

# Lobster Pekin, Szekely Gulyas, and Boeuf Provencale. Promoting culinary diversity in the *Australian Women's Weekly* 1933 – 1970

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One of my interests in Australian food history is seeing how culinary diversity has been promoted through publications - newspapers, magazines, journals and books. This article looks to identifying how cultural diversity was promoted through the food pages of the *Australian Women's Weekly* (the *Weekly* from hereon) from its first edition in 1933 to the publication of its first cookbook – the *Australian Women's Weekly Cookbook* (the *Cookbook* from hereon) in 1970.

Why choose the *Weekly*? Freida Moran has described the *Weekly* as 'a recognised cultural mediator with popular impact.'<sup>1</sup> Lauren Samuelson writes: 'As leaders of the magazine's Test Kitchen, the *Weekly*'s food editors had a unique position and ability to impact Australian food culture through their food features.'<sup>2</sup> <sup>3</sup> In modern parlance the *Weekly* was an influencer. In the introduction to the *Cookbook* Ellen Sinclair, Food Editor at the *Weekly*, said as much when she wrote: 'Our Leila Howard Test Kitchen has been proud to help readers not only with planning important family occasions, but also with preparing the daily meal; we are proud that our recipes have become so much a part of Australian home life.'<sup>4</sup> <sup>5</sup>

What were the ways the *Weekly* promoted culinary diversity in its published recipes to encourage their incorporation into 'Australian home life'?

## 1. Feature Article – National Cuisines

These dealt with a single cuisine giving recipes for several dishes. Each cuisine had an introduction which may have been a summary of the style of dishes from that cuisine, sometimes a summary of key ingredients in the cuisine, or an explanation of the mode of cooking in that cuisine.

### Example 1.

#### A Chinese Touch. New Ways for the Hostess (1936)<sup>6</sup>

This, one of the first cuisines to be featured, was a single page with nine recipes all but three with Anglicised names. 'Just as London has gone "all Chinese" in the matter of clothes, following on the wonderful exhibition of Chinese arts and crafts,' wrote 'Graduate', 'hostesses now vie with one another on the subject of Chinese parties and food. The idea is worth imitating, and discerning hostesses will delight in the possibilities of Chinese "eats" and table decorations.' 'Graduate' described some common ingredients in Chinese cuisine. 'Sour-sweet flavouring is typical of Chinese dishes. Plain boiled rice is served with many dishes, but is made more interesting by frying after boiling, as is done in China. Soya beans, chili sauce, preserved ginger, almonds, a thick mixed fish sauce, and curry powder are all used in Chinese cookery. Melons, honey, dates, and persimmons. and

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<sup>1</sup> Moran, Freida, 'Ordinary and Exotic: A cultural history of curry in Australia' A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honours in History November 2017 p.4

<sup>2</sup> Samuelson, Lauren, 'From nutrition to glamour: The Australian Women's Weekly's food editors 1933-1970. History Australia 2022, Vol. 19, No.2, p.425

<sup>3</sup> While writing this article I came across Lauren Samuelsson's *A Matter of Taste. The Australian Women's Weekly and Its Influence on Australian Food Culture*. Monash University 2024. Chapter 6: 'It Was Taken Up with Cries of Delight. Foreign Food and Fads in the Australian Kitchen' is an excellent discussion of the subject.

<sup>4</sup> Sinclair, Ellen, Introduction, *Australian Women's Weekly Cookbook* Golden Press 1970

<sup>5</sup> In 1977 the Audit Bureau of Circulation found that the AWW had a circulation of over 850,000 and that an average issue was read by 3,444,000 people aged 14 and over. Buttrose, Ita, 'At My Desk', *The Australian Women's Weekly* 6 July 1977 p.1

<sup>6</sup> 'A Chinese Touch. New Ways for the Hostess', *The Australian Women's Weekly* 11 February 1936 p.3

whole preserved plums are just a few of specialities that can be introduced when entertaining “a la China.”

The recipes published were Prawn Cocktail, Soya Bean Savory, Chicken Chop Suey, Chinese Rice, Chow Chow, Bamboo Pudding, Lobster Pekin, Devilled Prawns, Pickled Stuffed Eggs, Chop Suey Hong Kong.<sup>7</sup>

### **Example 2.**

#### **Japanese Cookery (1962)<sup>8</sup>**

This was a four-page illustrated feature article with six recipes for Shirumono (soup), two for Sashimi, for different fish, two for Nabe Ryori (fireside dishes), four for Okashi (desserts), two for Zensai (hors – d’ oeuvres), one for Sumono and Aemono (salads), and one for Nimono (boiled dishes). The recipes were the result of a visit she made to Japan at the invitation of the Japanese government.

‘Asian restaurants,’ wrote Dunleavy, ‘have stimulated the Australian housewife’s interest in Oriental cookery. Japanese cookery is perhaps the least known, although most of the ingredients for traditional dishes are sold here’. This assurance that ‘most of the ingredients for traditional dishes are sold here’ was a constant in AWW culinary feature articles.

Dunleavy wrote a Gourmet’s Guide to the restaurants for those ‘who want to try authentic, traditional Japanese dishes’ in Tokio (her spelling) and Kyoto. I imagine this was the quid quo pro for subsidising her trip.

## **2. Feature Article – Recipes from a National**

The *Weekly* published features based on recipes for a particular cuisine given to the *Weekly* by a national from the particular country.

### **Example 1.**

#### **India Curry and Rice Book – Jane Nuttah Singh (1968)**

This was a 16-page pull-out booklet with recipes from Jane Nuttah Singh. Singh had come to the *Weekly*’s attention when she won their Pineapple competition in 1962. The recipes covered meat, chicken, fish, and vegetarian dishes as well as a full page on accompaniments for a curry meal. She gave recipes for making and reheating rice with recipes for rice focussed dishes. She published the first recipe for Pork Vindaloo.

### **Example 2.**

#### **Hungarian Cookery (1970)<sup>9</sup>**

In this two-page feature the recipes were given by George Renvi ‘born in Budapest (and) who has lived in Australia for more than twenty years and still loves to cook the dishes of his native Hungary’.

Renvi gave the *Weekly* two menus accompanied by recipes for the dishes in the menu.

Menu 1: Sour Egg Soup, Steak Esterhazy with Semolina Noodles, Cottage Cheese Pancakes.

Menu 2: Potato Marjoram Soup, Szekely Gulyas (pork shoulder chops with sauerkraut), Apricot Souffle.

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<sup>7</sup> I am not here going to question the authenticity of the recipes. My task is simply to present them to you as evidence of the intent to place before the cook culinarily diverse cuisines and to encourage them to attempt the dishes by appeal to some characteristic or otherwise.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Japanese Cookery’, *The Australian Women’s Weekly* 16 May 1962 p.39

<sup>9</sup> ‘Hungarian Cookery’ *The Australian Women’s Weekly* 13 May 1970 p.72

### 3. Feature Article – Dishes

These were articles that described a dish/or dishes in detail and gave recipes for it, sometimes looking at the dish in a number of countries.

#### Example 1.

##### **Cannelloni (1966)**<sup>10</sup>

‘Cannelloni are an Italian dish of pancakes with filling,’ the *Weekly* said. ‘They’re deliriously savory; substantial and economical, too. An ideal dish for a teenagers’ party, or an unusual first course for a dinner party, cannelloni are also excellent family food at any time.’

‘Cooks say cannelloni are good to make if you’ve got half a day to spare,’ the *Weekly* continued, ‘but we’ve simplified each step so it will be easy to present this savory dish.’ The steps are making the pancakes, making the sauce, making the filling and assembling. Photo illustrations show first a pancake ready to be lifted out of the frypan and then an image of one pancake being filled and a photo of the finished dish

#### Example 2

##### **An International Look At Croquettes (1970)**<sup>11</sup>

Sometimes a feature article looked at how a particular dish was treated in several countries. This three-pager gave recipes for meatballs or flat cakes of mince. ‘Croquettes, meatballs, rissoles – call them what you will,’ said the *Weekly*, ‘they all add up to small, tempting, savory morsels of meat, fish, or chicken. And they’re internationally popular - every country has its speciality.’

Recipes were given from Albania, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, France, Korea, Sweden, Russian, England, Denmark, and Indonesia. What’s noticeable is that the recipes have not only been sourced in Europe.

#### Example 3.

##### **Pasta (1965)**<sup>12</sup>

A feature article might also focus on a key part of a cuisine – like pasta and Italian cuisine. ‘Some housewives, especially those of Italian descent, make their own pastas,’ the *Weekly* said, ‘but ready-made pastas are also sold in great variety at all food stores’. The article described different pastas and whether they could be bought in a dry form - Macaroni, Spaghetti, Vermicelli or as ‘made up dishes’ – Ravioli, Gnocchi. It described how to cook pasta: ‘All pastas should be cooked for 10 to 20 minutes, according to size, in a large quantity of boiling salted water. It also gave recipes for Macaroni Salad, Chicken Tetrizzini, Semolina Gnocchi, Potato Gnocchi, and, inevitably, Spaghetti Bolognese.

#### Example 4.

##### **Sambals and Other Side Dishes (1967)**<sup>13</sup> ,

A feature could be made around standard accompaniments to a dish. ‘Sambals and other side dishes add interest to a curry meal,’ the *Weekly* said. It gave instructions how to eat them. These side dishes can be sharp, pungent, sweet, salty, or tart; when choosing from them, put just a small quantity on the plate. Eat the dishes intermittently by taking a little of one, then another, mixing each with a spoonful of curry and rice.’ The article gave recipes for sambals, chutneys, sauces and for the Indian flat bread puri.

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<sup>10</sup> ‘Cannelloni’, The *Australian Women’s Weekly* 11 May 1966 p.59

<sup>11</sup> ‘An International Look At Croquettes’, The *Australian Women’s Weekly* 21 January 1970 pp. 47 - 49

<sup>12</sup> ‘Pasta’, The *Australian Women’s Weekly* 27 January 1965 p.12

<sup>13</sup> ‘Sambals and Other Side Dishes’, The *Australian Women’s Weekly* 1 May 1967 p.14-15

#### 4. Booklets

The *Weekly* published booklets on a style of cooking or a food or a pastiche of recipes among which were culinarily diverse recipes. The booklets were pull out supplements only available with purchase of the magazine.

##### Example 1.

###### **Books for Cooks (195?)**

There were also booklets with generalist recipe content. This 63-page one was by Dione Lucas, 'America's blue-ribbon cook, TV personality, and teacher of the highly skilled art of cooking'.<sup>14</sup> Lucas was in Australia to 'tour and lecture in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide, where she will demonstrate to women how to make artistic creations from ordinary ingredients'. Out of 104 recipes 45 are non-Anglo-Australian but also are only European. Recipes are given for example for Blinis, Boeuf Provencale, Escalopes de Veau Parmesan, Hot Brioches, Pilaf of Lamb Kidneys, Swedish Meatballs, Vacherin aux Peches.

##### Example 2.

###### **Cooking With Herbs and Spices (1967)<sup>15</sup>**

This 15-page booklet didn't have an introduction It's format was to name a spice or herb, describe its uses and give recipes for it. There were only seven recipes for non-Anglo-Australia cuisine. For example, Bay Leaves/Rice Pilaf<sup>16</sup>, Curry Powder/Prawn Curry and Curry Biscuits<sup>17</sup>, Paprika/Hungarian Goulash<sup>18</sup>.

##### Example 3.

###### **Beef Cook Book (1969)<sup>19</sup>**

This was a 15 page photographically illustrated booklet. It had no introduction. It's section on International Dishes said: Beef makes a good dish in any language – and it's the basis for the favourite dishes of many countries<sup>20</sup>. It had recipes from Hawaii, Hungary, Malaysia, Italy, Mexico, India, China, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, Greece, France and Germany. In addition to these there were culinarily diverse recipes in the main text, for example, Lasagne or Family Beef Curry.

##### Example 4.

###### **The World's Best Curries (1969)<sup>21</sup>**

This was an 11-page photographically illustrated booklet. 'Recipes in this book', the *Weekly* said, 'will enable you to make a wonderful variety of curries — with poultry, fish, meat, vegetables, eggs, fruit. There are also many types of side-dishes to serve with them, and some delicious fruit-flavored desserts suitable to end a curry meal'.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Lucas Dione, 'Books for Cooks' *The Australian Women's Weekly* 195?

<sup>15</sup>'Cooking With Herbs and Spices', *The Australian Women's Weekly* 1 February 1967.

<sup>16</sup>'Bay Leaves/Rice Pilaf' *Cooking With Herbs and Spices*, *The Australian Women's Weekly* 1 February 1967 p.2

<sup>17</sup>'Curry Powder/Prawn Curry', *Cooking With Herbs and Spices*, *The Australian Women's Weekly* 1 February 1967. p.11

<sup>18</sup>'Paprika/Hungarian Goulash' *The Australian Women's Weekly* 1 February 1967. p.10

<sup>19</sup>'Beef Cook Book', *The Australian Women's Weekly* 23 July 1969

<sup>20</sup>'Beef Cook Book', *The Australian Women's Weekly* 23 July 1969 p.7

<sup>21</sup>'The World's Best Curries', *The Australian Women's Weekly* 8 March 1967

<sup>22</sup>'The World's Best Curries', *The Australian Women's Weekly* 8 March 1967 p.1

Mr. A. E. ("Tiger") Ady<sup>23</sup>, of Sydney, an 'authority on Asian spices' gave descriptions of the country of origin of curries 'showing how curries can vary according to their country of origin'. Also published was a guide to 'Curry ingredients' – Ghee, Coconut milk or cream, Tamarind and Lemongrass.<sup>24</sup>

Curry recipes in the booklet came from Burma, India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Thailand, and Ceylon.

## 5. Reader recipes

The *Weekly* ran a weekly recipe competition for a money prize and the pride of having the winning recipe(s) published. This is a small sample of reader recipes for non-Anglo-Australian cuisine.

- Indian Chutney.<sup>25</sup>
- Hungarian Cream.<sup>26</sup>
- Tim Suen Yoke (Chinese recipe).<sup>27</sup>
- German Coffee Cake.<sup>28</sup>
- Cassata Cake.<sup>29</sup>
- Polish Dill Cucumbers.<sup>30</sup>

## 6. Chef's recipes

### Example 1.

#### Tony's Luxury Dish (1955-1956)

Tony was Tony Clerici who from what I can gather was one time head chef at Myer's department store and Manager at Romano's and was described by the *Weekly* as a well-known chef and restaurateur. During 1955 - 1956 Clerici gave his 'Luxury Dish' recipes in editions of the *Weekly*. Most of the recipes were for non-Anglo-Australian dishes and at the fine dining end. Among them were Bouillabaisse<sup>31</sup> Chicken Liver Normandie<sup>32</sup> and Pork Rillettes Caprice<sup>33</sup>. Clerici was also credited as the one who introduced Steak Diane to the Australian table and made it famous via Romano's.

### Example 2.

#### Wonderful Food From Seven Countries (1970)<sup>34</sup>

This feature article opens with the observation that 'Australian cuisine has been greatly enriched in the past few years by the dishes introduced to it by migrants.' These dishes, the *Weekly* said, are best presented and served at the international club that had formed to cater for their nationals. 'In this six-page feature are wonderful dishes from seven countries, as interpreted by skilled chefs at seven of Sydney's international clubs'.

The seven Clubs and one of the dishes they contributed were: Apia Club (Italian) – Soup Montarana; Russian Club – Continental Meats; Hellenic Club – Melizanes Imum Baldi; Rathskeller at the

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<sup>23</sup> Ady was the husband of Doris Ady who in 1968 published, *Curries from the Sultan's Kitchen*. Recipes from India, Pakistan, Burma & Sri Lanka. The Ady's also ran a spice import business and a restaurant.

<sup>24</sup> 'The World's Best Curries', *The Australian Women's Weekly* 8 March 1967 p.2

<sup>25</sup> 'Indian Chutney', *The Australian Women's Weekly* 23 June 1934 p.31

<sup>26</sup> 'Hungarian Cream', Prize Recipe, *The Australian Women's Weekly* 21 February 1948 p.30

<sup>27</sup> 'Tim Suen Yoke', *The Australian Women's Weekly* 29 March 1961 p.54

<sup>28</sup> 'German Coffee Cake' Prize Cake Has Gay Topping, *The Australian Women's Weekly* 16 February 1966 p.39

<sup>29</sup> 'Cassata Cake' Cassata cake for dessert, *The Australian Women's Weekly* 10 May 1967 p.69

<sup>30</sup> 'Polish Dill Cucumbers' Recipe from Poland Wins Prize, *The Australian Women's Weekly* 18 June 1969 p.72

<sup>31</sup> 'Bouillabaisse', Tony's Luxury Dish, *The Australian Women's Weekly* 25 May 1955 p.58

<sup>32</sup> 'Chicken Liver Normandie' Tony's Luxury Dish, *The Australian Women's Weekly* 27 June 1956 p.74

<sup>33</sup> 'Pork Rillettes Caprice' Tony's Luxury Dish, *The Australian Women's Weekly* 18 July 1956 p.52

<sup>34</sup> 'Wonderful Food From Seven Countries' *The Australian Women's Weekly* 16 September 1970 p.84-89

Concordia Club (German) – Liver Dumpling Soup; Polish Club – Beef Roulades; Phoenician Club (Malta) – Skirt Steak Broth; and the Spanish Club – Lechon al Horne (Baby Pork).

### **The Australian Women's Weekly's Cookbook (1970)<sup>35</sup>**

Ellen Sinclair Introducing the International Cookery<sup>36</sup> section of the *Cookbook* wrote: 'Because Australian housewives are always interested in ways with foods, new, delicious tastes, dinner parties with an international flavour have become popular'.<sup>37</sup> In this context how did the *Cookbook* stand up to scrutiny of its culturally diverse recipes?

Across the main body of the cookbook and its International Cookery section there were recipes for:

- 27 Italian dishes.
- 26 French dishes.
- 17 Curry/Indian dishes.
- 17 Chinese dishes.
- 9 Indonesian dishes.
- 4 German dishes.
- 4 Hungarian dishes
- 3 Greek dishes.
- 3 Middle European dishes.
- 2 Spanish dishes
- 1 Middle Eastern dish

It gives three ways for cooking rice: Fluffy Boiled Rice, Steamed Pearly Rice and Oven-steamed Rice. Recipes are given for Pilaf, Nasi Goreng, Risotto and Chinese Fried Rice.<sup>38</sup>

It has a section on Pastas in which it broadly describes the kinds of pasta, how to cook pasta, and gives four recipes for using them – all Italian.<sup>39</sup>

It has a section on Vegetables<sup>40</sup>, mostly firmly in Anglo-Australian cuisine and gives some recipes correspondingly, none for a culturally diverse dish. Okra is described and the basic way of preparing it but there is no recipe. For Chilli it directs the cook to Peppers where the two are unhelpfully discussed together, chilli taking a backseat. Indeed, chilli remains absent from curries. There is a description of what spices go to make a curry powder but no recipe as such.

There is a five-page Dictionary of Herbs and Spices<sup>41</sup> of which three are given over to spices many of which are used in Asian and Indian cooking. There is discussion of each spice and indicative uses but no recipes. Garam Masala is described but again there is no recipe for it.

There is a four-page section on Sauces which includes Stroganoff Sauce and Chinese Plum Sauce, most of the others being French affiliated.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> The *Australian Women's Weekly's Cookbook* 1970

<sup>36</sup> Recipes for culinarily diverse dishes were spread throughout the cookbook with some selected dishes being in the International Cookery section. I can see no reason for this.

<sup>37</sup> 'International Cookery', *The Australian Women's Weekly's Cookbook* p.120

<sup>38</sup> 'Rice', *Australian Women's Weekly Cookbook* pp. 91 – 92.

<sup>39</sup> 'Pastas', *Australian Women's Weekly Cookbook* pp. 94 - 96

<sup>40</sup> 'Vegetables', *Australian Women's Weekly Cookbook* pp. 99 - 112

<sup>41</sup> 'Dictionary of Herbs and Spices', *Australian Women's Weekly Cookbook* pp.136 – 143

<sup>42</sup> 'Sauces', *Australian Women's Weekly Cookbook* pp 144 - 147

The nine Indonesian dishes are an anomaly. It's blurb in the International Section doesn't suggest why there is an emphasis on this and not equally on Malaysian which gets no recipes. Thai cuisine was not on the radar at all at this time nor were Vietnamese, Cambodian and Lao.

So, how well has the *Cookbook* prepared the home cook to hold 'dinner parties with an international flavour'? The big four – Italian, French, Curry/India, and Chinese - would give them sufficient to go with and there are lesser cuisines that can also be called on in a pinch.

### **Summing Up: Culinary Diversity in the *Weekly***

I undertook this review of the *Australian Women's Weekly's* recipe pages to assess how the AWW promoted culinarily diversity between 1933 and 1970. I found several ways which I have described and given examples of dishes promoted in them. The *Weekly* is often seen as a bulwark of Anglo-Australian food. My review suggests a more nuanced view of the *Weekly* is called for, one that acknowledges its efforts to make culinary diversity 'a part of Australian home life'.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Sinclair, Ellen, Introduction, *Australian Women's Weekly Cookbook* Golden Press 1970