

Tea and Cookery. The Kandy Koola Story

July 2024

In 1898 a slim (72 pages) cookery book was published by the Kandy Koola Tea company 'For Presentation To The Ladies Of Victoria.'¹ The *Kandy Koola Cookery Book and Housewife's Companion* though 'marked at one shilling' was posted 'free to any address on receipt of post-card or letter to Bourke-street, Melbourne'.² The presentation to Melbourne ladies and its free distribution are two of the things about the cookery book that intrigued me.

I have found little thus far about the Kandy Koola Tea Company. It's owners appear to have been Messrs John Connell and Co. Proprietary, Limited.³ An advertisement published 1908 said, 'For more than 20 years Kandy Koola has been the only tea consumed in thousands of homes throughout the Commonwealth' which would put the commencement of the business at least by 1888.⁴

The earliest advertisement for it I found was in 1895: "Kandy Koola" - A higher authority than Government analyst - the public - says this tea is superior to any other'.⁵ The tea was advertised as 'always of one standard quality, blended from the choicest growths of India and Ceylon'.⁶ The cookery book carried a three page article on the production of tea 'from the garden to the tea cup (which) should be very interesting to readers of this useful book'.⁸ Accompanying this is a recipe for a cup of tea:

Having procured a tin or packet of "Kandy Koola" Tea, fill the kettle with *fresh* water, bring it rapidly to a *boil*, rinse your (earthen) teapot with *hot* water put required quantity of tea to suit taste, pour on water while *boiling*, infused from five to six minutes. Whilst the tea is infusing make a second teapot hot, and pour the liquid off the leaves into this, and serve.⁹

The company was not shy of promoting itself.

Kandy Koola Tea

Read these quotations from the press: "Perfectly palatable: prettily packed." "The tea is an excellent one, well flavoured and very pleasant." Kandy Koola is deservedly popular as an afternoon tea." It has an exquisite flavour, and has won a well-deserved popularity.' And many other equally flattering testimonials." Sold by all leading grocers.¹⁰

An innovative promotion was the 'Kandy Koola Tea and Coffee Coupon'. These were available free from participating grocers. Coupons were numbered and each week a list of the prize-winning numbers was posted in newspapers. The numbering was sequential so customers could hang on to

¹ 'The Kandy Koola Cookery Book', Kandy Koola Tea 1898

² 'Proprietors of the "Kandy Koola Tea", *The Nathalia Herald and Picola, Narioka, Kotupna and Moira Advertiser* 29 December 1898 p.2

³ 'The "Kandy Koola" Tin Label', *Kyabram Free Press and Rodney And Deakin Shires Advocate* 19 January 1899 p.1

⁴ 'Kandy Koola' Advertisement, *The Bulletin* Vol.29 No.1492 17 September 1908 p.24

⁵ "Kandy Koola" ', *The Argus* 14 August 1895 p.1. This may be an artefact of Trove

⁶ 'Kandy Koola Tea', *Western Mail* 8 September 1899 p.42

⁷ I imagine 'Kandy' was chosen to associate the tea with Kandy, a tea growing and producing area in Ceylon/Sri Lanka.

⁸ 'Tea', ... *Cookery Book* pp. 29 - 31

⁹ *Cookery Book* p.31

¹⁰ 'Kandy Koola Tea', *The Argus* 9 September 1896 p.5

their coupons and hope to have the winning number.¹¹ Money prizes were awarded. In May 1903 first prize was £2 which at that time was substantial.¹²

Kandy Koola Coffee mentioned above was another product from the company. Sadly, I found nothing to throw light on this.

I found three competitors for Kandy Koola Tea. Goodall's Teas ('should be used by all married or about to marry; it assists in making home happy')¹³; Braintree Tea¹⁴; Rasawatte Tea¹⁵

The Kandy Koola Cookery Book

In 1909 an advertisement promised that 'housewives who have a care for the weekly expenses (would) find Kandy Koola more economical than any other tea'.¹⁶

'In collating these receipts,' the Cookery Book noted 'care has been taken to publishing only those which are adapted to the use and requirements of housewives with moderate incomes.'¹⁷ It went on to say: It is frequently thought that a book distributed gratis is not as valuable or reliable as those purchased for a few shillings at a booksellers, but the publishers feel assured that a careful perusal of this little work will convince its readers of its utility.¹⁸

Contents

I called the book slim and so it was, but it covered a good deal of territory in its 72 pages: Rules to Be Observed in Cooking; 144 recipes; Sundries; Medical Hints; management of a Drowning; managing Sunstroke; a pot pourri of Useful Information; Weights and Measures; and a Ready Reckoner Marketing or Hourly Wages Table which I confess I have no idea how to use. In the following I only deal with rules and recipes.

Rules To Be Observed In Cooking covered boiling meat and vegetables, stewing, roasting, baking, grilling, frying, and thickening. For example:

To Grill - Have a nice , clear fire, without smoke, and rub a little fat on your gridiron to prevent the meat from sticking. The fat from the chop or steak dropping into the fire will cause it to flame, and this will help to cook, and gives the meat a nice colour.¹⁹

There were 144 recipes in all: 11 soups; 7 fish; 30 meat; 6 vegetables; 6 salads; 27 pastry and pudding; 18 cakes; 7 biscuits; 6 sauces; 4 pickles; 3 jams; 4 sundries ; 7 drinks; 9 confectionary. The recipes were all given as a narrative, that is there were no tables of ingredients, and the ingredients and method were not separated. They varied in size.

¹¹ 'Remember The Coupons' Cookery Book p.39,.

¹² 'Kandy Koola Tea And Coffee Coupons', *The Naracoorte Herald* 15 May 1903 p.2

¹³ 'Goodall's Tea', *The Argus* 9 March 1895 p.1

¹⁴ 'Braintree Tea', *Singleton Argus* 5 August 1896 p.2

¹⁵ 'Rasawatte Tea', *West Gippsland Gazette* 2 May 1911 p. 1

¹⁶ 'Kandy Koola Tea', Advertisement *The Bulletin* Vol.30 No.1527 20 May 1909 p.24

¹⁷ *Cookery Book* p.3

¹⁸ *Cookery Book* p.3

¹⁹ *Cookery Book* p.5

Mutton Cutlets, Fried. – Flatten the cutlets with a bat, dip them in a beaten egg, and then in bread crumbs, season to taste, then fry gently in dripping or lard, turning until thoroughly cooked.²⁰

Banana Pudding. - Sponge cake, bananas and custard (vanilla flavouring for custard). Cut small pieces of cake, and place in a deep glass dish: then slice bananas in small pieces, cover this with hot custard; repeat with cake, banana, and custard; this will fill the dish. The pudding is made a few hours before it is wanted for the table. To improve the appearance keep back the white of eggs when making the custard, and a little time before the pudding is wanted for table whisk these to a stiff froth, and put pieces of this froth into boiling milk in a saucepan: the pieces will set in a minute or two; then take them out and place over the pudding, putting on each piece a small lump of apple jelly.²¹

The recipes covered similar ground to other cookery books of the time in ingredients and methods of preparation.²² For example, it shares with them recipes for curry: Fish Curry²³; Beef, Curried²⁴. Similarly, there are recipes for oysters: Oysters, Fried²⁵; Oysters, Roast²⁶; Oysters, Stewed²⁷; Oyster Sauce²⁸. There were recipes for 'nose to tail' dining: Calf's Feet Stewed²⁹; Tongue, Boiled³⁰; Tripe, Boiled³¹; and Sheep's Head Baked³².

Sheep's Head, Baked:- Split open the head and remove the tongue and brains, then soak the head for a little time in warm salt and water. Tie the two halves together, and bake in the oven for two hours, basting with dripping. Potatoes maybe baked with it. Boil the tongue separately, and make a sauce by boiling the brains, the mashing them with a teaspoonful of minced sweet herbs and some butter, pepper and salt. Stir the in a stewpan on the fire for some little time. Place the brains round the tongue and serve in a separate dish from the head.³³

There are some differences. There are only three recipes for jams - Melon Jam³⁴; Lemon Jam³⁵; and Quince Jelly³⁶ - whereas contemporaneous cookery books had several. Perhaps it was not thought appropriate to publish recipes for jams when one of your advertisers was a company making jams. There is a notable absence of recipes for native animals other than fish and seafood, whereas its contemporaries often had recipes for kangaroo and wallaby.

²⁰ *Cookery Book* p.15

²¹ *Cookery Book* p.25

²² Cookery books reviewed for this article: *Cookery book of good and tried receipts*. Compiled by the Women's Missionary Association of the New South Wales Presbyterian Church of New South Wales, 1895

The Antipodean Cookery Book and Kitchen Companion, Mrs. Lance Rawson, 1895; *Mrs Maclurcan's Cookery Book. A collection of practical recipes specially suited for Australia* Hannah Maclurcan 1898; *The Goulburn Cookery Book*, Mrs. Forster Rutledge Compiler, 1899

²³ *Cookery Book* p.9

²⁴ *Cookery Book* p.10

²⁵ *Cookery Book* p.8

²⁶ *Cookery Book* p.8

²⁷ *Cookery Book* p.8

²⁸ *Cookery Book* p.41

²⁹ *Cookery Book* p.10

³⁰ *Cookery Book* p.14

³¹ *Cookery Book* p.14

³² *Cookery Book* p.14

³³ *Cookery Book* p.14

³⁴ *Cookery Book* p.45

³⁵ *Cookery Book* p.45

³⁶ *Cookery Book* p.45

Medical Hints

The Cookery Book is one of two contemporaneous cookery books I reviewed for this article which had a section on home medical advice³⁷.

The overall advice in the Cookery Book is:

Eat plain food and plenty of fruit in its season. Never eat to fulness. Many, by being too indulgent to a healthy appetite in youth, lay the foundation of chronic dyspepsia in middle age.³⁸

Other food-based advice included:

Biliousness may be prevented by taking one teaspoonsful of black currant preserve before breakfast every morning.³⁹

The juice of half a lemon in a teacup of strong black coffee, without sugar, will often cure a sick headache.⁴⁰

For a burn, a good application is a mixture of equal parts of salad oil and lime water, well shaken together.⁴¹

Useful Information

This section also offered food advice and recipes.

Meat that smells sour owing to moisture in the atmosphere can be made quite sweet by washing in common vinegar.⁴²

An orange baked in the oven and eaten before going to bed, will invariably cure sore throats.⁴³

An excellent sandwich can be made by toasting cheese in slices; pepper and salt to taste, and place between bread.⁴⁴

A small piece of charcoal in the pot with a boiling cabbage will remove any odour.⁴⁵

Advertisers

The layout of the recipe pages are another thing by which I was intrigued. One-line promotions are sandwiched between recipes. For example:

SALADS

Beetroot

Delicious Kandy Koola Coffee

³⁷ The other is *Cookery book of good and tried receipts*. Compiled by the Women's Missionary Association of the New South Wales Presbyterian Church of New South Wales, 1895

³⁸ *Cookery Book* p.54

³⁹ *Cookery Book* p.56

⁴⁰ *Cookery Book* p.58

⁴¹ *Cookery Book* p.59

⁴² *Cookery Book* p.62

⁴³ *Cookery Book* p.62

⁴⁴ *Cookery Book* p.62

⁴⁵ *Cookery Book* p.63

Cucumber
Nestle's Swiss Milk
Beans, French
Pure Kandy Koola Tea
Potato Salad
"O.K." Tomato Sauce
Tomato Salad
For Cold Meats, "O. K." Pickles
Lettuce Salad⁴⁶

I was taken by the content of some of the advertisements.

Nestle's Swiss Milk urged customers to 'Ask for Nestle's and see that you get it, as inferior and English brands are sometimes substituted'.⁴⁷

"O.K." Jams took a novel approach: 'The Purest Jams Are "O.K." £50 Offered Anyone Able To Prove Otherwise'.⁴⁸ The claim for purity was made on the basis of their practice of processing fruit directly in the orchard.

Kandy Koola Coffee claimed it was 'Soothing at Night'.⁴⁹

Sketches

Finally, I was intrigued by the sketches that appear before some sections and free-standing in the book. As an example of the first is the sketch of a cowherd bringing a cow back home which accompanies the section on Meats.⁵⁰ As examples of the latter are one of a bottle tree⁵¹ with no discernible relationship to the cookery book and one of a kangaroo accompanying an advertisement for "O. K." Australian Jams and Jellies.⁵²

Endpiece

Kandy Koola Tea was still being advertised in 1927.⁵³ I could find no information as to whether the Cookery Book was made available free or for one shilling in States other than Victoria or republished after 1898.

⁴⁶ *Cookery Book* p.20

⁴⁷ *Cookery Book* p.10

⁴⁸ *Cookery Book* p.46

⁴⁹ *Cookery Book* p.28

⁵⁰ *Cookery Book* p.10

⁵¹ *Cookery Book* p.16

⁵² *Cookery Book* p.49

⁵³ 'Advertising Art's Ball', *Table Talk* 30 June 1927 p.65.