

Strange Tastes

Over time, food preferences and eating habits change in response to various cultural, psychological, and social factors. Among the pages of the historic cookbooks in UNSW Library Special Collections are weird and wonderful recipes that capture these bygone tastes. Some recipes pair unconventional flavour combinations, like Philip E. Muskett's 1898 recipe for bananas and bacon, which he unconvincingly writes "is almost sure to be appreciated." Others feature rare or uncommon ingredients like swan eggs or turtle fins. Eliza Acton's 1859 instruction for a hard-boiled swan egg describes the beauty of the dish; "when boiled hard and shelled, their appearance is beautiful, the white being of remarkable purity and transparency." The recipes presented in *Strange Tastes* will both confuse the tastebuds and delight the senses.

Top Left

*Modern cookery for private families,
reduced to a system of easy practice in a
series of carefully tested receipts...*, 1859
by Eliza Acton
Printed in London by Longman, Brown,
Green, Longmans, and Roberts
V 641.5942/20

Top Centre

*Mrs Beeton's household management : a
complete cookery book*, 1920
by Isabella M. Beeton
Printed in London and Melbourne by
Ward, Lock & Co.
V 641.5942/14

Top Right

The art of living in Australia, 1894
by Philip E. Muskett and H. F. Wicken
Printed in London & Melbourne by Eyre
and Spottiswoode
V 641.0994/1

Bottom Right

*The book of diet : with, also a collection
of savoury, choice, delicious and selected
recipes*, 1898
by Philip E. Muskett
Printed in Melbourne by Robertson
V 613.2/139

Delectable Delights

Among the more pleasurable recipes are elaborate desserts, novel salads, and homemade snack foods. The recipes in *Healthful cookery* (1930), for example, feature decorative salads artfully arranged to be as much a feast for the eye as the stomach. The “Butterfly Salad” assembles bananas, pineapples, and olive slices as the body, wings, and eyes of a butterfly nestled on a bed of lettuce. The 1890 recipe for potato chips provides pared-back instructions devoid of temperatures or measurements, illustrating the difficulty in capturing and translating recipes for wood or coal-powered ovens. Rather than cooking for a specific time, home cooks looked for a ‘light-brown colour’ to indicate doneness. Baking is a science, and cooks and chefs had to be incredibly skilled to produce complex desserts in non-temperature-controlled ovens.

Top Left

The royal cookery book (Le livre de cuisine)
: comprising domestic and high-class
cookery, 1869
by Jules and Alphonse Gouffé
Printed in London by Sampson Low,
Son, and Marston
V 641.5944/23

Top Centre

High-class cookery made easy, 1890s
by Elizabeth Anna Hart
Printed in Edinburgh by Lorimer & Chalmers
V 641.5/19

Top Right

Healthful cookery, 1930
by Jenny Bartlett
Printed in Warburton, VIC by Signs
Publishing
V 641.5636/7

Bottom Right

*Senn's century cookery book : practical
gastronomy and recherché cookery*, 1933
by Charles Herman Senn
Printed in London by Ward, Lock & Co.
V 641.5/50

Peculiar Proteins

A common challenge in preparing recipes in historic cookbooks is sourcing rare or unusual ingredients. Some proteins or cuts of meat that were once commonplace, like a calf's head or feet, can be difficult to locate in modern grocery stores or even specialist butchers. Other ingredients are no longer consumed due to environmental or ethical concerns. Hannah Maclurcan's 1898 recipe for "Turtle Fins on Toast" calls for canned turtle fins, a delicacy rarely consumed now because so many species are on the endangered list. Dishes like "Rabbit Cake" and "Foie Gras Ice Cream" take what sounds like a sweet confection and transform it into a savoury main course. These curious delicacies surprise the senses by pairing incongruent flavours in unexpected ways.

Top Left

Mrs. Maclurcan's cookery book : a collection of practical recipes specially suitable for Australia, 1898

by Hannah Maclurcan

Printed in Townsville by H. Maclurcan

V 641.5/38

Top Centre

Mrs. A.B. Marshall's cookery book, 1895

by Agnes B. Marshall

Printed in London by Marshall's School of Cookery; and Simpkin, Marshall,

Hamilton, Kent & Co.

V 641.5/53

Top Right

La bonne cuisine : a selection of high-class and household cookery recipes, 1896

by Mrs. Black

Printed in London by Collins

V 641.5/18

Bottom Right

Soyer's standard cookery : a complete guide to the art of cooking dainty, varied, and economical dishes for the household, 1912

by Nicholas Soyer

Printed in London by Melrose

V 641.5/48

Cooking Curatives

Many historic cookbooks contain chapters dedicated to 'invalid cooking' with medicinal recipes designed to prevent and cure a host of ailments and sicknesses. The dishes often involve soft foods like porridges and gruel, broths made with bones or boiled proteins, or drinks made with herbs, fruits, and grains. Some recipes offer curatives for diseases specific to the era; *Cooks and confectioners dictionary 1726*, published following frequent outbreaks of the bubonic plague, contains a drink recipe for "Plague Water" designed to stop its spread. Collectively, these recipes were believed to encourage healing and replenish a patient's strength and vitality. They offer insight into the at-home medical treatments and remedies administered by families and local community members.

Top Left

Cooks and confectioners dictionary

1726, 1980

by John Nott

Printed in London by Lawrence Rivington

V 641.5/26

Top Centre

*The modern housewife, or Ménagère :
comprising nearly one thousand receipts
for the economic and judicious preparation
of every meal of the day and those for the
nursery and sick room ..., 1851*

by Alexis Soyer

Printed in London by Simpkin, Marshall

V 641.5/39

Top Right

The Kingswood cookery book, 1888

by Harriet F. Wicken

Printed in Melbourne by G. Robertson

V 641.5/40

Bottom Right

*The Kookaburra cookery book of culinary
and household recipes and hints, 1912*

by Lady Victoria Buxton Girls' Club

Printed in Melbourne by E. W. Cole

V 641.5/56