

‘A practical and extremely interesting collection of Chinese recipes.’ Roy Geechoun and ‘Cooking the Chinese Way’

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In 1948, Roy Geechoun published *Cooking the Chinese Way*.¹ It contained ‘thirty popular recipes with detailed and precise instructions so that you can now cook real Chinese meals at home without any difficulty’.²

Geechoun’s was not the first English language Chinese cookery book published in Australia. In 1946 an unnamed Chinese recipe book is noted as being sold at a fete.³ In 1947 the Australia China Association, of which Geechoun was a former Chairman, published a booklet ‘50 Recipes for Famous Chinese Dishes’.⁴ Both appear to have been ephemeral, single editions only. Geechoun’s book, on the other hand, went through several editions the last noted by the National Library of Australia in 1958.

Who was Roy Geechoun, why did he write the cookery book, and what was ‘cooking the Chinese way’?

Precursors

Australian cooks have latterly been conquering some of their culinary inhibitions, and showing increasing enterprise in their choice of foods. Continental and other foreign foods have become increasingly popular, and the trend to break away from stock Australian menus has, in many cases, been introduced into the home kitchen. Most marked of all has been the interest in Chinese food. The mushroom growth of Chinese cafes in the various capital cities is indicative of the popularity of the food in question.⁵

Recipes for Chinese dishes had been published in newspapers and magazines with wide circulation before 1948. As I researched I was surprised that half of the recipes were given by Chinese or Hong Kong nationals.

In 1931 *The Argus*, a Melbourne daily newspaper, published ‘A Chinese Dinner’ with recipes from Hong Kong national Nellie Choy Wong. (The article gives no further information on her). The recipes were Soy Bean Curd Soup, Mung Chi (Chinese Simmered Chicken), San Si Choi (Vegetable combination), Corn and White Meat of Chicken, Chinese rice.⁶ ‘The ingredients,’ *The Argus* said, ‘may be bought at Chinese shops in Melbourne.’ Appendix 1 lists the earliest mention of a Chinese foodstuff or ingredient in newspapers reviewed.

‘Mrs. Lee Soong an ardent feminist and peace worker who came to Sydney as a delegate to the recent International Women’s Conference,’ wrote the *Sydney Morning Herald* in April 1938, ‘is as much at home in the kitchen as she is on a public speaking platform. She is an expert at cooking

¹ Geechoun, Roy, ‘Cooking the Chinese Way’ W. D. Joynt & Company 1948

² Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* unpaginated preface

³ ‘China’ “Nan” Heard Today, *The Herald* 16 October 1946 p.15.

⁴ ‘50 Recipes for Famous Chinese Dishes’, Australia China Association, 1947. Curiously the copy I was able to find only has 30 recipes in it.

⁵ ‘Home cooking of Chinese food’, *Catholic Weekly* 16 December 1948 p.4

⁶ ‘A Chinese Dinner’, *The Argus* 12 December 1931 p.6

Chinese dishes, and delights in adapting them to Western conditions.⁷ Her recipes were Sweet and Sour Pork, Steamed Pork and Eggs, Lettuce Soup, Corn Soup A La Foo Yung and Steak and Mixed Vegetables.

The Australian Women's Weekly in May 1938 asked its readers 'Why not stagger your friends with an entire menu of Chinese dishes served at a table set with Chinese china, and chopsticks?' An occasional dish with a French or Austrian name can be relied upon to impress your guests, but the Chinese idea is a novelty'. 'Eating in Chinese Style' had recipes from a Chinese cooking demonstration by Elsie Lee Soong and Mrs. Fabian Chow 'visiting Australia to raise funds for Chinese civilian relief'.⁸ The recipes were for Steamed Rice, Fried Fish With Sweet And Sour Sauce, Fooyung Omelette, Steak and Vegetables, Chicken Pineapple, Chop Suey, Mushroom Soup and Canton Rice. The circulation of the magazine was over 382,000 each week.

Vesta Junior in 1944 'had the loveliest afternoon with Mrs L. M. Wang, wife of the Chinese Consul in Melbourne, at her home in Toorak. There we talked about Chinese festival cooking. And just to let you see that I really did gather some Chinese recipes for you, which so many of you keep on asking for every week, I'll give them to you.'⁹ ¹⁰The recipes were La Si Che (Chinese Wishes), Gee Chah Tang (Steamed Chicken Giblets and Liver Soup), Chah Gee (Fried Chicken), Chah Yha Sze (Fried Duck), Harn Yun Gee (Fried Chicken with Almonds)

Also, in 1944 *The Argus* published 'Leaves From Madam Cheng's Book of Chinese Dishes.'¹¹ Recipes here were Chinese Omelette, Fried Spinach, White Boiled Chicken, Steamed Fish With Sweet And Sour Sauce.

'In 1948 the *Australian Women's Weekly* published 'Chinese Food', recipes from Mrs. S. Y. Woo, wife of the Consul General for the Republic of China. (The *Weekly* give further information about Mrs. Woo)¹². The recipes were for Chao Chee Ting or La Tzu Chi Ting (Chicken With Almonds), Tang Tsu Pai Ku (Pork with sweet and sour sauce), Yu Chuan (Fish with ham and mushrooms), Huo Tui Chi Tang (Ham and Chicken Soup), Chinese Eggs Faa Yung and Duck and Pineapple Canton. The circulation of the magazine was over 700,000 each week.

In addition, recipes for Chinese dishes appeared in 1934 in the *Sun News-Pictorial* - 'Age Old Recipes From China'.¹³; in 1936 in the *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate* - 'A Chinese Touch'¹⁴; in April 1939 in the *Australian Women's Weekly* - 'Here's What They Eat - OUT EAST'¹⁵; and In July 1940 the *Chronicle* published 'Some Chinese Dishes'.¹⁶

Taken as a whole, to my knowledge these recipes show that Chinese cuisine was brought to the Australian table more than any other non Anglo-Australian cuisine between 1931 – 1948.

⁷ 'Chinese Recipes for Western Cooks', *The Sydney Morning Herald* 21 April 1938 p.23. Recipes included Sweet and Sour Pork, Steamed Pork and Eggs, Lettuce Soup, Corn Soup A La Foo Yung and Steak and Mixed Vegetables.

⁸ 'Eating In Chinese Style', *The Australian Women's Weekly* 28 May 1938 p.26.

⁹ 'Festive Cooking in China Gives Hints for Christmas Cooks', *Taste and Tell, The Argus*, 19 December 1944 p.9.

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¹¹ 'Leaves From Madam Cheng's Book of Chinese Dishes', *The Argus* 1 August 1944 p.9.

¹² 'Chinese Food', *The Australian Women's Weekly* 6 November 1948 p.33.

¹³ 'Age Old Recipes From China' *Cookery of Other Nations, Topics for Women Readers Sun News-Pictorial* 24 April 1934 p.30.

¹⁴ 'A Chinese Touch', *New Ways For The Hostess, Food Craft, Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate* 11 February 1936 p.3

¹⁵ 'Here's What They Eat - OUT EAST', *The Australian Women's Weekly* 15 April 1939 p.9

¹⁶ 'Some Chinese Dishes' *Chronicle* 18 July 1940 p.44

Roy Geechoun

I could find little of Geechoun's biography other than these few details: also known as Lee Lock Gee Choun, son of a market gardener in Bendigo (Victoria), moved to Melbourne, lived in East Hawthorn and Canterbury; partner in a gift shop in Bourke Road, Camberwell.¹⁷ He turns up as an independent vocational adviser in Brisbane in 1929.¹⁸ In 1938 he imports 'supper cloths and dinner cloths'.¹⁹ I found nothing about his cooking background.

A review of the cookery book describes Geechoun as 'a well-known Chinese citizen of Melbourne'.²⁰ They would know of him as a member of Victoria's Legislative Council.²¹ He was a frequent contributor to *The Argus*. In 1941 he wrote to the Editor supporting calls to reduce the hours fruiterers are allowed to be open.²² In November 1943 he wrote an article on Chinese methods of dehydration of food stuffs.²³

In May 1944 writing as the Chairperson of the Australia China Association (ACA) he supports the suggestion to establish a school of Oriental Studies at a university because 'It is of vital importance that we should study the Asiatic peoples, about whom we are so ignorant, without delay'. He notes the work of the ACA in this regard: 'To meet this need my association conducts monthly educational classes on China, and has recently organised a weekly class to study the language itself. A library is also being built up as fast as circumstances permit. The splendid attendance and deep interest displayed at our lectures give us considerable gratification'.²⁴ In 1947 the ACA published the booklet '50 Recipes for Famous Chinese Dishes'. Compiled by Mrs. L. Sie and published 'as a good will gesture'.²⁵ The book has no introduction or preface. The relationship of this to Geechoun's book is not clear.

It is clear, though, Geechoun intended his book to have more than a culinary purpose. The dedication in the 1948 edition is 'To the furtherance of a greater Australia-Chinese friendship so firmly established during the war years'.²⁶ This is made explicit in an article in 1949 about a cooking class by Geechoun sponsored by the Australia China Association partnering with the Metropolitan Gas Company of Victoria: 'During his commentary, Mr. Roy Geechoun explained how anxious the association was to promote the best possible relations between the two countries, "and what matter the method—be it food or ancient bronzes."²⁷

¹⁷ 'Chinese cookery book for Australians', Australian food history timeline (australianfoodtimeline.com.au)

¹⁸ 'Vocational Guidance', *The Brisbane Courier* 28 March 1929 p.10

¹⁹ 'So Now You're Engaged', *The Argus* 28 December 1938 p.5

²⁰ 'Cooking the Chinese Way', *The Herald* 18 December 1948 p.9

²¹ 'Chinese cookery book for Australians', Australian food history timeline (australianfoodtimeline.com.au)

²² '6 p.m. Closing of Shops', *The Argus* 20 December 1941 p. 6

²³ 'Dehydration of Food Is Not a New Process', *The Argus* 13 November 1943 p.1

²⁴ 'Oriental Study' Letters to The Editor, *The Argus* 2 May 1944 p.9

²⁵ '50 Recipes for Famous Chinese Dishes', Australia China Association 1947. Unaccountably the edition I reviewed had 30 not 50 recipes

²⁶ 'Chinese cookery book for Australians', Australian food history timeline (australianfoodtimeline.com.au)

²⁷ 'Chinese Customs a Help in Kitchens', *The Sun News-Pictorial* 9 April 1949 p. 20

Cooking the Chinese Way

Introduction

In his Introduction to the book Geechoun addressed the culinary purpose:

...Chinese cooking, like most things Chinese, is a mystery to Australians. The strange names of the dishes and unusual ingredients only help to conceal what goes to make up delightfully subtle flavours which are so different from Western cooking. Nor in his²⁸ ignorance is the Westerner able to comprehend just how it is possible to prepare foods with which he is familiar in such appetising and appealing, yet strange and unusual way. Chicken and pork done in the Chinese way, in any of the dozens of ways Chinese prepare them, for instance, is nothing like the chicken or pork he is used to, and he just does not try to understand it is possible to prepare fish in so many different ways. It is to help clear up some of this mystery that this little book has been compiled.²⁹

Geechoun credits two people with assisting him write the book. One is an unnamed 'expert Chinese Chef who has freely made available his wide experience'.³⁰ The other is his business partner James Law 'whose cooking has brought me some of my most treasured memories and who has been the source of those little secrets which give the book a true Chinese flavour'.³¹

Together they 'have worked out the smallest detail all the essentials to ensure even the least competent cook making a success of his ventures into Chinese cooking'.³² Reviews of the book alluded to the competence of the cook and the practicality of the recipes.. 'Mr. Geechoun, whose zeal for Chinese food has gone to the length of organising Chinese cooking demonstrations under the auspices of the Australia China Association, explains in 'Cooking the Chinese Way' how from goods normally available in Australia, any average cook can without difficulty produce a Chinese menu at home'³³. 'There are 'Thirty recipes, with precise cooking instructions.'³⁴ The book is 'A practical and extremely interesting collection of 30 Chinese recipes'.³⁵

One of the guides to the home cook is the inclusion of 'the average times of the various stages of cooking. This latter is perhaps the vital principle of Chinese cooking for to use the words of a noted Chinese gourmand of the eight century A. D. "every eating material can be made palatable provided that it is given the right cooking time".³⁶

Articles and Essays on Chinese Customs In The Use of Food

Geechoun's book includes 12 of these short essays. The first is 'Chinese Food Abroad' in which he writes: 'In compiling this booklet consideration has been given to Chinese goods that are normally available in Australia ... Many of the fresh vegetables have been introduced to Australia by Chinese market gardeners'.³⁷ The book was published in Melbourne and Geechoun gives the contact details for two Chinese stores in Melbourne who 'can be relied on to help you particularly when any of the

²⁸ Note the gender of the cook he is writing for – it is unlikely at this time that the home cook would be male. Australian cookery books at the time in my experience were addressed to women.

²⁹ Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* Introduction pp.7 -9

³⁰ Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* Introduction p.9

³¹ Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* Introduction p.10

³² Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* Introduction p.8

³³ 'Home Cooking of Chinese Food', Books, *Catholic Weekly* 16 December 1948 p.4

³⁴ 'Cooking the Chinese Way' Quick Looks, *News* 1 January 1949 p.2

³⁵ 'Cooking the Chinese Way' Reading Guide, *The Sun* 26 March 1949 p.4

³⁶ Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* Introduction p.8

³⁷ 'Chinese Foods Abroad' Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* p.13

ingredients are unobtainable and it might be necessary to use alternatives'.³⁸ In the 1954 edition Geechoun writes: '... there is usually a Chinese store wherever there is a Chinese community'.³⁹

Geechoun's innovation in this essay is a table which lists the Chinese ingredients together with the Chinese characters for the ingredient and the English spelling of the ingredient.⁴⁰ The home cook could then take Geechoun's book to a Chinese store and show the proprietor what they are looking for by pointing to its name on the page.

Essays give detailed information on particular Chinese ingredients: Bamboo Shoots⁴¹, Sprouted Bean Shoots⁴², Water Chestnuts⁴³, Bean Curd⁴⁴, and See You (Soy Bean Sauce).⁴⁵

In discussing these Geechoun introduces the home cook to additional aspects of Chinese cuisine.

The mildly flavoured bamboo shoots have the quality dear to the hearts of Chinese epicures, of blending their own flavour with whatever they are cooked and at the same time themselves absorbing the other flavours. This is an important principle of Chinese cooking. Blending the flavours of all ingredients during cooking ... The Chinese make a point of appealing to all the senses with their cooking.⁴⁶

The Chinese are not a scientific people but they have made some important discoveries which have a solid scientific base. One is the use of bean curds as an everyday article of food. Although they may not know it the Chinese have discovered in bean curd a valuable substitute for dairy products which are entirely missing from their diet.⁴⁷

He gives instructions for sprouting bean shoots and making bean curd.

Discussing See You sauce he suggests a fusion between Chinese cuisine and Western Cuisine.

Many well-known Western condiments and sauces contain some See You, but Australians know it best as a sauce invariably served in Chinese restaurants. It is suggested that as well as using See You in your Chinese cooking you might try it when cooking Western dishes. When roasting or frying meat or poultry a small amount of See You imparts its special flavour to advantage and a teaspoonful in a soup or stew is a distinct improvement.⁴⁸

³⁸ 'Where to Obtain Chinese Cooking Ingredients', Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* p.14

³⁹ 'Introduction' Geechoun, Roy, 'Cooking the Chinese Way' W. D. Joynt & Company 1954 p.6

⁴⁰ 'Chinese Foods Abroad', Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* p.13

⁴¹ 'Bamboo Shoots', Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* p. 15

⁴² 'Sprouted Bean Shoots', Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* p. 17

⁴³ 'Water Chestnuts', Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* p. 18

⁴⁴ 'Bean Curd: An Invaluable Food', Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* p. 19

⁴⁵ 'See You (Soy Bean Sauce)', Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* p. 34

⁴⁶ 'Bamboo Shoots', Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* p. 15

⁴⁷ 'Bean Curd: An Invaluable Food', *Cooking Chinese* p. 19

⁴⁸ 'See You (Soy Bean Sauce)' Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* p. 34

Rounding out this set of Articles he writes of Fish As An Important Food In China⁴⁹, New Ways of Cooking Poultry⁵⁰, The Chinese And Their Rice⁵¹, How Chinese Preserve Their Food⁵², and Chinese Beverages⁵³. Here also additional aspects of Chinese cuisine are described.

The Chinese are not big meat eaters. This may possibly be due to the fact that so much of the country is not suitable for raising sheep or cattle ... It's fortunate therefore that China's seas and numerous waterways abound with fish. Sea foods of all kinds, many of them unfamiliar to us,⁵⁴ balance the Chinese diet of cereals and vegetables and Chinese cooks are unexcelled in the variety and tastiness of their fish dishes.⁵⁵

The essay on Rice is a curious article to find in a cookery book. It is not about how to cook rice but about the economics of rice production itself. He describes the labour-intensive production of rice and the little reward for this to the farmer while 'China's millions are under-fed'.

Herein lies one of China's major problems. How can she mechanise her agriculture to increase her food production and free manpower for the development of her industries?⁵⁶

The essay on Chinese Beverages gives a precis of Chinese and alcoholic beverages and states that Chinese are and always will be a temperate race as far as alcohol is concerned. 'Tea on the other hand is accorded a high place by the Chinese ... Tea is more than a beverage. It is an essential part of the Social grace, that mature art of living which somehow distinguishes even the poorest and simplest Chinese.'⁵⁷

The Recipes

There are 30 recipes in the first edition of the book: four soups; seven fish; five meats; seven poultry; six general.⁵⁸ The full list is Appendix 2. Geechoun doesn't say in the 1948 Introduction what was the criteria for including a recipe. However, in the 1954 revised edition he writes: 'The recipes in this book are representative of the best and most popular Chinese dishes introduced to Europeans by Chinese away from their homeland'.⁵⁹

They range from familiar dishes to the less familiar.

Wong Mun Ghai (Chicken with Pineapple, sweet and sour)⁶⁰

Ingredients

1 young boiled chicken	1 ½ dessertspoons corn
¾ lb pineapples	flour
½ cup vinegar	¾ cup water
½ cup sugar	1 egg

⁴⁹ 'Fish As An Important Food In China', Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* p. 25

⁵⁰ 'New Ways of Cooking Poultry', Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* p. 40

⁵¹ 'The Chinese And Their Rice', Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* p. 49

⁵² 'How Chinese Preserve Their Food', Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* p. 57

⁵³ 'Chinese Beverages', Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* p. 59

⁵⁴ It is a peculiarity of the book that at times Geechoun writes as if he is not Chinese and aligns himself with the Australian cook/ reader

⁵⁵ 'Fish As An Important Food In China' Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* p. 25

⁵⁶ 'The Chinese And Their Rice', Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* p. 50

⁵⁷ 'Chinese Beverages' Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* p. 60

⁵⁸ The Sixth Edition in 1954 has 40 recipes

⁵⁹ Introduction' Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* 1954 p.5

⁶⁰ 'Wong Mun Ghai (Chicken with Pineapple, sweet and sour), Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* p. 46

1 ½ tablespoons flour

Method

Make a batter with flour, egg and enough water to make smooth. Bone the chicken and cut it into small chunks. Dip the chicken pieces in batter and fry it in deep fat till nicely browned. Lift out and drain. Brown the sugar in a saucepan. Add the water, vinegar, and pineapple cut into small pieces. Bring to the boil and thicken with cornflour. Pour this mixture over the cooked chicken.

Hoo Shee Soong (Dried Oyster Mince)

Ingredients

¾ Hoo Shee (dried oysters)	2 stems celery
¼ bamboo shoots	3 stems Chinese cabbage
¼ lb water chestnuts	1 piece garlic
1 doz dried mushrooms	1 teaspoon salt
1 onion	3 spring onions

Preparation

Soak separately in hot water for four hours the oyster and mushrooms. Cut off stems of mushrooms and squeeze out surplus liquid. Crush garlic. Cut all other ingredients into quarter inch cubes.

Method of Cooking

Brown the garlic in a little oil in a pan. Add oysters and onions stirring whilst frying. Cover with a lid and cook for three minutes. Next add salt, bamboo shoots, water chestnuts, mushrooms, onion, celery, cabbage. Mix altogether. Add stock or water to half cover. Cook ten minutes. Add chopped onions, thicken with cornflour.

They range from the very simple to the more complicated but all, as reviewers said, were such that any average cook could without difficulty produce a Chinese meal at home.

Lat Tzu Ngow Yook (Green Peppers and Steak)⁶¹

Ingredients

¾ lb thick steak	½ lb onions
1 lb green peppers	Salt

Preparation

Thinly slice the steak, cutting it across the grain into pieces about 1 inch by 1 ½ inches. Also slice onions and green peppers.

Method of Cooking

Heat a small amount of peanut oil or lard in a pan and add a teaspoon of salt. As soon as the oil begins to smoke fry the steak stirring frequently, and as soon as it starts to change colour take up and put aside. Fry the onions and peppers together, stirring, for a couple of minutes. Half cover with stock or hot water and simmer seven minutes. Add the previously half cooked meat, mix well with vegetables, and cook for a further five minutes. Thicken with a little cornflour.

⁶¹ 'Lat Tzu Ngow Yook (Green Peppers and Steak)', Geechoun ... *Cooking Chinese* p.47

Dou Foo Tong (Bean Curd Soup)

Ingredients

4 cubes bean curd	small piece bamboo
¼ lb lean pork	shoots
6 water chestnuts	3 slices green ginger
6 dried mushrooms	1 ½ pints of chicken stock
Small piece choong choy	or water

Preparation

Soak mushrooms in water for one hour, clean and cut off stems. Wash choong choy well. Cut Each cube of bean curd in four. Chop other ingredients into small pieces.

Method of Cooking:

Put choong choy, mushrooms, pork, bamboo shoots ginger, and water chestnuts into stock and boil for fifteen minutes. Add bean curd with a little salt and boil a further ten minutes. Serve with finely chopped spring onions.

The number of Chinese specific ingredients varies also as in the two recipes above from none to many. They also go from the well-known to the obscure – soy sauce to choong choy (salted Chinese radish).

Chinese Menus

These are added in the 1954 edition. 'In addition to acquiring knowledge of how to Cook the Chinese Way, Geechoun writes, 'it will be helpful to know what dishes to select to make up a Chinese meal'. We can dismiss all thoughts of those sumptuous banquets though which many writers and travellers have sought to glamorize Chinese eating. Banquets are for special occasions and are generally left in the hands of an expert Chinese chef'.

A menu example:

For six to eight persons:-

Doong Kwah Arp Tong (Chinese Melon)

Shu Gai (Dry roast chicken)

Chui Pee Yee (Fish Sweet and Sour)

Gai Guin (Chicken Roll)

Chop Suey

Jing Darn (Steamed Pork and Egg)

Chow Farn (Fried Rice)

Coda

The Herald said in reviewing the book that it 'ought to be a welcome addition to the collection of any cook bold enough to venture outside the familiar field of Western cookery.'⁶² With several editions till 1958 evidently there were many who ventured with 'Cooking the Chinese Way' as guide..

⁶² 'Cooking the Chinese way', *The Herald* 18 December 1948 p.9

In addition to revising the cookery book over these editions, Geechoun continued to publish recipes⁶³, articles about Chinese cooking⁶⁴ and to give cookery demonstrations⁶⁵.

Geechoun went on to own the Kowloon Restaurant in South Yarra and found a Chinese cooking school, reported to be the first in Melbourne.⁶⁶

⁶³ 'Learn to Cook the Chinese Way', *The Herald* 21 November 1951 p.5

⁶⁴ Geechoun, Roy, 'It's Different and Easy' *The Sun News-Pictorial* 17 June 1953 p.22

⁶⁵ '1953 Better Home Cooking Demonstration' *The Sun News-Pictorial* 29 June 1953 p.19

⁶⁶ Chinese cookery book for Australians', Australian food history timeline (australianfoodtimeline.com.au)

Appendix 1 Earliest mention of a Chinese foodstuff or ingredient in an English language source.

It's axiomatic that to have Chinese dishes you need to have Chinese foodstuffs. Listed here are the earliest references to a Chinese foodstuff or an ingredient in the English language press from colonial importers. There may have been earlier occurrences from Chinese importers. The earliest evidence I found of Chinese foods being in the colony was in 1831. A. Foss lists for sale 'China preserves viz. Ginger, Chow Chow, Citron, Comequat, &c. &c. of the most exquisite and inviting flavour'.⁶⁷ Also In 1831 James Simmons advertised Chinese Goods among which were gunpowder and Hyson teas.⁶⁸ Both are green teas of Chinese origin. [I may be pushing the definition of engagement here as they are a variety of a product that was already at the Australian domestic table.] In 1841 Chinese soy sauce, preserved nutmeg, ginger and chow chow were in a list of goods landed from the *Devon*.⁶⁹ Chinese Peanut Oils were on sale in 1855.⁷⁰ The first mention of dried mushrooms was in 1856.⁷¹ In 1858 R. Towns and Co. advertised the availability of kum chum⁷², vermicelli, soo lew⁷³, and Chinese oil, white bean curd, and pickled beans curd.⁷⁴ The first mention I found for bamboo shoots was in 1858⁷⁵. The first mention of water chestnuts was in 1880.⁷⁶

So, by 1880 many of the specialist foodstuffs for Chinese cooking were available.

⁶⁷ 'Ex Elizabeth', A. Foss, *The Sydney Herald* 7 November 1831 p.3

⁶⁸ James Simmons, *The Sydney Monitor* 25 June 1831 p.4

⁶⁹ 'Now landing ex Devon', *Southern Australian* 2 February 1841 p.1

⁷⁰ 'Chinese Peanut Oils', *The Age* 24 September 1855 p.1

⁷¹ 'The Chinese Again', *The Age* 26 July 1856 p.2. They are mentioned among Chinese goods being sold by Mr. Inchliffe at his London Mart in Brunswick (a suburb of Melbourne).

⁷² Possibly a misspelling of Kum Chun – oyster sauce

⁷³ I found nothing to tell me what this is.

⁷⁴ 'Chinese Goods', *The Argus* 24 April 1858 p.3

⁷⁵ 'Oithona' Imports, *The Argus* 25 January 1858 p.4

⁷⁶ 'Java' Imports, *The Sydney Daily Telegraph* 17 Jun e1880 p.2

Appendix 2. List of all the recipes in Cooking the Chinese Way

Soups

Dou Foo Tong (Bean Curd Soup)
Doong Kwah Arp Tong (Melon and Duck Soup)
Dar Far Tong (Pork, Pea and Egg Soup)
Yin War Tong (Bird's Nest Soup)

Fish

Jing Sin Yee (Steamed Fish)
Dou Foo Yee (Bean Curd and Fish)
How Yee Pin (Fried Fish with Vegetables)
Chow Loong Har (Crayfish with Pork and Eggs)
Chow Yow Yee (Dried Squid with Vegetables)
Mun Sin Yee (Braised Fish)
Chui Pee Yee (Fish Sweet and Sour)

Meats

Dou Tzai Ngow Yook (Beans and Steak)
Chop Suey (Pork Cooked with Vegetables)
Lat Tzu Ngow Yook (Green Peppers and Steak)
Dim Sims
Hang Yun Gai Den (Chicken and Almonds)

Poultry

Chow Galpin (Steamed Chicken with Vegetables)
Shu Gai (Dry Roast Chicken)
Wat Gai (Braised Chicken)
Gai Guin (Chicken Roll)
Wong Mun Ga (Chicken with Pineapple sweet and sour)
Jing Gai (Steamed Chicken)
Shu Arp (Roast Duck)

General

Chow Farn (Fried Rice)
Char Foo Young (Omelette in Deep Fat)
Ho Shee Soong (Dried Oyster Mince)
Yeung Foo Kwah (Stuffed Bitter Melon)
Yeung Doong Goo (Stuffed Mushrooms)
Harm Darn (Salt Eggs)