

# 'Every now and again I lust after them'. A brief story of Chocolate Crackles

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We got lucky.

Rice Bubbles were released by Kellogg's in 1928. Apparently only Australia and New Zealand calls them 'Rice Bubbles'. To the rest of the world, they are called 'Rice Krispies' which I think is nowhere near as evocative nor descriptive as 'Rice Bubbles'. But okay, it's the crispness that gives rise to the snap, crackle and pop when they touch a liquid like milk. Speaking of which did you know that the three elves on the packet have names and distinct characters:

Surely these guys are some of the most recognised elves on the planet. These well-loved characters have been associated with Rice Bubbles packs since the 1930s. Snap is the big brother of the gang and known as a problem solver, Crackle is an unsure "middle child" and known as a joker, and youngster Pop is the most mischievous of the three. Just listen to them go when you add in the milk.<sup>1</sup>

But that's beside the point for this snippet. The first Australian recipe I found for using Rice Bubbles for anything apart from breakfast was for Rice Bubble Date Cake in 1934<sup>2</sup>. Then there was Rice Bubble Coated Apples in 1936<sup>3</sup> and the recipe that makes me shudder also in 1936 Rice Bubble Cream Meringues<sup>4</sup>.

Then as I said at the beginning we got lucky. Any one of those could have been 'the one' that became an Australia icon. But it was Chocolate Crackles that won our culinary hearts. The earliest recipe I found for Chocolate Crackles is this one from 1938:

Chocolate Crackles - 8oz. copho, 4 cups rice bubbles, 3 tablespoons cocoa, cup cocoanut, 8 oz. icing sugar. Mix all dry ingredients, together, melt copho, pour over dry ingredients and mix well. Put in patty papers and leave to cool. — "Princess Aura," Ganmain<sup>5</sup>

I think it won us over both for its flavour and the simplicity of making them. So now let's have a look at the flavoursome ingredients.

## Cocoa

The earliest reference to cocoa I found was in 1804 where it is listed in the cargo brought to the colony by the ship *Maria*.<sup>6</sup> The earliest recipe I found for using cocoa was this 1881 recipe for Cocoa Pudding.

### Cocoa Pudding

Two teaspoonfuls of cocoa, two of corn-flour, two of sugar; mix with two cupfuls of milk and one or two eggs well beaten; let it come to a boil over a slow fire; when thick and cool, add a few drops of vanilla flavouring and pour into a glass dish. To be eaten cold.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.kelloggs.com.au/en\\_AU/brands/rice-bubbles.htm](https://www.kelloggs.com.au/en_AU/brands/rice-bubbles.htm)

<sup>2</sup> 'Rice Bubble Date Cake' *Mount Barker and Denmark Record* 6 September 1934 p.4

<sup>3</sup> 'Rice Bubble Coated Apples' *The Cumberland Argus and Fruit Growers' Advocate* 22 October 1936 p.14

<sup>4</sup> 'Rice Bubble Cream Meringues', *North-Eastern Wheatbelt Tribune* 31 July 1936 p.3

<sup>5</sup> 'Rice Bubbles' *The Albury Banner and Wodonga Express* 23 September 1938 p.21

<sup>6</sup> *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* 22 January 1804 p.3

<sup>7</sup> 'Cocoa Pudding', *The Queenslander* 19 March 1881 p.363

### *Coconut*

The coconut may have been fresh or more likely desiccated at this time. Coconut Ice made with desiccated coconut was a popular party treat at the time and remains so. Here's a 1920 recipe for it.

#### COCOANUT ICE

Take 2 lb. of loaf sugar, 1/2 pint of water, 1/2 lb. of desiccated coconut, 2 tablespoonfuls of lemon essence, 1 teaspoonful of cream of tartar. Put the sugar and water into a saucepan and boil until the sugar is quite dissolved, stirring well all the time. Stir in the cream of tartar and desiccated coconut. Boil for 15 minutes. Allow to slightly cool, and then add the lemon essence. Pour into deep plates, and allow to stand until cold.<sup>8</sup>

### *Icing Sugar*

There is little to say about icing sugar but you might like to know how to break up lumpy icing sugar.

#### HOUSEHOLD HINT

For icing sugar

PUT icing sugar which has formed into hard lumps, into the oven for three minutes. This will loosen it. Instead of sifting, put required amount into a paper bag and crush it with a rolling pin.<sup>9</sup>

### *Copha*

And so, we come to copha.

Copha is a popular vegetable shortening and a key ingredient in the much-loved kids party recipe, chocolate crackles. Copha is made with more than 99% coconut oil and less than 1% soy lecithin. It's gluten free, contains no palm oil and remains stable in room temperature up to 36 degrees Celsius.<sup>10</sup>

There is controversy over when it was first made. The website for it puts it at 1933. However there is a reference to it in a 1923 recipe.

#### Cheese Balls

Gunnedah, will receive 5/ for this simple but attractive recipe: —

Two tablespoonfuls of copha rubbed into 1 cup wheatmeal; add a pinch salt. Mix with cold water, roll into balls in white flour, and boll for one hour.<sup>11</sup>

(No, I don't see how cheese comes into the recipe either)

So whence its popularity? Here's Betty King, Home Economist of World Brand Pty Ltd, in *Betty King's Cook Book* from around 1940.

Copha is 100% pure shortening – so pure that it keeps fresh and sweet in your refrigerator or ice chest. Because Copha is tasteless and odourless, you really savour the fine flavours of good ingredients ... You'll get perfect results every time you use Copha's new Melt'n'Mix method for easier more successful cooking.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> 'Cocoanut Ice', *The Daily News* 7 February 1920 p.6

<sup>9</sup> 'Household Hint' *Brisbane Telegraph* 28 May 1953 p.18

<sup>10</sup> Our Story | Copha

<sup>11</sup> 'Cheese Balls', *Sunday Times* 2 December 1923 p.14

<sup>12</sup> 'Welcome to a feast of good cooking', *Betty King's Cook Book* 194? inside front cover.

It was used extensively in cakes, biscuits, scones, puddings, even in soups. And of course, in Chocolate Crackles for which there is a recipe in the Cook Book that is exactly the same as the 1938 recipe. I wonder if "Princess Aura" knew.

### *Vox Populi*

I asked my Facebook Friends :

- Chocolate crackles - memory you can share.
- Do they still make them for kid's parties ?

My favorite party food.

Ha ha! 6 yrs old my mother couldn't make them or stick jaws but she managed the caramelised toffee.

My favourite!!! Yes, they still make them for parties. Some people do the classic version with the copha & others just mix the rice bubbles with melted choc.

As a child I was totally addicted to them, making them seemed like magic. Often ate so many I felt sick. We were still making them for X's birthday parties - up until 24 years ago! I hope they are still a thing.

They're still a thing at parties and fetes etc.

I ate them but I always found the copha texture pretty gross. Not my favourite kid food.

I think I've had them at an adult party in recent years.

They still make them.... my cousin often still makes them for her grandchildren.

Every now and again I lust after them and buy the stuff to make them. I think I need some rice bubbles...