ady’s ‘housewives’ had to encounter Sri Lankan cuisine in print media - Australian newspapers, magazines, and cookery books - and what they would have learned about Sri Lankan cuisine from them. Sri Lankan cuisine has been a part of the Australian foodscape since at least 1895 when the earliest recipe for Ceylonese[[6]](#footnote-6) curries I found was published.[[7]](#footnote-7)So, I widened the scope of my research to look at what Ady’s time travelling ‘housewives’ would understand was Sri Lankan cuisine at key moments in publishing recipes for it from 1895 to 2023. (I will use the term home cook instead of housewife/wives from here on.)

I comment sometimes from my personal experience of eating and making Sri Lanka curries.

I use four sources:

* Recipes published in newspapers and magazines accessed through *Trove*, the digital depository managed by the National Library of Australia.
* Four cookery books of Sri Lankan cuisine published between 1968 and 2023.[4](#_bookmark3); Doris Ady’s 1968 *Curries from the Sultan’s Kitchen. Recipes from India, Pakistan, Burma & Sri Lanka*; Charmaine Solomon’s 1976 *The Complete Asian Cookbook*; Peter Kuruvita ‘s 2009 *Serendip[[8]](#footnote-8)*; and O Tama Carey’s 2022 *Lanka Food[[9]](#footnote-9)*.
* Other Australian cookery books. I looked here for specific references to Ceylonese or Sri Lankan dishes. I also used them to find examples illustrative of one point or another made in this article. There were nine cookery books that had recipes which met these criteria,. They are listed in the Bibliography.
* Three restaurant guides: The *SBS Guide to Ethnic Eating in Sydney* 1992, and 2005: *The Sydney Morning Herald Good Food Guide* 1992; *Sydney Eats* 1992 and 2005

What emerged was a picture of an accretion over time of facets of Ceylonese/Sri Lankan cuisine in response to the culinary possibilities (cultural and resource) of their time culminating in the complete cuisine as presented in O Tama Carey’s book.

[A note on spelling: there sometimes are differences in spelling of a dish or ingredient by the various sources. I use the spelling in the source I am referencing.]

# 1895: The earliest recipes for Ceylonese curries

As noted above, the earliest recipes I found for Ceylonese curries was in 1895. They are for a general curry sauce, Rice for Curries, Snipe Curry, Eggs Curried and Fried Red Herrings to Serve with Curry. (Recipes are Appendix 1)

What will the home cook surmise about Ceylonese cuisine from these recipes? Ceylonese curries are evidently not much different to curries in general with which they are likely to be familiar. Curries had been a part of the colony’s foodscape for decades. ‘Governor Macquarie, ‘wrote food historian Jacqui Newling, ’had served curry of duck to guests at Government House in April 1810.’[[10]](#footnote-10) The 1895 recipes have ingredients and methods of preparation in common with recipes for curry in general published in the colony over the 20 years prior.[[11]](#footnote-11) Most used curry powder and/or curry paste, so the home cook will not have to learn ‘any new art of spicing’. Lemon juice was often used. Some also used a prepared sauce - tomato/ketchup. Milk, cream, and apples were also used.

The recipes are also similar to recipes in British cookery books of the time.[[12]](#footnote-12) This is not unexpected. Colonial cuisine was British cuisine and colonial curries were British curries with their localization via substitution for ingredients that were unavailable in Britain, apples for mangoes, lemon juice for tamarind.

The recipes for the curries themselves have nothing distinctively Ceylonese about them. Two of the recipes do however gesture towards Ceylonese cuisine. ‘Sampball’ (sambol) introduces the home cook to this characteristic accompaniment with curries in Ceylon, albeit the ingredients bear no resemblance to any sambols with which I am familiar. I found no references in Trove to sampball/sambol/sambal prior to or appearing in 1895 so this might have been quite novel for the home cook. The other is for Fried Red Herrings to Serve with Curry which seems to be an attempt to reproduce the dried salted fish which also often accompany a curry dish. This would be wholly new to the home cook. But they may understand that Ceylonese curries are never served on their own but will have some accompanying dishes of the type described here.

The spice ingredients for the curries are familiar and are available in the colony. (See Appendix 2) So, where could the home cook go in 1864 to buy either the individual spices or a curry powder? Spices had been on sale in the colony since at least 1803. The first shops in the colony - as opposed to auction houses or the government store - were established in the early 1800s. Ann Grant operated a shop from the front room of her house (as did others) where she sold spices.’[[13]](#footnote-13) I think it safe to say that she sold spices in small amounts and not in bulk. In 1821 an Apothecary, Druggist and Spice-Dealer advertised in the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* that among the items they had for sale were ‘ mace and nutmegs, cloves, allspice, ginger, ground ginger, pepper’.[[14]](#footnote-14) This was not unusual. Medicinal qualities were ascribed to spices and could be part of the compounded medicines they dispensed. Again I think it safe to say that they sold spices in small amounts and not in bulk. In 1864 when Abbott published the first recipe for curry and for curry powder Bright & Co. advertised ‘Pepper, Spice, Mace and Cloves’ for sale from their premises.[[15]](#footnote-15) In 1895 Harbottle & Co wholesalers and retailers advertised - unspecified - spices for sale at 2d per ounce.[[16]](#footnote-16)

In summary, at this time the resources – spices - for curry-making were available in the colony and curries were being made but within a British culinary frame of nativised Indian cuisines. The 1895 recipes are nominally Ceylonese only. It’s difficult from the recipes and accompanying text to reason why the anonymous author chose to call these Ceylonese Curries. Was there intent to intervene in Australian curry-making?

# Curry Powder

The 1895 recipes and those non-Ceylonese recipes I referenced above both in Australia and also in Britain all use curry powder**.** The earliest reference I found for curry powder in the colony was 1813. J. Laurie advertised for sale ‘A few Cannisters of curry powder in a high state of preservation.’[[17]](#footnote-17) In 1895 home cooks had a choice between several imported curry powder and pastes: Empire Curry Powder[[18]](#footnote-18), Rumford’s Curry Powder[[19]](#footnote-19), Gillespie’s Special Prize Curry[[20]](#footnote-20),Champion Curry Powder[[21]](#footnote-21), and Crosse and Blackwell.[[22]](#footnote-22) The 1895 recipes specifically mention Vencatachellum’s curry powder. This Madras style curry powder had been imported to the colony by at least 1874.[[23]](#footnote-23) It was a Madras style curry powder the ingredients for which were coriander, cumin seed, fenugreek, black mustard, cinnamon, cardamom, dried Kashmiri chillies, black peppercorns, long pepper, and turmeric.[[24]](#footnote-24)

The imports were challenged by a local curry powder. In 1844 Joseph and Annie Keen in Tasmania produced the eponymous ‘Keen’s Curry Powder.’[[25]](#footnote-25) Its ingredients were similar to Vencatachellum’s with small variations.

The home cook interested in making their own curry powder was not forgotten. In 1864 Edward Abbott published the first Australian recipe for curry powder.

The following are our proportions – Mustard seed, one ounce and a half; coriander, four ounces; turmeric, four and a quarter ounces; black pepper, two and a half ounces; cayenne, one ounce and a quarter; ginger, half an ounce; cinnamon, cloves and mace, each quarter of an ounce. To be well pounded and mixed. And kept in a stoppered bottle in a dry place.[[[26]](#footnote-26)](#_bookmark34)

There was another published in 1894 in the *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners’ Advocate*.[[27]](#footnote-27)

These all are generic curry powders and pastes. There is nothing distinctively Ceylonese in them.

However, just four years later in 1899 the home cook was presented with a very different recipe which does have ingredients distinctive of Ceylonese curries and accompaniments.

The famous Ceylon curry powder is said to have the following rather indefinite composition: A piece of green ginger, 2 fragments of garlic, a few coriander and cumin seeds, 6 small onions, 1 dry chilli, 8 peppercorns, a small piece of turmeric, half a dessertspoonful of butter, half a cocoanut (sic), and half a lime. For it to be in perfection, the powder should be made the day on which it is cooked.[[28]](#footnote-28)

It’s more a paste than a powder as it uses ‘wet’ ingredients and so must be used on the day it is made. It is what Indian cooks are described as doing daily in the in the 1895 recipes.

It does have distinction from other curry powders of the time in introducing two ingredients characteristic of Ceylonese cuisine - – coconut and lime.

Again, the intent is not clear. The recipe is given in answer to an inquiry from a reader for a general curry recipe not specifically a Ceylonese one.

# 1895 – 1968: First interregnum

**Coconut Milk**

Over the next 65 years recipes for Ceylonese curries are scant. One recipe that was published - Ceylon Curry - introduced the home cook to a foundational ingredient of Ceylonese curries - coconut milk, and how to prepare it from a coconut.

Cocoanut "Stock" for Curry.

Take half a fresh cocoanut or two tablespoonfuls of desiccated cocoanut. If fresh nut Is used, peel the flesh and grate it. Place in. a bowl and pour over it a breakfastcupful of boiling water. Cover and allow it to stand for an hour or two. Then squeeze the ‘milk‘ through muslin, and put aside to use in the curry. Keep the cocoanut if you are using the fresh nut, for this can be soaked again.[[[29]](#footnote-29)](#_bookmark74)

The home cook will now see that the recipes that called for milk were substituting it for coconut milk. What Elliot misses is that in Ceylonese curries there are three decoctions of coconut. What you get from this first decoction is called ‘first milk’ and is thick and somewhat creamy hence the substitution of fresh cream in recipes when coconuts are unavailable. It is reserved for finishing off the curry shortly before serving. The ‘coconut stock’ is made from the second and third decoction. She makes further decoctions optional. till 1953.[[30]](#footnote-30)

Elliot, notes: ‘This makes a "white” curry, and you may observe that it includes no curry powder’. She is silent as to why she has done without the curry powder. Interestingly she has earlier in the item given a defense of using curry powders.

In the East most of the cooks make curry from fresh spices, and many people imagine that this is one of the reasons why curry made elsewhere does not have the same savour. This is a fallacy, and I have the word of a curry expert that curry made with good curry powder is better than most of those made from fresh spices, being less dependent upon the art of the cook, and more certain in results. There are several good curry powders on the market, and you must be sure that you do get the best. They are not expensive.[[31]](#footnote-31)

This is the second recipe at this time that does not use curry powder, the other being a 1931 recipe for Ceylon Prawn Curry. Here also the author notes the lack of curry powder but gives no reason for its exclusion.

I found no biographical information about Lucy Elliot to put her recipe and her comments in context.

# 1968: Doris Ady and ‘Curries from the Sultan’s Kitchen’.

‘This book is an important milestone in the publication of cookery books in Australia and New Zealand for it is written by a newcomer who has brought her skills and knowledge of Asian food to our countries…’

Margaret Fulton 1968[[32]](#footnote-32)

Fulton is talking about Doris Ady and her book *Curries from the Sultan’s Kitchen*. Ady was of Burmese heritage but lived in Australia from 1958 onward. In Sydney she and her husband, ‘Tiger Ady’ ran restaurants: first the ‘Burra Bazaar’ in Cremorne and then the ‘Bengal Tiger’ in Mosman and also ran ‘Sultan’s Choice Foods’ importing and wholesaling spices and pickles among other items.

Ady in her Foreword (as cited earlier) identifies that there is one branch of cooking in which (the Australian housewife) is a little inexperienced, that of the cuisine of South East Asia and sets out to address this gap in knowledge.[[33]](#footnote-33) Ady says of this gap: ‘Visitors from Asia do not come to us in any great numbers, and we in turn have been more apt to travel in a westerly direction rather than to explore the sights and sounds and smells of Asia’. This for me is a very preceptive comment situating her book as an intervention in a specific cultural context. Margaret Fulton also in 1968 published *The Margaret Fulton Cookbook* of she said later, ‘I knew Australians were becoming more interested in international food, so I included Asian dishes.’[[34]](#footnote-34) Both books are then deliberate interventions in the Australian cuisine.

 The two books were published within a sociopolitical context of increasing connection between Australia and South/East Asia due to four factors. The first was the dismantling of the ‘White Australia Policy’, legislation introduced in 1910 to exclude migration of Chinese in particular but other nationalities as well including Ceylonese.[[35]](#footnote-35) From 1900 – 1950 there had been limited family migration of mainly Sinhalese to Australia.[[36]](#footnote-36) The second was from 1950 – 1980 with an influx of Sri Lankan Burghers (descendants of Dutch and Portuguese) migrating under the impact on them of Sri Lankan nationalism.[[37]](#footnote-37)

The third factor was students who had studied in Australia under the Colomba Plan, a multi- Commonwealth nations scheme to provide opportunities for individuals from the signatory countries through a scholarship system which facilitated interaction between the students and Australian citizens. In 1960 Alison (PDF) Health Foods wore an advertorial in *Tharunka*, the magazine of the University of New South Wales titled ‘Our Changing Eating Habits’:

Over the last decade the eating habits of the Average Australian have undergone considerable

changes. With the influx of immigrants from European Countries, many unknown and unusual

dishes now» are part of our way of life. The next stage to the alteration of the general eating habits of Australians is taking place with the constant arrival of students from our Eastern neighbours — India, 'Pakistan, Burma, etc. These Students bring with them the Hot Spicy dishes of the East, with their tantalizing piquant flavours. [[38]](#footnote-38)

 By 1964 there had been 12, 000 students who had studied in Australia under the program.[[39]](#footnote-39)

The fourth was the growth in tourism from Australia to South East Asia as economic growth in Australia and the introduction of affordable air fares to these destinations. Another group pf Australian travelers were young Australians who in the late 1960s and early 1970s travelled overland from Asia to Europe, through Bali, Thailand Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey on ‘the hippie trail’. When they returned to Australia they sought out restaurants at which they could explore further the cuisines they encountered.[[40]](#footnote-40)

Into this multifactor Asianising of Australia Ady released her book. She covers cuisines from India, Pakistan Burma, and Sri Lanka. The home cook is exposed to a seismic shift in their understanding of Sri Lankan cuisine. Ady’s description of the cuisine in her introduction to the chapter on Sri Lankan dishes hints at something different. She writes of visits to Sri Lanka where ‘on every occasion my palate has been assailed by new and exotic flavours – cinnamon and cloves for savoury dishes instead of in sweet ones, the fragrance of rosewater in cakes and desserts, sweet strong cups of their world famous tea’.[[41]](#footnote-41)

It's in Ady’s recipes that the home cook experiences the seismic shift, particularly in the range of dishes that are not curries but are part of Sri Lankan cuisine – Devilled Beef or Lamb, adding spice without curry powder; mallungs, shredded leafy vegetables sautéed in mild spice and finished off with grated coconut for example Cabbage Mallung; sambols like Seeni Sambol; desserts like Vattalappam, the classic baked coconut milk and palm sugar pudding; cakes, like Ceylon Love Cake based on cashew nut, restoring Dutch recipes to the cuisine as also are Frikadells, crumbed and fried forcemeat. This is in all likelihood the first time that the home cook will have learned of European settlement in Sri Lanka other than British.

Ady has a full-page discussion about rice common to the four cuisines for which she provides recipes. This is the first time I found such an extensive discussion (albeit only a page) about rice - the varieties grown, how to cook it – she gives two ways, boiling and the absorption method - and whether to wash the rice - she is in the yes camp on this, particularly for those ‘weight watching’ as ‘washing the rice before cooking does tend to get rid of some of the mill starch present in all types of rice’.[[42]](#footnote-42)

She says that ‘The main distinctiveness of Sri Lankan cuisine compared with the others she writes of is coconut milk which ‘provides the stock in which the curries are cooked’.[[43]](#footnote-43) Ady uses frozen coconut cream in place of fresh coconut milk in all her recipes.[[44]](#footnote-44) ‘It is not necessary to spend time making coconut milk … when frozen, unsweetened coconut milk is available. Occasionally it is possible to find canned coconut milk. Admittedly, these may be hard to come by in New Zealand and in the more remote Australian country areas, and if this should be the case use desiccated coconut. Failing all else use undiluted evaporated milk.’[[45]](#footnote-45) [[46]](#footnote-46) Home cooks reading this will breathe a sigh of relief.

Ady introduces the home cook to new ingredients. Tamarind, lost in Anglicizing the cuisines of India and Sri Lanka to be replaced by sour apples as in the 1895 recipes, is restored. Maldive fish (dried and smoked skipjack tuna) is one of the defining ingredients of Sri Lankan cuisine, playing a similar role to the uses of fish sauce or dried prawns or other seafoods used in other cuisine. Where earlier recipes had used bay leaves Ady brings back curry leaves. Lemon grass again is one of those ingredients that crosses cuisine.

Ady assured home cooks that ‘All the spices mentioned (in her recipes) are available under several well-know brand names, in many shops and delicatessens – also they are sold in bulk in a great many health food shops.’[[47]](#footnote-47) Two of the brands were McCormik and Master Foods. [[48]](#footnote-48) (See Appendix 2 for the list of ingredients and their first appearance in *Trove.*)

There is one another shock for the home cook. Out of 15 curry recipes just three use curry powder, all the others build the curry sauce from individual spices. Of the three one calls for Sri Lankan curry powder which goes undefined. This is quite a radical move on her part, upsetting centuries of Anglo curry-making practice. She does this without any discussion about whether or not to use curry powder. She clearly simply trusted that her housewives ‘game to tackle anything’ would follow her into this uncharted culinary territory. Evidently they did. The book went through eight editions and sold over 40,000 copies. Ady’s book deserves new prominence among cookery books that contributed to the development of Australia’s multicuisine table.

In summary, the resources - ingredients - for making dishes from Ceylonese cuisine have become more available with brand named food companies carrying them. Her book was published in a sociopolitical climate of increased connections between Australia and its northern Asian neighbours.

**1968 – 1976: Second Interregnum**

**The Australian Women’s Weekly ‘s Curries with authentic flavour**

During these years there was little published for the home cook to broaden their understanding of Sri Lankan cuisine with the exception of a feature article ‘Curries … with Authentic Flavour’ in the *Australian Women’s Weekly* in 1973.[[49]](#footnote-49) Arguably more home cooks would have seen the recipes here than would have bought Ady’s cookery book, 40, 000 sales notwithstanding.

This feature was only the second instance I came across where a Sri Lankan was identified as the recipe maker. The person in this case was Mrs. Lalini Fernando of whom, disappointingly, we learn little about other than that she and her family have been in Australia just two years and that her two children go to Australian schools.[[50]](#footnote-50) We do learn that she makes her own curry powder for which she gives her recipe. She also contributed a recipe for one of the classic Sri Lankan fish dishes – Ambul Thiyal.

It isn’t said but I think Fernando is one to have benefited from the dismantling of the White Australia Policy noted above in the section on Doris Ady. The surname Fernando suggests to me she is of Portuguese/ Sri Lankan descent.

**Rosemary Brissenden and *South East Asian Food***

In 1969 Rosemary Brissenden published *South East Asian Food* covering Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand.[[51]](#footnote-51) This was the first Australian cookery book to bring together these cuisines. As it did not cover Sri Lanka I will not be dealing with it here.

**1976: Charmaine Solomon and ‘The Complete Asian Cookbook’**

Solomon was a Sri Lankan who emigrated to Australia with her family in 1959. In Ceylon she had edited the women’s pages of the *Ceylon Daily News* contributing recipes as well. In Australia she was hired to the staff of *Women’s Day* as a food writer, later becoming Food Editor of *Family Circle*.

Solomon’s book is something of a 1976 ‘State of Play’ report of what food journalist Cherry Ripe later called the Asianisation of the Australian palate.[[52]](#footnote-52) Van Reyk has argued that ‘Before the Asianisation of the Australian palate however, came the Asianisation of Australia itself.’[[53]](#footnote-53) Ady had said that one of the reasons that her housewives were unfamiliar with Eastern cuisines was that that ‘Visitors from Asia do not come to us in great numbers’.[[54]](#footnote-54) This changed substantially over the 1970s not by visitation but by migration The White Australia Policy was finally officially abandoned in 1973 under the Whitlam Labor government replacing it with a policy of multiculturalism.[[55]](#footnote-55) This was accompanied by changes to Australia’s immigration policy.

The selection of migrants became, in principle, non-discriminatory to race, colour, ethnicity, country of birth, and gender. … In the new context the prevailing origins of Australia’s migrants changed rapidly. By 1975 Europeans fell from two-thirds to less than half and Asian numbers increased from 8 to 18 per cent. … (By the 1970s) Australia moved into a new refugee-receiving phase which was related to the end of empire and decolonization. Many of the migrants at this later stage were people departing ex-colonial countries, especially out of India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Chile.[[56]](#footnote-56)

Australia had ceased its involvement in the Vietnam war in 1975 and was about to receive its first Vietnamese refugees. Australia also began to strengthen trade ties with Asia. The time was ripe for Australians to deepen their engagement with Asian cuisines begun through Brissenden’s book. Solomon’s book served the purpose well. In the Preface to *The Complete Asian Cookbook*, Solomon writes: ‘My aim in writing this book has been to make it possible for keen cooks everywhere to explore the cooking of Asia – and to prove that real Eastern meals can be produced in a Western kitchen.’[[57]](#footnote-57) The cuisines for which she gives recipes are India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, The Philippines, China, Korea and Japan.

As with Ady there is intent here to intervene in Australia’s cuisine. I think one of the ways Solomon does this in the book is to use phonetic spelling of the dishes’ vernacular as well as the Anglicized name. For example, Thakkali Male/Fish Curry with tomatoes, or Rabu Kolle Mallung/ Shredded Radish Leaf.

So, what will the home cook learn about Sri Lankan cuisine? Solomon’s introduction to the Sri Lankan chapter broadens the home cook’s understanding of what makes up Sri Lankan cuisine:

In spite of its tiny size, Sri Lanka boasts an amazing variety of food and styles of cooking. The island has a rich heritage of indigenous dishes and its regional cooking is strongly individual and varied … In addition to regional characteristics, some of the most popular dishes reflect influences from other lands. After a hundred years or so it does not matter that this or that style of cooking was introduced by foreigners who came and stayed, either as traders or conquerors – Indians, Arabs, Malays, Moors, Portuguese, Dutch and British. The dishes they contributed have been adapted to local ingredients but retain their original character. They are not presented as Sinhalese dishes but accepted and enjoyed as part of the richly varied cuisine.’[[58]](#footnote-58)

Those last sentences are almost exactly the Sri Lankan cuisine equivalent of Australia’s new policy of integration in a multicultural Australia which would shape the Australian multicuisine table. No active policy was pursued in Sir Lanka over the centuries, but a natural integration has taken place.

Solomon begins the recipe pages with a list for the home cook of what ingredients to have in ‘Your Sri Lankan Shelf’ to make the range of dishes she gives recipes for.

Your Sri Lankan Shelf Aromatic ginger, ground Coriander, ground Cummin (sic) ground Fennel, ground Fenugreek, seeds Cinnamon sticks

Cardamom, pods, and ground

Chilli powder and whole dried chillies Curry leaves, dried

Cloves, whole and ground Peppercorn, whole Turmeric, ground

Cloves, ground

Creamed coconut optional Desiccated coconut Paprika

Dried *rampe* (pandanus) leaf, optional Dried lemongrass optional

Black mustard seed Dried tamarind pulp Ghee

Vegetable oil (coconut oil if available)[[59]](#footnote-59)

As with Ady, Solomon assures home cooks, ‘Almost without exception (ingredients) called for are now readily available in the West, in the rare case they are not, or are out of stock, there are generally suitable substitutes.’[[60]](#footnote-60) (See Appendix 2 for a list of ingredients and when they first appeared in *Trove*). She notes eight suppliers for the ingredients, covering Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane, the three most populous capital cities.[[61]](#footnote-61) These enterprises are specialty shops managed by individuals from within the migrant communities. The days of generalist chemist shops being the go-to for spices are well in the past.[[62]](#footnote-62)

Solomon has a short section on utensils writing that no special equipment is necessary to make her recipes unless you are making ‘hoppers’ - bowl-shaped pancakes of rice and/or wheat flour a staple of Sri Lankan breakfasts) but Solomon eases the home cook’s mind by suggesting they use an omelette pan instead. A good set of saucepans and wooden spoons are all that are required.[[63]](#footnote-63) This fits perfectly with her intention of showing that Eastern meals can be made in a Western kitchen.

Solomon explains that curries are categorised according to the spicing, the method of cooking or the colour - white curries based on coconut milk, red curries for the chillies used, black because they use roasted spices.[[64]](#footnote-64) This will be a surprise to the home cook who only knew that there was ‘curry’.

Well and truly backgrounded, what does the home cook discover? There are the expected curries with a wider range of meats - 12 recipes - and seafood – 12 recipes. There are 17 recipes for vegetables of which four are for vegetables that would be unfamiliar to most home cooks in the 1970s: ridged gourd, okra, hibiscus, and green banana.[[65]](#footnote-65) There are seven recipes for pickles, 10 for sambols, and three cakes.

The entirely new area of the cuisine the home cook would discover is rice and flour preparations: Appe - hoppers, bowl shaped pancakes; Pittu - steamed roll of grated coconut; Iddi Appe - stringhoppers , thin noodle mats of steamed rice or wheat flour; Rotis - flat breads made from flour and coconut.

The home cook is introduced to dishes from Sri Lanka’s multicultural heritage - Frikkadells, Dutch spiced forcemeat balls; Satay Curry from Malaysian cuisine; Breudher, a Dutch derived rich yeast cake; the Portuguese coconut cake, Bolo de Coco; and the Sri Lankan Christmas Cake whose ingredients are drawn from British, Dutch, Portuguese, Arab, and Chinese cuisines.

What the home cook is being presented with in Solomon’s book is a holistic view of a more complex cuisine than rice and curry.

In summary, the resources – spices - that Solomon lists for the home cook’s shelf to prepare the dishes in the book are available, some from specialty stores from within ethnic communities. Culturally the book was published in a time of transition of the ethnic base of Australia with Asian migration increasing. Anglo-Australians will have more frequent contact with the new migrants and their cuisines, formally as Asian restaurants are established and informally through everyday acts of culinary multiculturism – sharing dishes between neighbours and with work colleagues for example. Solomon’s book is positioned as a culinary bridge between the old and the new Australia.

Solomon’s book has remained in print for 47 years as of 2023, evidence of its success in intervening in Australian cuisine.

**1976 – 2009: Third Interregnum**

**Restaurant Guides**

Recipes continued to be published in newspapers and magazines over the next 30 years but offering little new for the home cook.

In 1977 Mrs M. Crusz won a Consolation prize of $5 for her recipe for ‘the famous date chutney of Sri Lanka’. This was the first instance I found of a Sri Lankan recipe winning a cooking competition in a newspaper or magazine.[[66]](#footnote-66)

In 1979 Mrs Mallika de Silva contributed to an *Australian Women’s Weekly* ‘Curry Cookbook’ ‘typical Sri Lankan dishes’ for Beef Curry, Fried Brinjal Pickle, Chicken Curry and Tempered Boiled Potatoes.[[67]](#footnote-67) This last was a new technique for the home cook, basically a dry fried spiced dish, the word ‘tempered’ being borrowed from Portuguese.

The home cook in 1985 may have attended the Sri Lanka Food Fair in Canberra put on by the Australian Sri Lanka Association to celebrate Sinhalese and Tamil New Year. ‘Traditional Sri Lankan food will be on sale for a nominal cost of $2.50 a plate and will include rice and curry string hoppers, uppuma (a South Indian dish), sweets, savouries and faluda (soft drink)’.[[68]](#footnote-68) The item about this included a recipe for Sathey Curry ‘for the home cook to follow.’

**Restaurant Guides**

From 1984 a new avenue for the home cook to learn about Sri Lankan cuisine emerged - the restaurant guide. These added to the home cook’s information in two ways: first telling them where they could go to sample Sri Lankan cuisine and second naming and describing some of the dishes they could expect to find in these restaurants.

Among these guides the *SBS (Special Broadcasting Service)[[69]](#footnote-69) Eating Guides*, first published in 1992 just a year after the Service was established were the most thorough, informed by the multicultural staff at the Service. Edited by Maeve O’Meara and Joanna Saville they charted the development of the cuisines forming the Australian multicultural table. This is a Sri Lankan entry in the Guide:

Flavour of Ceylon

Shop 2, 20–22 Macquarie Street, Parramatta, 9893 9033;

www.flavourofceylon.com

Lunch Mon to Fri 11.30 am–2.30 pm, dinner Tue to Sat 6–10 pm •

BYO • $

This is a popular spot for authentic fare at reasonable prices, as broadcaster Harjeet Randhawa tells us. Try the vegetable or mutton biryani and kadju (cashew) curry. There are good stringhoppers to sop up curry sauces; excellent seafood pittu; paratha bread finely chopped and mixed with seafood, egg, onions and spices; and good dhal. Try wattalapam—traditional Sri Lankan steamed coconut custard dessert with palm —to finish. The owner is happy to cater for functions and parties.[[70]](#footnote-70)

The Guide also had short entries on where an interested person could go to purchase what was needed to make a dish of a particular cuisine. This is one for Sri Lankan cuisine from the 2005 Guide.

Udaya Spices

1/76 Station Street, Wentworthville, 9688 3954

Mon to Wed 9 am–9 pm, Thu to Sat 9 am–9.30 pm, Sun 9 am–8 pm

Everything for the Sri Lankan home can be found here, including flour for

hoppers and pittu, fresh vegetables like drumsticks and fresh curry leaves and

murunga leaves (used in crab curry). There’s a great choice in frozen greens

and frozen breads like roti, naan and paratha. There’s a cookware section

upstairs, and for the really committed there’s an electric mill for grinding

your own dhal (lentils) into flour for idli and dosai.[[71]](#footnote-71)

In 1998 O’Meara and Saville published *Lamingtons and Lemongrass*, a tie-in book for the Guides, which published a recipe for Marita’s Sri Lanka Beef Curry.[[72]](#footnote-72)

**Food Safari**

In 2006 Maeve O’Meara partnered with SBS on Food Safari, half hour television episodes each focused on one cuisine from Australia multicuisine table. The episode on Sri Lanka was in the second series. Featured on it was Peter Kuruvita, Sunil Ranasinghe owner/chef of one of the oldest Sri Lankan restaurants in Sydney, Deborah Solomon (Charmaine’s daughter) and me. In 2009 a tie-in book - *Food Safari* - was published with recipes for the dishes that had been featured in the episodes.[[73]](#footnote-73) The dishes didn’t advance Sri Lankan cuisine in Australia but were no doubt revelatory to the viewer and then the readers. I’ve no doubt that the television episode would have reached far more people than the book. The series is permanently viewable on SBS Food.

**2009: Peter Kuruvita and ‘Serendip. My Sri Lankan Kitchen’**

Born in England in 1963 to a Sri Lankan father and Austrian mother, Peter Kuruvita lived in Sri Lanka from 1967 – 1974 when the family moved to Australia. Kuruvita was an apprentice chef at the East Sydney Technical and Further Education College (TAFE) and finished the apprenticeship at Ryde Catering College. Kuruvita worked in many of Sydney’s fine dining restaurants before becoming Consultant Chef to the ‘Flying Fish Restaurant in Pyrmont.

‘In January 2007,’ Kuruvita wrote in *Serendip*, ‘at a literary festival in Galle (Sri Lanka) I overheard some local women talking about the lack of good references books for Sri Lankan curries. Thus inspired, and yearning to visit childhood memories, I set out to write this book.’ [[74]](#footnote-74) In 2009, Kuruvita published *Serendip. My Sri Lankan Kitchen*. The book, then, is a mixture of recipes, memoir, and cultural guidebook, in keeping with recent trends in cookery books. It was the first solely Sri Lankan cookery book published in Australia.

Kuruvita covers much the same ground as Solomon but had three unique contributions to broadening the understanding of Sri Lankan cuisine at the time of publishing *Serendip*. The first contribution derives from his Achi (grandmother) ‘a walking encyclopedia of Ayurvedic medicine’.[[75]](#footnote-75) He writes that he is ‘still coming to grips with heating and cooling properties of the various foods’. Chiming with interest from consumers in the health giving qualities of foods he includes recipes which have ascribed to them healing properties: Kola Kanda a creamy porridge of brown rice and coconut reputedly good for those with arthritis; Thambung hoddi is given to women when they have given birth.

Kuruvita’s second unique contribution is recipes for street food/ travelling food and snacks.

In Sri Lanka fresh regional and seasonal foods are enjoyed by all, Road trips are popular, and as [people travel across the country they stop to eat at teahouses and boutiques (as they are called). Lunch packets, street food and the great tastes of foods from the island’s different groups can all be savoured.[[76]](#footnote-76)

He describes making buffalo curd and kittul panni (the boiled juice from the kittul palm, thick like honey or treacle) a favourite on-the-road and breakfast dish and gives instructions for making a ‘lunch packet’ – rice and curry wrapped in a banana leaf. He gives simple recipes for making a snack like devilled cashew nuts roasted spiced peanuts. This adds to the stock of information of the breadth of Sri Lakan cuisine our time travelling home cook now has, Kuruvita’s third unique contribution is to give recipes ‘that represents each of Sri Lanka’s three major ethnic groups: Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim’.[[77]](#footnote-77) This takes further the work done by Solomon in introducing home cooks to the cultural integration characteristic of Sri Lanka cuisine, this time the integration of three ethnic groups.

Solomon gave just one recipe for Ceylon Curry Powder which isn’t the case. Kuruvita gives four: Meat Curry Powder; Vegetable Curry Powder; Roasted Curry Powder and Fish Curry. The ingredients for these are mostly the same as in Solomon’s all-purpose one, with a few different additions across the four powders: goroka (a dried fruit used as a souring agent), curry leaves, Maldive fish and lemongrass. Correspondingly his recipes use the particular powder depending on whether the curry is meat, fish or vegetable.

In keeping with his aim of making the book a reference book like Solomon he has a Glossary where he describes more about particular ingredients and their uses. This further embeds the home cook in the cuisine.

Kuruvita, like Ady and Solomon before him, suggests to the home cook where to buy the spices that will stock the spice rack. ‘Why not go on an adventure’ he writes, ‘and find the Sri Lankan spice store nearest to you?’ [[78]](#footnote-78) They can also find them, he notes, at their Asian grocer and specialist spice outlets. This highlights the change in the culinary context that had been happening in the Sri Lankan community for decades. From 609 Sri Lankan born migrants in Australia in 1901[[79]](#footnote-79)by 2021 there were 131,904[[80]](#footnote-80) mainly in the State capital cities.[[81]](#footnote-81) With the increase in numbers came the possibility for opening sustainable commercial enterprises to meet the culinary needs of the communities. This also opened up opportunities for the interested home cook to find the wherewithal with which to make Sri Lankan food in their home. In 2005 the *SBS Eating Guide* for Sydney listed six shops where the home cook could buy spices, condiments, curry mixes, snack foods, fresh vegetables specific to Sri Lankan dishes, cooking utensils, pre-made dishes (frozen and fresh), a range of rices, and flours. Many Indian stores also carried Sri Lankan spices, condiments, and other culinary goods.[[82]](#footnote-82) The guide listed 13 of these.

In summary, the resources - ingredients - for making dishes from Sri Lankan cuisine become more available with the growth of Sri Lankan spice shops. There are now enclaves of Sri Lankans where the home cook can ‘adventure’ and immerse themselves even for just a couple of hours in a Sri Lankan ambience. They can dine cheaply across a wider menu of Sri Lankan dishes from restaurants primarily serving the Sri Lankan communities. They can go to Sri Lankan supermarkets to track down the specialist equipment and vegetables enabling them to make more ‘authentic’ Sri Lankan dishes at home.

**2022: O Tama Carey and ‘Lanka Filling Station’**

O Tama Carey is an Australia born of a ‘white Australian’ (her description) and a Sri Lankan mother. She worked at some of Sydney’s fine dining restaurants – ‘Bistro Moncur’ and ‘Billy Kwong’ – before opening her own restaurant, ‘Lanka Filling Station’, in 2018. She published ‘Lanka Food’ in 2022.

I want this book to be multipurpose: a guide for those seeking a deeper understanding of Sri Lankan culture through food, a way to demystify the cuisine, and a starting point for you to cook Sri Lankan food and share it with your favourite people. But mostly I just want it to be a cookbook that you use so often it gets messy.[[83]](#footnote-83)

The book covers many of the dishes published by Solmon and Kuruvita. What was innovative of Lanka Food for the home cook was laying out the order of meals and the dishes for each over the course of the day. Home cooks now can see how the dishes partner over the course of breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Breakfasts are for hoppers, pol (coconut) rotis, sambol go withs, Kola Kanda or curd and kithul. (with the delicious recipe – Put some buffalo curd in a bowl. Pour over kithul.

Eat.). Lunches are rice and curry, perhaps in a lunch packet, and on the street you will find fish cutlets, mutton rolls, ‘and lunchtime through to early evening is ‘prime vadai time’. Dinner is again rice and curry ‘although its likely to be a larger array of dishes: rice, sambols, pickles, a mallung, another vegetable dish or curry perhaps even two, dhal, meat or seafood curry or maybe some sort of fried fish (shades of the 1895 Red Herring). ‘Whatever is served , there will always be a balance of flavours, textures and spice levels, generally with more emphasis on vegetable dishes than those containing seafood or meat’.[[84]](#footnote-84)

Carey gives four recipes for curry powder: White, Brown, Red, and Black. She has pictures of each so the home cook will know what they are aiming for. For the home cook it is a welcome mode of instruction - telling, but also *showing*. Carey does this throughout the book. There are step by step pictures for how to arrange the dishes in a lamprais and then wrap it into an elegant package, and how to roll the pancake around mince to make a pan roll. In the chapter ‘What Goes with What she gives suggestions - with pictures and names of dishes - for a Hopper Breakfast or Dinner, a small, medium and large rice and curry meal, an extra fancy rice and curry meal and a crab curry meal’. Carey also does the home cook a favour and presents pictures of what each spice should look like.

It’s a nice touch that in her ‘Ingredients’ section – she gives the Sinhala name for the ingredient both in Sinhala script and phonetics. It takes Solomon’s naming of dishes in their vernacular a step further.

Carey’s book is in some ways the most complete of the four cookery books in that it not only covers the field of dishes but places them within the structure of meals over the course of a day. As with the show and tell pictures of techniques. It’s a somewhat old style of food writing where suggestions are made for the home cook to structure a meal based on the recipes in the book. What I think thereby she gives the home cook is the knowledge and confidence not only to make dishes from the cuisine but to do this in a culturally appropriate way.

Carey addresses the question of availability of the ingredients to make her recipes in a thoroughly modern way: ‘The advent of online shopping has made it easier to get many hard-to-find ingredients and you should be able to find most of the things you’ll need without too much trouble.[[85]](#footnote-85) As long as you are armed with some Maldive fish, freshly grated coconut, curry leaves and jaggery you should be fine.’[[86]](#footnote-86) As re-assuring to the home cook as any other advice.

**Coda**

What I have been exploring in this article is just how recipes published in magazines and newspapers, four cookery books and three restaurant guides gave the Australian home cook the opportunity to get a rounded understanding of Sri Lankan cuisine while also giving them confidence to ‘tackle anything and taste everything’ in the cuisine.

Over the 130 plus years since the first recipes appeared for Ceylonese curries, each published recipe and cookery book has advanced the home cook’s knowledge of ingredients, techniques and styles of dishes that make up the cuisine. As a corollary I have shown the development of the cuisine in Australia from its Anglicized beginning in 1895 to 2022 where it is distinctly its own. Another corollary is that I have appraised the works of Ady, Solomon, Kuruvita and Carey and found them to be each in their way valuable contributions to developing the understanding of the breadth of Sri Lankan cuisine.

In 2023 Sri Lankan cuisine is ‘having its moment’. There are 20 Sri Lankan specific restaurants and take-aways in Sydney. This reflects the surge in numbers of Sri Lankan emigres to Australia since 1991. Half of restaurants are located in the Western suburbs of Sydney where there are enclaves of Sri Lankan. Five of them are located in inner suburbs where they have gone ‘up market’ aimed at the non-Sri Lankan diner.

To my knowledge this is the first time anyone has undertaken research into Sri Lankan cuisine In Australia. Its neglect is not surprising. Sri Lankan cuisine has always played second if not third fiddle to Indian cuisine or British Raj cuisine at the table and in food studies. It’s been called ‘India lite’. Yet it has a claim to the attention of food scholars not least for its integration of foods from a range of cuisines. This article is a first step in redressing this.

**Appendix 1 – The 1895 recipes**

**Curries (1895)**

Some of these recipes are adapted from those of Santiago[[87]](#footnote-87), the famous Ceylon cook at the Liverpool Jubilee Exhibition, who experienced in England the same difficulty that exists in the colony, the inability to get fresh curry stuffs. In India the ingredients are ground on the curry stone pounder just before making the curry, and many of the items are not obtainable elsewhere. Some of the best preparations of readymade curry powder and paste are those of Vencatachellum’s and if kept closely covered will retain their strength for a considerable period.

A very good curry sauce to use with eggs and cooked meats, and which in cold weather will keep good for quite a fortnight if heated up occasionally, is made by peeling and frying three large onions a nice brown with a heaped tablespoonful of butter, two large apples, the sourer the better; peel, slice, and add to the onions a tablespoonful each of curry powder and paste, or two of the powder, a pint and a half of stock, a tablespoonful of tomato sauce, a teaspoonful each of sugar and lemon juice, a tablespoon of desiccated cocoanut and salt to taste. Cook together until the onions and apples are soft when strained and put aside for use. If not thick enough use flour or rice mixed with milk for white meats and eggs, and browned flour for brown meat.

Rice for Curries.—Take an enamelled saucepan to hold two quarts; put cold water in until three- quarters full; add one teaspoonful of salt and let it boil; while the water is boiling soak l lb. of rice for five minutes in cold water; after being well washed drain off the water and put in the pan with boiling water; stir for two or three minutes and boil for 20 minutes with the lid on; drain the water off and add a cup or two of very cold water; stir it and drain again and set by the fire or in the oven for a few minutes, when each grain will be separate.

Snipe Curry: an entrée. Dress four snipe as for serving on toast; cut each in half lengthwise and roll in flour seasoned with pepper and salt; fry in butter or lard until three-parts cooked when put aside; melt a little butter in a stewpan, and add a medium sized onion finely minced and a tablespoonful of curry powder; when brown add half-pint of good gravy, salt to taste and a small teaspoon of sugar; simmer gently till required; 10 minutes before serving add the fried snipe and a few drops of lemon juice. This curry should be rather dry, the gravy reduced to a quarter pint. If liked very hot add cayenne. It may be served with sippets of toast instead of rice.

Eggs Curried. —Put in a stewpan half a pint of milk, one onion (finely cut), one tablespoonful well-chopped cooked ham or corn beef, a small green capsicum (cut in small pieces), a dessertspoonful of curry powder, a cooked potato (mashed). Let these simmer on a slow fire for half an hour, and be careful not to let the mixture burn. Boil the eggs hard; plunge in cold water, which will make the shells come off easily; cut the eggs in half, and place in vegetable-dish, the cut side up. If a small piece is cut off each end they will stand better. Before pouring the sauce over add to it a tablespoon of cream, a few drops of lemon juice, and an eggspoon of sugar and salt to taste. Serve with rice in a separate dish. In Ceylon etc., with these curries what is called sampball and fried red herring is served. Sampball is just a freshly-made chutney or pickle. An easily-made one is to chop an onion very fine, add a tablespoonful of finely-chopped cooked ham, one teaspoon each of sugar, cayenne, and salt. Mix all the above with a wooden spoon, and then add a tablespoon of lemon juice or vinegar, and mix again. As sampballs are not used out here, we put the sugar in the curry.

Fried Red Herrings to Serve with Curry - Take two large red herrings, cut them into pieces about an inch and a half, and across the herring; put on a plate, and add one tablespoon of vinegar and a dash of cayenne; roll the herrings well in the mixture, and fry in butter or lard and drain on paper and serve dry.[[88]](#footnote-88)

**Appendix 2 List of ingredients for recipes and their first appearance in publications**

Lemons - 1788

Apples - 1788

Ketchup -1803

Pepper – 1803

Cloves – 1806

Chilli – 1806

Chillli powder – at least by 1960

Tamarind - 1808

Mace - 1813

Ginger – 1816

Cinnamon - 1816

Coriander - 1821

Cayenne – 1822

Mustard seed – 1823

Garlic – 1823

Turmeric – 1824

Cardamom - 1825

Cumin - 1826

Coconut - 1827

Fennel - 1832

Tomato Sauce – 1838

Chillies dried - 1838

Paprika - 1882

Desiccated coconut – 1889

Lemongrass – 1880

Maldive fish (dried and smoked skipjack tuna) - 1913

Curry leaves – 1964

Creamed coconut - 1969

Dried *rampe* (pandanus) leaf - 1976

1. Deutrom, Hilda 1929 *Ceylon Daily News Cookery Book*, Lake House, 1929 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Van Reyk, Paul, *True to the Land. A History of Food in Australia* , Reaktion, 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ady, Doris, *Curries from the Sultan’s Kitchen. Recipes from India, Pakistan, Burma & Sri Lanka*, A.A. & A. W. Reid, 1968 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Solomon, Charmaine, *The Complete Asian Cookbook*, Paul Hamlyn 1976 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ady, *Curries* p.9 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. What was Ceylon was renamed Sri Lanka in 1972. I will use Ceylon/Ceylonese until 1972 after which I will use Sri Lanka/Sri Lankan [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. ‘Curries’ Household Hints and Recipes, *Tasmanian Herald* 31 July 1895 p.3 [31 Jul 1895 - Household Hints](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/173880531?searchTerm=ceylon%20curry) [and Recipes. - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/173880531?searchTerm=ceylon%20curry) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Kuruvita Peter, *Serendip*, Murdoch Books, 2009 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Carey O Tama, *Lanka Food* Hardie Grant, 2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Newling, Jacqui, *Eat Your History. Stories & recipes from Australian kitchens* Sydney Living Museums and NewSouth 2015 p.210 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See for example ‘Curry,’ Abbott, Edward, *The English and Australian Cookery Book: Cookery for the Many, as well as the Upper Ten Thousand - by an Australian Aristologist*, Sampson Low, Son, and Marston, London, 1864 p.25; ‘Curries and Indian Dishes’, *The Queenslander* 11 September 1875 p.23 [11 Sep 1875 - Curries and Indian Dishes. - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/18337912?searchTerm=curry); ‘King of Oude’s Curry’ Household Memoranda, *Advocate* 17 February 1877 p.4 [17 Feb 1877 - HOUSEHOLD MEMORANDA. - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/170434873?searchTerm=curry); ‘Curry Dishes’, Morning Bulletin 16 May 1892 p3 [16 May 1892 - CURRY DISHES. - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/52433957?searchTerm=curry) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. See for example “Veal Curry’ in Somerville, Mary *Cookery and domestic economy: containing upwards of one thousand carefully tested recipes expressed in simple terms for every-day life* 1862 p.102; ‘Curried Rabbit’, Harrison, Mary, *The skilful cook: a practical manual of modern experience*, S. Low, 1884 p.107 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Kingston, Beverly, *Basket, Bag and Trolley. A history of shopping in Australia,* Oxford University Press Australia, 1994 p.11 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. “Apothecary, Druggist, Spice Dealer’, *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* 3 November 1821 p.4 [03 Nov 1821 - Classified Advertising - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/2180588?searchTerm=spice%20druggist) [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. ‘Bright & Co’, The *Brisbane Courier* 17 November 1864 p.6 [17 Nov 1864 - Classified Advertising - Trove](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/1264524?searchTerm=%22clove%20spice%22) [(nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/1264524?searchTerm=%22clove%20spice%22) [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. ‘Harbottle & Co.’ *The Western Champion and General Advocate for the Central Western Districts* 1 January 1895 p.2 [01 Jan 1895 - Advertising - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/79735523?searchTerm=%22spice%22) [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. ‘Curry Powder’ *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* 4 December 1813 p.2 [04 Dec 1813 -](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/628816?searchTerm=curry%20powder) [Classified Advertising - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/628816?searchTerm=curry%20powder) [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. ‘Empire Curry Powder’ *The North Queensland Advertiser* 16 January 1895 p.34 [16 Jan 1895 - Advertising -](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/79278922?searchTerm=curry%2Bpowder) [Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/79278922?searchTerm=curry%2Bpowder) [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. ‘For the Stomach’, The Telegraph 16 January 1895 p.5 [16 Jan 1895 - Advertising - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/79278922?searchTerm=curry%2Bpowder) ‘We can recommend Rumford's Curry Powder for its stomachic properties; its stimulating, pungent, and carminative qualities, helping and inciting the stomach to digest its food thus becoming one of our most valuable preventives of indigestion.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. ‘Gillespie’s Special Prize Curry’ *The Scrutineer and Berrima District* Press 5 October 1895 p.2 [05 Oct 1895 -](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/124063219?searchTerm=curry%2Bpowder) [Advertising - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/124063219?searchTerm=curry%2Bpowder) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. J. R. Paul, T*he Clipper* 21 December 1895 p.8 [21 Dec 1895 - Advertising - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/83366211?searchTerm=curry%2Bpowder) [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. W. T. York & Co ,*Zeehan and Dundas Herald* 21 January 18956 p.3 [21 Jan 1895 - Advertising - Trove](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/79697383?searchTerm=curry%2Bpowder) [(nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/79697383?searchTerm=curry%2Bpowder) [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
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24. [How to make madras curry powder? - The Hindu](https://www.thehindu.com/food/recipes/recipe-to-make-madras-curry-powder-at-home-to-add-to-soups-curries-and-sauces/article67222072.ece) [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. ‘A Keen Curry History’, [A KEEN CURRY HISTORY | McCormick Australia](https://www.mccormick.com.au/keens/curry-history) The ingredients in Keen’s Curry Powder are turmeric, coriander, salt, fenugreek, pepper, chilli, black pepper, rice flour, allspice and celery powder. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Abbott, *Cookery Book* p. 210 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. ‘Curry Powder’ Recipes, *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners’ Advocate* 24 p.11 February 1894[24 Feb 1894 - RECIPES. - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/137185726?searchTerm=curry%20powder%20recipes) [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
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29. ‘A Ceylon Curry’ The Proper Way with Curry, *Warwick Daily News* 4 April 1938 p.2 [04 Apr 1938 - The Proper](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/190547025?searchTerm=ceylon%20curry) [Way With Curry - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/190547025?searchTerm=ceylon%20curry) [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. ‘Coconut milk makes curries taste much better ‘ *News* 2 December 1953 p.2 23 [02 Dec 1953 - WOMEN'S](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/131240855?searchTerm=coconut%20milk) [NEWS - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/131240855?searchTerm=coconut%20milk) [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. ‘Coconut milk … [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Margaret Fulton, ‘Introductory Note’, Ady, *Sultan’s Kitchen* p.8 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Ady, *Sultan’s Kitchen* p.9 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Fulton, Margaret, *I Sang for My Supper*, 1999 p.100 [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Van Reyk, Paul, *The Land 2021* pp.178 - 179 [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Hugo, Graeme, and Dissanayake, Lakshman, *The Process of Sri Lankan Migration to Australian Focussing on Irregular Migrants Seeking Asylum*, Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2014 p.8 [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
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38. ‘Our Eating Habits’ *Tharunka* 29 February 1960 p.4 [29 Feb 1960 - Our Eating Habits - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/230408524?searchTerm=cinnamon) [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Van Reyk, Paul, *The Land 2021* p,181 [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Van Reyk, Paul, *The Land 2021* p,181 [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Ady, *Curries* p.85 [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Ady, *Sultan’s Kitchen*… p,105 [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Ady, *Curries* p.85 [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. The earliest reference I could find for frozen coconut cream is a 1969 advertisement for Vencat Curry *Australian Women’s Weekly* 23 April 1969 p.32 [23 Apr 1969 - Advertising - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/43462583?searchTerm=frozen%20coconut%20cream) [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
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46. Evaporated milk had been available since at least 1918 when it is referenced in an article on Grades of Milk *The Albury Banner and Wodonga Express* 18 January 1918 p.16 [18 Jan 1918 - GRADES OF MILK. - Trove](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/101401400/10819163) [(nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/101401400/10819163) [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Ady, *Sultan’s Kitchen* p.11 [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. McCormick advertised that it had over 100 spices and seasonings ‘in your favourite food store’ including ones to ‘add a touch of the exotic to your curries and casseroles.’ *Australian Women’s Weekly* 26 April 1967 p.73 [26 Apr 1967 - Advertising - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/51273035?searchTerm=spices); Master Foods brought to the pantry ‘Australia’s largest range of herbs and spices’ including saffron, cardamom, chillies (dried), cinnamon, cloves, coriander, cummin (sic), ginger and turmeric. *Australian Women’s Weekly* 1 February 1967 p. 16 [01 Feb 1967 - Advertising - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/55468695?searchTerm=spices) [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Rosemary Brissenden published Sout East Asian Food In 1973 [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. ‘Ambul Thiyal, Curries … with authentic flavour, The *Australian Women’s Weekly* 29 August 1973 p.71 [29](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/46453058/4923267) [Aug 1973 - CURRIES... with authentic flavor - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/46453058/4923267) [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Brissenden, Rosemary, *South East Asian Food,* Penguin, London, 1969. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Ripe, Cherry, Goodbye Culinary Cringe, 1993 pp. 9 - 10 [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Van Reyk, Paul, *The Land 2021* p,181 [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Ady, *Sultan’s Kitchen* p.9 [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. ‘End of the White Australia Policy’ [End of the White Australia policy | National Museum of Australia (nma.gov.au)](https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/end-of-white-australia-policy) [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Richards, Eric, *Destination Australia. Migration to Australia from 1901*, UNSW Press, 2008 pp.252, 258 [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Solomon, *Complete Asian* p.5 [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Solomon, *Complete Asian* p.116 [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. ‘Your Sri Lankan Shelf’, Solomon, *Complete Asian* p.118 [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Solomon, *Complete Asian* p.9 [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Solomon, *Complete Asian* p.9 [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. The other source which rarely gets spoken of is the packets of Sri Lankan spices, dry herbs, curry powders and seeds smuggled in the luggage of Sri Lankan visitors to Australia and emigres. My father grew Sri Lankan vegetables in the back yards of our houses seeded from this source. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Solomon, *Complete Asian* p.117 - 118 [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Solomon, *Complete Asian* p.117 [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Of this okra may have been familiar to some. Okra was being grown in the colony in 1859 and there were a number of recipes for it. Most would know the hibiscus as a tropical flower but not as a vegetable. Green bananas were more likely seen as unripe banana than a vegetable in its own name. Ridged gourd may have been familiar from its use as a sponge but again not as a vegetable. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. ‘Sweet Date Chutney’ Prize Recipes, *The Australia Women’s Weekly* 3 August 1977 p.83 [03 Aug 1977 - Prize](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/55477678?searchTerm=sri%20lanka%20curry%20recipe) [Recipes - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/55477678?searchTerm=sri%20lanka%20curry%20recipe) [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Beef Curry’, ‘Fried Brinjal Pickle’, ‘Chicken Curry’ and ‘Tempered Boiled Potatoes’ *The Australia Women’s Weekly* 25 April 1979 pp.70- 80 [25 Apr 1979 - CURRY COOKBOOK - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/51384743/4878376) [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. ‘Sri Lankan food fair to be held on Sunday’ *The Canberra Times* 26 April 1985 p.23 [26 Apr 1985 - Sri Lankan](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/122475002?searchTerm=sri%20lanka%20curry%20recipe) [food fair to be held on Sunday - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/122475002?searchTerm=sri%20lanka%20curry%20recipe) [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. The SBS was established ‘to provide multilingual and multicultural broadcasting and digital media service that inform, educate, and entertain all Australians and, in doing so, reflect Australia’s multicultural society. SBS Charter [Overview of SBS charter - SBS About](https://www.sbs.com.au/aboutus/how-we-operate/overview-of-sbs-charter/) [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. ‘Favour of Ceylon’, SBS Eating Guide to Sydney 2005 p.371 [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. ‘Udaya Spices’, SBS Eating Guide to Sydney 2005 p.376 [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. O’Meara, Maeve and Saville, Joanna, *Lamingtons and Lemongrass*, Allend and Unwin,1998 p.63 [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. O’Meara, Maeve, *Food Safari, Glorious Adventures through a World of Cuisines*, Hardie Grant 2009 [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Kuruvita Peter, *Serendip* p.8 [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Kuruvita Peter, *Serendip* p.18 [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Kuruvita Peter, *Serendip* p.134 [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Kuruvita Peter, *Serendip* p.161 [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. ‘Stocking the spice rack’, *Serendip* p.27 [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Sri Lanka-born Community Information Summary, Department of Foreign Affairs, [Community Information](https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/mca/files/2016-cis-sri-lanka.PDF) [Summary - Sri Lanka-born (homeaffairs.gov.au).](https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/mca/files/2016-cis-sri-lanka.PDF) The 2020 Census date is not as yet available [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. ‘People in Australia who were born in Sri Lanka’, [2021 People in Australia who were born in Sri Lanka,](https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/7107_AUS) [Census Country of birth QuickStats | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)](https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/7107_AUS) [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Graeme and Dissanayke, *Sri Lankan Migration* p.8 [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. The kudos for the first Indian spice shop in Sydney goes to Moses Spices established in the late 1960s. ‘Once known as Eze and Sons it is remembered by many Indians and Sri Lankans who came to Australia the ‘60s and early ‘70s. They recall carrying bags of curry powder into Australia and begging visitors from home to bring spices – before they discovered Eze’s. ’O’ Maera, Maeve and Saville, Joanna (Eds) *SBS Guide to Ethnic Eating in* *Sydney* The Text Publishing Company 1992. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Carey, *Lanka Food*, Hardie Grant, 2022., p.8 [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Carey, *Lanka Food*, p.51. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. To test this I did a search for ‘dried pandanus leaf Australia’ which imagined might be on of the hardest ingredients to find. The search yielded 16 online sale sites. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. ‘Ingredients’, Carey, *Lanka Food*, p.25 [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Daniel Santiago was a Sri Lankan professional cook in London in the1880’s, He was the author of the cookery book ‘The Curry Cook’s Assistant’ based on Ceylonese cookery. Hugh Karunanayake, *The Tea Planter and His Cook* https://bit.ly/3RxPmk2 [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. ‘Curries’ Household Hints and Recipes, *Tasmanian Herald* 31 July 1895 p.3 [31 Jul 1895 - Household Hints](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/173880531?searchTerm=ceylon%20curry) [and Recipes. - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/173880531?searchTerm=ceylon%20curry) [↑](#footnote-ref-88)