

Doggedly Anglo-Australian: Woolworths Food Fair. Recipes From Famous-Brand Cooks 1963

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On 1 May 1963 the *Australian Women's Weekly* (AWW from here) and Woolworths (Woollies from here) jointly published a 31-page magazine 'Recipes from Famous Brand Cooks'. It was a collection of recipes from 11 food companies recognised as 'Famous' by Woollies though the criteria for this is not stated.¹

Each set of recipes from a Brand came 'from their own test kitchens where their home economists and cookery supervisors have created and tested the recipes'.² The list of the brands and their products is Appendix 1.

The recipes were compiled by the *Australian Women's Weekly's* Leila Howard Test Kitchen. 'Inexperienced housewives as well as accomplished cooks will find the recipes interesting as well as valuable', Howard wrote in her introduction to the magazine. 'In the wide selection of recipes, there are many new ideas for dishes which will transform a meal'.³

The booklet was accompanied by in-store demonstrations and product displays in 73 Woollies stores across Australia.

There were 228 recipes in all: 7 sauces, 6 soups, 18 vegetables, 19 fish, 11 poultry, 5 rice, 36 'varied' meat, 37 cakes and biscuits, 63 desserts, 26 snacks and savories.

What do the recipes tell us about the Australian table that these three influencers - the AWW, Woollies and Famous Brands' Cooks - constructed and were 'selling' to their readers and customers? It was doggedly Anglo-Australian⁴ and arguably out of touch with changes happening for non-Anglo-Australian dishes at the table as given in the weekly magazine.

Cover Image

The wrap-around cover shows 11 dishes all of which are Anglo-Australian. There are two which are nominally not - Hot Spicy Fish (which uses Continental's Dutch Curry and Rice Soup)⁵ and Burmese Cheese-Fried Rice.⁶ But in each case a look at the recipe will show they also are within Anglo-Australian cuisine.

¹ 'Recipes from Famous Brand Cooks' *The Australian Women's Weekly* 1 May 1963 p.2

² Famous Brand Cooks, AWW 1 May 1963 p.2

³ Famous Brand Cooks, AWW 1 May 1963 p.2

⁴ By Anglo-Australian cuisine I mean a cuisine based on a limited range of meats, poultry and fish and parts thereof, a range of vegetables and fruit limited to those of European provenance, and a general under seasoning/spicing.

⁵ Hot Spicy Fish, AWW 1 May 1963 p.7

⁶ Burmese Cheese-Fried Rice, AWW 1 May 1963 p.7

First Page Illustration – The Housewife



How do the influencers picture the housewife. She is smartly dressed and takes care of her appearance when out of the home even when shopping. Dressed as she is she may just as well be going to an afternoon tea. She has gloves in one hand (unlikely she will put them on they are an item in her ensemble) with the other she holds the supermarket trolley – a recent invention - already piled with groceries and other products. There doesn't appear to be anything resembling fresh vegetables or fruits among what we can see, just packet goods. She will have the family car parked in the supermarket parking lot and she will skilfully manoeuvre the trolley from supermarket to the car. Her child is reaching for a packet of something as her mother looks on approvingly. No doubt she is already teaching her child how to shop – to be economical without being stingy, to buy products that take the least amount of preparing. – though she has the latest time saving kitchen equipment in her kitchen - mix master, pressure cooker, electric frypan . She shops at Woolies because it's convenient with all she wants other than meat all under one roof. She shops at Woolies, because per Woolies slogan is promised the fastest turnover, freshest quality and reliable brands. She is interested in new products and new ideas for meals though only from brands she knows.

Cuisines

Two hundred and six of the recipes are ascribable to Anglo-Australian cuisine . For example, Tuna-Stuffed Baked Potatoes, Chicken Mango, Savory Topside Bake, Pineapple Meringue Pie and Spiced Ginger Cupcakes.⁷

There were 19 recipes across four non- Anglo-Australian cuisines – Italian, Chinese, Anglo-Indian, and Middle European.

Italian

Six of the recipes here could be seen as of Italian provenance: Marville Pizza, Pizza Supper Pie, Tasty Macaroni Meal, Chicken and Rice Italiano, Bacon and Corn Risotto, and Spaghetti with Anchovy Sauce. However, arguably the macaroni and spaghetti recipes should be excluded from this category. Pastas - macaroni and vermicelli in particular – had divorced from Italian cuisine centuries ago in Britain and was taken up by Anglo-Celtic cuisine and so came into Anglo-Australian cuisine.

⁷ Spiced Ginger Cupcakes, AWW 1 May 1963 p.24

There is an anomaly here. The AWW had previously published Italian recipes. In 1957 the AWW published Two Italian Menus from American television celebrity Dione Lucas.⁸ Menu 1 was Zuppa Verde, Risotto alla Milanese, Cannelloni, Insalata di Pomodori, Suffle Limone con Salsa Zabaglione, Caffè Espresso (Coffee), Pane Fresco (Fresh bread), Vino Bardolino (Red Wine). Just two years before in 1961 it published a three-page article 'Italian Cookery'.⁹ Recipes in the article included Spumone Lamponie, Liver Alla Veneziana, Lasagna, Risotto Alla Milanese, Cannelloni, Scampi with Risotto Piemontese, and Zupa Di Pesce. Then on 1 May 1963 it published *Fine Food From Italy* in the body of the May issue. Recipes here were for Vitello Alla Marsala, Pizza Calabria, and Torte Alla Crema Café.¹⁰ Why there should be a dumbing down of the cuisine in the booklet given these recent published recipes I cannot tell but I would hazard a guess that as all the recipes in the booklet were provided by the Famous Brand kitchens it was their conservatism that is exposed here.

Chinese

Five of the recipes here could be seen as from Chinese cuisine: Shanghai Chicken and Walnuts, Soy Steak Supreme, Sweet and Sour Sauce, Sweet and Sour Fish with Rice Border, and Sweet and Sour Pork. That three of them are for Sweet and Sour dishes again seems like dumbing down to me. Chinese cuisine has had a long history in Australia from at least the 1850's goldrush where they ran cookshops not only for Chinese miners but those looking for an alternative to mutton and damper.¹¹ The AWW and Chinese cuisine had built up quite a strong partnership by this time. The engagement began on April 1939, just six years in publication, when the AWW published a feature article 'Here's what they eat ... "Out East" in 1939'.¹² This was well before the publication of the first two English language Chinese recipe books, Roy Geechoun's 1948 *Cooking the Chinese Way* and Yep Yung Hee's 1951 *Chinese Recipes for Home Cooking*.¹³ The partnership blossomed in the 1960's. In 1961 the AWW published 'Chinese cookery - Cantonese Style', a selection of recipes from the cookery book of Ella Mei-Wong also published that year.¹⁴ It would go on in 1964 to publish 'Chinese Party Food', a seven-page feature with recipes 'specially prepared by Mrs Ella-Mei Wong'.¹⁵ The AWW followed this up in 1965 with 'Cook Chinese' a set of recipes by Nancy Chi Mai.¹⁶ Also in 1965 it published 'Buffet Party for Fifty ... with Chinese Style'.¹⁷

Anglo-Indian

Of the four recipes here that use curry powder three I'd ascribe to Anglo-Indian cuisine where raisins, apples and chutney were historically substituted for unavailable Indian ingredients and remained there even when Indian ingredients became available: Veal and Raisin Curry, Poached Eggs in Curry Sauce, Rice Cheese and Onion Pie. The fourth, Hot Spicy Fish which used Continental Dutch Curry and Rice Soup I'd ascribe to Australo-Indian cuisine. In 1936 the AAW had published 'Know How to Make Delicious Curries ... Before Bleak Winter Comes'¹⁸ in which the recipes used curry powder but dropped the dried fruit. In June 1961, the AWW published a one-page feature article – 'Curries'.¹⁹ Six curries are given only one of which, Pear-Nut Curry, calls for apples and sultanas. None of the recipes

⁸ 'Two Italian Menus', *The Australian Women's Weekly* 24 April 1957 p.57

⁹ 'Italian Cookery', AWW 13 September 1961 pp.49 - 51

¹⁰ 'Fine Food From Italy', *The Australian Women's Weekly* 1 May 1963 p.40

¹¹ Van Reyk, *True To The Land. A History of Food In Australia* Reaktion 2021 p.70

¹² 'Here's what they eat ... "Out East" *The Australian Women's Weekly* 15 April 1939 p.9

¹³ *Chinese Recipes for Home* Yep Yung Hee, Associated General Publications, Sydney 1951

¹⁴ 'Chinese cookery - Cantonese Style', *The Australian Women's Weekly* 17 May 1961 pp.42 - 43

¹⁵ 'Chinese Party Food', *The Australian Women's Weekly* 19 February 1964 pp.47 - 54

¹⁶ 'Cook Chinese' *The Australian Women's Weekly* 15 September 1965 pp.1 - 13

¹⁷ Buffet Party for Fifty ... with Chinese Style, *The Australian Women's Weekly* 10 November 1965 p.60

¹⁸ 'Curried Rabbit' Know How to Make Delicious Curries ... Before Bleak Winter Comes, *The Australian Women's Weekly* 90 May 1936 p. 51

¹⁹ Curries, *The Australian Women's Weekly* 14 June 1963 p.45

used cayenne or chilli. Then in May 1963 the same month as the publication of the booklet the AWW published another single page on curry as part of its feature article 'How to be a Specialist Cook'.²⁰ It itemised the spices that are used in curry powder, assuring the home cook that 'all herbs and spices mentioned are obtainable in Australia'.²¹

Middle European

There were four recipes here that I would ascribe to Middle European cuisines (Hungarian, Austrian, German, Czech, Polish): Balkan Chicken Pilaf, Bremen Cake, Streusel Squares, and Apple Kuchen. These were cuisines under-represented before 1963. In 1938 the AWW published 'Recipes from the Continent' with seven cake recipes.²² Just one specified its provenance: Topfen Kiperln (An Austrian Recipe). Also, in 1938 the AWW published recipes for Hungarian Pie and Foam Sauce and Polish recipes for Rosol or Beef Tea with Kluski or Dumpling and Farszerowana Kapusta (Stuffed with Cabbage).²³ In 195? The AWW published a supplement *Books for Cooks* with recipes by Lucas for Piroshkis, Iced Bortsch and Cabbage Strudel.²⁴ In January 1963 the AWW published 'European Cooking' a two-page spread of recipes from Musia Soper's cookery book *Encyclopedia of European Cookery*. It's curious to me why the AWW seemingly ignored Maria Kozslik Donovan's 1955 book *Continental Cookery in Australia* and played catch-up eight years later with a non-Australian cookery book.²⁵

Famous Brands' Advertisements

In contrast to the preponderance of Anglo-Australian recipes, six of 11 Famous Brands' advertisements in the booklet directly addressed non-Anglo cuisines. White Wings big image is of a Luncheon Fruitcake, but it has thumbnail images of two packets under the text 'Try these other White Wings Speciality Cake Mixes' - one for Cinnamon Streusal, the other for Cassata Fruitcake²⁶. Uncle Toby's Oats have a recipe and image for Curry Mandalay - the ingredients of which include curry powder, sultanas, chutney, lemon juice, salt, pepper and peeled chopped carrot and apples - an archetypal Anglo-Indian set of ingredients.²⁷ Sunwhite Rice has a recipe and image for Devilled Rice with Pan Fried Chicken the ingredients for which similarly are typical Anglo-Indian cuisine - cooking apple, curry powder, and chutney.²⁸ Big Sister's Ginger Roll is in a tin the label for which gives the name in Chinese-English font.²⁹ Continental Soups advertised its Dutch Curry and Rice Soup with a recipe.³⁰

Recipes

Cakes and Biscuits

There was nothing exceptional here. Not unexpectedly a White Wings cake mix was an ingredient in several recipes for cakes, for example Orange Candle Cakes; Spiced Ginger Cupcakes; Chocolate-Banana Cake; Party Fruit Gateau; and the Australian icon the Lamington. Marville was an ingredient in several recipes also, going one-step further than White Wings incorporating its name into the title of the cake or biscuit, for example Marville Tea Cake; Marville Fiesta Cookies; and Marville Pineapple

²⁰ 'How to be a Specialist Cook ... Curries' *The Australian Women's Weekly* 22 May 1963 p.44

²¹ Spices could be bought from health food stores and delicatessens.

²² 'Recipes from the Continent' *The Australian Women's Weekly* 26 November 1938 p.3

²³ 'These Dishes Have A Foreign Flavour' *The Australian Women's Weekly* 24 December 1938 p.8

²⁴ *Book for Cooks*, *The Australian Women's Weekly* 195?

²⁵ Kozslik Donovan, Maria, *Continental Cookery in Australia* William Heinemann Ltd, Melbourne, 1960, first edition 1955

²⁶ White Wings, AWW 1 May 1963 p.27

²⁷ Uncle Toby's Oats, AWW 1 May 1963 p.22

²⁸ Sunwhite Rice, AWW 1 May 1963 p.19

²⁹ Big Sister, AWW 1 May 1963 p.30

³⁰ Dutch Curry and Rice Soup

Crunch Cake. There were just two recipes for non-Anglo-Australian cake - Bremen Cake and Streusel Squares.

What is of interest to me here is that the booklet was published in 1963, fully 20 years after 'Continental cakes and biscuits appeared on many stalls' at a fundraiser for a charity, and 16 years after the influx of Middle European refugees who are often credited with transforming Australian café food culture particularly by cakes and pastries. The Famous Brands, Woollies and the AWW seem to have been oblivious to these changes.

Desserts

There are 70 recipes for desserts none of which stray from the Anglo-Australian. Twenty-three use a Big Sister canned roll, just six use Golden Circle Pineapple.

'Varied' meats

There were 34 recipes for 'varied meat' dishes. Disappointingly here also the recipes are solidly Anglo-Australian. Just six at least gestured toward non-Anglo-Australian cuisines – Soy Steak Supreme, Pizza Supreme, Marville Spanish Rice, Veal and Potato Curry, Riblets Mexicale, Spicey Meat Loaf and Nasi Goreng. There were just two offal recipes - Brandy Cream Kidneys and Kidney Croustades. There were two which called for Continental smallgoods in this case frankfurts: Glazed Pineapple and Sausages and Hot Dogs – Tropic Style. The AWW would correct the lack of recipes for Continental smallgoods with a feature article 'Sausages', in 1965.³¹ Sub-headed 'Dictionary of sausage types to help you make the right decision', 40 sausages were described, including suggestions for using them.

Poultry

There were 11 recipes for chicken. Of these four were nominally non-Anglo-Australian: Balkan Chicken Pilaf, Shanghai Chicken with Walnuts; Chicken Casablanca, and Chicken and Rice Italiano.

Fish

There were 19 recipes for fish. Keeping in tune with the other dishes there were just two that were nominally non-Anglo-Australian: Tuna Espagnole and Marville Pizza. Ten called for canned fish which is unsurprising given that one of the Famous Brands is Woolworths Limited which sold canned fish.

Vegetables

The range of vegetables did not extend past what would commonly be in Anglo-Australian cuisine: asparagus, cabbage, capsicum (red or green), carrot, celery, corn, cucumber, lettuce, mushrooms, onions, parsnip, peas, potatoes, pumpkin, radish, shallots, tomatoes (pulp, sauce, puree also), turnip. None of them were for vegetables alone. None of the recipes for the non-Anglo-Australian dishes called for special vegetables. There were no vegetarian recipes i.e. vegetables on their own, not accompanying meat or fish.

Fruit

As with vegetables, fruits used were within Anglo-Australian cuisine: pineapple, oranges, lemon, peaches, prunes, apples, dried apricots, dates, bananas, cherries, and glace cherries.

Spices

Most recipes had very little to no spices. Of those that did, cayenne was called for in 13 recipes, garlic in eight, paprika in seven, curry powder in five. Chili was called for in one recipe and chilli sauce in another.

³¹ 'Sausages', *Australian Women's Weekly* 10 March 1965 pp.45-47

Conclusion

The 1963 Australian table as constructed by the Famous Brands, Woollies and the AWW is an Anglo-Australian one with limited inclusion of other cuisines. In the context of recent and contemporaneous recipes published in the weekly magazine for non-Anglo-Australian cuisines the recipes in the booklet seem out of step.

Appendix 1. Famous brands and their products³²

Big Sister Foods Ltd.- Cake-rolls and Puddings

Clifford Love & Co. - Uncle Toby's Oats and Maize Oil

C. O. D. Cannery – Golden Circle Canned Pineapple and Beetroot

Kraft Foods – Philadelphia Cream Cheese, Processed Cheeses, Mayonnaise

Marville Co. – Marvel Margarine

Ricegrower's Mills Ltd. – Sunwhite rice

The Batlow Packing House Ltd. – Mountain Maid Canned Corner and Pie Apple

The Nestle Company (Australia) Ltd.- Processed Milk, Chocolate Quik, Nescafe

White Wings Pty. Ltd. – Baking Mix, Cake Mixes

Woolworths Limited – Tender Joy Chicken, Canned Fish, Package Vegetables, Canned Orange Juice

World Brands Oty. Ltd. – Continental Brand Soups, Packaged Desserts, Cofa Shortening

³² 'Recipes from Famous Brand Cooks' *The Australian Women's Weekly* 1 May 1963 p.31