

Historic Cooking

The study of historic cooking is a growing body of research in which period recipes are considered artifacts. As with most attempts to reproduce items from the past using instructions of an earlier time period it is difficult to get an exact true representation. Ingredients are manufactured and processed differently, tools and equipment are different and 21st century eyes and hands are using the recipes originally created by and for a past century.

From the beginning my intention with this book has been to reproduce period recipes from the Harris family collection using modern ingredients and equipment. I wanted to give the modern cook hints on creating these recipes in a modern kitchen, but did not know that the term 'modern method' held certain expectations, such as listing the ingredients in the order they are used and using specific culinary words for specific cooking actions. Also, as stated in the first edition the recipes were tested in Imperial and then converted to Metric measures. All the recipes, whether they "pass" modern judgement in taste and consistency, are valuable because they give us some insight into the people who used them. Recipes tell us something about the times and circumstances in which they were created.

The recipe titles that appear in Delicious Memories are written just as they were found at the top of the original recipes, all of which have been dated according to Harris family oral history. The 'recipe board' was written by Elizabeth Harris during the latter part of the 19th century and hung in the basement kitchen at Benares, as a reference to family favourite recipes. Its handwriting was compared with letters written by Elizabeth Harris. the 'Clipping Book' was started in 1906, the year Anne Harris Sayers, Elizabeth's granddaughter, was married. the pen used by Andrew Gooderham to draw the beautiful illustrations of the artifacts and architectural features of Benares Historic House was an 80 year old nib pen used by the Harris Family.

This project has given me a wonderful education in historic cooking, recipe testing and recipe writing. I enjoyed creating this book and am pleased to expose these recipes to a new generation thereby renewing a piece of community history. I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to Fiona Lucas for her continued assistance with this supplement, and especially for her support, her words of encouragement, and for sharing with me her knowledge of food and her skill with words.

This supplement is a clarification of some of the historical terms and methods used. Also included are a Glossary and some typographical changes. I hope you enjoy this cookbook as a look back into the past and as a source of delicious recipes.

Susan Wade

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See related documents, Historic Cooking Glossary & Historic Cooking Techniques