

## The most delicate salted and smoked tongues ... A sketch of delicatessens in Australia.

2024

I had occasion lately to eat a stick of cabanossi, a thin, dry, red, spiced and smoked crumpled sausage. It produced a food memory of lounge rooms and wine bars in the 1970s where sliced cabanossi and a cube of cheese on a Jatz biscuit<sup>1</sup> was bound to appear some stage. This broadened into recalling delicatessens at which I had bought cabanossi and other smallgoods like 'Cyril's Fine Foods' established by Cyril Vincenc in the Haymarket, Sydney, near the central produce market in 1956. It was something of a Mecca for those wanting food items from middle and northern European countries for the next 60 years.

It wasn't a big step from there to wondering what the story was of delicatessens in Australia. I have glimpsed it from time to time. I described it briefly in my book *True to the Land A History of Food in Australia*<sup>2</sup>. I profiled Tom Kelemen, a refugee from communist Hungary arriving in Australia in 1947, who went on to establish a delicatessen in Maroubra, a beachside suburb in Sydney.<sup>3</sup> Cookery book author Maria Kozslik Donovan in her 1955 book *Continental Cookery in Australia* was able to assure her readers that 'No ingredient is mentioned that cannot be easily obtained in the large cities'.<sup>4</sup> She doesn't say it directly but a cursory look at her ingredients would show them all to be found in delicatessens. Doris Ady in her 1968 *Curries from the Sultan's Kitchen. Recipes from India, Pakistan, Burma & Sri Lanka*, assured home cooks that 'All the spices mentioned (in her recipes) are available under several well-known brand names, in many shops and delicatessens'.<sup>5</sup>

I decided to flesh out my knowledge of delicatessens.

The first reference I found for 'delicatessen' was in July 1864 in the *Süd Australische Zeitung*<sup>6</sup>, I imagine aimed at the German communities in the South Australia. Published in German this is a translation:

I notify herewith my friends, through this publication that I have today in O'Connell Street North-Adelaide opened a Butcher Shop.

Following your kind interest in my shop, I promise you real service for moderate prices.

The most delicate salted and smoked tongues, smoked liver sausage, liverwurst, blood sausage, weisse wurst, bratwurst, Leoner wurst, mortadella wurst, Spanish tongue and truffle sausages, bacon sausages, Turkish Jellies, and stuffed meats – Delicatessen always in stock. I now take orders for deliveries for breakfasts, lunches, dinners, Ball-Parties etc. Also my endeavour will bring the newest and most elegant articles in the above categories to the table.

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<sup>1</sup> Jatz is a small round biscuit with a bubbled surface made by Arnotts Australia's biggest biscuit maker launched in 1952. It has icon status in Australia.

<sup>2</sup> Van Reyk, Paul, *True to the Land A History of Food in Australia* Reaktion 2021 pp154-156

<sup>3</sup> In 1947 Australia embarked on a project of enabling displaced persons in Europe to migrate to Australia to provide much-needed post-war labour. Van Reyk, *True to the Land*.

<sup>4</sup> Kozslik Donovan, Maria, *Continental Cookery in Australia* William Heinemann Ltd, Melbourne, 1960, first edition 1955 Introduction

<sup>5</sup> Ady, Doris, *Curries from the Sultan's Kitchen. Recipes from India, Pakistan, Burma & Sri Lanka*, A.A. & A. W. Reid, 1968 p.11

<sup>6</sup> *Süd Australische Zeitung* 22 July 1864 p.7

Heinrick Tuft.

The earliest English language reference I found was in May 1874 in the *Bendigo Advertiser*.

Deutsche Notice

A.Heine View Place, hat soeben erhalten, deutscher Delicatessen: Caviar Limburger, Schweitzer and Kraeuter Kaese, Anchovis, Sardellen, and all verschiedene Sorten Deutscher.<sup>7</sup>

The English version printed below the German text said:

A.H. Heine, Wine Merchant, View Place, has on Sale the following Continental Delicacies suitable for luncheons, &c.:—Caviar, Limburg cheese, Dutch anchovies, sardellon, green and Swiss cheese, Frankfort and all other kinds of German sausages.

Two things interested me about this advertisement. Firstly, that the term 'delicatessen' was being used to mean the type of goods for sale and not the premises. That's also its meaning in several articles after this date like this 1919 report on an event for returned soldiers:

A welcome home to another batch of returned soldiers was held in the Town Hall on Thursday ... The ladies provided a "delicatessen" supper ...<sup>8</sup>

The second thing about the advertisement was that it was published in German and English in an English language newspaper. This says to me that there was a market for 'delicatessen' beyond German settlers 1874.

By 1930 'delicatessen' mainly came to mean the premises.

#### DELICATESSEN!

Some Cafeteria Opened by Charlie Carter Ltd.

NEW ONE ON HAY STREET

IT HAS BEEN LEFT TO THAT go-ahead firm, Charlie Carter Ltd. to introduce to Western Australia the modern delicatessen and cafeteria in Central Hay Street, right opposite the Post Office Lane, and to bring the Golden West into line with its sister -States and the Continent.<sup>9</sup>

So, I took as the lower limit of my research 1874, the upper limit being 100 years later, 1974.

#### 'Delicatessen' in the Delicatessen

To the young wife with ideas on the subject of food — ideas of which the unvaried use of the tin-opener fails to give expression— the shelves and showcases of the delicatessen offer a field of epicurean adventure. She need not sour her husband's disposition with a monotonous diet of cold meat, and rissoles, nor to avoid that, cut her hands with the jagged edges of innumerable tins. At any hour when food reasonably may be eaten, banquets of royal richness can be provided at a moment's notice by the genii in the white coat behind the counter of the delicatessen.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Deutsche Notice, *Bendigo Advertiser* 12 May 1874 p.3

<sup>8</sup> Coolgardie Chips, *The Sun* 23 February 1919 p.8

<sup>9</sup> Delicatessen! *Truth* 9 March 1930 p.4

<sup>10</sup> Easy Meals The Delicatessen Plenty of Variety Without Tears, *The Sun* 21 August 1933 p.9

What could one have in the banquets of royal richness? Enright's Delicatessen in 1941 gives u a very rich list indeed.

In the long refrigerated counter there was a great variety of small goods, including Windsor sausage, ham d'light, luncheon sausage, black and white pudding, pork sausages, saveloys, Frankfurts, pork brawn, pressed pork and tongue, pressed ox tongue in jelly, pressed pork and tongue, pressed tongue in jelly, cooked ham, cooked rolled bacon, pigs' trotters, pigs' cheek, and delicious bacon — bacon for which Enrights have for many years been famous. The cooked bacon and ham are cooked on the premises, and is so expertly done that it retains all its juices. In a separate compartment, which is of necessity kept at a lower temperature, was a nice variety of preserved fish, and we were informed that fresh fish will be stocked when it is available. Poultry, we were told, also will be later added to the list of goods offered in this department.<sup>11</sup>

Other delicatessens I reviewed share these products and include other specialties. Stiler and Stiler had 'an exceptionally extensive, ranging as it does from fresh meats, brains. puddings. tripe, etc. to an almost untold variety of cooked meats ready for table use'.<sup>12</sup> Kalgoorlie, 500 kl inland from the West Australian capital city of Perth, boasted a well-stocked delicatessen and was doing its best to eradicate rabbits, the worst introduced pest in Australia, roasting them and making rabbit pies.<sup>13</sup>

Goods made on the premises were highlighted. At the Beechworth delicatessen 'Sausages and saveloys are manufactured and all meats (are) cooked on the premises'.<sup>14</sup> At Enright's 'The cooked bacon and ham is cooked on the premises, and is so expertly done that it retains all its juices'.<sup>15</sup>

To successfully operate Brisbane delicatessen ' , said the *Sunday Mail* in 1953, 'nowadays it is - necessary to be somewhat of an amateur linguist. . . This is because of an increasing patronage from New Australians — particularly for the many varieties of sausage'.<sup>16</sup> This was clearly true for non-New Australian customers, too. In 1963 the *Australian Women's Weekly* (AWW), somewhat belatedly' came to the rescue publishing a four-page feature 'Continental Sausages'<sup>17</sup> 'World-famous sausages and sausage type smallgoods,' the article said, 'are now manufactured in Australia and are readily available in most delicatessens and food stores in Australian cities'. The article's subheading was: 'Dictionary of sausage types to help you make the right decision'. There were 40 sausages. Each sausage was described, there was a note on pronunciation, its country of origin, its ingredients were listed, and suggestions for its use were given. They were listed according to whether they needed cooking before eating or not. (A list of them is Appendix 1) The feature was accompanied by a photograph of 19 of the main types combined with a drawing of them with each sausage appropriately named. For example:

CSABAI KOLBASZ (pronounce "shabbi colbas," Hungarian): Made of pure pork, seasoned with paprika, and well smoked. Serve as is or cook with vegetables; cooking time as for frankfurts. Also excellent grilled or barbecued.

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<sup>11</sup> Enright's Delicatessen, *The Beaudesert Times* 19 September 1941 p.7

<sup>12</sup> Stilers' Modern Delicatessen, *Maryborough Chronicle, Wide Bay and Burnett Advertiser* 26 September 1946 p.6

<sup>13</sup> Modern Delicatessen for Kalgoorlie, *Kalgoorlie Miner* 108 March 1940 p.3

<sup>14</sup> Delicatessen Opens at Beechworth, *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, 20 May 1936 p.2

<sup>15</sup> Enright's Delicatessen, *The Beaudesert Times* 19 September 1941 p.7

<sup>16</sup> It's Salami in any language, *Sunday Mail* 10 May 1953 p.5

<sup>17</sup> 'Sausages', *Australian Women's Weekly* 10 March 1965 pp.45-47

One of the manufacturers AWW was pointing to was G. Melosi who by 1964 was producing 45 different smallgoods including ham, bacon and cabanossi sausages.<sup>18</sup> At that time it was 'the largest salami manufacturer in New South Wales and the second largest in the whole of Australia'.

### More than sausages

Delicatessens also sold cheese. Eatwell Delicatessen sold 'different sorts of Continental and ordinary cheeses'.<sup>19</sup> For Farley's Delicatessen 'a specialty will be made of cheese and the Mt. Gambier fully matured cheese is recommended to customers as a real treat'<sup>20</sup>. At The Crescent Delicatessen "There are 70 varieties of cheeses alone, imported from every part of the world."<sup>21</sup>

Mitchell's Delicatessen advertised home-made cakes and scones.<sup>22</sup> At J. B. Young's delicatessen you could buy 'Delicious Swiss Cakes ... Made Right Here and Supplied Oven Fresh'.<sup>23</sup> At Mullins' you could get a full range of confectionery and home-made cakes, cut lunches and dressed poultry.<sup>24</sup> A feature of the delicatessen run by the Joneses was 'the variety of cut sandwiches available — 50 in number.'<sup>25</sup> Lunches continued to be a feature of delicatessens. In 1968 George's Delicatessen's 'Lunch-time customers can choose from 29 sandwich varieties, served from a purpose-built counter.'<sup>26</sup>

Some of the delicatessens value-added with another line of business on the premises. At Terpou's 'Tubular furniture in Laminex finish provides seating accommodation for 48 persons, and meals, grills and teas will be a feature of the business.'<sup>27</sup> George's Delicatessen had a lunch counter and a milk bar.<sup>28</sup> W. Beynon, acquired adjacent premises to his delicatessen which he transformed into a modern fish café'. At Beynon's every day:

... fresh supplies of fish arrive [ ] these are kept under the most hygienic conditions. They may 'be purchased fresh, ' or cooked electrically in delicious oil, ready to serve. Lobsters, oysters, and all other sea delicacies are available, and delightful fish luncheons and suppers are prepared.<sup>29</sup>

Beynon's wasn't the only delicatessen to also sell fresh fish. Jones's of the 50 sandwiches was run along with a fish shop on the same premises. The last mention of fresh fish was in 1954 at The Dandy Delicatessen in Burnie.<sup>30</sup>

Diggerland sold fresh fruit<sup>31</sup> as did Charlie Carters.<sup>32</sup> B.C.C sold 'beetroot cooked ready for salads'.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Yennora Factory Extensions Make Greater Efficiency, *The Biz* 14 October 1964 p.6

<sup>19</sup> 'Japan Departs Refugees' *The Australian Jewish Herald* 2 October 1941 p.9

<sup>20</sup> Farley's Delicatessen, *Goulburn Valley Stock and Property Journal* 9 October 1935 p.6

<sup>21</sup> Fairfield Food Chosen From All Nations, *The Biz* 21 November 1962 p.12

<sup>22</sup> Mitchell's Delicatessen, *The Daily Express* 1 March 1830 p.3

<sup>23</sup> J. B Young's Delicatessen, *The Canberra Times* 2 July 1953 p.2

<sup>24</sup> Modern Delicatessen and Drinks Bar, *Coffs Harbour Advocate* 13 July 1951 p.1

<sup>25</sup> New Business Enterprise, *Lithgow Mercury* 29 January 1941 p.7

<sup>26</sup> Now His Sport Is Business, *The Broadcaster* 10 September 1968 p.4

<sup>27</sup> New Delicatessen Now Open, *Manjimup and Warren Times* 6 October 1953 p.2

<sup>28</sup> 'Now His Sport Is Business', *The Broadcaster* 10 September 1968 p.4

<sup>29</sup> Beynon's Delicatessen and Fish Saloon, *Lithgow Mercury* 15 December 1939 p.8

<sup>30</sup> Dandy Delicatessen, *Advocate* 7 October 1954 p.16

<sup>31</sup> Diggerland Delicatessen, *Sunraysia Daily* 22 December 1925 p.3

<sup>32</sup> Delicatessen! *Truth* 9 March 1930 p.4

<sup>33</sup> B.C.C.Store Delicatessen Convenience, *South Coast Bulletin* 30 October 1946 p.14

## Ultra Modernity

Delicatessen owners sought to reassure their customers about the processes they had in place to prevent spoilage and disease.

At J. Richardson and Co.'s new venture 'The counters, finished with duco enamel, which enable absolute cleanliness to be maintained ... A modern Zero refrigerator unit has been installed, and this will ensure that all goods are kept in perfectly fresh condition'.<sup>34</sup>

'New large refrigeration, gleaming clean tiled counters and walls, 'at Stiler and Stiler gave 'the entire section ... an air of ultra-modernity'.<sup>35</sup>

B.C.C. Stores installed 'a modern self refrigerator delicatessen cabinet. ... Now whilst doing your grocery shopping it is possible to select your small good requirements which are all hygienically cellophane wrapped'.<sup>36</sup>

## Delicatessens and the Housewife

Delicatessens did not only promote their goods, they promoted themselves as the solution to the problems of the modern housewife/hostess.

Hundreds of modern housewives have been saved from spoiling complexions and tempers caused through working over hot stoves, by buying the most tasty meats to take home for the family at the Myer Delicatessen. All kinds of delectable foods, beautifully cooked, may be bought here at surprisingly modest cost.<sup>37</sup>

In these days of afternoon parties, hurriedly prepared meals, evening bridge parties, and dainty suppers, hostesses are perplexed to evolve new, dainty, appetising dishes which can be prepared with the minimum of expense and time. Adelaide hostesses have long felt the want of an up-to-date delicatessen.<sup>38</sup>

There was apparently a downside to all this convenience. 'Delicatessen wives – who buy meals outside instead cooking them', a woman's club speaker quoted in *The Albury Banner and Wodonga Express* warned, 'are the cause of the increase in divorces'.<sup>39</sup> Responding to this the paper said:

If the food is well cooked, scientifically prepared, carefully inspected, and fresh, as far as the stomach fares the change will not be for the worse, and in some cases decidedly for the better. The really important consideration concerns itself, not with eating at all, but with the new leisure. Women who are freed from the stove will find several hours of extra leisure on their hands. Whether they use this for self-improvement or waste it is the most important consideration in the change in our method of eating.<sup>40</sup>

## Demise of a delicatessen

There used to be a delicatessen on King Street, Newtown. It was a narrow shop with barely room for one shopper in front of the counter, but this enhanced the whole experience, putting you up close

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<sup>34</sup> Delicatessen, *The Armidale Express and New England General Advertiser* 24 January 1938 p.4

<sup>35</sup> Stilers' Modern Delicatessen, *Maryborough Chronicle, Wide Bay and Burnett Adviser* 24 September 1946 p.2

<sup>36</sup> Self-service Delicatessen *South Coast Bulletin* 7 February 1951 p.18

<sup>37</sup> From the Delicatessen, *The Herald* 3 January 1930 p.10

<sup>38</sup> A New Delicatessen *The Advertiser* 20 November 1928 p.16

<sup>39</sup> Delicatessen Wives, *The Albury Banner and Wodonga Express* 12 November 1926 p.33

<sup>40</sup> Delicatessen Wives, *The Albury Banner and Wodonga Express* 12 November 1926 p.33

and personal with the salamis hanging above the counter, the smells intoxicating. There is no-one slicing the meat in front of you who can give you just as much as you need, wrapping it in a sheet of butcher's paper. No-one to discuss the cheese with and be given a tasing size portion of your selected cheeses ever patient as you tried several. They had to move as King Street became gentrified, replaced by an up-market café. Now the salamis, hams, cheeses are sold in a supermarket down the street, lacking any character. It isn't an epicurean adventure nor a banquet of royal richness.

## Appendix 1 List of sausages -Australian Women's Weekly 1965

### Cooked, ready to eat

Berliner Fleischwurst (German)  
Bloodwurst (German)  
Braunschweiger (German)  
Cabanossi also known as Cabana (Italian)  
Coppa (Italian)  
Csabai Kolbasz (Hungarian)  
Double-smoked rolled ham  
Ham and veal loaf  
Hamspeck  
Hamwurst, also known as Schinken wurst (German)  
Hurka (Hungarian) varieties  
    White Pudding  
    Black Pudding  
Kaiserfleisch  
Karlsbader  
Kashanka (Russian or Polish)  
Leberkase also known as Liver Cheese (German)  
Liverwurst the best known are  
    Chicken  
    Fresh  
    As Latvian Liverwurst, but without  
    the cubes of white pork fat.  
    Hansmacher (German)  
    Kalbs  
    Latvian  
    Smoked  
    Zwiebelwurst, also known as Onionwurst (German)  
Mortadella also known as Bologna (Italian)  
Pariser  
Pate de Foie Loaf  
Pork Loin also known as Kassler Ripp  
Pink Pork Loin  
Pork Loin also known as Kassie  
Presswurst also known as Head Cheese  
Salami  
    Varieties  
    Cacciatori (Italian)  
    Cervelat (German)  
    Danish  
    Gipsywurst.  
    Hungarian  
    Italian.  
    Kolbasz also known as Klebes (Polish)  
    Mettwurst German and Danish types  
    Milano  
    Paisanello, Tosca no, Véneto (Italian):  
    Polish  
    Rugenwalder (German)  
    Smoked

Smierwurst (German)  
Smoked Beef (Dutch)  
Smoked ham de Luxe also known as Lachshinken)  
Smoked Speck  
Speckwurst (German)  
Yea Wurst also known as Londoner  
Tongue  
Tonguewurst

These need cooking  
Bratwurst (German)  
Chipolata  
Cotechino (Italian)  
Dampfwurst (German):  
Frankfurts (Vienna style):  
Knackwurst  
Weisswurst (German)