

## Hooke(d). Restoring George England Hooke's 1905 fruit preserving book to Australian food history.

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In 1905 George England Hooke published *Australian Fruit Preserving. A Practical Treatise on the Best Methods With Instructions for Making – Jams, Marmalades, Jellies, Conserves, Pickles, Sauces and Chutneys etc., Bottling (or Canning), Drying (or evaporating) Fruits & Vegetables*.<sup>1 2</sup> From my experience in the Australian food history world it is generally forgotten. This article hopes to redress this.

The book, Hooke wrote, was the 'outcome of actual experiment; the author, during a long period of years, treated in a variety of ways all the fruits mentioned, subsequently writing the details of those methods which gave the best results'.<sup>3</sup>

Why did he write the book?

Every season the average Australian orchard witnesses the wilful and deplorable waste of large quantities of useful fruit which it would not pay to send to market in its original state. At the same time, households of limited means find jam, tinned fruit, and so forth an appreciable item in the grocery bill which they make more or less successful attempts to reduce by turning out the article for themselves. ... Here, then, are two classes who are, or should be, interested in the subject of fruit preserving - The fruit-grower who has not realised the possibilities of the field that lies ready to his hand and the useful addition it may make to this income ... and the housewife who is imperfectly aware of the gratifying results she may achieve, with little trouble. Both feel the need of practical guidance, and this the present manual is designed to supply. It is equally adapted for those who desire to deal with fruit-preserving in a domestic way as for those who have an idea of tackling it on a more ambitious scale.<sup>4</sup>

The book is in two parts. The first part, almost a quarter of the book, is comments and instructions on fruit preserving generally. The volume and scope of the material in Hooke's book sets it apart from other Australian cookery books of the time. Those either only published recipes or carried short articles on particular aspects of fruit preserving. For example, the *Cookery book of good and tried receipts* (1895) has two pages dealing with 'Dried, Evaporated, or Dehydrated Fruit'.<sup>5</sup> The *Goulburn Cookery Book* has a page of 'Hints on Jam-Making'.<sup>6</sup>

The second part is his recipes of which there are 238 recipes including 11 for bottling, four for candying, six for tomato sauces and one tomato ketchup, seven vegetable pickles and one for chutney the rest being for jams and jellies.

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<sup>1</sup> Hooke, George England, *Australian Fruit Preserving. A Practical Treatise on the Best Methods With Instructions for Making – Jams, Marmalades, Jellies, Conserves, Pickles, Sauces and Chutneys etc. Bottling (or Canning), Drying (or evaporating) Fruits & Vegetables*, The Sydney and Melbourne Publishing Co. Ltd..

<sup>2</sup> Biographical information about him is slim. He is thought to have begun his career as a journalist in the early 1870s. In 1873 he established the *Tamworth Courier* and later became the editor of the *Molong Express*, both rural newspapers in New South Wales. He died in 1914.

<sup>3</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p.6

<sup>4</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p.4

<sup>5</sup> Association of the Presbyterian Church Compiled for the Women's Missionary of New South Wales *Cookery book of good and tried receipts* 1895.

<sup>6</sup> Rutledge ... *Goulburn* .. p.163

## First Part – Comments and Instructions

The part is further divided into three sections:

- General comments
- Fruit and Vegetable Drying
- Bottling or Canning

### *General*

The topics covered here are: Pure Water, Cleanliness, Utensils and Implements, The Measuring Stick, Pricking the Fruit, Boiling Citrus Fruits, Jellies, Fruits and Shreds Rising, Melon Jam, Lime Water, Rice Water, Honey Vinegar, Sauce and Chutney Jar, Covering Jams and Jellies, Sealing Bottles, and Garnishes. There is much in this part, and I only discuss a few topics to give the flavour of it.

He begins with water, emphasising the need for it to be ‘clean in a chemical sense ... Clean pans, clean fruit, clean sugar and careful manipulation may all be virtually thrown away if the water be unclean.’<sup>7</sup> Appearance is not always proof of purity and if there is any doubt he suggests boiling it should be adequate to purify water in most instances and he also gives a method for purifying it using alum.

Hooke writes that ‘the cleanliness with every operation associated with fruit preserving cannot be over-estimated’. He doesn’t expand on this here. Instead, he discusses the presentation of preserves for competitive exhibition. Hooke has been ‘asked to judge preserves at very important shows’ and comments on the pitfalls<sup>8 9</sup>. ‘The flavours and colours of the better kinds of fruit are of such delicate nature that the least particle of what might be called foreign matter is often sufficient to spoil them, at any rate for exhibition purposes.’<sup>10</sup> This topic of presentation at exhibitions comes up throughout the book. ‘Fruits rise in the bottles because they are lighter in weight than the liquid in which they are preserved. They look unsightly...’<sup>11</sup> ‘In order to give an attractive appearance to some kinds of pickles and chutneys when in the bottle it will be as well to prepare some vegetables to be used for garnish .... Some long red and green chillies ... radishes, carrots, small cucumbers...’<sup>12</sup>

Hook turns his attention to the ‘“tools of the trade” necessary for the successful carrying on of our occupation’ for the benefit of ‘the orchardists, fruit-growers and others in whose interest this little work is mainly written (who) are not blest with a too liberally culinary department’, explaining the tools and their part in the processes of preserving.<sup>13</sup> ‘Several pans of different sizes will be necessary ... select a pattern of pan which is broad and shallow. The greater surface of preserve that can be exposed to the heat at the one time the better. If deep narrow pans are used one portion of the preserve will be cooked before the other.’<sup>14</sup> ‘A set of scales and weights is necessary , because guesswork in the matter of quantities will not do at all is satisfactory results are regularly desired’.

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<sup>7</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p. 17

<sup>8</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p. 24

<sup>9</sup> He is writing here about horticultural and agricultural shows held annually across Australia where farmers, graziers, and other rural industries exhibit their products in competitions and where new techniques and equipment for rural industries are displayed. They usually have competitions also for home crafts like pickling, jam-making and cake baking. There sometimes are modest cash prizes to be won. Hooke responding it seems to criticism of these competitions wrote: ‘And who shall say that it is not a laudable desire on the part of the careful housewife or her daughter that she should be able to enter into friendly competition with her neighbour at the local shows and elsewhere? Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p. 18

<sup>10</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p. 18

<sup>11</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p. 26

<sup>12</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p. 36

<sup>13</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p. 20

<sup>14</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p. 20

‘Very frequently it is necessary to measure the water used in processes after it has been heated. This involves much slopping and time, it will be found very convenient to use a measuring stick.’<sup>15</sup> Hooke gives instructions on making one. He gives here advice also to the maker who intends on selling their product what jars to use: ‘If it be intended to sell or exchange some of your products, they had better be put into jars of recognised trade sizes and shapes; and information upon this head will be best obtained by a study of some first-class grocery window’.<sup>16</sup>

He spends two pages discussing stoves. ‘In the first place a stove should take a prominent position in the preserving room; and now that stoves are so cheap, and also satisfactory from a cooking point of view, it is far better to have one than to put up with the annoyance of an open fireplace.’<sup>17</sup> Gas is preferable to wood but coal should never be used when preserving.<sup>18</sup> A stove pipe at the rear is best as it allows you to move pots around on the stove top easily – also you don’t get smoke in your eyes. He recommends a “Beacon Light” stove.<sup>19</sup>

He discusses making jellies at length. As an exhibition judge he has seen ‘articles exhibited as jellies which were no nearer being a jelly than they were jam ... A jelly should be a solid, transparent, bright substance, composed of the pectine and flavouring juices of the fruit, sugar, and water - nothing else. The introduction of gelatine, gum, isinglass, or other artificial stiffening substances, or flavouring essences ... should have no place in fruit jellies.’<sup>20</sup>

He describes how to make Honey Vinegar ‘a very important item in the list of ingredients required when we start to make pickles and sauces, &c. It gives a characteristic piquancy to these articles which is not attainable by any other artificial product with which I am familiar’. Here too he addresses those who wish to make products at a ‘more ambitious scale’. ‘Every orchardist who keeps bees - and every orchardist, fruit-grower or gardener ought to keep a few colonies, and no doubt would do so if he only knew the value of the pesky little creatures - should make some honey vinegar’.<sup>21</sup>

His no waste dictum comes to the fore when discussing a Sauce and Chutney Jar. ‘Into these from time to time, according to individual taste, put all the pieces and peelings of waste fruit and vegetables that may be desirable in the composition of the sauce or chutney ... from time to time throw in a few chillies, bits of green ginger root, cloves or garlic, salt and so forth ... At the end of the season, or other convenient time, turn the contents of the jars into a broad dish, or other suitable receptacle, and select the best pieces for chutney’.<sup>22</sup> He gives a recipe for chutney here and also later in his Recipes.

Now to make the chutney, weigh the pieces of fruit and vegetables to be used, and add to them an equal weight of the pulp. Place these together in a preserving pan, and stew then until

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<sup>15</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p. 23

<sup>16</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p. 22

<sup>17</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p. 19

<sup>18</sup> Gas stoves were on the market by at least 1870 ‘Cooking by gas’. *The Tasmanian Times* 1 June 1870 p.3. In 1905 Mrs Glennen was giving lectures on *How to use a Gas stove*. *Tasmanian News* 14 January 1905 p.2

<sup>19</sup> ‘The Albion Beacon Light Stove is the one that gives satisfaction, and is at the same time economic. It is made at the Albion Stove Works, Maryborough, the makers claiming that it doubles the heat and halves the wood bill. It has all the advantages of the English stove, and others besides. ... The securing of an Albion Stove should not be attended with any difficulty, as they are sold by all store keepers’. Albion Beacon Light *The Catholic Press*, 25 June 1908 p.34

<sup>20</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p. 25

<sup>21</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p. 30

<sup>22</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... pp. 32-34

thoroughly cooked, adding to the mixture such other flavourings as sugar, honey, citric acid, or vinegar in such proportions as may seem most desirable. Let the citric acid or vinegar be added only a few minutes before the chutney is sufficiently cooked. When cool enough put into wide-mouthed jars, and cork or seal quite air-tight. It will improve with age, and be of much finer flavour when twelve months old than when fresh made.<sup>23</sup>

### *Fruit and Vegetable Drying*

This section, Hooke writes, is particularly directed at those who want to get along with the 'evaporating work in a profitable manner'.<sup>24</sup>

Using apples as the example Hooke describes the steps taken to turn fresh fruit into a dried product suitable for and reconstituting as needed. 'Fruit', he wrote, 'which has been carefully evaporated is twelve months afterwards as good for culinary purposes as it was the day it was gathered'.<sup>25</sup>

The method he uses is predicated on having an evaporator (with a discussion of the merits of short and long heating periods) of which he says 'there are upon the market quite a number ... all of which have different points of excellence according to the makers, or the agents handling them; but practically the end of each is the same viz. the drying of the fruit'.<sup>26</sup>

There are other 'appliances required for evaporating of so simple an order that they might be made by any man at all handy with a carpenter's tools.'<sup>27</sup>

The processes from peeling, coring, slicing, evaporating (with a discussion of how long and at what temperatures this should be done), and sulphuring (which can be dispensed with for domestic use) are described in detail, so much so that Hooke feels obliged to say:

Even at the risk of being considered tedious, I have been somewhat explicit over this subject, for the simple reason that I fully recognise its importance; and have often read with regret so much so-called instruction upon it that was entirely misleading and called for correction.

He gives brief notes on drying plums, apricots, peaches and nectarines.

### *Bottling or Canning*

In this short section Hooke describes his method for bottling fruit. He recommends boiling the fruit in syrup first and then placing them in the bottle or can. This he says its to get 'air' out of the fruit which if not expelled will lead to spoilage. He gives a table of the temperature and time for bottling various fruits.

He disapproves of cooking the fruit in the glass jar in which it will be bottled as this allowed air to remain in the bottle when sealed. He published the book 10 years before Fowler's Vacola came on the market and revolutionised in-bottle cooking using a combination of boiling and vacuum sealing. The Vacola was hugely popular.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p. 33

<sup>24</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p. 41

<sup>25</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p. 39

<sup>26</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p. 41

<sup>27</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p. 40

<sup>28</sup> 'Fowlers Vacola' Australian food history timeline - Fowlers Vacola bottling kits (australianfoodtimeline.com.au)

## Part 2 - Recipes

Fruits may be preserved whole or, if of a large size, in pieces in – water, syrup, or honey; made into conserve jelly, jam, marmalade; dried, crystallised, or candied; or used in the manufacture of pickle, chutney, sauce and paste. Even vegetables may be converted into pickle, chutney, sauce, or paste either alone or in conjunction with fruits.<sup>29</sup>

The first thing that I noticed in this section is Hooke's way of presenting the recipes. They are organised according to the months in which the fruit is 'seasonable' in Sydney. It strikes a chord with valorising of seasonality these days as a guiding principle for using fruit and vegetables.

### March

#### Fruits in Season

The following fruits are seasonable in Sydney during March viz. Apples, Bananas, Lemons, Plums, Passionfruit, Pears, Quinces, Rock Melons. Tomatoes.

Recipes for March are: China Pear Jam, Pear Marmalade, Melon and Lemon Jam, Purple Guava Jelly (not listed as seasonal), Quince Jelly and Jam (For Show), Quince Conserve, A Rich Peach Conserve, Candied Squashes (not listed as seasonal).

Not all the fruits in season have a recipe for them in every occurrence in that season. For example, apples are listed as seasonal in January, February, March, April, May, June, July, September, October, November, December with recipes only in January, February, April, May, June, and July.

Hooke gives recipes for a cornucopia of fruits: the fruits usually preserved – apples, plums, oranges, peaches, quinces, blackberries, melons, and in addition nectarine, damson, peach, rock melon, pear, squashes, passionfruit, mandarin, bananas, cumquats, shaddock (pomelo), and loquats. He also includes recipes for squashes and parsnips. Missing are the two commonly preserved native fruits - rosellas and quandongs.

The recipes themselves are generally like those published in other cookery books of the time in ingredients and method. This recipe demonstrates Hooke's no waste approach.

#### Seville Orange Conserve

Thoroughly wash the fruit, and then rub each orange all over with a nutmeg grater. Cut the fruit into sections about half-an-inch long. Remove all the seeds, even the very little ones, as they will turn black in cooking, and spoil the appearance of the conserve. Put the fruit into a clean preserving pan, and to each pound add five pints of water and a little salt. Boil very gently, until the rind is soft enough to be pierced with a straw, by which time the water will be reduced to about a quart. Particular care must be exercised in boiling, or the pulp will come away from the rind.

When the fruit is soft enough, add to it three pints of lemon water and three and a half pound of crystal white sugar. Boil until the syrup jells; which should be in about forty minutes.

This is a most delicious conserve, and although somewhat tiresome to make, will repay the time devoted to it.

Dry the grated off peel, and use it in cakes or puddings.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p.4

<sup>30</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... pp. 147 - 148

Three recipes are for fruit not fit for market – grapes with blackspot / Anthracnose – or over-ripe peaches and apricots.

In this section when giving instructions he sometimes has his exhibition judge hat on describing, for example, Grapes in Jelly is ‘a very pretty and attractive preserve which would claim much attention at any show’<sup>31</sup> or Kumquat Marmalade as ‘one of the prettiest preserves to be seen on a show stand, although it is somewhat tedious to make’.<sup>32</sup> ‘If making Blackberry and Apple Jam for show purposes. I W sugar should be used, together with a pinch of tartaric acid, as it gives the preserve a brighter appearance’.<sup>33</sup> He has three recipes particularly ‘For Show’ – Nectarine Jam<sup>34</sup>, Quince Jelly and Jam (a recipe that runs to two and a half pages)<sup>35</sup> and Grape Jam.<sup>36</sup> Of Nectarine Jam he says

Choose some large clingstone nectarines when they are ripe, but firm. Be particular that they are all of one sort, and of the same degree of ripeness. If this is not attended to you will have pieces in the jam of different shades and colours, which alone should be sufficient to condemn it for show.’

### **Returning Hooke to Australian Food History**

This brief look at Hooke’s ‘practical treatise’ on fruit preserving arguably justifies my claiming a place for it in Australian food history. This is particularly for his descriptions and discussions on the breadth of processes in preserving fruit. Does it achieve its aim of being equally adapted for those who desire to deal with fruit-preserving in a domestic way as for those who have an idea of tackling it on a more ambitious scale? I don’t think so. Except in a few instances the book comes across to me as much more for the former. ‘fruit-preserving in a domestic way. Certainly, the recipes are of domestic scale and there are no instruction how to adapt them for preserving on a more ambitious scale. Nonetheless it must have proved popular: I have a copy - undated - of the fifth edition.

*My thanks to Colin Sheringham for comments on a draft of this article.*

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<sup>31</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p.90

<sup>32</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p.131

<sup>33</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p.79

<sup>34</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p.68

<sup>35</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... pp.99 - 101

<sup>36</sup> Hooke ... *Australian Fruit Preserving* ... p.89