

Not Meatless Monotony: One hundred years of Lenten Fare in Australia

The 20 February 1896 edition of the Goulburn Evening Penny Post carried this advertisement:

“Recipes of Lenten Dishes”

Is the title of a little book very appositely published by Messrs. Angus and Robertson, Mrs. Wicken, lecturer in domestic economy to the Sydney Technical College, is the writer. The book contains over a hundred pages of useful recipes principally devoted to the preparation of fish, but there are others dealing with sauces, vegetables, pastry, soups, savouries, eggs, and sweets. Housewives will find the information of value.¹

Mrs Harriett Wicken, who taught Domestic Economy at the Sydney Technical College, had written the recipes for Phillip Muskett’s 1893 *The Art of Living in Australia*, and in 1885 had published the well-received Kingswood Cookery Book. *Lenten Dishes* was well-reviewed. It was ‘a neatly turned out little book which Catholic housekeepers will find of great use to them during the Lenten Season’, said the W.A Record, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of Perth.² But its appeal was not limited to Catholic housekeepers. ‘Most of these cookery books are the despair of modest housewives, whose larder is limited. Not so here.’ declared the reviewer for the Parramatta-based Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate. ‘Mrs. Wicken seems to have laid herself out more especially for just this class — and surely it is large enough to be considered. For instance, the ingredients for one dish are one egg, half a gill of milk, salt, and pepper. Is there any housewife whose larder does not contain these materials?’³

Wicken’s but not by any means the first instance of recipe advice for those fasting or otherwise observing Lent in Australia. On 16 March 1867, the Australasian newspaper published a letter to the editor:

Sir,—If you would give your readers and subscribers a good recipe for smoking fish, you would confer a favour on many others, during the present Lenten season besides yours.

A RITUALIST.⁴

In the years following, indeed every year over the next 100 years over which I have researched newspapers and magazines across Australia, in the weeks before and during Lent, readers of the nations’ press were provided with recipes to help them both abstain from meat and fast. In an age when major Christian denominations no longer place such an emphasis on either during Lent it may not be immediately obvious why this was so.

Fasting during the 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Holy Thursday was formalised at the First Council of Nicaea in 325 CE. Christians were under obligation to have only one meal a day in the evening. Eating meat, fish, eggs, and butter was forbidden, a practice known as maigre.⁵ Recipes designated as maigre were few, soups being the most common. This one is from The Catholic Press in March 1897.

Soup Maigre— Peel and cut in small pieces three good potatoes, one turnip, three onions, one carrot, one parsnip, two tomatoes; put them in a stew pan and place over a hot fire, pouring over them about three pints hot water, add pepper and salt to taste; boil until the vegetables will mash, then pass it through a colander (sic), taking care the vegetables do not press through, put the soup again into the sauce pan, and when it is still hot add about two tablespoonsful of

peasemeal, half a teaspoonful of dried mint and thyme, let boil for an hour and a half, add before taking off the fire a few drops of Lea and Perrin's sauce; serve with sippets of toast.⁶

But let's have Mrs Wicken (who did not include a designated maigre recipe in her book) and the newspaper recipe writers – often pseudonymous – take us through how to eat in the spirit if not the letter of Lenten meals.

Going without meat

In her Preface Mrs Wicken writes:

If one could live on a leg of mutton for a week and require no change of food, how easy life would be for Australian housekeepers; but since that cannot be, I am going to try once more to lighten the burden of housekeeping by suggesting a few dishes to vary the menu; and since fast days are often more trouble than feast dates, I have put together a few recipes for the approaching Lenten season, which I hope will prove useful'.⁷

All very well, some of the other recipe creators may have said, but going without meat presented a significant problem. 'When almost every member of a family goes out to work for a livelihood,' wrote one in the Weekly Times in 1910, 'it is essential that self-denial should not unfit any of them for the day's work'.⁸ And why would they become unfit? 'When animal food is left entirely out of the bill of fare ... (other) foodstuffs must be selected to furnish the particular properties supplied by meat, otherwise individuals, through insufficient or injudicious feeding, become a trial to themselves and to their friends. A certain amount of nourishment is necessary for health and well-being'.⁹

Others saw the forced abstention from meat as a positive good. During the Lenten season many people cut down their meat supply,' wrote 'Housewife 'who 'conducted' the *Women's Page* in the March 1910 Sydney Mail, 'and, substitute dishes of a different order. For my part I think that Australians eat far too much meat at all times, and that it would be better for the health of the community if more variety were introduced into the menu'.¹⁰ The recipe writer for the Geelong Advertiser headed for higher moral ground:

Heine[the German poet and literary critic] said that life must be worth living in a world that has such lovely eating in it, and it is to be feared that, since Heine's day, the world has got even fonder of "lovely eating" than before. Twice a year, however, the gourmands of to-day are called upon to pause, once in the spring at Lenten time and again in the autumn, when at the various foreign cures the hard worked stomachs of epicures redeem themselves by a little judicious abstinence. But for these two interludes the death rate would not go down in the really satisfactory way in which it does. Mother Church is wise to inculcate the wholesome custom of periodical abstention from too much fleshy food.¹¹

'Donna', one of the rare recipe writers to take stock of the differences in climate between Australia and Britain when Lent is celebrated, suggested a more practical reason cut down on meat:

The advent of Lent has found most of us with jaded appetites, February's record weather conditions having deprived most of us of energy, so much so, that even the selection of food has little interest for us. Anyway, heat and meat do not seem to agree, therefore a round of meatless dishes should have attraction for many just at this season.¹²

During World War Two fasting or at least abstaining from meat during Lent was cast as a patriotic duty, no better expressed than by the anonymous and nom-de-recipe-less writer for the 1943 Manjimup Mail and Jardee-Pemberton-Northcliffe Press:

These days we are learning to think of food as wealth—the true wealth translated from the soil into terms of better health. The stocks of foodstuffs in our cupboards are perhaps more limited in variety than in other years, but after all we still have the essential foods we need, and every ounce of every foodstuff there can be! made to perform the maximum service in the interest of individual and community health.

Using food wisely is one of the many patriotic duties of Australian women today. One of the ways good cooks can serve their country and their families best is in the careful planning of nutritionally ,well-balanced meals—by experimenting a little with new recipe suggestions to keep up interest in those three meals a day—and by taking care that nothing in the kitchen gets wasted.¹³

But the constant Lenten dilemma continued to engage the recipe writers even during the Depression and World War Two - how to nourish and sustain the health of a family without meat ? Mrs. W.A.Sparkes, won a prize in the March 1945 wartime recipe competition of The Telegraph (Brisbane) for ‘vegetable sausages— an appetising dish for Lent.

Take 1 ½ cups cooked, sieved vegetables. as carrots, potatoes. ½ cup split peas, 1 cup soft breadcrumbs, ½ teaspoon mixed dried herbs, 1 egg, pepper and salt; flour, milk and browned crumbs for frying. Combine the vegetables. soft breadcrumbs, herbs, pepper and salt to taste, add beaten egg. Add a little flour if necessary for correct consistency for rolling into sausage shapes. Roll, brush with milk and coat with browned crumbs. Deep-fry and serve with green vegetables.’¹⁴

But there was a simpler and possibly more appealing front runner in the Lenten dining stakes – fish.

The homely herring and its ilk

Our Heine quoting writer wrote that for ‘an admirable diet’ the best option was fish:

One pound and a half of white fish, it is said; is equal to one pound of beef, and there is as much nourishment in one pound of the homely herring as in one pound of beef ... Beef stimulates more than fish, and from fish one neurotic will get an equal amount of nourishment. What feeds the brain without exciting it is therefore particularly [welcome?]. Fish being more digestible than meat, gives the stomach a rest, and when the stomach is at rest and at peace, it is then that the brain works best.¹⁵

Fish was indeed the default option for Lenten recipe compilers. But here, also, there were difficulties to be overcome, two being almost perennial through the period under review: how to introduce variety into the possibly daily fish dinner and the cost of fish as compared to meat.

In the no-nonsense way much admired by reviewers of her Lenten recipe book, on the first difficulty Mrs Wicken had this to say:

One of the reasons why “Home Dinners” are often spoken of with contempt is because day after day the same dishes appear on the table. I was astonished and amused too, the other day be some one telling me that he was tired of fish because there were only three ways in which it

could be cooked, viz., fried, boiled and soured ... I set to work to write a little book which I hoped would prove that there are other ways of cooking such a valuable food as fish...¹⁶

Wicken may here have been being a little disingenuous. Other recipe writers had tackled the issue of cooking fish other than 'fried, boiled and soured'. In 1894, the Caulfield and Elsternwick Leader gave recipes for Salmon Cutlets with Swiss Sauce (the sauce made with stock, roux, anchovy sauce, capers, mushrooms, pepper and three eggs whisked in), Souffle of Lobster, and Salt Cod Bordelaise.

And just the year before publication of publication of Wicken's *Lenten Dishes*, 'Lenten Fare' in The Queenslander gave four recipes for fish that they had 'no doubt [would] be acceptable, as on former occasions, to others as well as those for whom they are specially published': Fish Soup; Crayfish Soup; Fish Cutlets three ways – A la Maintenon (each cutlet 'sprinkled' with salt, lemon juice, and cayenne then grilled), French (as before but spread lightly with anchovy paste or sauce before grilling) and Fried (dipped in beaten egg, then in bread crumbs and chopped and fried in oil); and Fish Pie.¹⁷

This did not prevent later recipe writers re-hashing Wicken's words, however as did 'Vesta' in the Brisbane Courier in 1910 introduced 'Some Lenten Dishes':

During Lent it is not only necessary to have a fish course every day at dinner, in most households; it is quite de rigueur to have fish at every meal on certain days, and to have some meals which are of fish only. Hence, if variety is to be attained, the cook must know more than merely how to boil or steam to fry or grill ... Fish may be presented as dainty dishes "fit to set before a king," if but a small degree of pains be taken to master the details of a few simple recipes; while remains of cooked fish may be so served that as breakfast or luncheon dishes they leave nothing to be desired.¹⁸

Dainty dishes for which Vesta gave recipes were Fish Steaks Stewed in Milk, Norwegian Fish Cakes, Quenelles of Whiting, Fresh Fish a l'Italian, Fish Cream, Salt Fish with Parsnip Puree, Fish with Rice, Tomatoes and Onions, Curried Fish.

Fish Cream - One and a half lbs of fish filleted and put through a mincing machine. Add a cupful of white sauce, and a well beaten egg, pour into buttered cups, cover with buttered, and steam for 20 minutes. Turn out and serve with egg, anchovy, or parsley sauce.¹⁹

Mrs Wicken also addressed a second difficulty the housewife perennially faced when it came to fish – cost.

As to the cost, we know that fish always costs more than meat, and so it is of no use to deny the fact, but a wise housewife will not always give meat because it is cheaper, for she knows the truth of that old proverb, "Penny wise and pound foolish," and is convinced that by giving her family a varied diet she will be more likely to keep them in good health, and so strong to resist the pains and penalties of dyspepsia, as well as the epidemics which always seize first a poor and badly nourished constitution.²⁰

The cost of fish became even more of an issue during World War 1 and the 1929 – 1933 Depression:

There is a proposal on foot for the Government to order two meatless days a week in order to provide meat for the soldiers. If fresh fish, likewise fresh fruit, were obtainable at reasonable prices no one would grumble, but the housewife will find herself up against a problem a little more serious than usual if this comes to pass. Even that despised but handy aid in an emergency,

a tin of salmon or sardines, has gone up in price so much that it is now a luxury. Anyway we should not grumble but face the season of penitence, fast, and abstinence in a spirit of cheerfulness and thanksgiving to God, who has spared our fair land from the miseries of war. We are a far way off being placed on rations, though we do talk a good deal about the high price of luxuries which we have come to look on as necessities.²¹

It is a thousand pities that fish is not cheaper than it is, because for some folk it is practically prohibitive. It would seem that many people at the moment are living mainly upon bread and meat, and for health it is absolutely necessary to have as much variety as possible, and fish and fruit should be, if possible, included in the menu.²²

But if not fish then what?

So, if too much meat too often was unhealthy, and the cost of fish too high, what were the alternatives that could maintain the health of the working members of the family relatively cheaply?

Mrs Wicken suggested that 'Then again there are vegetables, which may be served in many different guises. English cooks are only supposed to know how to boil the plainly, although if the truth were told, very many "professed" cooks cannot even do that, or perhaps will not trouble about 'such a little'.²³ The recipe writer in the 1908 Weekly Times suggested that the nourishment lacking from a meatless diet 'is best secured by substituting for meat such things as cheese, eggs, milk, macaroni, pulse (such as haricots, peas, lentils) etc'.²⁴

And recipe creators responded to the call, giving the lie to those like the recipe writer for the Colac (Victoria) Herald's 'Ladies Column' in 1910 who bewailed the monotony of the 'Conventional Lenten fare of ... Fish and eggs, eggs and fish [which] are insufficiently varied to suit the appetites of all, particularly those appetites which need a little encouragement' (who were undescribed but in all likelihood meant men and children).²⁵ The range of vegetables was wide: carrots, turnips, celery, beans (haricot and otherwise), cauliflower, leeks, eggplant, pumpkin, gramma, vegetable marrow (courgettes grown large), corn, cabbage, spinach (silver beet), cucumbers, parsnips and more were baked, steamed, stuffed, frittered, souped, sliced, scalloped, grilled solo or in combination with each other, with eggs or cheese, in sauces or as side dishes with fish.

'Vesta', among others, extolled the pleasure of tomatoes which 'lend admirable flavouring to the many dishes of macaroni, spaghetti and vermicelli, eggs and vegetables which will furnish most of the needs for those people who keep Lent strictly'.²⁶ Tomatoes were made into soups – on their own or with other vegetables; skinned and chopped for salads; sliced and partnered with creamed cheese as a sandwich filling; sliced, dipped in egg and breadcrumbs and fried as cutlets; sliced and topped with anchovy paste then scalloped (layered in a dish) and baked as a substitute for expensive fresh fish.

Tomato Cutlets.—Large, tomatoes just ripe; slice rather thick, flavour with lemon-juice, salt, and cayenne, dip in egg and breadcrumbs and bake in a shallow dish with a small piece of butter on each.

Tomato as a Substitute for Fish.— Tomato sliced as above, flavoured with anchovy paste or sauce, served cold, scalloped, or baked as directed in the preceding recipe, forms an excellent and satisfying substitute for fish.²⁷

Potatoes were ubiquitous – in soups and salads, baked, in pies (on their own or with fish or cheese) - in mixed vegetable roasts, as chips, mashed. By the 1930's however, potatoes had come under

suspicion as leading to poor health, so much so that 'Frangiska' felt she had to come to their defence in an article unapologetically titled 'We Eat Potatoes':

During this uncertain (Autumnal) weather 'solid' meals are needed, and it is difficult to provide a really solid meal without meat. It is during this season that we may indulge freely in the popular potato. ... there are very few people who do not like potatoes, and we are beginning to suspect that is why we always eat them with a sense of guilt, and we have a vague feeling that there are many other vegetables— turnips, carrots, swedes and pumpkin — that are cheaper and better for us. Potatoes are very cheap now, so we may be excused on that score, and dietetic experts no longer regard them with quite such holy horror'.²⁸

Similarly the changes were rung on the two favourite pastas, macaroni and spaghetti, cheese and tomatoes (in one form or another) being frequent accompaniments.

While eggs were often recommended as having high health benefits were often also expensive and scarce during Easter. 'Penelope' writing in the Sydney Morning Herald in 1922, addressed the difficulty:

Entering, as eggs do, into the composition of almost every dish it is a serious matter for the great body of housekeeper at large, when eggs become so costly that on the score of economy they have to be very sparingly used.

What to do: - Either use substitutes freely or lower costs by serving Swiss or other scrambled eggs with the rasher instead of the (to-day) right royal fried or poached egg. In this form of egg cooking one introduces boiled rice, spaghetti, vermicelli, potato, or breadcrumbs, as the case may be, to eke out the insufficient egg-to make, in fact, two eggs do duty for three or four. There is no other way known to "Penelope" save to score out eggs from the breakfast menu entirely, and to substitute well, other things. ... The economical other things are really the cunningly combined little dishes of balanced food values so well known to the good cook, and often referred to in this column. They are now and again some trouble to make, and also often take quite a time, comparatively speaking, to cook, and should therefore be made the day before they will be required. For these reasons and others such dishes are never so popular as "poached eggs," or "eggs and bacon."²⁹

Special Lenten Fare

As dietary restrictions weighed heavily on a disconsolate, mostly meatless dinner table, food to be enjoyed, even indulged in, was not left off the menu. Cakes, biscuits, jellies, and other desserts having no meat, nor having to be made from 'fish and eggs and eggs and fish, satisfied the pleasure-starved palate. And then there were the two sweet items that were inextricably linked with the season: pancakes and Simnel Cake.

'To-day the Continent of Europe will indulge in its last carnival sports before retreating into the seriousness of Lent', wrote "Martha" in the Queensland Times in 1927. ' Great Britain will confine itself to the mere consumption of the Shrove Tuesday pancake, and some of us in Australia, particularly in households where the domestic hen produces a plentiful supply of eggs, will follow the example of our forebears'.³⁰

'Martha's recipe for pancakes was much the same as that of earlier Lenten fare writers:

A recipe for pancake suitable for those occasions when we can be lavish with eggs requires 4 eggs, 4 tablespoons of flour, 1 pint of milk, a pinch of salt. Sift the flour and the salt together-it is worthwhile sifting them twice. Make a well in the flour., pour in the milk and yolks of eggs; beat till the batter is smooth and full of bubbles, then stand aside; six hours is not too long. Just before cooking whip the whites of the eggs to a stiff froth in a large basin, and pour onto them the batter. Let your frying pan heat while you are doing this, and melt in it a level teaspoon of butter. When this is hot drop in a tablespoonful of the batter, which should be thin enough to run to the edges of the pan. When the pancake is firm it should be turned, and just here comes in the skill of the pancake maker. If she with a clever jerk can turn the pancake upside down it is all right, but it requires practice to get the knack of it. If she has not that skill it is better to hold a hot salamander over the top while the underside is cooking. If the kitchen does not boast a salamander a small-red-hot iron shovel may be made to do duty. The aim should be to get both sides an even light brown. Roll the pancake up and keep hot while the rest of the batter is being cooked. Serve them very hot piled up on a d'oyley. Hand around lemon cut in quarters and sifted sugar. These may be looked on as pancakes deluxe.³¹

'Martha' addressed herself to the perennial problem of both the scarcity and the price of eggs at Easter.

'You cannot make an omelette without eggs, says the French proverb but when accident or economy pinches then you can make a pancake without eggs. To do this, use a cup of self-raising flour to which you add one teaspoonful of baking powder and half a teaspoonful of salt, sift these two or three times, then make a well and pour in one pint of milk, beat very thoroughly, throwing the mixture high to aerate it well, and stand aside. Fry in butter.³²

Simnel cake, the other special Lenten food for which recipes were given, was an essential part of a tradition dating back to the Middle Ages - mothering Sunday. Celebrated on the fourth Sunday in Lent, Laetare Sunday when a Christian was allowed a respite from fasting at some stage a practice of honouring one's 'mother' church morphed into a day for honouring one's earthly mother.³³ A disappointingly anonymous writer in the Weekly Times (Melbourne) in 1904 described the practice and the cake delightfully:

It originated, I believe. In Shropshire. It was customary for all members of a family, if in any way possible, to visit their mother, or "go a- mothering," as it is called, on Mid-Lent Sunday. They presented her with a Simnel cake, and : she in return provided them reach with a bowl of furmenty,— or furmety, as it is called in some parts. These rich yellow cakes, with or without almond-icing, and clearly labelled "Simnel," may be seen in most confectioners' windows towards the middle of Lent.

The chief feature of a Simnel cake is that it has to be first boiled and then baked. I have seen some recipes where the boiling is omitted, but, judging from the following lines, that is quite wrong: —

"She who would a Simnel make,
Flour and saffron first must shake,
Candy, spices, eggs must take,
Chop and pound till arms do ache;
Then must boil and then must bake
For a crust too hard to break."

Simnel Cake.— Required: Half a pound of butter, three-quarters of a pound of flour, half a pound of currants, half a pound of peel, quarter of a pound of almonds, six ounces of castor sugar, quarter of an ounce of mixed spice, one orange rind, one lemon-rind, three eggs, half a wineglassful of brandy or home-made wine, A. little saffron. Beat the butter and sugar together with a wooden spoon till quite soft and creamy, then beat in the eggs one by one. Add the flour lightly. Have ready the currants cleaned and stalked, the peel chopped, and the almonds shelled and shredded; also the rinds of the orange and lemon grated. Mix these ingredients together, then add them to the flour, etc. Now add the spice and wine, and lastly a little saffron. Mix very thoroughly. Have ready a greased cake-tin, or a plain round souffle- tin. Take the lump of dough from the basin, and drop it into the tin. Tie a pudding-cloth over the top. It must first however, be scalded and then floured. Put the tin in a large saucepan of fast-boiling water, and boil for three hours. Then take it out Remove the cloth. Take the cake out of the tin. Work the edge of the top up like a rough wall. Brush it over with beaten egg and place it on a greased baking tin in a slow oven. Bake slowly till it is a nice brown, and has a hard, crisp crust. Sprinkle with a little icing-sugar, and put on a sieve till cold.³⁴

I found only two recipes for furmenty or frumenty suggesting it was not as popular. The descriptions of it suggest it was a wheat-based porridge with dried fruits, milk, and brandy.

I found only one recipe for that other standard bread indulgence at Easter, Hot Cross Buns.

The more things change ...

'Frangiska' introduced her recipes in 1930 by acknowledging that 'Although the Lenten season is not now so universally and rigidly observed as it was formerly, many housewives try to eliminate meat from the menu as much as possible.'³⁵ 'Candida' writing in 1933 took a more censorious view:

The rigor of the ancient observance of Lent, which excluded from the diet all flesh foods, is now much relaxed, and in the Anglican Church the observance of the fast is left, to the discretion of the individual. The 40 fasting days of Lent do not include Sundays, which are always feast days. Those who are supposed to be fasting often eat far too much at a meal. They may omit meat from the menu, but they more than make up for its absence by consuming greater quantities of other foodstuffs. In other words, they observe the letter but not the spirit of the custom.³⁶

And yet newspapers and the emerging women's magazines continued to run features on Lenten dishes and the recipe writers continued to pose what to eat as a problem which they were there to solve. Little changed, however, in the recommended foods that would both keep the Lenten prescriptions and meet the energy needs of the working family – fish, eggs, cheese and vegetables. Recipes were adapted for changes in cookware. The pressure cooker made a brief appearance in the early 1950's but was quickly superseded by the casserole, touted in particular as an excellent mode of cooking because it could be endlessly varied.

Here's a Casserole for Lent from the February 1959 edition of the Australian Women's Weekly that adapts earlier recipes for a vegetable bake as Lenten fare:

This versatile casserole recipe is an excellent stand-by in Lent. The basic recipe can be varied in several ways. You can change the flavor of this simply prepared recipe by using any one of the variations which are included below.

SAVORY VEGETABLE BAKE

One and a half cups sliced carrots, 1 ½ cups sliced green beans, 1 ½ cups sliced celery, 1 teaspoon salt, pinch pepper, 1 teaspoon thyme, 1 cup water, 2 tablespoons chopped celery leaves, 2 tablespoons chopped onion, 3 tablespoons butter or margarine, 1 large tin cream of mushroom soup, 3 cups rice cereal. Cook carrots, beans, and celery in the water with salt, pepper, and thyme, drain and reserve liquid. Fry celery leaves and onion in one tablespoon melted butter until onion is soft but not browned. Turn all vegetables into greased casserole, pour over reserved vegetable liquid and mushroom soup. Melt remaining butter, add crumbled rice cereal pieces and extra salt and pepper and thyme if desired.

Toss over heat for a few minutes, arrange around top edge of casserole. Place in a moderate oven for mixture to thoroughly heat through. Serves 6 to 8.

Variations: Substitute 3 cups cooked flaked fish for the vegetables and use cream of oyster soup in place of the mushroom.

Use 2 cups well-seasoned white sauce flavored with lemon juice, and 3 cups shelled prawns or other shellfish.

Make a mock kedgeree by combining 2 cups curry sauce, 1 cup cooked rice, 1 cup flaked salmon, and 2 chopped hardboiled eggs in a similar type of casserole.³⁷

Kedgeree, by the way was frequently suggested as Lenten fare, along with fish, egg, and vegetable curries and 'lentil curries' which were variations on recipes for dhal.

Lenten Fare in 2020

What to eat during Lent continues to be fertile ground for recipe writers and compilers on the internet. A quick search via Google comes up with hundreds of sites across all variations of the Lenten fasting prescriptions. The introduction to *100 Dinners to Love During Lent—That Aren't Fish*, for example, could have been written any time over the 100 years reviewed in this paper: the idiom has changed, and the dishes present on-trend options - 'During Lenten season, meat on Fridays is a big no-no. But you don't have to turn to the same boring fish dinner each week. From kicked-up tacos to veggie pizza, cheesy manicotti to hearty chili, these Lent recipes give you plenty of options'.³⁸ So too does *Meatless Meals Made Easy: 21 Recipes to Cook During Lent* which rehashes the tropes of simplicity and recipes for all the year round, including recipes for tacos, burritos, risotto fired rice and, yes, 'lentil; soup': 'With the start of Lent, you may be getting ready to give up meat on Fridays until Easter. While this may not sound complicated, it can be a challenge for busy families if you're not prepared with some crowd-pleasing meat-free recipes. Don't fret, though—just bookmark this collection of hearty lent-friendly meals that are so good, you'll want to cook them year-round'.³⁹ 'Light and Fresh Meatless Meals for Lent' introduces a clutch of recipes with 'During the Lenten season, some observers abstain from eating meat on Fridays and oftentimes also opt for smaller and/or less indulgent choices', echoing 'Housewife' in 1910 critical the 'the world has got even fonder of "lovely eating" than before' and approving that twice a year 'the gourmands of today are called upon to pause'.⁴⁰

I found no current recipes for plant-based 'meat' but no doubt they are on their way.

Coda

Oh, the recipe provided by the Editor of The Australasia to A Ritualist in 1867?

Nothing more easy than smoking fish. Let them be as fresh as possible. Do not delay the process one minute needlessly. Clean the fish and rub salt into them; a little ground allspice and black pepper added if the flavour is desired. Get a common wooden box or barrel, inside of which, on nails, hang the fish. Invert the box or barrel over some hardwood sawdust, or hardwood chips, and thrust therein a redhot poker to make them smoulder. In about an hour look at the fish. The colour will tell whether they are sufficiently smoked. The degree of requisite salting and smoking depends upon taste, or the time the fish are intended to be kept.⁴¹

¹ Goulburn Evening Penny Post, 20 February 1896, p.4 accessed 23 February 2022 at trove.nla.gov.au

² 'Recipes of Lenten Dishes', The W.A.Record, (Perth) 23 February 1901, p. 11 accessed 23 February 2022 at trove.nla.gov.au

³ 'Current News', The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, 22 February 1896, p. 4 accessed 23 February 2022 at trove.nla.gov.au

⁴ 'Smoked Fish', The Australasian, 16 March 1867, p. 8 accessed 23 February 2022 at trove.nla.gov.au

⁵ 'Lent', [britannica.com/topic/Lent](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Lent) accessed 6 March 2022.

⁶ 'Recipes for Lent', The Catholic Press, 6 March 1897, p. 16

⁷ Wicken, Harriet, Recipes of Lenten Dishes, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1896 p. 5 accessed at collection.sl.nsw.gov.au 6 March 2022

⁸ 'The Lenten Season. Hints About Meals'. Women to Women, The Argus (Melbourne) 23 February 1921 p. 12 accessed 26 February 2022 at trove.nla.gov.au

⁹ 'Lenten Fare', Weekly Times (Melbourne) 7 March 1908, p. 10 accessed 24 February 2022 at trove.nla.gov.au

¹⁰ 'Meatless Dishes', Women's Page, Sydney Mail 29 March 1922 p. 21 28 February 1922 p. 12 accessed 26 February 2022 at trove.nla.gov.au

¹¹ 'Fish Fare: Hints for Lenten Dishes', Household Hints, Geelong Advertiser 25 March 1910 p. 9 accessed 24 February 2022 at trove.nla.gov.au

¹² 'Lenten Fare', The Country Woman's Page, The Daily Mail (Brisbane) 27 February 1925 p. 13 accessed 27 February 2022 at trove.nla.gov.au

¹³ 'Recipes for Lenten Meals', Manjimup Mail and Jardee-Pemberton-Northcliffe Press 26 March 1943 p. 4 accessed 27 February 2022 at trove.nla.gov.au

¹⁴ 'Wartime Recipe. Tasty Dish for Lent', The Telegraph (Brisbane) 1 March 1945 p. 6 accessed 26 February 2022 at trove.nla.gov.au

¹⁵ 'Fish Fare: Hints for Lenten Dishes', Household Hints, Geelong Advertiser 25 March 1910 p. 9 accessed 24 February 2022 at trove.nla.gov.au

¹⁶ Wicken, Harriet, Recipes of Lenten Dishes, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1896 p. 7 accessed at collection.sl.nsw.gov.au 6 March 2022

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