

KIWI CHESTNUTS

FRUITS OF A LONG GARDEN

Maria Teresa Corino

It is unfortunate that [...] we will be unable to pass on to the next generation noble avenues such as our fathers planted for us in Grey Street, Hamilton East. Fortunately those trees have grown so tall or have been so placed that their branches do not seriously interfere with our modern innovations. Advantage should be taken wherever opportunity affords, and free space permits [...], to plant free-growing trees such as chestnuts, oaks, ashes, sequoias, etc.¹

Kiwi chestnuts, or katania as we may one day come to call them, are the fruits of a long garden, planted by Pākehā settlers to ‘beautify’ the streets of cities and towns all along the islands of Aotearoa with large, leafy European trees. One of those stately species, known as the sweet or Spanish chestnut at the time, just happens to be one of humanity’s bread trees.² It bears a floury nut that has nourished many northern hemisphere populations for millennia.

In March 2015 I had just moved to Kirikiriroa Hamilton, to an old state house by the Waikato river — always and deservedly referred to as ‘the mighty Waikato’. As the season of mists began, I spotted chestnut burrs littering the lawns by the riverside walkway: bright green just-fallen burrs, dried out sepia-toned ones, with plump, glossy red-brown nuts

¹ ‘Source of danger: Trees and power lines, remedial steps urged. Beautifying society’s position.’ *Waikato Times*, 27 July 1933, p. 9.

² Two commonly planted food-bearing trees were the walnut, and the oak, of course, which like the chestnut has nourished humans both directly and via the pig. Neither, however, have been as important human food sources as the chestnut.

peeping from spike-lined cracks. Now and then bare nuts, released up in the canopy, fell and bounced on the ground.

In my native Italy such an easily accessed bounty would be pounced upon the moment it appears. Italians are foragers at heart, witness the many yearly mushroom poisonings and deaths. Chestnut lovers only risk losing a few drops of blood. Even so, most of us buy them in shops, as flour, marrons glacés, dried white nuts to cook in milk, raw nuts to boil or roast. When I was a child I loved the obligatory All Soul’s Day (November 2) visit to family tombs — because a roast chestnut seller was always stationed at the doors of the cemetery, selling half-charred, half raw goodness, piping hot in a paper cone.

As the Aotearoa season progressed — in the North Island it usually goes from early March to late April — I became curious about how so many chestnut trees had come to the banks of the Waikato, and why an elderly Chinese man and I were the only people gathering the fallen nuts. We would nod to each other as we did the chestnut shuffle: feel for full burrs with solidly shod feet; squash them open to reveal the nuts; ease the plumpest ones out with careful fingers or a stick. He suggested a simple way to enjoy them: boil until soft, cut in half, eat with a teaspoon.

Chestnuts are a treasured seasonal treat and a food of the heart and soul in places such as Japan, Korea, China, and Europe. New Zealanders who hail from these areas have much to teach us about these little brown nuts, but so do past Pākehā cooks.

‘JUST A CHESTNUT’

Chestnut trees (*Castanea* spp.) are members of the beech family. About thirteen main species are native to a temperate northern hemisphere climactic band that stretches across Europe, Asia and North America. Pollen studies indicate that at least some of these species are ancient:

they survived the age of mammoths and sabre-toothed tigers in several glacial refugia.³

The fruit is a nut, but an unusual one: starchy, slightly sweet, and nutritious, but relatively low in fat. It provides trace minerals and vitamin C, as well as 199 calories per 100 grams when dried, as compared to 86 for potatoes and 240 for whole grain wheat bread.⁴ Its nutritional profile is closer to eggs and rice than to oil-rich nuts like walnuts, hazelnuts or almonds. As well as being very nutritious, chestnuts can be easily roasted or boiled, but are palatable raw, so they were a staple food from well before the dawn of grain cultivation, and until as recently as the first half of the twentieth century.

People from the traditional chestnut cultures have trouble allocating them to a food category: ‘We do not think chestnuts as nuts. It is just chestnuts!’⁵ I think that the ‘nut’ in ‘chestnuts’ confuses English speakers and limits their use in Anglophone countries.⁶ More reasons to not think of chestnuts as nuts include the fact that ‘Virtually every tree nut species IS an allergy risk...with the sole exception of chestnuts.’⁷ They should also not be kept at room temperature like oil-rich nuts but refrigerated, and consumed within a fairly short time.

The words for chestnuts are nut-free in other languages. Southern European/Latin-based terms (the *castagna/chesten/kesten/castaña/chataigne*

3 M. Conedera et al. ‘The Cultivation of *Castanea sativa* (Mill.) in Europe, from its Origin to its Diffusion on a Continental Scale.’ *Vegetable History and Archeobotany* Volume 13, Issue 3 (2004), 161-179, doi:10.1007/s00334-004-0038-7

4 Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux, ‘Chestnuts’, in *The Cambridge World History of Food*, ed. Kenneth F. Kiple and Kriemhild Coneè Ornelas, Vol. One, (Cambridge, UK, Cambridge

5 ‘Yukiko’, email to author, 15 May 2017.

6 See recipe search sections below.

7 David Klinac, email to author, 29 January 2020. Klinac has the support of the Economic Union Directive 2003/89/EC of 10 November 2003 for one, which lists pretty much all nuts from macadamias to pistachios as allergens, but not chestnuts. Yet Klinac reports ‘We get a lot of companies saying “we would love to include products containing NZ chestnuts in our product range...but we have a strict no nuts policy.”’

national variants and *marron/marrone*), Japanese (*kuri*), and Mandarin (*li zi*) words have no link to nuts. I asked several people from these backgrounds whether they think of chestnuts as nuts. They don’t, and have trouble allocating them to a food category: ‘a chestnut is just a chestnut’ is the common reaction.⁸ French and Italian cookbooks classify them as fruits. My Italian-language *Silver Spoon* cookbook says that they are a fruit, but lists them under vegetables for savoury preparations. It also states that chestnuts help to counter ‘stress intellettuale’.⁹

In English they were once called chesten or cisten, from the Middle English chastaine and Old French chastain. They picked up a redundant nut from the mid-1500s to become chesten nut, which was gradually abbreviated to chestnut. The Latin castanea comes from Greek, and before that probably from a root word in the fertile lands of Persia and Armenia.¹⁰ The dichotomy *castagna/marrone* (as in marrons glacés) reflects the history of strong class divisions among European chestnut consumers. For many centuries in Southern Europe it was both a staple of mountain populations and an indulgence of the wealthy. In France and Italy the nut eaten by the poor was a *chataigne/castagna*, while the chestnut of the rich, prepared in far more sophisticated ways, was called *marron/marrone*.

Learned authors from the ancient Greeks onwards have been fairly scathing about the eating qualities of chestnuts. They were conflated with acorns as pig food and peasant food. The wood was highly prized however, and trees were pollarded to make supports for grapevines. This seems to have been the main impetus for the spread of cultivation by the Romans throughout Europe. Virgil, Ovid and Martial mention them ‘in a mountainous context, often in association with pastoral activities and

8 Interviews by author, April-May 2017. See ‘Three kataniaphiles’ below.

9 Giovanna Mazzocchi (ed.), *Il Cucchiaio d’Argento*, (Rozzano, Domus, 2011), 400.

10 *Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. ‘Chestnut (n.)’, accessed Apr. 06, 2021, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/chestnut>

frugal meals based on rustic ingredients such as cheese and fruit.’¹¹ The association of chestnuts with the rustic, both in a positive, poetic, nostalgic way, and a negative one of rural poverty and stupidity persists to this day. Cultivation dropped precipitously by the middle of the nineteenth century, due to extreme winters in 1709, 1789 and 1870; a changeover to mulberry trees to feed silkworms; disease; and strong prejudice among agrarian reformers against a life-style more akin to the hunter-gatherer than a modern, industrious, cash society life.¹² Toussaint-Samat blames an aging population, war, and the appeal of the cities for the fall in popularity of the chestnut, but she notes that ‘new peasants’, idealists not too bothered by profitability, libertarians, and ecologists, have since the 1960s led to a resurgence in France.¹³

Eating chestnuts rather than even the worst of breads has been for a long time regarded as a sign of utter poverty, although chestnuts are so nutritious that they consistently supported very high population densities. Chestnut eaters were reported to be thin, short, slow-moving and slow-chewing, like ruminating cows. Chestnut growers were lazy, just waiting for the tree-bread to fall into their mouths like manna from heaven;¹⁴ tax avoiders, and godless, because they avoided the biblical command to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow.¹⁵ Tree crops versus grain crops is an ancient battle, and the grain eaters have long controlled the message, even in British colonial newspaper reports: ‘the poorest peasants in the mountains [...] just manage to keep body and soul together on this not very nutritious food when wheat or maize is not to be had. [...] Our

11 Conedera, p. 172.

12 Fauve-Chamoux, pp. 362-3.

13 At least into the 1990s, when she was writing. So the 1968 ‘summer of love’ may have led to an autumn of chestnuts! Marguelonne Toussaint-Samat, *History of Food*, (London, Blackwell Reference, 1994), p. 715.

14 Fauve-Chamoux, p. 362-3.

15 Ariane Bruneton-Governatori. ‘Alimentation et Ideologie: le cas de la chataigne’ (Alimentation and Ideology: the Case of the Chestnut), *Annales, Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 39e Annee, No. 6 (1984), pp. 1161-1189.

prouder stomachs. in this country [Britain], have always rebelled against the delicacy.’¹⁶

The rich, meantime, ate and eat the *marron/marrone*, a large, rounded chestnut that fills the whole burr, while ordinary ones are smaller and flat on one or two sides from sharing the burr with one or two of their sisters. These super-chestnuts give less yield per tree, and require careful selection, grafting, pruning and cultivation. They were not consumed by the growers but reserved for sale, along three chestnut trade routes: from Portugal to Bordeaux and then on to England and the Netherlands; from Milan to Germany; from Italy to Lyon.¹⁷

The New Zealand Chestnut Council (NZCC), well aware of the marketing success that followed the transformation of Chinese gooseberries into kiwifruit, has been thinking about the naming of chestnuts: ‘they definitely need a better name/image.’¹⁸ They have come up with *marronz*, *castanza* and *castanenza*,¹⁹ none of which thrill me. I like the sound of the Japanese *kuri*: *kiwikuri*, maybe, for the Japanese export market?

A much better contender may be the te reo Māori word ‘*katania*’. According to Dr Richard Benton, *katania* is the te reo ‘Māori for “sweet chestnut” — that’s what the late H.M. Ngata,²⁰ of dictionary fame, called it — *katania ratina*, ‘Latin chestnut’ in full!’²¹ ‘The word and chestnuts themselves (except as a colour term, *pākaka*, with a basic meaning of ‘scorched’) are both ignored by the on-line AUT Māori dictionary.’²²

16 ‘The Latest India Office Report,’ *Hawke’s Bay Herald*, 22 July 1892, p. 4.

17 Fauve-Chamoux, p. 362.

18 David Klinac, email to author, 29 January 2020.

19 *Ibid.*

20 Hōri Mahue Ngata, Whai Ngata, and New Zealand. Ministry of Education. *English-Maori Dictionary*, (Wellington, N.Z., Learning Media, 1993).

21 Richard Benton, email to David Klinac, 19 May 2016. Dr Benton was Deputy Director of the Centre for Māori Studies and Research of the University of Waikato (1996-1999). At the time of writing he is President of the Polynesian Society and a member of the International Advisory Panel of Terralingua.

22 Richard Benton, email to David Klinac, 13 February 2020.

'It is a nice word which fits in well with Maori phonology and can be pronounced reasonably easily by English speakers. It would be great to see it popularized, especially as the name for NZ-produced chestnuts.'²³ A name that is linked to the English and Latin-based terms, and yet is our very own. Maybe it is time to rename the chestnut and give it a less misleading skin.

CHESTNUTS IN AOTEAROA

The first chestnut trees planted in Aotearoa were probably European chestnuts (*Castanea sativa*) brought by European settlers during the 1800s, followed soon after by Japanese chestnuts (*C. crenata*)²⁴, and later on American chestnuts (*C. dentata*) and Chinese chestnuts (*C. mollissima*).²⁵ 'but details have since been lost and no pure strains of this early material are known to remain.'²⁶ Specimens planted in 1847 and 1850 were recorded in 1973.²⁷ Several commercial nurseries imported the various chestnut tree species into New Zealand, until chestnut blight appeared in the US and quarantine restrictions were introduced here in response. By the late

23 Richard Benton, email to author, 13 April 2021.

24 The Wellington Botanic Garden Board assisted in one arrival: '100 giant chestnuts' in April [c.1880] 'It was represented to Government that Mr. Tiffin, of Napier, was about to visit Japan on a horticultural expedition, and that it would be a good opportunity for getting Japanese plants for distribution selected by a thoroughly-competent and enthusiastic collector. [...] twelve cases were received, containing 1,800 plants, [which also included 50 oranges and 1,000 persimmons] a very large proportion were in excellent condition, and have been distributed to applicants on payment of a charge that will recoup expenses.' Botanic Garden Board, 1880-81 (Twelfth Annual Report of the), 'Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives', 1881 Session I, H-24, Papers Past, accessed 13 April 2021, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/parliamentary/AJHR1881-I.2.2.4.34>

25 Nnadozie C. Oraguzie et al, 'Relationships of Chestnut Species and New Zealand Chestnut Selections Using Morpho-nut Characters.' *Euphytica* 99, no. 1 (1998): pp.

27-33.

26 *Ibid.*

27 'Historic and notable trees of New Zealand: Taranaki, Wanganui and Rangitikei - Central North Island.' Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research, accessed 6 April 2021, <http://digitalibrary.landcareresearch.co.nz/digital/collection/p20022coll11/id/4/>

1800s/early 1900s some disease resistant *C. crenata* was being planted in Europe, as chestnut diseases were already destroying huge numbers of *C. sativa*.²⁸ Could this be why so many species of chestnuts were also tried in New Zealand?

Nursery advertisements from the 1800s and early 1900s, however, seem to list all edible species as Spanish or sweet chestnuts (and often as ornamentals).²⁹ There were various 'private' imports as well, mostly of European chestnuts. Since quarantine started, the only imports of new cultivars have been via the NZCC and a few individual growers through the lengthy quarantine process.³⁰

New Zealand is now the only country in the world free of the many devastating chestnut diseases, which have almost wiped out the American chestnut (an attempt is underway to resuscitate it with genetic engineering).³¹ Pests and diseases are decimating European production just as demand for chestnuts and chestnut products is making a comeback there, driven by the popularity of traditional foods and gluten-free ingredients.

*Oh! there is no tree in all the world so beautiful in shape and color [sic], so symmetrical and stately, as the chestnut.*³²

Chestnut trees — along with 'oaks, ashes, sequoias, etc.'³³ — planted along streets and in parks, farms and schools³⁴ from Northland to Otago, seem

28 Bruneton-Governatori, p. 475.

29 See e.g. 'Ornamental Trees,' *North Canterbury Gazette*, 4 September 1934, p. 6; or as fruit trees 'Riverside Nursery,' *Thames Star*, 20 September 1897, p. 1.

30 David Klinac, email to author, 17 January 2020.

31 American Chestnut Research and Restoration Project, 'Ten Thousand Chestnut Challenge', accessed 10 April 2021, <http://www.esf.edu/chestnut/>

32 'Chestnut Time,' *Lake Wakatip Mail*, 28 July 1925, p. 7.

33 'Source of danger,' *Waikato Times*, 27 July 1933, p. 9.

34 Arbor Day was a popular time to plant trees. At 'Native schools', like Manaia on the Coromandel where 'eight edible chestnuts' were planted, 'simple practical lessons on planting, grafting, pruning, &c, and on the natural history of the pests injuring fruit-trees, would form a very suitable course for older scholars in Native schools,' according to George Hogben, Secretary for Education. 'Arbor Day', Appendix to the Journals of

to have been mainly chosen as stately exotics by beautification societies, councils, and individuals.³⁵ 'An endowment of beauty by relieving the prospect of a long street, and charming the eye with soft touches of nature.'³⁶

In Tauranga in 1929 'Plane trees, chestnuts, walnuts, and oaks of several varieties beautify almost every street.'³⁷ 'Trees are stately and add to the beauty of your property,' says a 1924 *Waikato Times* advertisement. 'We are able to supply street, park & avenue trees. Oak, Ash, Elm, Spanish and Horse Chestnuts, Limes, Weeping Trees, etc.'³⁸ Chestnut trees were regularly on sale from orchardists, mostly advertised under ornamentals, although also at times as fruit trees.

For farms they were advocated for beauty, profit from timber³⁹ and nuts,⁴⁰ and shelter for workers and grazing animals.^{41,42} The *Christchurch Star* speaks more nebulously of the importance of 'forest trees' to 'agricultural and pastoral interests.'

*'In its bearing upon successful colonisation forest tree planting is of the greatest importance. [...] Nearly all kinds of trees have now become astonishingly cheap, thus very little excuse can be made in this direction.'*⁴³

the House of Representatives, 1899 Session I, E-02a, Papers Past, accessed Apr. 13, 2021, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/parliamentary/AJHR1899-I.2.2.3.7>

35 David Klinac, interview by author, 28 April 2017, And see e.g. J. Joyce, who recommends chestnuts for their 'wealth of foliage' in 'Gardening Notes,' *New Zealand Tablet*, 21 June 1917, p. 15.

36 'Trees in Towns,' *Patea Mail*, 31 May 1881, p. 2.

37 G. Edith Burton. 'The Oak Tree was an Acorn Once,' *Auckland Star*, 2 March 1929, p. 8.

38 *Waikato Times*, 1 July 1924, p. 8.

39 'Farming Items,' *New Zealand Mail*, 2 December 1882, p. 11.

40 'Planting,' *Akaroa Mail and Banks Peninsula Advertiser*, 22 May 1885, p. 2.

41 'Shelter Trees,' *Te Aroha News*, 16 June 1888, p. 7.

42 Or all of the above, concluding possibly a bit too rosily that 'Large quantities of chestnuts would find a ready market in all the large centres of New Zealand, where at the present they are a great luxury.' 'Chestnut,' *Auckland Star*, 24 May 1890, p. 2 (Supplement).

43 'Forest Tree Cultivation,' *Star* (Christchurch), 9 December 1873, p. 2.

The *Star* goes on to praise the planting of trees, chestnuts included, in public spaces by the government. Many New Zealanders who I have spoken with informally during the last five years recall a chestnut tree growing on a grandparent's farm.

It can be hard to tell when trees planted in beautification schemes were horse chestnuts or edible chestnuts.⁴⁴ Horse chestnuts have inedible nuts, and are larger trees with much more impressive white flowers, often compared to white candles or candelabra. Horse chestnut fruits, or 'conkers', lack the pointed end topped with a fluffy tuft that distinguishes edible chestnuts, but are otherwise very similar. They are bitter and poisonous, but very popular for children's games.⁴⁵

There was ongoing confusion between the two fruits. The *Taranaki Herald* was happy to receive from Mr Rumney in May 1890 'a sample of some chestnuts he has for sale. They are the genuine kind, and fit for roasting.'⁴⁶ In 1910 the *Southland Times* reported that in Masterton 'a local Chinese' was to be charged for selling horse chestnuts to a boy who ate them and became ill.⁴⁷ In another report, presumably of the same case, the magistrate held that 'a Chinese named Ah Ting' had inadvertently included some horse chestnuts in a batch of 'Spanish' chestnuts.⁴⁸

Some very old trees survive, though many have been cut down. I went to photograph a bountiful specimen in Grey street, Hamilton, a few days before the 2020 Symposium to find it had just been pruned to a massive

44 At other times Spanish or sweet chestnuts are specifically mentioned. Though the press reports are not necessarily accurate, edible chestnuts *were* planted at some time along the main street of Hamilton East. See e.g. a reference to 'a scheme of beautifying the town by planting trees' in 1876, by the Town Board of Hamilton East, the contract being awarded to a Mr Mason. 'In the Good Old Days,' *Waikato Times*, 2 September 1916, p. 3. The Mason brothers had a large nursery at Claudelands, Hamilton.

45 Anti-Destruction, 'Destroying the Plantations,' *Press*, 23 November 1888, p. 6.

46 *Taranaki Herald*, 8 May 1890, p. 2.

47 *Southland Times*, 17 June 1910, p. 5.

48 'Masterton Magistrate's Court,' *New Zealand Times*, 25 June 1910, p. 15.

articulated stump, like a tree Venus de Milo. Fittingly, a funeral home car was parked by its side. Large trees that pepper streets, cars and footpaths with spiky burrs for a couple of months every autumn are not universally popular.

But their genes live on: the early ‘mother trees’ from which seed and graftwood was collected, to be used as the basis of the current commercial New Zealand cultivars, were almost always street and park trees, and the odd ‘backyard tree’ from old settler homesteads. There were no large commercial orchard plantings before about 1980.⁴⁹ There are references to chestnut plantations⁵⁰ in *Papers Past*, but these were presumably small scale or short lived.⁵¹ ⁵² David Klinac, a tree scientist and the spokesman for the NZCC, knows everything and everyone in the New Zealand chestnut world. He says that when researchers were trying to find the next kiwifruit, the next export success story in the early 1970s, they went up and down the country and selected the best producers: ‘No-one knew what a chestnut was meant to taste like, so we just picked the biggest nuts, the heaviest croppers.’ DNA analysis revealed the best performers to be local hybrids, their genes mostly Japanese, with a little European chestnut.⁵³

Growers are still trying to bring in new varieties because those big nuts

49 Klinac, interview by author, 28 April 2017.

50 E.g. ‘Fruit-growing Industry, *New Zealand Herald*, 24 December 1888, p. 5.

51 Prisoners from Waitapu planted an impressive ‘Spanish chestnuts (seeds), 52,552’ along with many thousand other trees and seedlings—but planting is not harvesting. Department Of Justice, Prisons Branch (Report On), For The Year Ending 31st December, 1903; Also The Operation Of ‘The First Offenders’ Probation Act, 1886” (Report On), For The Year Ending 31st December, 1903., Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives, 1904 Session I, H-20, Papers Past, accessed Apr. 13, 2021, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/parliamentary/AJHR1904-I.2.3.2.28>

52 Deer browsed on and broke down ‘40 acres of sweet chestnuts’ at Whakarewarewa. Deer In New Zealand. Report On The Damage Done By Deer In The Forests And Plantations In New Zealand, Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives, 1922 Session I, C-03a, Papers Past, accessed Apr. 13, 2021, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/parliamentary/AJHR1922-I.2.1.4.7> Many grazing animals, including cattle and alpacas, are partial to chestnut bark, nuts and shells.

53 Klinac, interview by author, 28 April 2017.

turned out to not always be the best flavoured. Chestnuts are regarded as hard work even by those who are addicted to them, as both a hard outer skin and a clinging inner skin have to be removed. In Japan the tough peel is called *onikawa*, the monster skin; it shields *shibukawa*, the bitter skin. Most Kiwi chestnuts have an even clingier pellicle than European ones; some have pellicle through the centre, splitting the flesh into two parts. The nuts are susceptible to fungi, both on the tree and on the ground. It seems to have been an issue here for a long time, judging by letters to the editor⁵⁴ and jokes in old newspapers. According to grower Annabel Sidey, unhealthy nuts contributed to the collapse of the Aotearoa export industry after a brief boom late last century, ‘Too many people sent too many rotten nuts.’⁵⁵ The industry has turned to the domestic market, but is faced with much indifference from Pākehā consumers, many of whom have probably never tasted a chestnut.

Up until about one hundred years ago, the taste of chestnuts was familiar enough to Pākehā settlers that the flavour of kūmara was repeatedly described as being ‘like chestnuts’.⁵⁶ Now chestnuts are often described as tasting like kūmara—a very approximate similarity at best.⁵⁷ Then and now, for those of us who spare them a thought, chestnuts are mainly associated with Christmas, with family and friends gathering to roast them on an open fire, or paper bags full of charred nuts from itinerant sellers

54 For example, ‘good chestnuts are a most palatable delicacy; and it is a fraud on the public that such uneatable rubbish should be palmed off on us under their name. M’ ‘Chestnuts,’ *Auckland Star*, 21 April 1937, p. 6.

55 Jon Morgan, ‘Evocative chestnuts take a roasting,’ *Stuff*, 14 April 2011, accessed 6 April 2021, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/farming/4886828/Evocative-chestnuts-take-a-roasting> A very good account of the history of commercial cultivation in New Zealand, and of the issues the industry faces, including disinterest by Pākehā consumers.

56 See e.g. D.M. Ford, who includes an interesting take on the history of sweet potatoes, and asserts that in the U.S. ‘they are often used in place of chestnuts for stuffing turkey on Thanksgiving Day.’ D.M. Ford, ‘Tropical Potatoes’, *Oamaru Mail*, 26 May 1917, p. 3 (Supplement).

57 Morgan. *Stuff*, 14 April 2011.

on wintry European streets: a nostalgic and very occasional treat linked to ‘the old country’, where Christmas comes with cold hands and snowy boughs. These associations are long-standing, but many New Zealanders did use to have a broader familiarity with chestnuts.

KATHERINE MANSFIELD’S CHESTNUTS.

The writer Katherine Mansfield knew her chestnuts. Among the trail of wonderful breadcrumbs collected in *The Katherine Mansfield Cookbook* is *Chestnut Curry* as a luncheon dish⁵⁸ (although the illustration under the recipe looks a lot like conkers⁵⁹). And ‘Don’t forget about chestnuts boiled, put through the sieve and then made the consistency of mashed potatoes.’⁶⁰

Mansfield also knew how to use chestnuts to create a scene of winter domesticity, and a vignette of boyish campfire cooking. In her unfinished novel *Maata*, begun in the winter of 1913, she encapsulates these two common English and Pākehā images of chestnuts so effectively that the fragment is worth quoting at length. As Margaret Scott says, ‘The story ... is ostensibly set in London, but it harks back in feeling, and sometimes in detail, to Wellington.’⁶¹

Maata knelt by the dining room fire helping Maisie roast chestnuts. They had

58 Nicola Saker (Ed.), *The Katherine Mansfield Cookbook*, (Wellington: Katherine Mansfield Birthplace Society Inc. Te Puakitanga, 2018), p. 10. *Chestnut Curry* also appears in the *Southern Cross* in 1917, with haricot beans, a carrot, and 1.5 gills of curry sauce. ‘Home Circle: War-Time Economics’, *Southern Cross*, 30 June 1917, p. 6. (For general deliciousness I’d go with Saker’s recipe, which includes coconut milk, tomatoes, onions, turmeric, ginger, garlic, coriander and chilli.)

59 *Ibid.* p. 13

60 Katherine Mansfield. Letter to JMM, 9 January 1920, quoted in Saker, *Katherine Mansfield Cookbook*, p. 12.

61 Margaret Scott. ‘The Unpublished Manuscripts of Katherine Mansfield, Part VI, Two Maata Fragments.’ *Turnbull Library Record*, Volume 7, Issue 1, 1 May 1974, p. 4. PapersPast, accessed 7 April 2021, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/periodicals/TLR19740501.2.4>

a packet of the little hard nuts beside them and a hatpin to prick them with, an old Daily Mirror leaf to hold the charred peelings. In the rosy glow of the fire the two children, leaning against each other laughed and whispered, very absorbed, very intent. By the table sat Mrs Close darning whole new feet into a pair of Hal’s socks.[...] Now and again she leant forward and opened her mouth for Maisie to pop in a ‘beautifully soft one’ [...] The room was warm and all pleasantly scented with the roasting nuts. [...] Now and again, in the hush, they heard Hal’s piano. [...]

‘Mum’ said Maisie suddenly ‘where’s our Philip.’ ‘Don’t know, dearie — ask Maata’, Mrs Close doubling a strand of wool and laboriously threading the needle. ‘Do you know where he is — he’d love some of these chestnuts. Oh — do you remember how he used to love chestnuts when he was a little thing Mum, and roast them in the bonfire in the backyard, and dirty his handkerchiefs with them?’

‘That I do. Do you know Maata I’ll never forget one day finding the boys after they’d been having a bonfire washing their handkerchiefs and their little white ‘duckies’ at the garden tap on the front lawn — for everybody to see. [...] But to see these kids with a bit of soap and some pumice stone they’d found on the esplanade, scrubbing their hankies and hanging them to dry on a flax bush — I thought I’d have died laughing.’

‘Oh the darlings. I can see them,’ laughed Maata. ‘So serious, you know.’ She shook her skirts, crept over to Mrs Close, and sat leaning against her, her bright hair between the older woman’s knees. ‘Tell me about when they were little’[...] Maisie pleaded, standing a row of four fat soldiers in the second fire bar.[...]

A voice from the door — Phil had slipped quietly in and stood against the lintel, hands in his pockets, looking at them with laughter. [...]

‘Maisie — give me one. I came down to steal Maata. It’s such a beautiful night. Don’t you want to go for a walk, dearest?’ [...] ‘Me too, me too’, from Maisie. ‘No’ replied the mother firmly.[...] ‘You go off to bed my girl, and don’t sit any longer scorching your face and getting indigestion with all that rubbish. Off you go’.

Yes, there is a sting in the tail: ‘all that rubbish.’ Other less-talented writers

riffed on similar themes, with similar little stings: ‘if we are not too proud.’ The chestnut tree is stately and noble, but its fruits are not.

*At Christmas [...] the chestnuts follow us indoors—humbly enough, candied into “marrons glacés,” or stuffed tightly inside turkeys; we roast them by the fire; they pop and crack; they jump inside the flames, or hide under the chairs, or burn our finger-tips. Or in the streets clever old women roast them over red-hot braziers; we smell them from afar, and if we are wise and not too proud we buy a bagful with a pinch of salt, and eat them round the nearest corner, and keep a few to put inside our muffs and warm our hands.*⁶²

KATANIA RECIPE SEARCH

The University of Waikato’s cookbook collection includes several editions of Kiwi classics and many local community recipe compilations. I searched them all for chestnuts, with meagre results. The Waikato is chestnut country, but none of the community cookbooks yielded a single chestnut recipe (and none of the most highly rated local restaurants had chestnuts on their menu when I did a mid-season online check⁶³). Chestnuts rarely appear in other New Zealand cookbooks in this collection—maybe one recipe every twenty books—and even more rarely are preparation details spelled out, i.e. how to deal with the pesky shell and pellicle. ‘A tremendous fuss is made about the difficulty of shelling and skinning chestnuts. It is really very easy,’ says Elizabeth David.⁶⁴ With most Kiwi katania, it isn’t, Elizabeth.

Recipes can be otherwise unreliable or unachievable. In 1962, for example, fresh cherries and chestnuts were unlikely to be available in the same season, to make flambé *Cherries and Chestnuts with Brandy*.⁶⁵ The idea that

62 ‘Chestnut Time,’ *Lake Wakatip Mail*, 28 July 1925, p. 7.

63 2017 season, March–April.

64 Elizabeth David, *French Provincial Cooking*, (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1986), p. 263.

65 Rosa Peacock, *Cosmopolitan Dishes for New Zealand Tables*, (Wellington, Paul’s Book Arcade, 1962), 45.

chestnuts are nuts, so can be cooked as you would any nut is apparent in E.C. Roosevelt’s *Roast Chestnuts*, to be tossed with butter in a fry pan for ‘a few moments’, then sprinkled with salt and cayenne and served ‘after the cheese’.⁶⁶ They would be basically raw, then and now widely regarded as indigestible, though this may well be wrong.⁶⁷

Early recipes sometimes include chestnuts in roast turkey stuffing. Mrs E.B. Miller’s 1916 *Economic Technical Cookery Book*, has butter, pink colouring, sugar and pureed chestnuts. Alternatively, stuff turkey with ‘eighteen truffles, if procurable.’⁶⁸ Economic indeed. Stuffed turkey in this country tends to be a Christmas dish, when chestnuts are well out of season, which may explain why chestnut stuffings disappear from most later cookbooks.⁶⁹ In 1955, *The Journal of Agriculture Cookery Book* had a magnificent list of twenty-eight stuffings, from oysters to oatmeal, from feijoas to Chinese gooseberries, but no chestnuts.⁷⁰

Mrs W.F. Kent-Johnston, who donated the proceeds of her book to the rebuilding of Napier’s St John cathedral after the 1931 earthquake, is a far more reliable source. She shells the katanias, puts them in warm water, brings almost to the boil, peels while warm. She sounds like she has actually handled Kiwi katanias. She then boils, sieves, and seasons them with stock, milk, cayenne, salt and mace.⁷¹ *A chestnut pudding* in

66 “Roast Chestnuts,” in Scoullar and Chisholm Ltd, *Cookery Book and Household Management*, (Dunedin N.Z., Scoullar and Chisholm, 190?) p. 347. This is a N.Z. reprint of a U.S. cookbook, so the method may work for some of the smaller American chestnuts.

67 David Klinac, email to author, Jan. 21, 2020.

68 Elizabeth Brown Miller, *Economic Technical Cookery Book: being all proved recipes, and given at various classes*, (Dunedin, Mills, Dick and Co., 1916), pp. 94–5.

69 Though they still turn up in newspaper Christmas recipes, possibly taken from U.K. publications, e.g. the forcemeats in ‘Christmas Recipes’, *New Zealand Herald*, 22 December 1905, p. 5 (Supplement).

70 *The Journal of Agriculture Cookery Book: Containing 624 Recipes And Additional Information Relating To Food Planning And Preparation Selected From The New Zealand Journal Of Agriculture*, (Wellington, A.H. & N.W. Reed, 1955), pp. 149–154.

71 Nan G. Kent-Johnston, *Everyday Recipes: tried and tested by Mrs. W.F. Kent-*

the 'vegetarian cookery' section of the 1955 edition of *Colonial Everyday Cookery* also sounds fairly appealing, a sweetened, vanilla-scented puree, decorated with angelica, almonds and glacè cherries and served in a glass dish. The vegetarian section mentions a chestnut flour used by the Italians 'which supplies a large nitrogenous element'.⁷² Chestnut flour recipes, however, are absent.

The National Library of New Zealand's *Papers Past* databases of newspapers, magazines and journals are a far better source: *chestnut fingers, pudding with honey and stewed green figs*;⁷³ a chestnut stuffing to 'cheer up an old bird' that includes shallot, parsley, lemon rind, almonds, a small chilli — even 'if liked, just a suspicion of garlic may be added by rubbing the inside of the bird with a clove of garlic';⁷⁴ 'snails cooked 'on the bars of a fire or on a shovel after the manner of chestnuts';⁷⁵ many chestnut soups, compotes, purees, and sauces;⁷⁶ croquettes from the *Bruce Herald* in 1896 packed full of cream, butter and eggs to serve with turkey;⁷⁷ *fried fillet steak with chestnuts*;⁷⁸ *fricassee of oysters and chestnuts*.⁷⁹

There are chestnut stuffings aplenty, most often paired with sausages, the bird served surrounded by more sausages. One lateral thinker, concerned not with Christmas but with whether 'roast mutton is apt to pall if presented too often' suggests boned ribs of beef with chestnut stuffing.⁸⁰ There is a surprisingly modern stewed rabbit, with olive oil,

Johnston, (Napier, The Daily Telegraph Co. Ltd., 1953), p. 2. Also published as *The Diocese of Waiapu Cookery Book*.

72 *Colonial Everyday Cookery*, (Auckland, Whitcombe & Tombs, 1955), p. 132.

73 'Chestnut ways', *Otago Daily Times*, 14 June 1929, p. 14.

74 *Ibid.*

75 "Snails as Food", *Otago Mail*, 17 July 1929, p. 4. The shovel seems to be the Kiwi equivalent of the Italian perforated chestnut pan.

76 'Housekeeper', *Bruce Herald*, 4 June 1901, p. 2.

77 'How to Make Chestnut Croquettes', *Bruce Herald*, 15 May 1896, p. 5 (Supplement).

78 'To-Day's Dinner', *Dominion*, 17 June 1909, p. 3.

79 'Housekeeper', *Alexandra Herald and Central Otago Gazette*, 12 May 1904, p. 7.

80 'Dishes to Tempt Jaded Appetites', *Ladies' Mirror*, 1 July 1924, p. 33.

thyme and bay leaves. 'A glass of red wine added to the gravy improves the dish immensely.' Very Elizabeth David, but from 1940.⁸¹ In many dessert dishes, katanias are peeled, then cooked until very soft and passed through a sieve, a similar method to the Italo-French *Monte Bianco*.

One gets the impression that chestnuts, in season, were readily accessible and fairly well known to most Aotearoa cooks from the late 1800s until at least the 1950s. They certainly featured in those barometers of the country's best produce, the agricultural and flower shows. Mr H. Adams at the 1875 Nelson Flower Show won the 'Best Dish of Chestnuts' category. They were not 'plethoric' like the strawberries, but they won him five or six shillings for several years running.⁸²

Maureen in the *New Zealand Tablet* mentions chestnuts several times. 'Chestnuts, if not baked, should be blanched and steamed, and then eaten with salt and milk, in the French fashion.'⁸³ 'Chestnuts [...] are so rich in starch as to be almost bread. They are used principally for soups, sauces, entrees, and desserts.'⁸⁴

Try her peeling method from a 1915 'marrons glace' recipe — remove the shells and throw boiling water over them, in a few minutes they can be peeled, she says. David Klinac recommends the modern-day version of this: shell, place in microwave, cook four minutes on high, then peel. Use an open microwave container if you want them dry, closed for moist.

In France and Italy many chestnut recipes, both new and traditional, are based on chestnut flour rather than on fresh or dried chestnuts. One 1901 Kiwi recipe, *Chestnut Pudding a la Vanille*, mentions a kind of home-made flour: 'Having removed the outer and inner shell, boil till tender, dry in the oven, and pound to powder.'⁸⁵ But chestnut flour mostly appears in New

81 'A French Recipe,' *Evening Post*, 6 Apr. 1940, p. 17.

82 'Summary,' *Colonist*, 14 Dec. 1875, p. 5. (Supplement).

83 'Maureen', 'Domestic', *New Zealand Tablet*, 7 December 1916, p. 55.

84 'Maureen', *New Zealand Tablet*, 2 January 1908, p. 33.

85 'Housekeeper', *Bruce Herald*, 4 June 1901, p. 2.

Zealand sources as a famine food, or as the sustenance of impoverished foreign peasants. The *Tablet* in 1898 lists it with rat pie, feline rabbits and famine breads, and notes: ‘Civilised countries will not give up wheat-flour bread.’⁸⁶ Scorn is poured on the idea that in Europe a potato famine could be relieved with the ‘farina’ (i.e. flour) from chestnuts, as ‘inexhaustible supplies of them are to be had.’⁸⁷

Many flours have now risen in the estimation of ‘civilised countries.’ Although it avoids the lengthy preparation process, the use of chestnut flour remains a rarity here, possibly because it does not keep as well as, and is more expensive than other flours. But it can also replace eggs, butter, milk and sugar. The classic Italian *castagnaccio* cake, for instance, is traditionally chestnut flour and water, usually seasoned with rosemary and raisins. Corsican *frittelle* are sweet and rich pancakes made only with water, chestnut flour and salt.

Chestnut flour *was* used in fine British cooking some time ago: Colin Spencer’s *British Food* tells of chestnut flour tarts, saffron-tinted, filled with pine nuts or pistachios, wine, sugar, honey, ginger, and cloves, from the reign of Edward the First — around 1280.⁸⁸

I continued the chestnut search in my own cookbook collection.⁸⁹ Unlike either current or older New Zealand cookbooks, French, Italian, and Spanish ones contain a bounty of chestnut cakes, soufflés, candies, jam, ice cream, chocolates, biscuits, creams, confits and caramels, pancakes and fritters, and quite a few savoury soups, casseroles and purees. To skin katanias, however, I now use methods from Japanese recipes, rather than those in European cookbooks. Or I get out the Japanese chestnut scissors,

86 ‘Current Topics at Home and Abroad’, *New Zealand Tablet*, 22 April 1898, p. 1.

87 “Curry and Corn,” *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, Volume V, Issue 225, 27 June 1846, 65

88 Colin Spencer, *British Food: An Extraordinary Thousand Years of History*, (London, Grub Street, 2004), pp. 40-41.

89 Tiny by some standards, somewhere between 200-250 volumes — but multilingual.

available from the NZCC. The many chestnut dishes of China, Japan and Korea seem to seldom make it into books written in English,⁹⁰ but they are easily found online.

THREE KATANIAPHILES

During the 2017 chestnut season I conducted interviews with Kirikiriroa Hamilton residents born in Japan, France, and China.⁹¹ Perhaps it is a sign of the importance of chestnuts in these three places that the very first person from each country whom I asked if they like chestnuts responded: I *love* chestnuts! Their stories help explain why love is not too strong a word for kataniaphilia.

Japan

From haiku to emoji, *kuri* are part of the Japanese soul. There may well have been no Japanese without chestnuts and other tree crops, diet staples while Japan was still connected to mainland Asia. They are a genuine paleo food, eaten at first raw or cooked in ashes, then as soups, pastes and dumplings as pottery was developed.⁹² ‘Charred chestnuts that are more than 9,000 years old have been found in and around the archaeological sites of Jomon Period (10,000-200 B.C.) settlements.’⁹³ At a 5,500-year-old site evidence of a large plantation of chestnuts was discovered, indicating use of the native nut as a staple before the spread of rice cultivation. A ‘huge chestnut tree in the center of the settlement [...] was probably used for

90 At least, none are included in any of mine.

91 They are just as important in Korean culture and cuisine, but I haven’t yet interviewed a Korean kataniaphile.

92 Naomichi Ishige. *The History and Culture of Japanese Food* (London, Keegan Paul, 2001), pp. 9-11.

93 Makiko Itoh. “Kuri”, the Nutty Staple of Ancient Japan’, *The Japan Times*, 14 October 2016, accessed 10 April 2021, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2016/10/14/food/kuri-nutty-staple-ancient-japan/#.WJw9ufJ0Dis>

religious rituals.’⁹⁴ *Kuri* are used in Shinto rituals. *Kuri kinton*, made of sweet potato and very sweet chestnuts preserved in syrup, are still part of the traditional array of New Year dishes. As in Europe, they retain a seasonality that has been lost with many other foods, giving them an appeal that goes beyond their nutritional input.

Every Japanese child knows the strange fairy tale *The Crab and the Monkey*. Monkey kills crab senior in a fight for persimmons. Crab junior gets a gang together (the members are cow dung, a rice mortar, a chestnut and a bee) and kills monkey. The chestnut helps by jumping out of the fire and hitting monkey in the neck. Chestnuts have exploded out of coals and hit people for long enough to affect culture elsewhere: in both French (*chataigne* and *marron*) and Italian (*castagna*) a good hard punch is a chestnut.

The University of Waikato’s Dr Fumiko Nishimura features *monburan* in the *Soba Blog*⁹⁵ that she writes to help her students learn Japanese language and culture. This Japanese take on the Italo-French *Monte Bianco* dessert is a long way from the original, a simple piped mound of sweet chestnut puree topped with whipped cream. *Monburan* are delicate individual pastries, sponge cake topped with chestnut-flavoured cream, covered with chestnut puree, maybe a chestnut on top or lurking within. Often yellow, they come in many colours and versions.

I spoke with Yukiko, who went on *monburan*-buying excursions to Shirobara (White Rose) Patisserie with her family through much of her childhood. ‘*Monburan* was my father’s favourite sweet, and my brother’s.’⁹⁶ Yukiko shows me magazines full of *omiyage* selections, the regional specialties that one can send to family, friends, colleagues. Traditional sweets stuffed or coated with chestnut paste, most just a mouthful or

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Fumiko Ishimura. ‘Mont Blanc’, *Soba Blog*, 22 December 2009, accessed 10 April 2021, <http://www.waikato.ac.nz/fass/soba/2009/10/-mont-blanc.shtml#more>

⁹⁶ ‘Yukiko’ (not her real name), interview by author, 24 April 2017.

two each, are displayed in individual nests of beautiful packaging. There are sweets from the Tamba mountains, ‘the roof of Kyoto’. Only a tiny percentage of chestnuts are prized Tamba-*waguri*.

To Yukiko, Aotearoa chestnuts taste much like Japanese ones. Maybe an enterprising grower will one day recreate Tanba-*waguri* outside Japan, as was done with Kobe *wagyū*. Yukiko oven-roasts *kuri*, or she might make her favourite chestnut dish, *kurigohan*, chestnut rice, one of the great autumn dishes of Japan: the subtle flavours of white rice and chestnuts seasoned with a dash of mirin, sake, or white wine with a little sugar, topped with sesame seeds. Yukiko remembers *kurigohan* as a true family meal: her mother cooked it, but her father had the long job of chestnut peeling, ‘because he was the strongest one.’⁹⁷

*Corsica*⁹⁸

Every year, in the lead-up to Christmas, a box full of Corsica arrived in the mail for Louise’s family, Corsicans living in Marseilles, France (of course, as Louise keeps correcting herself, unconvincingly, Corsica too is in France). There were *figatelli*, a thin, spicy pork sausage, and hard lemony *canestrelli* biscuits, but what everyone was waiting for was Corsican chestnut flour. It tasted like nothing else in the world, not even like fresh chestnuts: ‘I don’t know why I liked it so much, I don’t know... Everybody was enjoying it, it was linking everybody back to there.’

The flour, says Louise’s 79-year-old cousin, Marie Antoinette, who was raised in Corsica, takes ages to make, and is expensive. You dry the chestnuts in a special heated room; you peel the two skins—if you don’t, the flour will be sour; you mill the nuts. Louise’s *maman* made *brilluli*, a soup of chestnut flour and water, or sometimes milk, her sister’s

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ All stories and quotes about ‘Louise’ and her family are from interview by author, 4 May 2017. Louise is not her real name.

favourite; polenta, basically a thick *brilluli*; or *frittelle*, small pancakes, Louise's favourite. *Frittelle* time was always a festive occasion. 'When I think about them now, I can feel them in my mouth.'

Marie Antoinette ate many chestnut flour dishes while growing up. Most common were *brilluli* and polenta. The polenta was fried or just set and sliced, to be eaten with *figatelli*, or *brocciu*, a very fresh, white sheep's milk cheese. Her family also made *nicci*, flatbreads baked between two metal plates, or *pisticcini*, little yeast-risen balls baked on chestnut leaves.

Louise's father lived in a small inland village, isolated at the end of a winding road and a donkey track, until he went to be a soldier in World War II. His pre-war diet was almost exclusively chestnuts and pork. As a child Louise spent many summer holidays there. Chestnut trees were everywhere. Her father could still point out the family trees as they walked around the village: 'That one, and that one. We used to gather the chestnuts on the ground, keep them pruned.' They owned the trees, but not the land they grew on. By the time Louise saw it, the family house was renovated but still had the old soot-blackened kitchen, with an open fire pit in the centre of the room. You cooked chestnuts in a special earthenware pan with holes, or boiled them in water with salt and fennel branches.⁹⁹

Corsicans, like other southern Europeans, call the chestnut 'the bread tree', and chestnuts 'wooden bread': bread as the food of foods, necessary to life. According to the ethnologist Bruneton-Governatori the chestnut should also be called 'the meat tree', as anyone who has chestnuts can fatten a pig.¹⁰⁰ Pigs are fed the smaller or damaged chestnuts, carefully

⁹⁹ These methods are similar to the two most common in my Italian family, and I believe in most of Italy. We have metal chestnut-roasting frypans with perforated bottoms, so that the nuts can come in direct contact with the heat - see illustration. They can be used on many domestic cooktops, and can be home-made with an old pan and a drill. Boiled chestnuts can be eaten cold.

¹⁰⁰ Ariane Bruneton-Governatori, *Le Pain de Bois: Ethnohistoire de la Chataigner et du Chataigner*, (Toulouse, Eche', 1984), p. 330.



A Chestnut Pan

dried for winter—and in some areas even peeled!¹⁰¹ With these two staples plus usually milk products and a few vegetables, in the past peasants in the chestnut-growing areas of Europe had better health, higher population rates, and longer lives than their chestnut-deprived neighbours. Despite this, most contemporary commentators looked with pity on people who could not, or *would not*, grow grain crops and ate chestnuts instead.¹⁰²

In Corsica, as in Japan, chestnuts pop up in legends and fairy tales: chestnut trees as vampires; the devil tempts young farmers with treasure in exchange for the right to collect chestnuts; gremlins play tricks with the mill. A Corsican-born French general once said that to subdue the Corsicans one would have to cut down their chestnut trees.¹⁰³ Louise jokes that she may be part chestnut, her ancestors have eaten so many. *A*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* p. 247.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* pp. 469-70.

¹⁰³ This is supposed to have been said by Marshal Sebastiani: Bruneton-Governatori, 1984, p. 445.

Christmas Fantasy in the *Tablet* has even Emperor Napoleon dreaming of the ‘great poverty’ of his childhood, and ‘the frugal [Christmas] feast, where chestnuts were eaten with gusto.’¹⁰⁴

As a kid, Louise liked raw chestnuts. ‘But you can’t eat many, only two or three. My mother was always trying to avoid that, it’s not good for your intestines.’ Louise’s mother baked chestnuts from Ardeche in their shells. When she took them from the oven she sprinkled them with water and wrapped them for a while in newspaper to make them easier to peel. ‘It was probably only a few minutes, I don’t know, it felt like a long time.’ Louise buys roast chestnuts from street vendors whenever she is in France in autumn. ‘It’s cold outside and then you buy those chestnuts and you eat them. I like them but it’s more the context, the smell, the little newspaper cone, the whole thing,’ she says with a huge smile.

*China*¹⁰⁵

The Chinese chestnut, *Castanea mollissima*, may have been the earliest nut used by the Chinese. Chestnuts were found in a fifth millennium BCE archaeological site, and in Neolithic ones dating thousands of years earlier. ‘For many centuries it was probably the most important and/or the most popular nut used in their culinary.’¹⁰⁶ Their name is a homonym of ‘favourable’ and ‘sons’. They may still be sewn into a bride’s dress, and packed into her trousseau.

Li zi were tributes to the Emperor, temple gifts, grave goods, and planted near mansions and earth spirit altars. They are however regarded as causing indigestion if eaten in excess, so while they feature in many

¹⁰⁴ ‘A Christmas Fantasy,’ *New Zealand Tablet*, 23 December 1915, p. 59.

¹⁰⁵ All stories and direct quotations about Binlong and his family: Binlong Ai, interview by author, 1 May 2017.

¹⁰⁶ Jacqueline M. Newman, ‘Chinese Chestnuts’, *Flavour and Fortune Magazine*, 2004, Issue 11, accessed 10 April 2021, <http://www.flavorandfortune.com/ffdataaccess/article.php?ID=471>

sweet and savoury dishes, both vegetarian and meat based, they do not normally form a large proportion of the ingredients. They feature in soups and casseroles, or are made into flour and used in dumpling fillings, or blended with other flours to make wrappings. They are pickled in salt or vinegar, dried, kept in honey or sugar syrup, and in more recent times also frozen, canned or shrink-wrapped. *Li zi* are considered useful in reducing what many Chinese people regard as the offensive aroma of lamb and mutton.¹⁰⁷

Chestnut time machine: Binlong Ai’s stories flash us through successive generations, different Chinas. His grandfather, forcibly relocated to work in national mines in a remote, mountainous, and chestnut-rich region of southern Hunan province. His father, uncles and aunts, who grew up in a time of communal kitchens, of rationing and constant hunger. They went into the mountains to search for wild foods if they had any free time. They still get excited when small, sweet wild chestnuts turn up at the market. They store them in a breezy place to make them even sweeter.

Binlong, a member of the one child generation, prefers large chestnuts. His father used to take him running up the nearby mountain before breakfast, stop and point out edible plants, ‘This was my snack food when I was young, like you go to the snack shop now.’ The chestnut trees were only as tall as six-year-old Binlong.¹⁰⁸ His gang of little boys soon learned to smash the spiky burrs with a stone — not too hard, or you end up with a squashed mess — and to protect their hands with their sleeves. The nuts were fingertip size, soft enough to pop shell and all into your mouth.

The family now lives in a city: they pile in front of the TV on winter evenings, munching on warm roasted chestnuts from a street stall, although, Binlong says, some people are worried about the cleanliness of

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ China doesn’t just have *C. mollissima*, but several other species, which can be quite small. ‘Flora of China’, efloras.com, accessed 10 April 2021, http://www.efloras.org/florataxon.aspx?flora_id=2&taxon_id=105816

KATANIAS, THE FUTURE.

*The Spanish or Sweet Chestnut [...] should receive a great deal more attention than it does at present in New Zealand.*¹¹⁰

Kiwi katanias are the fruits of a garden long in both space and time, but they are now all-but-forgotten, as outmoded as hatpins and darned socks to most New Zealanders.¹¹¹ Despite this, growers keep trying to entice local consumers. While for some crops our upside-down seasons compared to most overseas markets are a competitive advantage, it turns out that chestnuts are too deeply ingrained as a cold weather food in the northern hemisphere. Few people want them in spring.

There is a wealth of chestnut recipes to try out: from many of the most ancient and popular cuisines of the world; from the pages of old cook-books, though they should be approached with caution; from ‘Maureen’ and the many un-named authors of ‘Domestic’, ‘To-Day’s Dinner’, and ‘Housekeeper’ in *Papers Past*. There are pick-your-own farms and plenty of fresh chestnuts in our local parks and streets for two months of the year, and more and more preserved products from local growers.

I spoke with David Klinac of the NZCC in a room crammed with experimental katanias. He and his fellow enthusiasts are seeking new customers via innovative processing of this very perishable crop: ready to use chestnut crumb; flesh cooked in the shell and extruded; freeze-dried flour; baby food; chestnut pollen pellets. And via products in which the clingy, intrusive pellicle of katanias does not matter, or is an advantage.¹¹²

The traditional resistance to the ‘bitter skin’ in Asia is fading, Klinac says. Japan has a mountain of chestnut pellicle waste to dispose of because they hand-peel commercially, so they have done a lot of work on chestnut

those vendors. Often called fried or Tianjin chestnuts, they are cooked in large woks full of tiny pebbles, almost sand-fine, and molasses. The mix soon turns black, smells of charcoal and caramel, and renders Chinese-style street chestnuts much sweeter but less charred than those of Europe. They are popular in many parts of Asia, from Japan to Hong Kong. Two Zhengzhou students have won design awards for an innovative roast chestnuts paper bag, with a pocket for the shells.¹⁰⁹ I roasted chestnuts for Binlong in my Italian chestnut pan with the perforated bottom. ‘To me, this is not the smell of roast chestnuts,’ he commented—as he polished them off.

Binlong, a postgraduate university student when we spoke, gets his Hamilton chestnut fix with chestnut soup at a small CBD Korean restaurant (‘They only give you three chestnuts per bowl’). Good, but a pale substitute for his mum’s chicken and chestnut soup. Every time he goes home he requests it, but only if fresh chestnuts are available at the traditional market. These days she asks him to peel the chestnuts; the treasured only child was excused shelling duty when he was at school. Then he sits on the couch, inhaling the scents from the pressure cooker. He does not have rice when there is chicken and chestnut soup, just three or four bowls of soup. When I ask if he uses a knife to peel chestnuts, he is horrified. Chinese people like to keep the nut undamaged, he told me, so they use their fingernails.

These days most families and young people (Binlong is an old man of twenty-eight) do not use fresh chestnuts, only pre-peeled packaged supermarket ones. ‘The mums aren’t willing to shell them.’ Trendy restaurants make chestnut-flavoured milk tea. Few people pick wild chestnuts. There are illegal mines all over Binlong’s childhood mountains instead of trees. Chinese people no longer care about the mountains anyway, he says, they go to the gym for exercise, and only see nature on organised excursions.

¹⁰⁹ Kat Bauman, ‘A Paper Bag Inspired by Chestnuts’, *Core* 77, 14 November 2016, accessed 10 April 2021, <http://www.core77.com/posts/57842/A-Paper-Bag-Inspired-By-Chestnuts>

¹¹⁰ *Auckland Star*, 24 May 1890.

¹¹¹ When I mention that I am researching them, I keep getting a blank and politely puzzled reaction. Or a look of remembered, mouth-watering bliss if I tell someone who comes from France, Italy, Spain, China, Japan, Korea...

¹¹² Davic Klinac, interview by author, 28 April 2017.

pellicle and human health. It has beneficial effects, they found, especially in appetite suppression and diabetes treatment. ‘Chestnut pellicle powder’ is now sold as a health supplement, and some of the most recent commercial Japanese chestnut cultivars have been bred to have even more pellicle. Tastes are changing, it seems.

For a long time the most expensive top-end chestnut product was always hand peeled whole cooked chestnuts in syrup (or alcohol) and sold in glass jars.....or more recently sold as individually wrapped confectionary chestnuts via street vending machines. Now you can also get exactly the same products made with whole chestnuts still with all the chestnut pellicle left on.....selling for exactly the same price (or in some cases even more).¹¹³

According to Klinac, an Australian survey has found that while older Asians think the pellicle is poisonous, the younger generation, especially Koreans, now simply thinly slice whole chestnuts with it all left on, then stir-fry them.¹¹⁴

The old image of chestnuts as fun for children, survival food for peasants, but not fit for ‘our proud stomachs’ may still lie behind the reluctance of many Kiwis to go to the trouble of peeling them, or gather them off the ground, whether in pick-your-own farms or in public places. Foraging for food may be becoming more acceptable in Aotearoa. Christchurch city council, for one, has launched a fruit trees feature on their *SmartView* map, with sweet chestnuts listed as one of the most common species.¹¹⁵ They are working to develop edible parks, but note that ‘Many people don’t realise they can harvest from fruit trees growing in public places.’¹¹⁶ At the time of writing many katanias still rot ungathered.

¹¹³ David Klinac, email to author, 29 January 2020.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ ‘Fruit Trees’, Christchurch City Council, accessed 10 April 2021, <https://smartview.ccc.govt.nz/map/layer/trees>

¹¹⁶ Michael Healy, Christchurch Council Smart City Manager, ‘Interactive map bears fruit without costing the earth’, *Waka Toa Ora*, January 29, 2020, accessed 10 April 2021, <https://www.healthychristchurch.org.nz/news/resources-and-information/2020/1/interactive-map-bears-fruit-without-costing-the-earth>

The appeal of foraging (even in countries where foraging *memories* are more likely to be widespread than actual going forth and gathering) is not just the pleasure of getting something for free. Foraging tugs on our links to *madre natura*, mother nature, to the whenua. This may remain problematic for chestnuts, exotics strongly linked to the colonial project and unseasonal yuletide customs in ‘the old country.’ Perhaps katanias, local hybrids that developed when the planters’ backs were turned, and survive despite their annoying ways, have a stronger claim to being one of the joys of autumn in Aotearoa.

“How I wish we could have chestnuts every day!” sighed Pamela. “But I believe we enjoy them more when we only get them now and again.”

[...]

“Hurrah!” cried Uncle Hugh, drawing up an armchair to the fire “Peel me some chestnuts. Pamela: it seems to me I am just in time!”¹¹⁷



¹¹⁷ ‘Chestnuts’, *Pahiatus Herald*, 16 May 1928, p. 7.

NEWSPAPER CHESTNUT RECIPES

1844-1936

Herewith a selection of chestnut recipes printed in New Zealand newspapers and magazines between 1844 and 1936.

Before the first decade of the twentieth century there were relatively few New Zealand published cookbooks, and therefore the source of domestic culinary recipes was more likely to have been either overseas publications—books and magazines—or locally printed newspaper columns. Although the origin of newspaper recipes may have been local in some instances, frequently they were taken from overseas publications, especially from Britain, America or Australia. Overseas sourcing of material may have been more common in the 19th century when textual material was added as space fillers by male newspaper editors, with little knowledge of cookery, attempting to increase female readership. An overseas source for many of the following recipes is clearly suggested by an internet search of key phrases from within the individual texts.

ROAST

Roasted Chestnuts

Buy a few chestnuts, bring them home, sit down, and with a small knife keep on cutting slits in the skin till you cut your fingers. When you have prepared enough, put the chestnuts on the top bar, and keep on until you have burnt your hand. Take a seat opposite the fire, and in a few minutes the delicious fruit will begin to pop out with great violence into the faces of the company, and all over the room. They are now done; and if you can find them, which may perhaps be accomplished by grouping about the floor, you will have an excellent dish of roasted chestnuts. — Punch.

Daily Southern Cross, 2 March 1844

Baked Chestnuts

Cut a bit of the outer shell off each chestnut to prevent them from bursting. Boil for ten minutes, and while hot put them on a tin in the oven and let them roast till soft. Fold in a napkin, and serve very hot. They are eaten with salt when prepared in this way.

Bruce Herald, 4 June 1901: Housekeeper

SOUP

How to Make Chestnut Soup

Peel and scrape the nuts; boil them in water with salt till quite soft; strain them from their moisture and press them through a sieve; put this puree into a saucepan containing a chopped onion already fried. Add the necessary quantity of water to prevent the mixture from being too thick. Serve with fried toast cut in dice.

Bay of Plenty Times, 18 December 1896

Fraulein Lepper's 'Meat Broth' for a Weak Stomach¹

One pound of meat simmered in one quart of water till the liquor is reduced to one pint, thickened with a little chestnut flour, and flavoured with tomatoes.

Lyttelton Times, 4 January 1897

Spanish Soup

Take two quarts of the liquor in which any salt meat has been boiled, and place on the fire in a saucepan. Add to this three pints of chestnuts, peeled and skinned, some onion and a little thyme. When the chestnuts are half cooked, add six potatoes and two turnips. Cook all thoroughly, pass through a sieve, return to the saucepan, bring to the boil and serve. Add two tablespoonfuls of vinegar and a little grated cheese before serving.

Star (Christchurch), 22 May 1897

¹ The London-based Fraulein Lepper promoted herself as a 'dietetic adviser.' The *Lyttelton Times* noted that 'She is a German governess who was invalided for seventeen years until she cured herself by means of a careful diet. She settled in England three years ago, and is now engaged in disseminating her ideas on the food question, and treats numerous patients by correspondence in Australia, America, Germany, as well as in England. She prescribes no drugs of any kind, her treatment being by diet, massage, baths (both water and sun) and judicious exercise.'

Chestnut Soup a la Berlin

Take the outer rind off fifty chestnuts and put them in a saucepan of cold water. When the water comes to the boil take them out and remove the inner skin. Stew them in stock to cover them, and when quite soft pound them in a mortar, reserving a few whole to put in the soup later. Pound two tablespoonfuls of breadcrumbs with them, two teaspoonfuls of salt, half a teaspoonful of pepper and half a grated nutmeg. Moisten with the stock in which the chestnuts were boiled, or fresh stock if sweetness is objected to in the soup. To each pint of the puree allow a pint of stock and half a pint of milk. Boil the whole once more with the whole chestnuts. If too thick, add a little more stock. Serve with fried croutons.

Bruce Herald, 4 June 1901: Housekeeper

Chestnut Soup

This is a good vegetarian soup. Boil a small onion cut in slices, a stick of celery, and a small turnip, for twenty minutes, in the water in which rice for curry has been cooked. Strain, and add to this vegetable stock three ounces of chestnut flour, previously mixed with a pint of boiling milk. Boil for ten minutes, season with pepper and salt, and serve.

Bruce Herald, 4 June 1901: Housekeeper

Another Chestnut Soup

Peel the outer rind off the chestnuts. Put them in warm water, and let them come nearly to the boil, when the inner skin will come off readily. Dip in cold water, wipe them, and put about three-quarters of a pound in a saucepan; cover with good meat stock and stew gently for nearly an hour, when they should be soft and easily broken with a fork; then drain, and rub them through a sieve. Add stock to thin the soup sufficiently, season with mace, cayenne, and salt, and stir till boiling. Warm a gill of cream and add it to the soup. Serve with fried croutons.

Bruce Herald, 4 June 1901: Housekeeper

Cream of Chestnut

Shell and blanch one pound of chestnuts, cover with boiling water, and simmer until tender; drain and press through a colander. Put three pints of clear beef stock over the fire with two tablespoonfuls of chopped celery, one tablespoonful of onion, one teaspoonful of minced parsley, and grated yellow rind of lemon, a grating of nutmeg, and a dash of cayenne; simmer thirty minutes and strain. Melt one heaping tablespoonful of butter, stir in one tablespoonful of

flour; when smooth add one cupful of milk and stir until it boils into a smooth cream. Return stock to fire, add white sauce and chestnut pulp, one tablespoonful each of lemon juice and salt, stir well, and bring to a boil; beat one egg slightly, add to one cupful of rich cream, stir into the soup, remove from fire, whip with eggbeater, and serve at once.

New Zealand Mail, 11 June 1902

Chestnut Soup

Peel and mince one small onion, fry in a stewpan with 2 oz. of butter, one sliced carrot and a piece of sliced celery (previously washed and drained). When sufficiently browned, put in 2 oz. chestnut flour and ½ oz. cornflour, stir for a few minutes over the fire, and pour in three pints of brown stock. Boil up and let simmer for about thirty-five minutes; add the juice of half a lemon, salt, pepper, and a grate of nutmeg, strain through a fine sieve or tammy. Re-heat, add one gill cream, but do not let it boil again. Serve with little croutons of fried bread.

New Zealand Mail, 8 June 1904

Chestnut Soup

Boil 1 lb. of chestnuts until they seem tender, peel off the shell and brown skin; return the white part to the stewpan and cover with water; add a finely minced onion, and 1 oz. of butter, pepper and salt. Let this simmer for an hour or more, then rub all carefully through a sieve, add a pint or rather more of boiling milk, and a dessert spoonful of corn flour previously mixed smooth with cold, water, and stir this, again over the fire until it boils.

New Zealand Mail, 30 August 1905

Chestnut Soup (vegetarian)

Cook fifty good-sized chestnuts in boiling fat², which has been well salted, and soak four ounces of soft bread crumbs in milk; pound the soaked bread crumbs and half of the cooked chestnuts in a mortar until they are a pulp, pour the pulp into a quart of milk, and boil it, stirring it briskly for ten minutes; add the remaining twenty-five chestnuts whole, and boil the soup five minutes longer; pour it into a tureen, in which you have already placed twenty-five inch squares of toasted bread. Let it stand for eight, or ten minutes before sending it to table.

Evening Post, 21 May 1910

² Presumably water, given the suggestion for it to be well salted.

Chestnut Soup

Take thirty chestnuts or so, remove the brown skins, put the chestnuts into cold water and bring to boil, then at once remove the white inner skin. Have two ounces of butter melted in a saucepan, and fry the chestnuts lightly in it. Then add three pints of good stock, and boil till the nuts are quite tender. Take them out, and pound them with one ounce of butter and a little stock. Rub them through a wire sieve and return them to the stock, stirring them very smoothly. Mix the yolks of two eggs with one pint of milk, strain into the soup, stir till the eggs are cooked, and on no account allow the soup to boil, but serve it very hot.

Star (Christchurch), 4 June 1910

A Winter Puree [Soup]

In this, nuts and celery combine to make a delicious soup for supper or dinner. The following ingredients are required: 2 lb. chestnuts, 1 quart stock or water, ½ head celery, 1 small onion, bouquet garni, ½ oz. semolina, 1 quart milk, pepper and salt to season. Put the chestnuts in cold water and bring to the boil; remove the skins and cut into slices. Prepare and slice the onion and celery, then put the sliced chestnuts, onion, and celery into a saucepan and pour on boiling stock. If stock is not available, a mixture of milk and water can be used. Add the bouquet garni, which is composed of a small bunch of herbs—such as parsley, thyme, a blade of mace, and marjoram tied together so that they can easily be removed during the cooking process if necessary. Add pepper and salt to season and simmer gently until the vegetables are tender. Rub through a sieve, return to the saucepan, and bring to boiling point. When boiling, sprinkle in the semolina, taking care to stir quickly meanwhile to prevent lumps forming. Cook for about 8 minutes and serve very hot.

Ladies' Mirror, 1 July 1926

SAVOURY DISHES

Wild Rabbits with Chestnuts

Now that rabbits are in season again, the following recipe will be found useful and inexpensive:— Cut up one or two wild rabbits, parboil them with a couple of ounces of lard and butter. When they are a trifle browned sprinkle them thickly with flour, and moisten them with a little white wine and broth. Put in some sweet herbs and some button onions, and let them stew gently. When three-parts cooked, throw in about twenty large chestnuts which have

been previously grilled and skinned. Serve the rabbits piled up and garnished with chestnuts.— “Our Pet.”

Evening Post, 5 March 1881

[Faux Chestnuts]

One of the indigenous delicacies of the New Zealand bush is the *hu-hu*, a large white grub, generally found in rotten wood. The hu-hu is about two inches long, and when nicely crisped before a fire eats like roasted chestnuts. The natives are very fond of them, eating them alive.

Thames Star, 18 May 1880

How to Make Chestnut Croquettes

The most delicious accompaniment to turkey are chestnut croquettes. Use 50 Spanish chestnuts, 2 gills of cream, 3 tablespoonfuls of butter, one-fourth of a tablespoonful of salt, 4 eggs and some sifted bread crumbs for breading the croquettes.

Shell and blanch the chestnuts, put them in a stewpan with enough boiling water to cover them and boil for 30 minutes. Drain off all the water and pound the chestnuts in the mortar. When they are very fine, add a tablespoonful of the butter and continue pounding until it is well mixed with the chestnuts. Now add the remainder of the butter and the salt and pound for ten minutes longer. Add of the cream a little at a time. When all the cream has been worked into the chestnuts, rub the mixture through a puree sieve. Beat 3 eggs till light and then beat them into the strained ingredients. Put the mixture into the double boiler and cook for about eight minutes, stirring constantly. It should be smooth and thick at the end of this time if the water in the outer boiler has been boiling rapidly. Spread it on a large platter and set away to cool. When the mixture is cold, butter the hands slightly and shape the mixture into cylinders, cones or balls. Spread these with the fourth egg and the fine crumbs. Fry for one minute and a half. Arrange on a warm napkin and serve at once.

Wairarapa Daily Times, 22 December 1897 Page 1 (Supplement)

Chestnut Puree

Chestnut puree is served in Austria -with fricandeau of veal and with cutlets or game. Take off the outer shell, and boil the chestnuts till tender in water to which salt has been added; then remove the inner skin, and rub them through a wire sieve with a wooden spoon. Melt an ounce or more of butter according to the quantity of chestnuts, and moisten with a little good gravy, strong stock, or brown sauce. Season with pepper and salt. When used as an accompaniment to game the chestnuts are usually flavoured with a little wine, and some clarified

butter is added. They are formed into balls, fried in deep fat, and put under the game to finish cooking.

Bruce Herald, 4 June 1901: Housekeeper

Stewed Chestnuts

Proceed as in the foregoing recipe,³ and when both skins have been removed, put the chestnuts in a saucepan with good stock and boil till tender, but unbroken. When sufficiently cooked, put them in a vegetable dish, pour some white sauce over them and serve.

Bruce Herald, 4 June 1901: Housekeeper

Fricasee of Oysters and Chestnuts

1½ dozen sauce oysters, 1 dozen chestnuts, 1 oz. of butter, 1 oz. of flour, ¾ pint of liquid, that is the liquid of the oysters made up to ¾ pint with milk seasoning. Cut off the tips of the chestnuts and put them into a saucepan of boiling water, cook for fifteen minutes, and strain off. Remove the shells of the chestnuts and, with a sharp knife, peel off the inner skin. Cover again with fresh water and simmer gently until tender. Cut into two or three pieces if large. Put the oysters with their own liquid into a saucepan, bring to the boil, strain and save the liquid. Remove the beard and cut the oysters into half. Make a sauce thus:—Melt the butter, stir in the flour smoothly, add the liquid, and bring to the boil. Season to taste with pepper, a little celery, salt, and lemon juice if liked. Add the oysters and cooked chestnuts. Serve in a hot entree dish, garnish with slices of finely cut lemon and parsley.

Alexandra Herald and Central Otago Gazette, 12 May 1904

Naples Chops

Take as many nice loin chops as you require for a dish, and trim away nearly all the fat. Fry them lightly, and place in a stew pan, dredging them thickly with browned flour. Cut in slices two or three large onions, season highly with black pepper, and fry till a golden brown. Scatter the onions over the chops, and into the bottom of the pan pour enough stock or water to just cover the meat. Have a pint of chestnuts boiled, peeled and laid on the onions. Place a cover on the stewpan, and cook the contents slowly for two hours; the onions and chestnuts will be cooked by steam, and their flavour will penetrate the chops. To serve, take up the chestnuts and onions, pile in the centre of a

³ *Chestnut Soup a la Berlin*: 'Take the outer rind off fifty chestnuts and put them in a saucepan of cold water. When the water comes to the boil take them out and remove the inner skin.'

hot dish; arrange the chops in a ring, thicken and colour the gravy, and pour round. Scatter chopped parsley over the chestnuts and onions, and serve.

Otautau Standard and Wallace County Chronicle, 3 July 1906

Steak with Chestnuts

One and a half pounds fillet of steak, half pint of stock, some chestnuts, flour, butter, pepper and salt. Boil some chestnuts until tender, then remove the skins and cut them in pieces. Fry the steak a nice brown, then add half-pint of stock or gravy, and let it simmer for half-hour, then add chestnuts and one tea-spoonful of flour rolled in a little butter, salt and pepper. Simmer for another ten minutes, then serve.

Dominion, 17 June 1909

Chestnuts in Various Ways

Chestnuts as a vegetable are used either whole or as a puree. For the latter, cut off the shell, boil them until the inner skin comes off easily, then put them into a saucepan with enough white stock to cover them, and boil them until they are soft enough to put through a sieve. The puree can then be dressed as are mashed potatoes with cream, butter and seasoning, or a little more of the stock can be added. Stir it over the fire until hot and serve it in the middle of a ring of fish, chicken aspic, or as a border to cutlets. To cook whole chestnuts remove the outer shell, fry the nuts in a little butter to get off the inner skin, then boil them in white stock until the nuts are tender but not broken. Serve them with a cream sauce poured over them either as a vegetable or baked in ramakin dishes with a little grated cheese on the top. For a course at luncheon hollow out a loaf of bread, butter it well and fry it as a crouton, then fill it with creamed chestnuts. Small rolls can be treated in the same way for individual dishes.

New Zealand Herald, 20 February 1911

Cabbage and Chestnuts

Cut up a cabbage as finely as possible, and cook it in boiling water with salt; peel some chestnuts, and put them also to boil in water, after which remove the inner skin. Set aside about a dozen chestnuts, crush the rest, and add this puree to the cabbage, together with a good-sized bit of butter, pepper, and salt; then butter a mould, sprinkle it over with breadcrumbs, and pour in the puree; let it bake in the oven for ten minutes. Turn out on to a dish, and garnish with the remaining chestnuts, which you must keep hot in the meanwhile.

Evening Post, 18 November 1911

Rabbit as an Entree

Ingredients: 1 young rabbit, 1 carrot, 1 onion, 1 bay leaf, 1 sprig of thyme, 4 peppercorns, 2 tablespoonfuls each of salad oil and vinegar, salt, pepper, 2 oz. of margarine, 1 glass of claret or port, 1 gill of brown sauce, 1 pint of chestnut puree. Method. —Blanch the rabbit. This is done by putting it into a pan of cold water and bringing to the boil. Drain, and dry in a cloth. Remove the flesh carefully from the back of the rabbit and cut it into neat fillets. The rest of the rabbit may be used for some other dish. Flatten the fillets with a knife, put them into a deep dish: sprinkle with the oil, add the carrot and onion cut small, the peppercorns, bay leaf, and thyme. Boil the vinegar and pour it over the rabbit. Cover and leave until cold. Remove the fillets from the marinade, dry with a cloth, sprinkle with salt. Melt 2oz. of dripping or margarine in a frying pan and put in the fillets. Fry gently, turning often for about 20 minutes or until nicely browned and cooked. Lift out the fillets and keep hot, drain the fat from the pan, add the wine and a little of the marinade. Boil until reduced to half the quantity, stir in the brown sauce, and simmer for five minutes, season, and skim.

To Dish: Pile the chestnut puree, pyramid form, on a hot dish, arrange the fillets round it, and strain the sauce over and round the fillets.

Chestnut Puree. —Remove the outer and inner skins from the chestnuts. Put the chestnuts into a pan with an ounce of margarine and a pint of white stock, or milk and water, and simmer until soft. Strain and rub through a wire sieve, and return the puree to the pan, with an ounce of margarine, a spoonful of milk or cream, a pinch of sugar, salt, pepper. Make hot, and use. About 1½ lb. of chestnuts will be required.

Waikato Times, 11 June 1924

Serving Chestnuts

Chestnuts are excellent served as a vegetable, and yet they very seldom appear in this way. They are easily peeled if an incision is made in each and they are placed in a hot oven for about ten minutes. They are very good steamed and served piping hot with butter and powdered parsley. Or they can be peeled and boiled till tender and then passed through a sieve and served very hot, mixed with milk or cream and well seasoned. Another way is to peel them and fry them in butter till brown. Add a little brown stock, plentiful seasonings, and a dash of sherry, and serve after reheating.

New Zealand Herald, 8 April 1926

STUFFING

Taupin was dining out, and they were discussing a turkey stuffed with chestnuts. "That is good, is it not?" says the host, with an air of triumph. "Yes," responds Taupin. Then he added thoughtfully: "Some people stuff them with truffles — that is good also."

Waikato Times, 9 February 1884

Roast Fowl—the German Way

Truss the fowl for roasting, stuff the breast with veal stuffing, and fill the body with *chestnuts* boiled tender, peeled, and roasted; spit the fowl, and put it to roast at a brisk fire; have a dozen more roasted chestnuts peeled, stew them in a pint of gravy, season with pepper and salt, and thicken with a piece of butter rolled in flour; boil until smooth; fry half a dozen sausages, pour the sauce into the dish, place the fowl in it, and the sausages around the fowl; garnish with slices of lemon.

New Zealand Mail, 28 February 1880

Braised Turkey Stuffing

Boil the chestnuts after removing the outer skin. When rather underdone, drain and remove the inner skin, sprinkle with pepper, salt, and spices, and stuff the turkey, inserting while so doing half a pound of butter, or beef suet cut into small pieces. An onion, chopped finely, may be added to the stuffing.

New Zealand Mail, 19 June 1885

Roast Turkey

First make a stuffing of chopped veal, chicken (and partridge, if you have it), adding the liver of the turkey, also chopped finely, and as much sausage meat as will be equal to a fourth of the whole, parsley, pepper, and salt. While this is being prepared, boil in very salt water 25 large chestnuts with the green heads of a couple of celery stalks. When the chestnuts are sufficiently done, reduce them to a pulp, and mix them with the stuffing. When this has been inserted in the bird put it on the spit, and baste freely with the butter which has been salted and peppered, and dissolved in a glass of Madeira, before being put in the pan. When perfectly done, little jets of smoke will issue like miniature volcanoes from the turkey. Meanwhile the remainder of the two heads of celery having been carefully washed, trimmed, and cut into pieces about five inches long, place it in the dripping-pan when the turkey is half done, where it will become thoroughly impregnated with the savoury juices from the bird. It will then form

a pleasant accompaniment to a delicious *plat*, the cooking of which ought to last from two hours to two hours and a quarter, according to the size of the bird.

Otago Witness, 24 December 1886 Page 39: Christmas Cookery

Chestnuts for Stuffing

I have never used chestnuts for stuffing but have concluded that I will try them this year. A friend of mine says they are very nice. For a ten pound turkey she used about fifty chestnuts; shell and blanch them, then cover with water and boil half an hour; pour off the water and add to them three tablespoonfuls of butter, one of salt, and half a teaspoonful of pepper; mix these well before stuffing the turkey with them; for a richer dressing she suggested the addition of chopped meat, a little thyme and parsley. — Mrs. Harding.

Ellesmere Guardian, 11 March 1893

How to Make Chestnut Stuffing

Cut the shells of about 50 chestnuts and roast them in the oven until they are done. Then remove the shells, or cut the nuts and take out the soft, mealy portion. Or, instead of roasting, the chestnuts may be shelled and blanched; then boil in just water sufficient to cover them for half an hour. In either case add 3 tablespoonfuls of butter, a level teaspoonful of salt and a third of a teaspoonful of pepper. Toss up lightly until well mixed and stuff the turkey with them. If preferred, the chestnuts may be coarsely chopped. A pint of oysters would be a nice addition to this stuffing.

Bay of Plenty Times, 14 December 1896

Turkey Stuffing

FOR THE THANKSGIVING FEAST. *Cranberry to Right of Us, Pumpkin to Left of Us, Turkey In Front of Us.* Here is a famous New York caterer's recipe for roasting the Thanksgiving bird: When the bird is drawn, washed and wiped dry, chop its liver fine with two shallots. Stir these a little in a buttered pan over the fire to cook the liver, and then mix with a pound of sausage meat and about three dozen chestnuts cooked whole; stuff the turkey with this, truss nicely, and roast two hours or more. Dish the turkey, with gravy made in the usual way with a dozen roasted chestnuts stirred in.

Wairarapa Daily Times, 16 December 1897

Chestnut Force meat for Roast Fowl

Roast and peel twelve large chestnuts, and boil them for twenty minutes in strong veal stock, drain. Pound in a mortar with the minced liver of a fowl a teaspoonful of grated ham, a teaspoonful of salt, half a teaspoonful of pepper, a teaspoonful of chopped onion, and one of grated lemon peel, a dust of cayenne, two tablespoonfuls of breadcrumbs, an ounce of butter, and the yolks of two eggs. Pound the dry ingredients, then add the eggs and butter. This is a very good force meat. The above quantity is sufficient for a large fowl.

Bruce Herald, 4 June 1901: Housekeeper

Chestnut Force meat

Put 2 oz. of butter and one tablespoonful of finely-chopped onion over the fire, cook for five minutes without browning; add 6 oz. of finely-chopped loin pork, add twelve, finely-chopped mushrooms, twelve finely-powdered cooked chestnuts; stir and cook five minutes longer; remove from the fire; season with a teaspoonful of salt, half a teaspoonful of pepper, and half a pound of whole and peeled and cooked chestnuts, and three tablespoonfuls of breadcrumbs; mix all together, and use for the turkey. Another way is to boil 1 lb. of peeled chestnuts till tender in milk, then pound them fine, and mix with 2 oz. of butter, a little salt and pepper, and use for the stuffing. Or mix with this 4 oz. of sausage meat and 1 oz. of butter.

New Zealand Herald, 22 December 1905 Page 5 (Supplement)

Goose with Chestnuts

Roast forty or fifty chestnuts, skin half of them; add them to half a pound of sausage meat, a morsel of garlic, sage, salt and pepper to taste, a grate or two of nutmeg, and the liver of the goose chopped finely. Mix well, and see that the chestnuts are well mashed. Skin the rest of the nuts, and put them in whole, Roast the goose; and serve with gravy and a puree of chestnuts.

New Zealand Herald, 22 December 1906

Fresh Meat Sausages

Mince in the machine one pound of tender beef, one pound of veal, four ounces of suet (belonging to both meats, carefully freed from skin and gristle), four shallots, two cloves of garlic, three hearts of celery, three well-cleaned anchovies, six ounces of bread crumbs, and twelve cold boiled chestnuts. Season the mixture with salt, black and red pepper, and allspice. Beat up separately the whites of four eggs, and mix all thoroughly well together. Flour a pasteboard,

and form the mince into tiny sausages, about two inches in length and one in circumference. Fry them in boiling dripping until they turn brown, and serve very hot. These sausages are excellent cold, and for stuffing poultry they are to be recommended.

New Zealand Herald, 24 December 1903

Chestnut Stuffing for Turkey

Cut a tiny piece from the outer skin from, about twenty chestnuts. Boil the nuts for about ten minutes. Remove both outer and inner peels, and then simmer gently in some nicely seasoned stock obtained by stewing the giblets, etc., of the turkey. When the chestnuts are quite tender, drain them, mash them well adding the liver of the bird, a very little finely-minced ham, an ounce of well-grated stale breadcrumbs, and a good seasoning of salt, pepper and grated lemon rind. When these ingredients are well mashed together, mix in about an ounce of dissolved butter and enough beaten egg to thoroughly moisten the stuffing.

Star (Christchurch), 1 May 1909

Chestnut Stuffing that Cheers Up an Old Roasted Fowl.

Mix together ½ lb. sieved boiled chestnuts, ¼ lb. chopped suet, ¼ lb. breadcrumbs, a heaped tablespoonful of minced shallot, another of chopped parsley, a teaspoonful of grated lemon rind, salt, half a small chilli very finely grated, and 2oz. of roughly chopped blanched almonds, and bound all together with two eggs. If liked, just a suspicion of garlic may be by rubbing the inside of the bird with a clove of garlic. Any left over after filling the bird is balled as forcemeat.

Otago Daily Times, 14 June 1929

Sausage and Chestnut [stuffing for Goose]

Chop half a tablespoonful of shallot and cook in three tablespoonfuls of butter for five minutes, add four 4 oz. [sic] of sausage meat, and cook for two minutes. Then add two tablespoonfuls of chopped mushrooms, half a pint of chestnut puree, a gill of stale bread crumbs, salt, pepper, and a half a tablespoonful of chopped parsley. Heat to boiling point, then add some whole cooked chestnuts and stuff the bird with it.

Timaru Herald, 17 December 1932

SAUCE

Chestnut Sauce

Chestnuts are very popular with the French, who use them in stuffing or in sauce for roast turkey. French chestnuts are twice as large as the American variety and are sold by very many grocers and fruiterers. One pint of shelled nuts, 1 quart of stock, ½ a lemon peel, 1 tablespoonful of flour, 2 tablespoonfuls of butter, 1 cupful of cream or milk, salt and pepper. Remove the outer shells from the nuts, and scald the kernels until the inner skins can be easily taken off. Place the kernels in a stew-pan with the stock, the lemon peel and a little salt and pepper, and simmer gently until the kernels are quite soft. Remove the lemon-peel, rub the nuts through a sieve, smash them very fine, and return them to the stock. Put the butter in a frying-pan. and when it is hot, add the flour. Cook until dark-brown, add the stock and nuts, and cook for two minutes; then add the cream, boil up once, and serve.

Lake Wakatip Mail, 9 February 1894

A Recherche Sauce

Chestnut sauce is always popular, and, judging from my correspondents, good recipes for it are scarce. Shell half a pound of chestnuts, and scald till the skins will peel off easily. Place these in a pan, with half a pint of veal stock, the rind of half a lemon, and a little cayenne and salt to taste. Let this simmer till the chestnuts are soft, pass it through a sieve, add a cupful of cream, let all simmer very slowly for two minutes, and serve.

New Zealand Herald, 31 March 1897

Chestnut Puree a la Parisienne

Take the outer skin off fifty chestnuts, put them in cold water, and when they come to the boil remove the inner skin. Cover with stock, boil till tender, and rub through a sieve with a wooden spoon. Put the puree in a stewpan with an ounce of butter, half a pint of cream, a cupful of the stock in which they were boiled, together with salt and pepper to taste. Stir till hot, and serve with cutlets.

Bruce Herald, 4 June 1901: Housekeeper

Chestnut Sauce for Roast Turkey

Prepare the chestnuts as in the foregoing recipe.⁴ Put them in a saucepan with white stock to cover them, and a few strips of lemon-peel to flavour. When they are tender, rub them through a sieve with a wooden spoon, season to taste, and add a gill of cream; simmer for a few minutes, and serve very hot. Another way is to mix the sieved chestnuts with good brown sauce, and pass the whole through a tammy.

Bruce Herald, 4 June 1901: Housekeeper

GLACE

Glace Chestnuts

Skin and blanch 20 to 25 chestnuts, and boil them for fifteen minutes. Make a syrup with 1 lb. of loaf sugar and a pint of water, to which is added a teaspoonful of vinegar. Boil for fifteen minutes, or till a rich syrup is obtained. Dip in the chestnuts (off the fire) singly on a fine skewer, and stand to dry on an oiled paper. Some people like the addition of a slight flavouring to the chestnuts.

Star (Christchurch), 27 April 1901

Marrons Glace

Now that chestnuts are in season some of my readers may be glad to have a recipe for "marrons glaces," and I know that the following one can be relied on. Select one or two pounds of chestnuts, and scald them for a few minutes in boiling water. The outer husks will come away; put the chestnuts into a vegetable steamer and cook until a skewer will easily run through them. The inner skin will come away without breaking the nut. Make a syrup to cover the nuts from the following:—2 lbs. of loaf sugar, 1½ pints of cold water; bring the sugar and water slowly to the boil, and stir until all the crystals are dissolved. If, after removing the scum with a spoon, dirt continues to rise, beat lightly the white of an egg and throw it in. Stir well and skim again; then any impurities will come away with the egg. Boil with the lid on for five minutes by which time the steam will be rising up from the lid. Drop in the prepared nuts and place the pan well back from the fire. After this the chestnuts must be kept just warm; if allowed to boil they will lose their transparency, and become hard.

⁴ *Another Chestnut Soup*: 'Peel the outer rind off the chestnuts. Put them in warm water, and let them come nearly to the boil, when the inner skin will come off readily.'

They may be removed from the fire without hurt, and as the process of cooking is rather a long one, it may be a good plan to only cook the sweets in the evening, as the fire is dying down. From twelve to sixteen hours is about the time; but be guided by the appearance of the nuts, which become transparent when finished. Take them out singly on a fork and dry on a sieve near the fire. Take the syrup that remains, and add to it a dessertspoonful of rum, a stick of cinnamon, and enough red colouring to change the syrup to a deep chestnut shade. Boil quickly for ten minutes, dip the chestnuts in separately, dry on a sieve, and finish by placing each in a little paper case.

Wairarapa Age, 21 May 1906: A woman's letter.

Candied Chestnuts

Take the outer skin from the nuts and soak them in boiling water till the second skin comes off easily. Then boil them till tender, though not broken. Squeeze the juice of a lemon into a basin of lukewarm water, and put the chestnuts in when cooked. Now make some clarified sugar by allowing half a pint of water and half the white of an egg to a pound of sugar; put these, well beaten, into a saucepan, and when the sugar is dissolved place it on the fire and boil it, then throw in a teacupful of water; do not stir the sugar till this is added. Boil it again, leave it to settle, and when all the scum is removed the sugar is ready. Dip the chestnuts into it, and leave them on a slab or dish to dry.

Star (Christchurch), 6 May 1911

Marrons Glace, or Glace Chestnuts

Ingredients: 12 chestnuts, 1 lb. loaf sugar, crushed, 1 pint of water. Remove the shells from as many chestnuts as required, and pour boiling water over them: after a few minutes the skins can be easily removed. Throw them into boiling water, and simmer slowly until tender. Put the sugar and water into a good-sized saucepan, place, on the side of the fire, and stir until dissolved; then put in the chestnuts one by one, and cook until clear. Place them carefully on a sieve, and drain until cold. Dip them into the hot glaze quickly one at a time with a wire fork or ring, and place on a sheet of tin which must be slightly oiled with sweet oil to prevent them sticking. It is best to make this glaze in small quantities only, as it candies quickly after it has been removed from the fire

New Zealand Tablet, 24 June 1915

Marrons Suces

A more easily prepared and very delicious variant of the luxurious Marrons glaces is made as follows: Split the chestnuts and boil till quite tender (about

twenty minutes). Peel and pass through a fine sieve. Dissolve half a pound of lump sugar in a tablespoonful of water for every one pound of the chestnut puree. Directly it begins to candy on the spoon add the chestnut puree, stir and boil, carefully for ten minutes. Turn it back into the basin with a few drops of vanilla essence or lemon juice as preferred. Sprinkle a board or large dishes with castor sugar; with a small spoon take out a ball of the mixture about the size of a chestnut, roll in castor sugar, and spread singly on the dishes to dry. When the upper side is dry, turn each with a spoon, dredge with castor sugar, and leave to dry. By the next day they should be dry enough on the surface to consume or put away till required.

Nelson Evening Mail, 19 December 1934

PUDDING AND SWEET DISHES

How to Make Chestnut Pudding.

Boil some chestnuts for a quarter of an hour in plenty of water, blanch and peel them. Pound them in a mortar with some orange flower water, or other favorite flavoring, and some light French white wine. Into this beat the yolks of 4 eggs, and the whites of 2, some grated nutmeg, a little melted butter and a pint of milk. Three gills of cream are preferable. Sweeten to taste. Stir over the fire in a china saucepan till thick. Then put the mixture into a pie dish lined with puff or other thin paste and bake in a fairly hot oven.

Ohinemuri Gazette, 8 February 1896

Chestnut Pudding a la Vanille

Having removed the outer and inner shell, boil till tender, dry in the oven, and pound to powder. Mix half a pound of the chestnuts thus prepared with six ounces of butter beaten to a cream, two tablespoonfuls of sifted sugar, flavouring of vanilla, half a pint of milk, and six well-beaten eggs. Stir these ingredients well together, add either steam in a buttered mould for an hour and a half or bake. Serve with wine sauce.

Bruce Herald, 4 June 1901: Housekeeper

Chestnut Pudding a la Carlton

Bake some chestnuts, and pound to powder. To half a pound add four ounces of creamed butter, a gill of cream, the yolks of four eggs, and four ounces of stale sponge cake that has been soaked in a gill of milk. Add half a glass of brandy, the grated rind and juice of half a lemon, a tablespoonful of

orange-flower water, and the whipped whites of the eggs. Bake in a buttered pie-dish or mould, turn out, sprinkle with castor sugar, and serve with sauce or whipped cream.

Bruce Herald, 4 June 1901: Housekeeper

My Own Pudding.

Boil the chestnuts till tender, putting them on in cold water. They will require to cook for over an hour. While hot, remove the outer and inner shell, rub through a sieve, and mix them with a tablespoonful of castor sugar, and the grated rind of a lemon. Line a glass dish with a thick layer of strawberry jam, put the chestnuts over this, about half a pound will be sufficient, strew a few brown breadcrumbs over, and cover with a thick layer of whipped cream.

Bruce Herald, 4 June 1901: Housekeeper

Chestnut Pudding

Boil 2 lb. chestnuts till soft, dry them in the oven, remove the shell and skin, then pound the chestnuts; mix with them 2 oz. butter, 2 oz. castor sugar, two eggs and half a pint of milk, and flavour with a little vanilla or grated lemon peel; beat up the mixture for three or four minutes, then put into a buttered pie-dish and bake.

Star (Christchurch), 13 September 1902

Chestnut Pudding

There are some people who dislike plum pudding. For their benefit is given a sweet which in dark brown colour resembles it, though entirely different in taste and constituents. To make it, take 2 lb. of chestnuts, 1 lb. of sugar, a pod of vanilla, ¼ lb. of angelica, a dozen crystallised cherries, ½ oz. of blanched almonds, and half a pint of water. Choose large, sound chestnuts only. Place in a saucepan, cover with cold water, and boil for an hour. Remove both the outer and inner skin with a sharp knife while still hot. Rub the chestnuts through a sieve. Put the half pint of water, the sugar and vanilla pod in a saucepan. Boil to a thick syrup, but without allowing it to colour. Reserve eight teaspoonfuls of the syrup. Pour the rest into the chestnut flour, mixing with a wooden spoon till it forms a thick paste. Set this paste in a glass dish. Shape it into a crown, and smooth over with a knife. Cut the blanched almonds into strips, cut a portion of the angelica into rounds, taking care not to break them, and cut the rest into Julienne strips. Lay the rounds of angelica side by side on the top of the chestnuts, and over each place a cherry. Insert the strips of angelica all round

the pudding, alternating with the shredded and blanched almonds. Reheat the portion of syrup kept over. Take a few spoonfuls of this, and pour it over the centre of the pudding to give a shiny, glazed effect.

Star (Christchurch), 10 December 1904

Chestnut Pudding

Boil about twenty chestnuts, and rub them through a sieve. Add a wine-glass of rum, half a pound of sugar, half a pound of butter (half melted), three well-beaten yolks of eggs, one white, and a little cream or boiled milk. Stir over the fire till the mixture begins to thicken and then put the bake in a slow oven. When nearly set add three stiffly beaten whites of eggs, and put back in oven to brown slightly. Ornament with candied cherries or strips of angelica, and serve cold.

New Zealand Times, 7 December 1907: Italian Recipes

Nesselrode Pudding

Required: Half a pint of milk, four yolks of eggs, two whites, three ounces of castor sugar, one gill of water, four ounces of chestnut puree, one gill of cream, half an ounce of gelatine, three ounces of crystallised fruit, maraschino. For the puree, boil some chestnuts and rub them through a sieve; or chestnut flour can be bought in a packet if liked. Prepare a custard with the eggs, sugar, and milk; when cool add the puree, whipped cream, gelatine dissolved in the water, and the fruit, cut in small pieces. Pour into a prepared mould.

Evening Star, 11 February 1911

Chestnut Pudding with Honey and Stewed Green Figs

A most successful chestnut pudding is made by creaming six ounces of butter with six ounces of castor sugar, beating in two eggs, a gill of cream, a dash of salt, and adding by degrees ½ lb. boiled and sieved chestnuts and ½ lb. of self-raising flour. This is well beaten for five minutes after mixing, and either baked or steamed in a ring mould, and served with honey and stewed green figs. It would be delicious served with cream and maple syrup or bramble jelly.

Otago Daily Times, 14 June 1929

[Chestnut Entremet]

A very good entremet is made of boiling chestnuts carefully peeled, and set to boil with some milk and vanilla, passed through a sieve, and served up cold with cream.

New Zealand Herald, 24 April 1875

Simple Sweets

Pineapple stewed in syrup and served on warm sponge cakes; peaches stewed in syrup, and served on rice with garnish of angelica; cream whipped with sugar, and served with chestnuts, boiled and rubbed through a sieve with pounded sugar, are some of the simpler kind of sweets which are always within reach and always acceptable.

Southland Times, 14 October 1880

Chestnut Auflaufe (Souffle)

[1¼?] lb. of chestnuts, boiled soft, peeled and pounded, with 2 oz. of butter, and a tablespoonful of thick cream. Beat the yolks of eight eggs well, with a ¼ lb. of sifted sugar; stir in the chestnut mass and the egg-whites, whipped to a snow. Bake it in a well-buttered form in a moderate oven.

Waikato Times, 30 May 1885 (Supplement)

Chestnut Puree

The French housekeeper has a wide variety of recipes for making delicious dishes of chestnuts. She varies her vegetable course with a dish of boiled chestnuts. But most appetising of all is her delightful chestnut puree, easily digested by invalids and little children, and very nourishing and wholesome for everybody. This is how it is done—Put the shelled chestnuts into boiling water. After five or six minutes take the chestnuts out of the water and peel off the the skin. Then put them in a saucepan of just enough water to cover the chestnuts. Cook them over a moderate fire, testing with a fork to see when they are soft enough. Crush them and pass through a strainer. Sweeten with powdered sugar to taste. If you really wish to turn this into a really dainty dish, make a hole in the middle of the puree and fill it with Cream.

Waikato Times, 6 June 1936 (Supplement)

A German Sweet Dish

Boil some chestnuts until they are soft enough to be crushed with a spoon and passed through a sieve. Beat up the whites of six or eight eggs into a froth with half a pound of lump sugar that has been grated on the rind of a lemon. Pile up the chestnuts while warm in a dish, and cover them thickly with the whip just before serving them.

Saturday Advertiser, 28 April 1877

How to Make Chestnut Fritters

Boil 20 chestnuts till quite soft, shell them and take off the skins, pound them in a mortar, mix with them 2 ounces of fine florador [flour?] and a few drops of almond or vanilla essence and a tablespoon of sugar. Well beat 3 eggs, yolks and whites separately; beat the whites to a stiff froth; mix all well together; add enough milk to make it very thick, like cream; fry, in boiling butter or the best olive oil by the spoonful, a bright golden colour; drain on a wire sieve in front of the fire. Serve them piled up with sugar sprinkled over them.

New Zealand Times, 10 March 1894 (Supplement)

Croquettes of Chestnuts

First of all peel the chestnuts as directed above,⁵ and boil them till tender. Meantime, mix together the yolks of two eggs with two ounces of sifted sugar, three ounces and a half of sifted semolina flour, and three ounces and a half of butter. Stir the whole over the fire, and flavour with essence of vanilla. Add a pint of cream, and stir continually till the mixture thickens; then take it off the fire, stir till smooth, and cook for another the minutes. Rub the chestnuts through a wire sieve, put them in a saucepan, and add the prepared mixture and a gill of cream, and cook all together; when cool, form into balls, egg and crumb, fry in deep hot fat, and serve with powdered sugar. Instead of the above [, an?] elaborate mixture of sweet white sauce may be used to mix with the chestnuts; for this, make a pint of sweet melted butter sauce, add the yolk of an egg and a little liqueur.

Bruce Herald, 4 June 1901: Housekeeper

Stewed Chestnuts

Stewed chestnuts form a delicious sweet, if cooked according to the following Italian recipe. Take a pound of nice large chestnuts, cut off the tops, and bake in the oven for fifteen minutes, and then peel off the outer and inner skins. Next put them in a stewpan with a claret glassful of white wine — if desired, this may be omitted — a tumblerful of water, the juice of one lemon, a little of the grated rind, and a quarter of a pound of loaf sugar. Cook over a slow fire for twenty to thirty minutes, when they should be quite tender, but be careful that they do not break. Arrange in a fancy dish, sprinkle with finely broken sugar candy — crystallised sugar may be substituted for this — and serve.

Bruce Herald, 10 January 1902

Crema a la Chipolata

Take thirty chestnuts, and peel them carefully. Place them in a clean enamelled iron stewpan, add just enough boiling water to well cover them, and simmer slowly until they are sufficiently cooked to permit of the skin being easily removed. This latter must be done very carefully. Next return the chestnuts to a clean stewpan; add to them two teacupfuls of water and the juice of a large lemon, freed from pips and strained; add also six ounces of sifted sugar and a little grated nutmeg. Simmer very slowly until perfectly tender. Then rub through a fine wire sieve. Add to the puree thus obtained sufficient cream to enable it to be piled up high and stiffly on a dish. Leave till cold; then cover with whipped and sweetened cream. Decorate with glace cherries, and serve.

Evening Star, 6 September 1902

Compote of Chestnuts

Remove both skins as already indicated. Make a syrup with half a pint of water and half a pound of sugar, adding a glass of sherry and the thinly-cut rinds of an orange and a lemon. Let the chestnuts simmer in this syrup for twenty minutes. Strain the syrup over the chestnuts, and serve hot, with a little powdered sugar.

Bruce Herald, 4 June 1901: Housekeeper

Chestnut Cream

Required: One pound of chestnuts, half a pint of thick cream, half a pound of loaf sugar, three tablespoonfuls of brandy, one lemon, vanilla, cochineal, and wafers.

Cut a slit across the top of each nut. Put them in enough boiling water to cover them, and boil for five minutes. Then peel them.

Put one pint of hot water, the sugar, and thinly-pared lemon rind on to boil. When it does so, add the nuts and brandy. Boil gently till nuts are soft; Lift them out of the syrup, pound them in a mortar (or in an enamel basin with the end of the rolling-pin, if you have no mortar), rub them through a hair or fine wire sieve. Whip the cream till stiff, add it lightly to the chestnut puree. Sweeten the mixture, and flavour it with vanilla. Mix all thoroughly.

Improve the colour with a drop or two of cochineal. Heap it up roughly in a pretty dish. Hand with it rolled pink and white ice wafers.

Alexandra Herald and Central Otago Gazette, 11 August 1904

⁵ Recipe: *Chestnut Puree a la Parisienne*: 'Take the outer skin off fifty chestnuts, put them in cold water, and when they come to the boil remove the inner skin.'

Compote of Chestnuts

Required: Two pounds of chestnuts, two pounds of loaf sugar, one quart of water, half a teaspoonful of vanilla. Throw the nuts into a pan of fast-boiling water, and let them boil for ten minutes. Then carefully remove the skins and husks from the nuts. Put the water, sugar, and vanilla into a clean saucepan, let the sugar first dissolve, then bring to the boil. Skim well and put in the chestnuts. Let them simmer gently until they can be easily pierced with a needle. This may take some hours, but the time greatly varies with the different nuts. Arrange the chestnuts in a circle on a glass or silver dish, and strain the juice over them. A few drops of cochineal added to the syrup in which they are cooked are a great improvement. For the juice: Required—Two ounces of Carolina rice, one pint of milk, caster sugar and vanilla to taste, a gill of cream. Put the milk in a saucepan and bring it to the boil. Wash the rice well. Then, when the milk is boiling, sprinkle in the rice, put the lid on the pan, and let it simmer gently till the rice is quite tender and all the milk is absorbed. Sweeten it carefully to taste with castor sugar and vanilla, whip the cream till it will just hang on the whisk, sweeten, and flavour it with sugar and vanilla: then stir it lightly into the rice. Heap the rice in the middle of the chestnuts.

Evening Star, 5 May 1906

Apple - Plum Pudding

Arrange in a deep dish as many peeled and cored apples as it will hold. Fill the space left by the removed cores with a mixture of equal parts of boiled chestnuts, stoned dates, seeded raisins and walnut kernels, all chopped finely and moistened with lemon juice, and sweetened to taste. Melt sugar in hot water in the proportion of one tablespoonful of sugar, and half a cupful of water to five apples, and pour over the whole. Bake till the apples are cooked.

Star (Christchurch), 7 July 1906

Apricots and Chestnuts

Soak some dried apricots for twenty-four hours and simmer them gently in a weak syrup until tender. They should be quite whole.

When done place them cut side up in a dish and stand aside, if the dish is to be cold. Cover and keep warm if hot.

Meanwhile boil some chestnuts until quite tender. Peel and simmer them gently in a little maraschino for ten minutes. Take up and rub through a sieve until in a puree.

Sweeten to taste and add a little lemon juice. Beat the white of an egg to a stiff froth and mix with the chestnut. Shape into tiny ovals with two

dessertspoons and fry until a pale brown in deep fat. Drain and dust with caster sugar, and lay one on top of each apricot half. Heat the maraschino left over from simmering the chestnuts and sweeten to taste. Pour over the apricots and serve at once or leave to get cold. Dried peaches do very well for this dish, but instead of the maraschino use brandy and water with rather a large flavouring of sugar.

Auckland Star, 30 November 1911

Berlin Cream

Boil and then roast sufficient chestnuts, grate them very fine, and beat up with cream till of a thick consistency. Place in a glass dish, and sprinkle the cream very liberally with powdered chocolate. If preferred, the whole may be beaten together.

New Zealand Herald, 24 February 1912

Chestnuts and Chocolate

Boil some chestnuts in water, peel, crush, and put this puree on the fire in a saucepan with butter, milk, sugar, and lemon juice. In another saucepan melt two sticks of chocolate in a little water. Shape your chestnut puree so as to resemble a gigantic chestnut, and cover it all over with the chocolate.

Dunstan Times, 14 July 1913

Chestnut and Custard

Wash 24 chestnuts and make a slit in the shell of each with a knife, put them into a saucepan of hot water and boil for ten minutes. Drain, peel off shell and inner skin. Put the prepared chestnuts into a saucepan with 1 gill (¼ pint) water, rind of ½ lemon, and 2 oz. sugar; stew them till soft and nearly dry, then rub them through a wire sieve. Put 3 oz. loaf sugar, ½ gill water and a squeeze of lemon-juice into a small saucepan and cook until a light coffee colour, then line a plain mould with it. Beat up 2 eggs with 2 oz. sugar in a basin; heat ½ pint milk almost to boiling point and pour it over the egg mixture, stirring all the time; then strain and allow to cool. Add the chestnut puree to the custard and fill up the mould, which has been lined with caramel, cover with greased paper and steam about 1½ hour.

Waikato Times, 12 July 1929

Chestnut Cups

Where the old English chestnut tree grows in this district the cook will soon find chestnuts. Already fresh ones are to be seen in the shops. For this dish you will require ½ lb. chestnuts, ½ pint milk, 1¼ tablespoons sugar, 1 egg yolk, ½ to ¾ gill “coffee” cream; ½ gill thick cream, vanilla essence.

Split the outer shells of the chestnuts along the flat side, being careful not to cut into the nuts. Place them on a baking tin and put them into a moderate oven until the shells begin to open. Remove the outer shells and inner skins while the chestnuts are still hot.

Place the peeled nuts in the top of a double boiler with half the milk. Bring them to the boil, then stand the pan over the lower part of the double boiler containing boiling water and cook the chestnuts gently until they are tender. Rub them through a sieve.

Beat the egg yolk and add ¼ tablespoon sugar to it. Heat the remainder of the milk and stir the heated egg yolk into it. Stand the pan over a pan of hot water and cool the custard until it thickens, keeping it stirred so that it does not curdle.

Mix the custard gradually with the chestnut puree and stir in one tablespoon of sugar. Leave it to get as cold as possible.

Flavour the mixture with vanilla or a spoonful of rum may be used. Stir in the “coffee” cream, adding just sufficient to make the mixture the consistency of fruit fool. Stir in more sugar if required before turning the chestnut mixture into the custard cups. Whip up the thick cream and use some of it to decorate the cups, serving the remainder separately. Note: “Coffee cream” is a thin cream.

Waipa Post, 13 April 1935

CAKES, TARTS & BISCUITS

Delicious Chestnut Cakes

Boil a pound of chestnuts for half an hour, strain, and, after removing shells and skins, rub them through a wire sieve with a wooden spoon. Mix together two teaspoonfuls of castor sugar and two ounces of butter, reduced to a cream; add the chestnuts, a little flour and two eggs well beaten. Stir all these ingredients thoroughly. Take a tin and grease with half an ounce of butter; place in it the mixture, arranged in little balls or mounds. Bake in a moderate oven for twenty or thirty minutes.

New Zealand Times, 7 July 1897 (Supplement)

Chestnut Biscuits

These little biscuits are delicious, and will be found most useful to have on hand at this season of the year. Half a pound of chestnuts, ¼ lb. of sugar, essence of vanilla, 2oz. of grated chocolate, and a little water. Boil the chestnuts till they are tender, rub them through a sieve, and add the sugar. Melt the chocolate in a little water over the fire till smooth, and add to the chestnut pulp. Lightly mix in the white of an egg very stiffly whipped. Drop on wafer paper in lumps, and place in the oven till crisp.

Otago Witness, 3 February 1909

Bateaux de Creme de Marron

Three dessertspoonfuls chestnut flour, an ounce and a half caster sugar, half a gill milk, and essence of vanilla. Cook these ingredients over the fire a few minutes, allow the mixture to cool, then stir in one tablespoonful of cream. Grease some boat-shaped moulds, line with tart crust. For this take eight ounces flour, four ounces sugar, four ounces butter, and one beaten egg. Sieve the flour and sugar on to a marble slab, rub in the butter, and mix to a smooth paste with the beaten egg. Roll out thinly, cut with an oval cutter, press into the mould; trim the edges with a sharp knife, then line with greased paper, and fill with rice; bake, remove the rice, and when cold fill the boats with the chestnut puree; allow it to become firm, then ice half the top with chocolate icing, allow it to set, and ice the other half with a lighter shade of, chocolate icing.

Evening Post, 29 January 1910

Chestnuts Used in Pastry

Take half a pound of ground or chopped chestnuts, half a pound of castor sugar, half a pound of flour, one ounce of almonds, a little ground nutmeg, and five eggs. Separate the whites and yolks of the eggs, and whisk the yolks [whites?] to a stiff snow, adding the castor sugar and beating again until a stiff froth is obtained. Now sift the flour and spice together, and stir it well in. Then add the almonds and chestnuts, and when the whole ingredients are thoroughly mixed put into cups or deep cup-shaped tins well buttered. Place them on baking tins and bake them in a moderate oven not too hot. To prepare the chestnuts remove the shells and blanch them as you would almonds.

Evening Star, 13 May 1911

Chestnut Cake.

Beat a quarter of a pound of butter and two cupsful of sugar to a cream; add the whites of three eggs whipped to a froth, half a cupful of water, and two small cupsful of flour, to which has been added a scant tablespoonful of baking powder: mix thoroughly and bake in layer pans; when cool turn from the pans, and spread with frosting made from the yolks of the eggs and a cupful of confectioners sugar; flavour with the juice of an orange and the grated rind, and add a half-pint of boiled chestnuts, finely chopped. Arrange the layers together, and cover the top with the frosting, decorating with a few glazed chestnuts.

New Zealand Mail, 29 March 1905

Chestnut Fingers with after-dinner Coffee

A short pastry is made by rubbing 6 oz. butter into 4 oz. sieved chestnuts, 4 oz. self-raising flour, and 4 oz. castor sugar, with a pinch of salt and a dash of cinnamon powder. This is moistened with two well-beaten eggs and a gill of cream flavoured with vanilla essence. It is rolled half an inch thick, heavily covered with chopped almonds lightly pressed on with the hand, cut into finger-lengths and baked for 12 minutes in a quick oven.

Otago Daily Times, 14 June 1929

Chestnut Cake.

A very good chestnut cake is made by beginning the same way as for the chestnut puree,⁶ but milk is added when the chestnuts are cooking. Then melt a bar of chocolate and mix it with them them (cocoa mixed with milk or water would do). Take two eggs and separate the whites from the yolks. Mix the yolks in with the chestnuts, also some butter. Beat the whites and add them and sugar to taste. Put in a well-buttered mould and bake in a moderate oven for half an hour. This can be served hot like a pudding, with or without cream, or cold as cake.

Waikato Times, 6 June 1936 (Supplement)

⁶ Recipe: *Chestnut puree*: Put the shelled chestnuts into boiling water. After five or six minutes take the chestnuts out of the water and peel off the the skin. Then put them in a saucepan of just enough water to cover the chestnuts. Cook them over a moderate fire, testing with a fork to see when they are soft enough. Crush them and pass through a strainer.

JAM

Chestnut Jam

Wash and slit 1½ lb. of chestnuts and boil them in slightly salted water until tender (about 30 minutes). Remove both skins and rub the nuts through a wire sieve. Then weigh the puree and to each lb. allow ¾ lb. of granulated or preserving sugar. Put the sugar into a preserving pan with about 1 gill of water. Stir over low heat until the sugar has melted, bring to the boll, and skim. Add the chestnut puree and vanilla pod, and cook gently for three quarters of an hour or until thick and of the consistency of damson cheese. Stir continually. Remove the vanilla pod and put the mixture into pots. Cover like jam. Vanilla essence may be used in place of the pod, using a good half teaspoonful. Add this after cooking.

New Zealand Herald 8 April 1926

