

Food Writers New Zealand
HANDBOOK

history



HISTORY OF FOOD

Readers are interested in how the food they eat reflects culture and tradition. Meals of the past are fascinating; chefs like Heston Blumenthal have made an industry out of recreating them. Food history is an important aspect of food writing.

There is a lot of false information available about food history, but historians are setting the record straight. For example, Marco Polo didn't bring pasta to Italy from China – there is evidence that it was eaten in southern Italy well before Marco Polo was born. The noodle-discovery story was traced to an American advertisement for macaroni from 1929.

Closer to home, the story that pavlova cake was invented by a pastry cook in Perth in 1935 was debunked by Guild member Helen Leach. She found a recipe for pavlova gelatin cake in a 1927 New Zealand recipe book. More importantly, she showed that the pavlova was not 'invented' but was instead the result of evolution as numerous cooks adapted the recipe. Helen's evolution theory, in turn, has been taken up by other historians around the world, as they reconsider the histories of other recipes.

General history in the last quarter century has moved away from studying 'great men' to focus on everyday life. Likewise food history is no longer just about banquets at court or important chefs. The problem with researching everyday eating is that most people considered it too insignificant to record, so historians need to use a range of documents, often from unexpected sources, to piece together the story.

It has never been easier to research primary sources, thanks to the internet. You can access historic cookery books, which once you would have had to travel overseas to read; and you can do keyword searches on New Zealand newspapers back to 1839.

You may be looking for quick facts and figures for your work, but historians would encourage you to also think about context: the social, cultural, political, economic and environmental factors that influenced what and how people ate in the past. To do this, you need to read secondary works, where historians have researched, analysed and presented a reasoned argument. Use works where the writer has referenced evidence for their claims.

RECOMMENED READING AND LINKS

The Aristologist: An Antipodean Journal of Food History

Petits Propos Culinaires Journal

Global Food History Journal

First Catch Your Weka by David Veart

Eating Out by Perrin Rowland

The Pavlova Story by Helen Leach

From Kai to Kiwi Kitchen edited by Helen Leach

New Zealand Food and Cookery by David Burton

A Distant Feast by Tony Simpson

Cuisine & Empire by Rachel Laudan

Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present edited by Flandrin and Montari

The Cambridge World History of Food edited by Kiple and Ornelas

The Oxford Companion to Food edited by Davidson and Jaine

A Paradox of Plenty by Harvey Levenstein

British Food by Colin Spencer

New Zealand Electronic Text Collection nzetc.victoria.ac.nz

Te Ara The Encyclopedia of New Zealand teara.govt.nz

Google Books books.google.com

Trove trove.nla.gov.au

PapersPast paperspast.natlib.govt.nz

The Food Timeline foodtimeline.org

Our first handbook was produced in 1991, with the purpose of providing a reference tool that in turn would establish standards for New Zealand food writers. In 1999 the handbook was updated to reflect the growing needs of members.

Food Writers New Zealand is indebted to our hardworking, talented, innovative and active contributors who provided their specialist input for this latest edition.

Thank you to Pip Duncan for her many hours co-ordinating this project.

KATHY PATERSON, PRESIDENT, 2016

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HANDBOOK DESIGN

Katherine Habershon habershon@xtra.co.nz

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[Vegetables.co.nz](#)

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New Zealand Guild of Food Writers, PO Box 74 262, Market Rd,
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