

## Culinary Diversity in Community Cookbooks 1970 – 1980

On the 11th August 1975 Al Grassby, Australian Minister for Immigration, laid the foundation for a multicultural Australia in a paper given to the Cairnmillar Institute 'Strategy 2000: Australia for Tomorrow'. In his paper, 'A Multi - Cultural Society for the Future' Grassby said:

My vision of our society in the year 2000 foreshadows a greatly increased social complexity in which the dynamic interaction between the diverse ethnic groups will be producing new national initiatives, stimulating new artistic endeavours, and ensuring great strength in diversity.<sup>1</sup>

One of the ways this 'dynamic interaction' would happen from the following years till the present was through food, creating what I have called elsewhere the multicultural Australian table. Lately I have been wondering how culinarily diverse the Australian table was back in the '70s. Not having direct access to that table I looked for places at that time that could throw some light on the question. Sarah Jane Shepherd Black in her thesis 'Tried and Tested'. Community Cookbooks in Australia, from 1890 to 1980. says: 'The humblest of cookery genres, the community cookbook, is a rich primary text of community action, lives lived and foods cooked and shared'.<sup>2</sup> I decided to look for evidence of culinary diversity in community cookbooks in the '70s.

The books were in order of the year of their publication:

- Recipes, Pearce School (1970)
- Centenary Recipe Book. The Peakhurst Infants' School Club and the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Parent and Citizens' Association (1971)
- Moonta Primary School Welfare Club Cookery Book (1972)
- Favourite Recipes of P.W.A. (Dorcas) St Stephen's Presbyterian Church (1973)
- What to Cook, Second Edition, The Ladies Auxiliary of St Helens Methodist Hospital (1975)
- Kookaburra Pre-School Cookbook 1977 (?)
- What's Cooking, Balaklava Branch of the Mothers' and Babies' Health Association (1977)
- Cookbook Number 2, McKinnon High School Mothers' Club (1977)
- Golden Jubilee Recipe Book One, South Western Group, Country Women's Association (1978)
- Golden Jubilee Recipe Book Two, South Western Group, Country Women's Association (1978)
- The Hornsby and District Hospital Cook Book (1978)
- Wonthaggi High School Cookbook (1978)
- The Seaforth Public Cookery Book, (1981)

This gives cook books from a mixture of community organisations, women's groups, remote rural, rural, rural branch of a state-wide organisation, urban, churches, and schools.

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<sup>1</sup> A. J. Grassby, *A Multicultural Society for the Future*, Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1973)

<sup>2</sup> Black Sarah Jane Shepherd, 'Tried and Tested'. Community Cookbooks in Australia, from 1890 to 1980. Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy pg.2

### **Diversity across all cookbooks reviewed**

I took as my guideline of the culinary diverseness of a dish its title which clearly stated its culinary affiliation - Curry, Sweet and Sour, Goulash - or was named for a non-Anglo location - Madras Steak.

1. All the cookery books have recipes from diverse cuisines.
2. They all had recipes for Chinese dishes, the most common being for Sweet and Sour of one kind or another.<sup>3</sup>
3. All but one had recipes for Curry of one kind or another with Prawn Curry being the most frequent. There were four recipes for non-curry Indian dishes. There were no recipes for any other dish from the rest of South Asia (i.e. Pakistan, Sri Lanka or Bangladesh).
4. From South East Asia there were four Malaysian dishes, three Indonesian and one Vietnamese.
5. There were three Japanese dishes
6. All but three had Italian dishes with veal, pasta, and pizza the most common.
7. There were nine recipes for Goulash, three specifying it as Hungarian Goulash.
8. There were five recipes for Stroganoffs.

### **Proportionality**

What proportion of recipes in any one book are diverse culinary recipes? It varies of course, but here are a few for comparison. Most have large sections on cakes, biscuits, slices, and desserts but the diverse recipes rarely include any in this category. So, I have not counted them in working out proportionality as it would seriously skew the result.

St. Stephen's P.W.A. – 13 diverse out of a total of 65 recipes i.e. 20%

Wonthaggi – 21 out of 78 i.e. about 27%

Seaforth – 47 out of 142 i.e. about 33%

Pearce - 20 out of 52 i.e. about 38%

Moonta – 9 out of 24 i.e. about 40%

None were below 20% and none over 40%.

### **Three examples of culinary diversity**

The material above aggregated recipes across the years 1970 – 1981. But what did culinary diversity look like in a single cookery book? Here are three examples. As above I have left cakes, biscuits and desserts out of the lists.

*Centenary Recipe Book*. The Peakhurst Infants' School Club and the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Parents and Citizens Association (1971)

Chop Suey; Boeuf Bourguignon; Chinese Veal and Vegetables; Mexican Chili Con Carne; Hungarian Goulash Casserole; Sausage Mandalay; Sweet and Sour Pork and Veal; Sweet and Sour Sausages; Sweet and Sour Pork; Curried Prawns and Rice; Sweet and Sour Tuna; Tuna Curry; Curried Cream Cheese Dip; Curry Dip; Chilli Relish.

*Moonta Primary School Welfare Club Cookery Book* (1972) (the smallest of the cookery books)

Pork Chops Chinese Style; Hi Ti; Beef Goulash; Bombay Curry; Fish and Spaghetti Casserole; Oriental Meat Balls; Good Beef Curry; Sweet and Sour Veal.

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<sup>3</sup> I have written about Australia's fascination with sweet and sour previously [Too sweet, and ... pineapple!. A brief history of Sweet and Sour Pork in Australia. - Compost](#)

*The Hornsby and District Hospital Cook Book (1978)*

Spanish Peasant soup; Sangria, Russian Salad; Macaroni Salad Bowl; Chicken Marengo; Polynesian Chicken; Malaysian Fried Chicken and Peanut Sauce; Sweet and Sour Tuna; Curried Salmon; Sweet and Sour Pork; Beef Cantonese; Rice A La Creole; Swiss Veal; Presto Lasagne; Sauerbraten; Malaysian Hamburgers; Chow Mien; Vietnamese Ground Beef; Goulash; O-Konomi-Yaki; Churrasco; Bigos; Stiphado.

### **Authorship**

There were just three where the nationality of the author aligned with the cuisine of the dish. 'An "Australian" version of Moussaka – Kerrie Karandonis<sup>4</sup>; 'Sweet and Sour Pork' – Mrs. L. Lim<sup>5</sup>, 'Soupes Plaki' – John Karandonis<sup>6</sup>.

### **Discussion**

It's clear that community cookbooks in the '70s show culinary diversity to varying extents. I am aware that recipes shared may have been 'specialties' of the sender and not daily fare. However, the cook books were produced during a period of cultural change in Australia with the ending of the White Australia Policy<sup>7</sup> which arguably had kept Australian cuisine embedded in its Anglo-Celtic roots. As the overwhelming number of recipes were authored by Anglo-Australians, I think that the recipes chosen and published say something about how the authors of the recipe and their community produced a book that shows them in Black's words 'thinking about, playing with and beginning to "own" a transformed culinary culture and a new, more flexible and resilient identity'.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Karandonis, Kerrie, An "Australian" version of Moussaka *The Seaforth Public School Cookery Book* p. 22

<sup>5</sup> Lim, Mrs. L, Lemon Chicken *The Seaforth Public School Cookery Book* p. 65

<sup>6</sup> Karandonis, John, Soupes Plaki *The Seaforth Public School Cookery Book* p.82a

<sup>7</sup> The White Australia Policy was the implementation of the Immigration Restriction Act 1901, *Pacific Island Labourers Act 1901* and the *Post and Telegraph Act 1901*. The intent of the Acts was to prevent non-white migration to Australia

<sup>8</sup>Black, Sarah Jane Shepherd, 'Tried and Tested'. Community Cookbooks in Australia, from 1890 to 1980. Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy pg.146