in the 1950s and 1960s

Donna Lee Brien

Introduction: From Trifle to Tiramisu

Tiramisu is an Italian dessert cake, usually comprising sponge finger biscuits soaked in coffee and liquor, layered with a mixture of egg yolk, mascarpone and cream, and topped with sifted cocoa. Once a gourmet dish, tiramisu, which means “pick me up” in Italian (Vopil), is today very popular in Australia where it is available for purchase not only in restaurants and cafés, but also in supermarkets and specialty stores. Recipes about tiramisu can be found in cookbooks and magazines, and at coffee shops and restaurants, and it is more widely available and written about in Australia than the once ubiquitous English trifle which, comprising variations on the theme of sherry soaked sponge cake, custard and cream, it closely resembles. It could be asserted that its strong coffee taste has contributed to its success in the trifle in contemporary Australia. Yet, coffee is also a recurrent ingredient in cakes and iced in nineteenth and early twentieth century Australian cookbooks.

Acknowledging that coffee consumption in Australia doubled during the years of the Second World War and maintained high rates of growth afterwards (Khamis; Adams), this article draws on examples of culinary writing during this period of increasing popularity to investigate the use of coffee in cookery as well as a beverage in these mid-twentieth century decades. In doing so, it is hoped that it will contribute to a lively scholarly discussion of how Australian cooking and sophistication associated with coffee, post-war immigration from the Mediterranean and other parts of Europe, or the influence of the media and developments in technology (see, for discussion, Adams; Collins et al.; Khamis; Symons).

Coffee in Australian Mid-century Epicurean Writing

In Australian epicurean writing in the 1950s and 1960s, freshly brewed coffee is clearly identified as the beverage of choice for those with gourmet tastes. In 1952, the West Australian reported that Johnnie Walker, then president of the Sydney Good Coffee Society had “sweated over an ordinary kitchen stove to give 12 Melbourne women a perfect meal” (“A Gourmet B”). Walker prepared a menu comprising: savoury biscuits; pumpkin soup made with a beef, ham, and veal stock; duck breast with “26 ounces of dry red wine, a bottle and a half of curacao and orange juice”; Spanish fried rice; a “French lettuce salad with the Italian influence of garlic;” and, strawberries with strawberry brandy and whipped cream. He served sherry with the biscuits, red wine with the duck, champagne with the sweet, and coffee to finish. It, however, the adjectives that matter here—that the coffee, not surprising, and the coffee was percolated and bleached, was not instant and may possibly be for a sophisticated example of adding chicory to coffee in France and elsewhere (104). This castigation of the French for their coffee was unusual, with most articles at this time praising Gallic gastronomy. Indicative of this is Nancy Cashmore’s travel article for Adelaide’s Advertiser in 1954. Titled “In Dordogne and Burgundy the Gourmet Will Find … A Gastronomic Paradise,” Cashmore details the purchasing, preparation, presentation, and, of course, consumption of excellent food and wine. Good coffee is an integral part of every meal and every day: “from these parts come exquisite pate de fois, truffles, delicious little cakes, conserved meats, wild mushrooms, walnuts and plums. … This begins with new bread and coffee … nothing is imported, nothing is stale” (6). Memorable lunchees of “hors-d’oeuvre … a meat course, followed by a salad, cheese and possibly a sweet” (6) always ended with black coffee and sometimes a sugar lump soaked in liqueur.

In Australian Wines and Food (AW&F), a quarterly epicurean magazine that was published from 1956 to 1960, coffee was regularly featured as a gourmet kitchen staple alongside wine and cheese. Articles on the history, growing, marketing, blending, roasting, purchase, and brewing of coffee during these years were accompanied with full-page advertisements for Bushell’s vacuum packed pure “roaster fresh” coffee, Robert Timmins’s “Royal Special” blend for “coffee connoisseurs,” and the Masterfoods range of “superior” imported and locally produced foodstuffs, which included vacuum packed coffee alongside calamondin oranges, sultanas, and unsalted butter. AW&F believed Australia’s growing coffee consumption resulted from the increased participation in quality dining experiences whether in restaurants, the “scores of colourful coffee shops opening their doors to a new generation” (“Coffee” 39) or at home. With regard to domestic coffee drinking, AW&F reported a revived interest in “making good coffee in the home” (“Coffee” 39). Instructions given range from boiling in a pot to percolating and “expresso” (Banquet 10; “Coffee” 37-9). Coffee was also mentioned in every issue as the only thing lifting the fine meal, to port, other fortified wines or liqueurs usually accompanied a small demi-tasse of (strong) black coffee. Coffee was also identified as one of the locally produced speciality foods that were flown into the USA for a consulate dinner: “more than a ton of carefully selected foodstuffs was flown to New York by Qantas in three separate airlifts … beef fillet steaks, kangaroo tails, Sydney rock oysters, King prawns, crayfish tails, tropical fruits and passion fruit, New Guinea coffee, chocolates, muscatels and almonds” (“Australian” 16). It is noteworthy that tea is not profiled in the entire run of the magazine.

A decade later, in the second half of the 1960s, the new Australian gourmet magazine Epicurean included a number of similar articles on coffee. In 1966 and 1969, the gourmet columnist Graham Kerr also included an illustrated guide to making coffee in two of the books produced alongside his television series, The Graham Kerr Cookbook (125) and The Graham Kerr Cookbook by the Gallipoli Gourmet (266-67). These included advice to buy freshly roasted beans at least once a week and to invest in an electric coffee grinder. Kerr uses a glass percolator in each and makes an iced (milk) coffee based on double strength cooled brewed coffee.

Entertaining with Margaret Fulton (1971) is the first Margaret Fulton cookery book to include detailed information on making coffee from ground beans at home. In this volume, which was clearly aimed at the gourmet-inclined end of the domestic market, Fulton, then cookery editor for popular magazine Woman’s Day, provides a morning coffee menu and proclaims that “Good hot coffee will never taste so good as it does at this time of the day” (90). With the stresses on the “good” Fulton, like Kerr, advises that beans be purchased so good as they are needed or that only a small amounts of freshly ground coffee be obtained at one time. For Fulton, quality is clearly linked to price—“buy the best you can afford” (90)—but while advising that “Mocha coffee, which comes from Aden and Mocha, is generally considered the best” (90), she also concedes that consumers will “find by experience” (90) which brands they prefer. She includes detailed information on storage and preparation, noting that there are also “dozens of pieces of coffee making equipment to choose from” (90). Fulton includes instructions on how to make coffee for guests at a wedding breakfast or other large event, gently heating home sewn muslin bags filled with finely ground coffee in a pan of boiling water (64). Alongside these instructions, Fulton also provides recipes for a sophisticated selection of coffee-flavoured desserts such as an iced coffee soufflé and coffee biscuits and meringues that would be perfect accompaniments to her brewed coffee.

Cooking with Coffee

A prominent and popular advocate of Continental cooking and Australian cooking in the 1950s, Maria Kozslik Donovan wrote and illustrated five cookery books and had a successful international career as a food writer in the 1960s and 1970s. Maria Kozslik was Hungarian by birth and education and was also educated in the USA before marrying Patrick Donovan, an Australian, and migrating to Sydney where he worked in 1950. After a brief stay there and in Adelaide, Donovan completed her M.A. dissertation in 1955 where she ran a cookery school and wrote for popular daily newspaper The Age, penning hundreds of her weekly “Epicure’s Corner: Continental Recipes with Maria Kozslik” column from 1954 to 1961. Her groundbreaking Continental Cooking in Australia with a living list of over 140 recipes, many of which were published in various French, Italian, Viennese, and Hungarian dishes, as well as some from the Middle East and the Balkans—each with an informative paragraph or two regarding European cooking and dining practices that set the recipes in context.

Continental Cookery in Australia includes one recipe for Mocha Torta (162), which she translates as Coffee Cake and identifies as “the favourites of the gay and party-loving Viennese … [in] the many cafes and streets of Salzburg and Vienna” (162). In this recipe, a plain sponge is cut into four layers and filled and covered with a rich mocha cream custard made from egg yolks, sugar and a good measure of coffee, which, when cooled, is beaten into creamed butter. In her recipe for Mocha Cream, Donovan identifies the type of coffee to be used and its strength, specifying that “strong Mocha” be used.

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and pleading, “please, no essence!” She also suggests that the cake’s top can be decorated with shavings of the then quite exotic “coffee bean chocolate,” which she notes can be found at “most continental confectioners” (162), but which would have been difficult to obtain outside the main urban centres. Coffee also appears in her Café Français (154–155). Coffee is poured into iced-filled glasses, and dressed with a touch of sugar and whipped cream (165). For this recipe the only other direction that Donovan gives regarding coffee is to “prepare and cool” strong black coffee (165) but it is obvious—from her eschewing of other convenience foods throughout the volume—that she means freshly brewed ground coffee.

In contrast, less adventurous cookery books paint a different picture of coffee use in the home at this time. Thus, the more concise Selected Continental Recipes for the Australian Home (1955) by the Australian-born Susie Mason—stating that upon marrying a Viennese husband, she became aware of “the fascinating ways of Continental Cuisine” (back-cover)—includes three recipes that include coffee. Deutsch’s Mocha Creams (chocolate truffles with a hint of coffee) (76–77), almonds marzipaned filled with coffee essence (89–90), and Mocha Cream Filling comprising a meringue beaten with chocolate vanilla, sugar, and coffee (95), all use “powdered” instant coffee, which is, in contrast, used extremely sparingly. Her Almond Coffee Torte, for example, requires only half a teaspoon of powdered coffee to a quarter of a pint (300 ml) of cream, which is also sweetened with vanilla sugar (89–90). In contrast to the examples from Fulton and Donovan above (but in common with many current coffee recipes) Deutsch uses the term “mocha” to denote a method of production that refers to a fine-quality coffee. The term itself is also used to describe a soft, rich brown color and, therefore, at times, the resulting hue of these dishes. The word itself is of late eighteenth century origin, and comes from the eponymous name of a Red Sea port from where coffee was shipped.

While Selected Continental Recipes appears to be Deutsch’s first and only book, Anne Mason was a prolific food, wine and travel writer. Before migrating to England in 1958, she was well known in Australia as the presenter of a live weekly television program, Anne Mason’s Home-Tested Recipes, which aired from 1957. She also wrote a number of popular cookery books and had a long-standing weekly column in The Age. Her Home-Tested Recipes feature published recipes contributed by readers, which, when published, were collected in her Treasury of Australian Cakes, published in London in 1962, and included those influenced by “the country cooking of England […] Continental influence […] and oriental ideas” (11).

Mason includes numerous recipes featuring coffee, but as (in Deutsch above) almost all are described as mocha-flavoured and listed as such in the detailed index. In Mason’s book, the mocha taste is, in fact, featured more than any of the other popular flavours (vanilla, honey, lemon, apple, banana, or passionfruit) except for chocolate. Those mocha recipes include cakes: Chocolate-Mocha Refrigerator cake—plain sponge layered with a coffee-flavoured mousse (134), Mocha Gateau Ring—plain sponge and choux pastry puffs filled with cream or ice cream and thickly iced with mocha icing (138) and Mocha Nut Cake—all of coffee and almonds cake filled and iced with mocha icing (138) and Mocha Chocolate Coffee Ice Cream—a coffee essence-scented ice cream (139) and Mocha Gateau (144) that was also featured in an ice cream bombe layered with chocolate-rom and vanilla ice creams (152). Mason’s coffee recipes are also given prominence in the accompanying illustrations. Although the book contains only nine pages in full colour, the Mocha Gateau Ring is featured on both the cover and opposite the title page of the book and the Mocha Nut Cake is given an entire coloured page.

The coffee component of Mason’s recipes is almost always sourced from either instant coffee (granules or powdered) or liquid coffee essence, however, while the cake for the Mocha Nut Cake uses instant coffee, its mocha icing and filling calls for “3 dessertspoons [of] hot black coffee” (167). The recipe does not, however, describe if this is made from instant, essence, or ground beans. The two other mocha icsings both use instant coffee, mixed with cocoa, icing sugar and water, one also includes margarine for softness. The recipe for Mocha Cup (202) in the chapter for Children’s Party Fare (198–203), listed alongside clown-shaped biscuits and directions to decorate cakes with sweets, plastic spaceships and dolfs, surprisingly comprises a sophisticated mix of sugar and coffee essence, its yolk and vanilla essence, and topped with cream. There are no instructions for making coffee or anything else for making fresh coffee in the volume.

At the Australian culinary masterwork of the 1960s, The Australian Cookbook, which was published in 1968 and sold out its first (record) print run of 100,000 copies in record time, is still in print, with a revised 2004 edition bringing the number of copies sold to over 1.5 million (Brien). The first edition’s cake section of the book includes a Coffee Sponge sandwich using coffee essence in both the cake and its creamy filling and topping (166) and Iced Coffee Cakes that also use coffee essence in the cupcakes and instant coffee powder in the glacé icing (166). A Hazelnut Swiss Roll is filled with a coffee butter cream called Coffee Creme au Beure, with instant coffee flavouring an egg custard which is beaten into creamed butter (167)—similar to Kondilis’s Mocha Cream but a little lighter, using milk instead of cream and fewer eggs. In the chapter for Continental Cakes, published in 1945, a small chocolate and cinnamon cake with “three dessertspoons of instant coffee” (160) is also featured in an ice cream bombe layered with chocolate-rom and vanilla ice creams (152). Mason’s coffee recipes are also given prominence in the accompanying illustrations. Although the book contains only nine pages in full colour, the Mocha Gateau Ring is featured on both the cover and opposite the title page of the book and the Mocha Nut Cake is given an entire coloured page.

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using the dish as a basis for a series of variations that even include replacing the coffee with fruit juices and other favouring agents. Long-lived Australian coffee recipes are similarly being re-made in line with current taste and habits, with celebrated chef Neil Perry’s recent Simple Coffee and Cream Sponge Cake comprising a classic cream-filled vanilla sponge topped with an icing made with “strong espresso”. To “glam up” the cake, Perry suggests sprinkling the top with chocolate-covered roasted coffee beans—cycling back to Maria Koszlik’s “coffee bean chocolate” (162) and showing just how resilient good taste can be.

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References


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Cold brew — made by letting coffee grounds soak in water at or below room temperature — is now a ubiquitous feature of the American city. Packaged in handsome brown bottles and poured by baristas in hip coffee shops, it was once a much rarer treat, disregarded and diminished by even the country’s most involved members of the industry. In the industry today, Japanese or Kyoto-style coffee is made by dripping water one drop at a time through glass apertures suspended like a tower. At a modern artisanal shop, to produce a batch of Kyoto-style coffee in five hours is considered fast. Cold coffee, if not cold-brewed coffee, is well known as a boon to those living life in extremis, especially soldiers. Next we will tell you how to cook this wonderful drink at home, so you not only knew how to call coffee with ice cream, but also knew how to do it yourself. To do this, do not need to look for any special ingredients - everything is extremely simple. We need freshly brewed coffee, a small amount of ice cream, whipped cream, sugar powder and a small amount of grated chocolate. It should be noted that freshly brewed coffee, of course, is an ideal option for making this drink. However, not all in the kitchen there are coffee makers, so you can get by with the usual quick-dissolving option. Let the Desserts are typically eaten in Australia, and most daily meals "end with simple desserts," which can include various fruits. [30] More complex desserts include cakes, pies and cookies, which are sometimes served during special occasions. [30]. "Powdered, Essence or Brewed?: Making and Cooking with Coffee in Australia in the 1950s and 1960s". 07/21/2016 02:17:36 AM UTC. https://web.archive.org/web/20150322225610/http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/viewArticle/475.