

Variations On A Theme. Homemade Sausage Rolls 1864 - 1964

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In 1864 Edward Abbott gave a perfunctory description of the sausage roll, you can hardly call it a recipe, in *The English and Australian Cookery Book. Cookery for the Many As Well the "Upper Ten Thousand"*.¹

Sausage rolls are an excellent variety of relish, which is merely the sausage meat enveloped in paste, in any shape you wish; but we say again, beware those ready made, unless you know where and by whom.

In this article I look at some of the many versions of the home-made sausage roll to 1964, a hundred years after Abbott. I looked at recipes published in newspapers, magazines and a sample of cookery books. It happens that the cookery books were not the sites at which variations occurred. So, the recipes in this article are only those from newspapers and magazines.

The earliest recipe I found other than Abbott's is this one from 'Cookie' in 1899 to *The Dawn*:

Sausage Roles

I am very successful in making sausage rolls, and, as they are liked, I am delighted to give my recipe to any reader requiring it. I boil the sausages first for five minutes in boiling water, this is done because otherwise the sausages would not be cooked enough if they were only cooked for the same time as is required for baking the crust. I then take them up, drain and skin them and cut them in half and let them remain for ten minutes to allow them to cool. Now I roll out my pastry about the thickness of a quarter of an inch, and cut it into pieces about five inches one way and three inches the other. Lay half a sausage in each, wet the edges of the pastry, fold it over the sausage, and press the ends securely. Bake in a hot oven. When they are done let them lean upright until they cool.²

'Cookie' does not specify what sort of pastry should be used. In recipes that follow puff pastry was most commonly used. This was the first I found for 'puff paste'

First make the puff paste in this way. Mix flour, salt, and baking powder together dry, then work in enough water to make a stiff paste. Roll this out on a floured board, spread it with either lard or butter, fold it three times, flour it well, roll it out again, and repeat the process of spreading it with lard three times. Then roll the paste out thin, and cut into pieces the length of sausage. Cut the sausages in half, so as to keep the length, place each piece on a strip of pastry, fold it over and press the edges together with a knife, bringing the join to the top of the sausage. Brush the pastry over with a little milk, and bake quickly for twenty minutes in a hot oven on a greased tin.³

In 1905 was the first recipe I came across to use minced meat and not a sausage, and to use parsley and other herbs.⁴ It also added lemon juice and an egg in the pastry and then glazed the whole with egg prior to baking.

¹ Abbott, Edward *The English and Australian Cookery Book. Cookery for the Many As Well the "Upper Ten Thousand"*;

² *The Dawn*, 1 August 1899 p.14

³ *Warwick Examiner and Times*, 10 October 1903 p.4

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In 1913 this recipe spiced it up, added ham to the meat, and cooked it in an interesting way:

One pound of raw, beef, sliced, 1lb of ham, one breakfastcupful of breadcrumbs, one pinch of cayenne, one teaspoonful of salt, one dessertspoon vinegar, one dessertspoonful of ketchup, two eggs. Mince beef and ham and add breadcrumbs and seasonings. Beat eggs slightly, and moisten and mix well. Roll into rolypoly shape. Have ready a pudding cloth wrung out of hot water; dust with flour. Tie the roll in it, place on a plate in a pot of boiling water to boil for two and a half hour. Dust with browned breadcrumbs.⁵

In 1917 the *Wyalong Advocate and Mining, Agricultural and Pastoral Gazette* published a recipe for sausage rolls 'especially adapted for travelling or picnic parties'.

This 1926 recipe ventilated the roll.

Puff pastry, sausage, eggs. Cut squares of puff pastry and put the meat of half a sausage on each. Fold over the pastry, making it adhere with a little beaten egg. Make three cuts across the top of the rolls with a knife, brush over with beaten egg and bake in a moderate oven for twenty to thirty minutes.⁶

In 1928 was the first recipe using pork mince.⁷ In 1932 a recipe mixed the sausage with 'crumbled' potatoes dipped it in egg and fried it.⁸ Another in 1932 put dollops of mashed potato on the pastry and topped it with a half a sausage.⁹ In 1933 the *Toowoomba Chronicle and Darling Down Gazette* published this recipe for offal eaters.

Take half a cooked sheep's kidney for each person, and a slice of buttered toast.

Roll each kidney in some uncooked sausage (best bought without skins by the pound), making it roll shaped. Each roll can, if liked, be dipped in egg and breadcrumb before cooking, but it is not really necessary. Fry each roll to a golden brown and serve at once on toast, with or without sauce.

(Mustard sauce is nice with this dish)¹⁰

In a 1938 recipe slices of bread, crusts removed replaced the puff pastry, with sausages held in place in the bread with a toothpick.¹¹ In 1945 milk was added to the sausage meat.

Skin 1 lb. pork sausages (if pork mince unavailable) and beat with milk till light. Allow to stand aside until the milk is absorbed, then beat in 1 cup wholemeal flour, pepper and salt to taste. Beat more milk in if mixture is dry. Roll out plain or cheese pastry very thin, cut in strips about 3 inches wide and 5 inches long. Place a tablespoon sausage mixture in centre of each and form into a roll. Brush over with egg and bake in a quick oven about 20 minutes.¹²

⁵ *Eyre's Peninsular Tribune*, 21 November 1919 p.4

⁶ *The Prahara Telegraph*, 15 January 1926 p.8

⁷ *The Queenslander Illustrated*, 19 May 1928 p.54

⁸ *The Gundagai Independent*, 11 April 1931 p.1

⁹ *Nambour Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser*, 30 December p.5

¹⁰ *Toowoomba Chronical and Darling Down Gazette*, 20 September 1933 p.4

¹¹ *Sydney Mail*, 6 April 1938 p.23

¹² *The Land*, 223 November 1945 p.17

The Australian Women's Weekly in 1955 published a recipe illustrated by photos at each stage – flavouring the mince with Worcester sauce and tomato sauce; cutting the pastry – not puff, just self raising flour, water and milk: spooning the filling onto the pastry, making a roll; cutting the rolls.¹³

There was one more version before 1964, a 1959 recipe which added stewed apples to the filling.¹⁴

¹³ *The Australian Women's Weekly* 15 August 1955 p.39

¹⁴ *The Biz*, 7 January 1959 p.6