

The Ways of Kedgerree. A survey covering 100 years of recipes 1870 - 1970 October 2025

Kedgerree. Take some cold boiled fish of any kind, five eggs boiled hard, a cupful of boiled rice, some butter, a cupful of cream, plenty of seasoning, and some cayenne: mixed and heated together, and served up hot.¹

This 1870 recipe is the earliest Australian recipe I've found for kedgerree a standard dish at the Anglo-Indian breakfast table and so adopted by the Australian table. Its origin is the Indian khichri/khichidi a dish of rice and mung dhal cooked with ghee and some spices.² It was this latter version that first appeared at the Anglo-Indian table. There are recipes for it in Anglo-Indian cookery books.³ Interestingly a recipe for it was also published in Australia in 1873.

Kitcheree (called also Kedgerree).— Soak a teacupful of dried peas for twelve hours in a basin of spring water; boil them until soft. Then wash a breakfast cupful of Patna rice; drain carefully through a colander the rice and peas. Warm a stewpan, then throw in 4 ozs. of butter; when bubbling, put in two or three onions sliced lengthways, fry until of a light golden colour; take out the onions, put in the rice and peas, fry until the butter has been absorbed, add eight white peppercorns, five or six cardamoms, four cloves, a blade of mace, and a stick of cinnamon, a little salt; mix all well together; cover the rice and peas with some good white broth or stock, put on the cover :and simmer very slowly; reduce the fire as the stock is absorbed; shake the pan occasionally, or stir the kitcheree with a wooden spoon, to prevent it burning. Serve very hot; stew (sic) the fried onions on the top. Some people like to colour the rice with a little saffron.⁴

But it was the version using fish that prevailed.

'It seems to have been under British influence and for British people that flaked fish or smoked fish was built into the dish, replacing the moong or 'lentils'; and again due to the British that chopped hard boiled eggs came into the picture (plus in the de luxe version ingredients such as cream)'.⁵

Required: One ounce of butter or dripping, half a pound of boiled rice, half a pound of any cold cooked fish, salt, pepper and cayenne, one or two hard-boiled eggs, and a little mace, if liked. Melt the butter in a pan, add to it the rice, fish, and the white of the eggs cut in small pieces. Season well, and make it thoroughly hot. Pile it up on a hot dish and garnish it with some finely-chopped parsley and hard-boiled yolk of egg rubbed through a sieve.⁶

Recipes for versions of this kedgerree were published in newspapers. There was a recipe for Kedgerree of Lobster (1889).⁷ Salmon Kedgerree (1934) used tinned salmon⁸. Meat Kedgerree (1935) used tinned beef⁹. Kedgerree (1936) used smoked haddock¹⁰. Bouef Kedgerree du Cari

¹ Kedgerree, Domestic Recipes Australian Town and Country Journal 19 February 1870 p.23

² Achaya, K. T. khichri/khichidi *A Historical Dictionary of Indian Food* Oxford India paperback p.130

³ Kichary, Arnot, Sandford *Indian Cookery* 1831 p.16

⁴ Kitcheree Domestic Economy The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser 8 November 1873 p.612

⁵ Davidson, Alan, *The Oxford Companion to Food* Oxford Press 1999 p.20

⁶ Kedgerree Tempting Breakfast Dishes *Weekly Times* 23 May 1903 p.31

⁷ Kedgerree of Lobster, Ladie's Column *Zeehan and Dundas Herald* 2 March 1898 p.4

⁸ Salmon Kedgerree, Fish Comes Into Its Own *The Australian Women's* 24 February 1934 p.35

⁹ Meat Kedgerree *Smith's Weekly* 6 April 1935 p.21

¹⁰ Kedgerree Do You Like Crab and Haddock? *The Australian Women's Weekly* 4 April 1936 p.54

{1940} used beef and not fish and curry powder.¹¹ Salmon Kedgerree (1940) used tomato sauce.¹² Tomato and Cheese Kedgerree (1942) used no fish.¹³

Tomato Cheese Kedgerree

One cup rice, 1 tablespoon butter, 1 cup tomato puree, 1 large onion, 1 tablespoon chopped parsley, 1 teaspoon curry powder, ½ teaspoon salt, ½ cup grated sharp cheese. Cook well-washed rice in fast boiling water until tender. Drain and rinse in cold water. Fry chopped onion in butter. Add parsley, curry powder, salt, tomato puree, rice, and lastly cheese. Heat thoroughly and serve piping hot with grilled bacon rolls and green vegetable.

In 1954 a recipe was published for Chilled Kedgerree,

Chilled Kedgerree

Salmon and Rice

Salad is a great favorite of mine. For four people you need a 1 lb. tin of the best red salmon, three hard boiled eggs, three-quarters of a breakfast cup of rice (uncooked measure), two tablespoons butter, juice of one or two small lemons, a pound of firm-ripe tomatoes and mayonnaise (a bought 'ready-to-use' one is nice for this). Some green peas for garnish.

Take the unwashed rice. Put in a saucepan with an ounce of melted margarine. Stir until fat is absorbed. Add plenty of boiling water. Stir once.

Boil until rice can be crushed between your fingers. Drain well. Melt the butter in the rinsed saucepan. Stir in the flaked salmon from which all dark skin and bone has been removed.

Cook until salmon is gently bubbling in the buttery juice. Now turn in the drained rice which has been in the colander.

Toss and stir, adding the chopped eggs and some lemon juice. When well blended turn into a deep dish, cover lightly with a greased paper and cool.

When required, toss with a fork and pile in centre of a salad bowl (or on individual lettuce leaves). Surround with sliced peeled tomatoes, as cold as possible, and mask these lightly with mayonnaise.

Garnish with tiny circles of tomato and scatter with cooked green peas.¹⁴

Recipes were published in cookery books. In 1911 *The Kookaburra Cookbook* published Kedgerree 1 & 2.¹⁵ In 1927 Lucy Drake published *Miss Drake's Home Cookery* with a recipe for Kedgerree.¹⁶ In 1950 *The New Australian Cookery Illustrated* published Kedgerree (1950).¹⁷

Kedgerree

2 cups flaked cooked fish

¹¹ Bouef Kedgerree du Cari, More Prizewinning Recipes. *The Australian Women's Weekly* 27 January 1940 p.8

¹² Salmon Kedgerree Fish Can Be So Appetising *The Australian Women's Weekly* 12 July 1941 p.33

¹³ Tomato and Cheese Kedgerree *The Australian Women's Weekly* 21 March 1942 p.35

¹⁴ Chilled Kedgerree *The Advertiser* 7 January 24 1952 p.13

¹⁵ The Lady Victoria Buxton Girls' Club Adelaide, *The Kookaburra Cookery Book*, South Australia, E.W. Cole, 1911

¹⁶ Drake, Lucy, *Miss Drake's Home Cookery* 1927 p.40

¹⁷ Kedgerree *The New Australian Cookery Illustrated* 1950 p.228

2 cups boiled rice
 3 hard-boiled eggs
 1 tablespoon butter
 1 tablespoon lemon juice
 Cayenne pepper
 (Made from salmon, smoked or dried fish, tinned fish or leftover smoked fish.)

Remove all skin and bones from the fish. Put the butter and lemon juice in a saucepan and add the fish, boiled rice, and the chopped up whites of the egg. Season lightly with a few grains of cayenne pepper (and a teaspoon of curry powder if you like it) and stir over low heat until very hot.

Turn out in a mound on a hot dish and great the yolks of the eggs over the top.

Recipes for kedgerree were used in product promotion. This one was published in 1912 for Horseshoe Salmon.

Ingredients : 1 tin Horseshoe Salmon, cold boiled rice, 2 hard boiled eggs.
 Method: Chop whites of eggs and add to Salmon (which has been broken), boiled rice, popper, salt, and a little butter. Put into enamel saucepan with butter and stir till very hot. Serve in a hot dish, sieve yolks of eggs over top.¹⁸

They were also published along with other recipes in booklets for a product or piece of equipment. A recipe for Kedgerree was published in the Tasmanian Seafood Cookbook by the Department of Sea Fisheries, Tasmania in 1981. '... the dishes are developed by the department's own seafood specialist who is also available for cooking demonstrations'.¹⁹

In 1990 the *Canberra Times* published 'Poor man's feast from India' in its *Boddy At Large Column*.²⁰ It was the longest most comprehensive description of kedgerree published to that time. Michael Boddy, the columnist, began with a description of how he makes a wet kedgerree based on New Zealand smoked blue cod. He explained what ghee is and asafoetida the spice readers would have been least familiar with. He then continued describing the dish, its origin, its variations and gave a recipe for a dry kedgerree.

Coming full circle Doris Ady published Kedgerree with rice and red lentils in *Curries From The Sultan's Kitchen* (1968)²¹. Charmaine Solomon published Kitchri in her *South East Asian Cookery Book* also with rice and red lentils (1970).²²

Kitchri	
Ingredients	
Rice	200 ml
Red lentils	200 ml
Ghee or Butter	2 ½ tablespoons
Onions, finely sliced	2 large
Hot water	1 litre

¹⁸ Kedgerree Horseshoe Salmon *The Brisbane Courier* 1912 p.1

¹⁹ The Tasmanian Seafood Cookbook, Department of Sea Fisheries, Tasmania 1981 inside front cover

²⁰ Poor man's feast from India' *Canberra Times* 28 October 1990 p.38

²¹ Ady, Doris, *Curries from the Sultan's Kitchen. Recipes from India, Pakistan, Burma & Sri Lanka*, A.A. & A. W. Reid, 1968 p.109

²² Solomon, Charmaine, *South Asian Cookery Book* Summit 1970 p.15

Salt	2 ½ teaspoons
Garam masala	1 ½ teaspoons

Wash rice and drain well. Wash lentils well, removing any that float to the surface, then drain thoroughly.

Heat ghee in a saucepan and fry onion gently until golden brown. Remove half the onion and reserve. Add rice and lentils to pan and fry, stirring continuously, for approximately 3 minutes.

Add hot water, salt and garam masala. Bring to the boil and simmer over a very low heat for 20 – 35 minutes or until rice and lentil are cooked. Do not lift the lid or stir during cooking time.

Serve hot, garnished with the reserved onions.

Kedgerie has been durable. As of 2025 SBS (the Special Broadcasting Service) published online a recipe for Kedgerie using smoked Murray Cod.