



Lord and Lady Lamington



THE LAMINGTON

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The origins of the lamington—a cube of plain cake, coated in chocolate icing and then covered in coconut—have been the subject of much speculation, the more so because, from its obscure beginnings, the lamington has gone on to achieve the status of a National Treasure. Considered by many to be an Australian creation, this little block of cake has become bound up with notions of Australian identity. Of its history all that can be claimed with any real confidence is that it was named in honour of one or other of Lord or Lady Lamington, and that it seems to have originated in Queensland at some time during Lord Lamington's tenure as Governor of that state—that is between April 1896 and December 1901. Most research to date has focused on the myths surrounding the creation of the lamington, concerned with who may have originated the idea, where and when, but without arriving at any definitive conclusion. What remains largely unexplored is why the lamington cake captured the imagination of cooks in the early years of the twentieth century. A study of recipes alone cannot completely answer this question however tracking the lamington cake through cook books and newspapers can throw some light on where ideas come from and how they spread and become popular. By putting ourselves in the shoes of home cooks and trying to imagine them in the kitchen we can begin to form a picture of why some ideas and particular recipes are more successful than others. The study of the progress of a particular recipe also provides some insight into the reliability of contributory recipe books as an indicator of actual kitchen practices.

At the end of the nineteenth century recipe books available in Australia were full of recipes for cakes, among them recipes for large cakes, small cakes, cakes with chocolate icing, cakes iced with coconut icing, cakes baked in roasting tins or Yorkshire pudding tins, cakes consisting of layers sandwiched together with jam or jelly or butter cream and cakes

cut into shapes for more attractive presentation. All these ideas find their way into the first recipes for lamington cakes.

The earliest recipes for lamingtons unearthed to date appear in newspapers, and then in contributory recipe books. Leach looked at some of the early published recipes in both Australia and New Zealand and identified at least five different versions published between 1902 and 1912¹. My research is based on lamington recipes in Australian newspapers and recipe books published during ‘the Golden Age of Antipodean Baking,’ that is between 1895 and 1940². In all I consulted 120 recipe books (including multiple editions of the same title). Of these, 52 included a recipe for lamington cake, and of the 52, 30 were contributory cookbooks, that is books compiled from recipes contributed by individuals, or collected from a community rather than those published by a recognised authority. In addition I conducted a newspaper search which resulted in some 200 references to lamington recipes. From this search the first published recipe appears in *Queensland Country Life* on 17 December 1900. I found 17 recipes published in the decade to 1909, 14 in newspapers and three in recipe books. In addition, French³ provided details of a recipe from the *Guild Cookery Book* published in 1909, and the reference to a recipe in the *Australian Home Journal* (1904). I am also indebted to Dr. Katie McConnel for the reference to a recipe in the *Sydney Mail* (1901). These additional references bring to 20 the total number of lamington recipes known to have been published before 1910. These recipes are summarised in Table 1. To simplify the following discussion they have been grouped into six different versions, the details of each version appears in Appendix 1.

1 Leach, Helen 2011. New light on the lamington – a view from New Zealand, *The Aristologist*, vol. 1, pp. 23 – 29.

2 Symons, Michael. 2008. The cleverness of the whole number: Social Invention in the Golden Age of Antipodean Baking 1890 – 1940. *Petits Propos Culinaires*, no. 85, pp. 31 – 60.

3 French, Maurice. 2013. *The lamington enigma. A study of the evidence*. Tabletop Publishing, Toowoomba.

Table 1: Lamington Cake Recipes. 1900–1909

Recipe	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<i>Cake</i>												
Butter	½ C	1 C	Wt 2 eggs	1 C	1 C	1 bkfst C	1 C	1 C	½ lb	1 C	¼ lb	1 C
Sugar	1 C	2 C	Wt 2 eggs	2 C	1 ½ C	1 bkfst C	2 C	2 C	½ C	1 ½ C	2 C	1 ½ C
Flour	1 C	3 C	Wt 2 eggs	3 C	2 ½ C	3 bkfst C	3 C	3 C	1 ½ C	2 ½ C	3 C	3 C
Whole eggs	3	3	2	3	4	4	3	5	2	5	3	4
Egg yolks	-	2	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Baking powder	1 t	-	½ t	-	-	-	-	3T?	-	-	-	-
Bicarb. soda	-	1 sml t	-	1 sml t	½ t	½ t	1 t	-	-	½ t	1 t	1 t
Cream of tartar	-	2 sml t	-	2 sml t	1 t	1 sml t	2 t	-	1 ½ t	1 t	2 t	2 t
Milk	4 T	1 sml C	-	1 sml C	½ C	½ teacup	1 C	¾ C	½ C	½ C	1 C	1 C
Flavouring	vanilla	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	vanilla
	or lemon	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Icing</i>												
Icing sugar	3 oz	1 lb	6 oz	1 lb	1 lb	½ lb	1 lb	6 oz	1 C	½ lb	½ lb	1 lb
Butter	1 oz	¼ lb	2 oz	½ lb	¼ lb	-	½ lb	2 oz	¼ lb	-	¼ lb	¼ lb
Cocoa/chocolate	3t or more	3 lge T	1 ½ t	3 lge T	6 t	1 lge T	4 T	?	2 T	2 T	1 dsp	4 t
Flavouring	vanilla	vanilla	-	vanilla	vanilla	vanilla	to taste	vanilla	-	vanilla	-	vanilla
Egg whites	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Water	-	-	3 t	-	½ C	1 T	-	-	2 T	2 T	-	1 ½ T

C = cup, t = teaspoonful, T = tablespoonful, lb = pounds, oz = ounces (1lb = 16 oz), dsp = dessert spoonful, Wgt = weight, lge = large

[1] *Queensland Country Life*, 17 December, 1900, p. 29; also *Queensland Country Life*, 1 December 1901, p. 31; also *WMU Cookery Book*, 1908, p. 159.

[2] *The Sydney Mail*, 12 October 1901; also *Western Mail* (Perth), 1 November 1902, p. 39. [3] *The Queenslander*, 4 January 1902, p. 30S; also *Sunday Times* (Perth), 31 January 1904, p. 6. [4] *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton) 6 February 1904, p. 3; also *Sunday Times* (Perth), 4 February 1906, p. 4. [5] *The Australian Home Journal*, (NSW), 1 August, 1904, pp. 37 – 38. [6] *The Queenslander*, 26 November 1904, p. 6 (attributed to Miss Amy Schauer). [7] *Sunday Times* (Perth), 8 March 1908, p. 7S. [8] *Hobart cookery book*, 1908, p. 82. [9] *Guild Cookery Book*, 1909 [10] Schauer, A. and M., *The Schauer Cookery Book*, 1909, p. 321. [11] *Bendigo Advertiser* (Vic.) 10 July 1909, p. 5. [12] *The Colac Herald* (Vic.), 30 July 1909, p. 7; also *The Braidwood Dispatch and Mining Journal* (NSW), 4 August, 1909, p. 4; also *West Gippsland Gazette* (Vic.), 10 August 1909, p. 3; also *The Shoolhaven Telegraph* (NSW), 18 August 1909, p. 4.

Leach⁴ and Symons^{5,6} have argued persuasively that new cake concepts do not usually arise spontaneously as an act of an individual creator but instead develop gradually via a process of steady evolution—what Symons calls ‘social invention.’ It follows then that we might be able to trace recipes similar to, or at least related to, lamingtons which eventually converge in a general agreement on both the method and the name of the cake. Tracing the antecedents of the lamington is hampered somewhat by the available evidence. The first Australian contributory cookbooks date from around 1895⁷ so there are very few sources published before 1900 which can purport to be a record of what home cooks were actually baking. Tracing the progress and the popularity of the lamington is directly connected with the increase in enthusiasm for contributory recipe books and their responsiveness to new ideas circulating in the community.

The applicability of Symons’ theory also depends on what we regard as ‘similar,’ or more to the point, what home cooks at the end of the nineteenth century regarded as similar. In recipe books of the time, ‘chocolate cakes’ were most often plain butter cakes with chocolate icing (eg. *WMU Cookery Book of Tried Recipes* 1894, p. 32) and ‘cocoanut cakes’ were similar cakes with coconut icing (eg. Maclurcan 1898, recipe #699). The idea of cutting cakes into pieces to make for a more attractive presentation probably pre-dates Mrs Beeton’s ‘Victoria sandwiches’ (two layers of classic pound cake baked in a Yorkshire pudding tin, sandwiched with jam and cut into ‘long finger pieces’ (Beeton 1861, recipe #1491). ‘Nantwich cake’ from *Cookery Book of Good and Tried Receipts* (1895, p. 143) was a pound cake formulation incorporating coconut in the batter, baked in a Yorkshire pudding tin and then cut into pieces. ‘Nell’s chocolate cake’ in the *The Home Cookbook* (1891, p. 340), a butter cake iced with chocolate icing and cut into ‘diamond shapes,’ is only a breath or two away from being a recipe for lamingtons. *The Queenslander* (19 August 1899, p. 386S) published a recipe for

4 Leach, Helen. 2008. *The Pavlova Story: a slice of New Zealand’s culinary history*. University of Otago Press, Dunedin.

5 Symons. 2008.

6 Symons, Michael. 2010. The confection of a nation: the social invention and social construction of the pavlova. *Social Semiotics*. Vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 197 – 217.

7 Black, Sarah. 2010. ‘Tried and Tested’: *Community cookbooks in Australia 1890–1980*, p. 6. Ph.D. thesis, University of Adelaide, <http://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/2440/64979/1/02whole.pdf>

‘Chocolate cakes,’ that is cakes with chocolate in the batter, which are baked in small patty tins, allowed to cool, brushed with red currant jelly and then covered in coconut, which is almost the lamington concept. Perhaps the closest related recipe which pre-dates the first known lamington cake recipe is one for ‘Small chocolate cakes with chocolate icing’ which appeared in a few newspapers in 1897 and 1898. These small chocolate cakes are made from a sponge cake, that is a cake made without butter, which is cut into small squares and iced with chocolate icing. Whilst these small cakes might be considered lamingtons in all but name, and a coating of coconut, this recipe is not, to my knowledge, reworked as a recipe for lamington cakes in either newspapers or recipe books (see Appendix 2 for details of recipe and publications).

What the recipe books available at the time do not appear to provide are recipes for ‘chocolate cocoanut squares’ or ‘chocolate cakes with cocoanut’ that is anything which involved butter cake, chocolate icing and coconut which could genuinely be regarded as a lamington in all but name. It would however be wrong to assume that, just because there was no published recipe before 1900, accomplished home cooks were not making chocolate coated, coconut sprinkled cubes of plain cake. As Luce Giard puts it ‘cuisine that is not baptized is found in the private life of ordinary people.’⁸ And of course looking for these recipes in newspapers is like trying to find a needle in a haystack since we cannot know what name or names they may have been given.

Similarly we cannot know how many of the women who sat down to read their copy of *Queensland Country Life* on Monday 17 December 1900 had ever heard of lamington cakes much less seen or tasted them. When they came across the recipe some may have recognised the lamington as similar to something they already made for their family and friends but had not previously glorified with a name, some may have recognised something new that they could try, using cake and icing recipes already familiar to them, and some perhaps just cut the recipe out of the paper and put it away for future reference. However, from this point, that is from what appears to be the first recorded use of the name, it is possible, given the limitations of the information available, to trace the spread of the new idea and to see how home cooks experimented with the published recipes.

Table 2 summarises the chronology of lamington references over the first decade.

8 de Certeau, Michael, Luce Giard and Pierre Mayol. 1998. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, v.2 *Living and cooking*. Minnesota University Press, Minneapolis.

Table 2: *Lamington Chronology 1900 – 1909*

No	Date	Place	Source	Recipe/ Comment
1	1900, Dec 17	Brisbane	<i>Queensland Country Life</i>	Supplied by newspaper
2	1901, Oct 12	Sydney	<i>Sydney Mail</i>	Supplied by newspaper
3	1901, Oct 27	Sydney	<i>Sunday Times</i>	Response to request: Can someone help with a recipe for Lamington cake?
4	1901, Nov 3	Sydney	<i>Sunday Times</i>	Response to request: Can someone help with a recipe for Lamington cake?
5	1901, Dec 1	Brisbane	<i>Queensland Country Life</i>	Supplied by newspaper [same as 1]
6	1901, Dec 14	Brisbane	<i>The Queenslander</i>	Response to request: Have not heard of lamington cake. Can you give some clue to the appearance and ingredients of the cake?
7	1902, Jan 4	Brisbane	<i>The Queenslander</i>	Contributed by reader
8	1902, Nov 1	Perth	<i>Western Mail</i>	Supplied by newspaper [same as 2]
9	1904, Jan 31	Perth	<i>Sunday Times</i>	Contributed by reader [same as 7 but with modified wording]
10	1904, Feb 6	Rockhampton	<i>Morning Bulletin</i>	Supplied by newspaper [same as 2 but with changes to icing]
11	1904, Aug 1	Sydney	<i>Australian Home Journal</i>	Supplied by magazine
12	1904, Nov 26	Brisbane	<i>The Queenslander</i>	Attributed to Miss Schauer
13	1906, Feb 4	Perth	<i>Sunday Times</i>	Contributed by reader [cake and instructions same as 2, icing as 10]
14	1906, 5 July	Brisbane	<i>The Brisbane Courier</i>	Miss Schauer judges cookery competition and awards prize for lamington cake.
15	1907, 19 April	Euroa, Vic.	<i>Euroa Advertiser</i>	Award for lamington cakes given at Euroa Fruit and Flower Show.
16	1907, 26 Oct	Bacchus Marsh, Vic.	<i>Bacchus Marsh Express</i>	Award for lamington cake given at Werribee and District Agricultural, Pastoral and Horticultural Society Show.
17	1908, 8 March	Perth	<i>Sunday Times</i>	Contributed by reader (cake and instructions same as 2); icing as 10, with additional 1 tablespoon cocoa)
18	1908, May 1	Launceston	<i>Examiner</i>	Award for lamington given at Longford show and cake fair.
19	1908, July 2	Rockhampton	<i>Morning Bulletin</i>	Demonstration by Miss Henry at the Rockhampton Technical College which included lamington cakes.

No	Date	Place	Source	Recipe/ Comment
20	1908	Tasmania	<i>Hobart cookery book</i>	Recipe contributed
21	1908	Queensland	<i>WMU cookery book</i>	Recipe contributed [same as 1]
22	1909	Queensland	<i>Schauer cookery book</i>	Recipe
23	1909	Melbourne	<i>Guild cookery book</i>	Recipe contributed
24	1909, Mar 24	Launceston	<i>Examiner</i>	Award for lamingtons given at Derby Horticultural Society Show
25	1909, April 17	Launceston	<i>Examiner</i>	Award for lamingtons given at Bracknell Fruit and Flower Show.
26	1909, May 6	Yea, Vic.	<i>Yea Chronicle</i>	Award given for lamington cake at Yea Exhibition of Flowers and Home Industries.
27	1909, Jul 10	Bendigo, Vic.	<i>Bendigo Advertiser</i>	Provided by newspaper
28	1909, Jul 30	Colac, Vic.	<i>Colac Herald</i>	Provided by newspaper
29	1909, Aug 4	Braidwood, NSW	<i>Braidwood Dispatch & Mining Journal</i>	Provided by newspaper [same as 28]
30	1909, Aug 10	Warragul, Vic.	<i>West Gippsland Gazette</i>	Provided by newspaper [same as 28]
31	1909, Aug 18	Shoalhaven, NSW	<i>Shoalhaven Telegraph</i>	Provided by newspaper [same as 28]
32	1909, Sept 30	Grafton, NSW	<i>Clarence & Richmond Examiner</i>	Award given for lamington cake at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Guild Floral Fair and Industrial Exhibition.

By the end of 1909 recipes have appeared in large circulation city newspapers and obscure provincial newspapers serving small rural communities. Both readers and the editors of the women's pages have made their contributions and the lamington has found its way into contributory cook books. As Symons⁹ has suggested, the lack of any instructions relating specifically to cutting the cake into cubes with the recipes published in *The Guild Recipe Book* (1909) and by Amy Schauer in 1909 might be taken as proof that the concept is by now so well known as not to require further explanation. It is certainly well enough known for lamington cake to be a category in baking competitions associated with local fairs and exhibitions.

The mentions of lamington cakes recorded in Table 2 are merely the highlights, just glimpses of the countless interactions and communications, the hundreds of afternoon teas, the thousands of conversations and letters that have also played their part in spreading knowledge of the new idea throughout the country. When and how do individual women first equate the concept with the name 'lamington cake'? How does Mrs Williams in Perth know about a recipe published twelve months earlier in a newspaper in Sydney, 3000km away on the other side of the continent? How does Miss Ferguson in Hobart know about recipes published in Brisbane? What makes her think that her version of lamington cake is worth contributing to the *Hobart Cookery Book*? Why do the organisers of the Euro Fruit and Flower Show decide to include an award for lamington cakes? How do they establish criteria for judging the best?

What we can glean from the published material is only part of the story but there can be no doubt that by the end of the decade the lamington is an established addition to the cake repertoire. The new cake is popular with, or at the very least considered appropriate by both the ladies of Adelaide, 'the patronesses of working girls, housewives and mothers'¹⁰, who contribute recipes to the first edition of *The Kookaburra Cookery Book* (1911), and the working class women who read the women's pages of *The Australian Worker* and provide recipes to Mary Gilmore for *The Worker Cook Book* (1915). Moreover,

9 Symons, Michael 2006. 'Authentic kitchen voices? Internal clues and measures of the historical value of community cookery books' in Kate Hunter and Michael Symons (eds) *Eating in, dining out: proceedings of the New Zealand culinary history conference*, 14 and 15 November 2005, pp. 117 – 135.

10 Pitman, Julia 2007. 'The Green and Gold Cookery Book: Women, faith, fetes, food and popular culture.' *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, no. 35, p. 72.

despite some initial confusion over the exact form of the cake, and whether or not the lamington has a filling of jam or cream still remains an option today, two formulations, the cake and associated icing recipes of versions 2 and 4 in Appendix 1, have firmly entrenched themselves. Of the 20 recipes published between 1900 and 1909 seven are the 5-egg version (version 2) and six are the 4-egg version (version 4). The first editions of both the *The Worker Cook Book* (1915) and *The Barossa Cookbook* (1917) publish both of these versions of the lamington.

Whilst the precise details of the naming of the cake remain a mystery, the origins of these two recipes are surprisingly easy to trace. Although the author of the recipe in *The Sydney Mail* (12 October 1901) suggests that it is new and may not be familiar to her readers, the observant among them would have recognised it as a reworking of a recipe that was known to them. In 1878 *Australian Town and Country Journal* (28 September, p. 28) published a recipe for 'Chocolate Cake' which differs in only minor details (see Table 3). The instructions call for the cake to be 'baked in layers, as jelly cake,' the layers are then sandwiched together with a chocolate filling. A modification of this recipe was published in the same journal in 1881 (29 January, p. 78) and versions of this 'Chocolate cake' recipe were printed in newspapers in all states, bar Tasmania, a further 15 times between 1878 and 1900. Another variation appears in Mrs Wicken's *The Kingswood Cookery Book* (1898) as 'German Cake' with exactly the same proportions although in this case there is no icing and all five egg whites are used in the cake. As 'Chocolate Cake' this formulation was also published in *Cookery Book of Good and Tried Receipts* (1895), *WMU cookery book of tried receipts* (1894) and appears twice in *The Home Cookbook*, a community cook book compiled in Toronto and first published in 1877. As noted previously, one of these Canadian recipes, titled 'Nell's Chocolate cake,' is similar to the lamington concept. This 5-egg cake recipe and various modifications was a popular basis for the lamington cake. Altogether, over the period to 1940, I encountered this version of the lamington published 25 times in newspapers and in 10 of the recipe books consulted.

Version 4 (see Appendix 1 and Table 4) is obviously inspired by the American 'number cake' or '1,2,3,4 cake,' that is a standard cake formula calling for one cup butter, two cups sugar, three cups flour and four eggs. That this cake was perceived as fast, easy and economical is evidenced

by its popularity. I found variations of this recipe (that is including both cake and icing variants) reproduced in 71 newspapers before 1940. Of these 36 were the exact cake formulation, and in 16 of these instances both the cake and icing formulations were repeated exactly as published in *The Colac Herald*, a provincial Victorian newspaper, in 1909. It is unlikely that this newspaper is the original source for this formulation but no earlier reference was found in the newspapers available on the National Library of Australia's newspaper database. Variations on the 4-egg theme appeared in 15 of the recipe books used in this study.

To what extent Australian home cooks were directly influenced by American ideas is beyond the scope of this discussion. There is however ample evidence that Australian women were well aware of the corresponding enthusiasm for cake making in America and of a popular demand for American recipes¹¹. As French notes *The Ladies' Home Journal*, a hugely successful American publication, was available here within months of its publication¹². Newspapers printed American recipes for everything from soap to 'Pumpkin Pie', 'Minnesota corn bread' and 'Hoe cakes.' (*Australian Town and Country Journal*, 13 December 1879, p. 28 and 26 May 1883, p.28; *The Capricornian*, 28 August 1886, p. 21) and the first community cookery book available in Australia was *The Home Cookbook* compiled by the ladies of Toronto, Canada (Black 2010, p. 6)¹³. Whilst there may not have been a profusion of books written specifically for the Australian housewife she was not deprived of access to up-to-date knowledge of new ideas and new trends. Home grown recipe books the likes of Mrs Wicken's revised Kingswood (1888), Mina Rawson's *Australian Enquiry Book* (1894) and *Mrs Maclurcan's Cookery book* (1898) contained traditional favourites alongside newer more original ideas.

Mina Rawson gave her recipe for 'American Tea Cake' (1894, p. 61) which is a standard 'cup cake', also referred to as '1,2,3,4 cake' or 'number cake.' The use of cup measurements for ingredients rather than weights was an American innovation well established there by the 1860s. Mrs Maclurcan's 'Victoria Sandwiches' (1898, #682) closely echoes Mrs.

11 Leach. 2011.

12 French. 2013. p. 29

13 Black. 2010. p. 6

Beeton's recipe of the same name but transposed into cup measurements. Mrs Wicken gives recipes for 'Cup cake' (1891, p. 257) and for 'Jelly cake' (1891, p. 254) another member of the American cake family. The early contributory recipe compilations also included their fair share of recipes with American influences such as 'Jelly cake' (layers sandwiched together with jelly, jam or the like), 'Silver cake' (made with egg whites), 'Gold cake' (made with egg yolks), 'American Cake', 'Yankee Cake' or '1,2,3,4 cake' (all standard 'number' cakes) and 'Lady Baltimore cake' (a layer cake with a filling and icing which incorporated raisins and almonds). Clearly Australian cooks were open to modern ideas and approaches to cake making and the rapid assimilation of the lamington demonstrates their enthusiasm for anything new. That these first lamington formulations are influenced by American recipes also implies an eagerness, at least as far as cakes are concerned, to break away from a staid traditional repertoire of recipes and develop a new more Australian cannon.

From this distance the lamington does not appear to be a radical new innovation. Cutting a cake into pieces and then icing those individual pieces is hardly revolutionary but that was perhaps part of its appeal. Here was something reasonably simple to make, although, as I shall argue later, not without its challenges, which required no new ingredients or the mastering of any new techniques, yet was sufficiently different to be of interest. Recipes for lamington cakes appear alongside recipes for chocolate cake and coconut cake, often made to the same or very like formulations and the lamington does not appear to have superseded those earlier similar cakes. For example the *Housewife's shopping guide and cookery book* (1924) includes recipes for a 5-egg 'lamington cake' (p. 13), 5-egg 'chocolate cake' (p.15), and for a 'cocoanut cake' (p. 35), which involves two layers of cake sandwiched together with a coconut filling, brushed all over with 'dissolved jam' and then 'spread thickly with cocoanut.' The *Barossa cookery book* (194-? p. 77) includes a recipe for 'Madelines' which are small cakes, baked individually, spread with jam and rolled in coconut on the page opposite two recipes for lamington cakes. Similarly, however alike, small cakes, baked individually, iced with chocolate and sprinkled with coconut are still 'small chocolate cakes' (Green and Gold cookery book 1925, p. 102) not lamingtons.

Part of the initial appeal of these early lamington recipes must have been that they were immediately recognisable. Home cooks understood that with the investment of a little of their time they could turn the familiar mundane cake with icing into something rather more genteel and sophisticated. Whilst it might seem to our eyes that the lamington is more or less just a variation on the chocolate cake of the time, it was not portrayed as such in cook books. Leach suggests that the concept behind the lamington was a new process rather than a new recipe and that process could be applied to any suitable cake but it is not until the late 1920s, and then more often in books by cookery experts, that the idea is seen as a recipe variation where a generic cake is suggested as the basis for lamingtons.¹⁴ For example in her *Everylady's cook book* (1926?) Lucy Drake, late of Swinburne Technical College, gives a recipe for lamington icing to be used with plain cake and, in the *Central cookery book* (1930s?) written by A. C. Irvine, late mistress of domestic science with the Tasmanian Education Department, lamingtons are made from a 'Queen cake' base and a standard recipe for chocolate icing. From the evidence it seems obvious that the concept of the lamington grew out of a combination of existing recipes and techniques, a reworking of existing formulations to produce a different form, but it very quickly established itself in the imagination of home cooks as more than just the sum of its parts, as a distinct and unique entity and therefore worthy of its own recipe. Moreover the popularity of two particular recipes hints at an early community consensus on the right way to make lamingtons which persisted throughout the period under consideration and beyond. Asked to nominate "National Treasures" for a column in the Australian Women's Weekly in 1982 (17 Mar 1982, p. 109), a reader proposes lamingtons, the 'old-style butter cake ones' rather than the 'new style soggy sponge, cream filled ones.' Of the books consulted in this study 52 included recipes for lamingtons, a total of 61 recipes in all. Of these 61 all are based on a butter cake formulation; 26 (42.6%) are version 4 or variations thereof and 12 (19.7%) are version 2 or variations thereof.

The popularity of these two early lamington recipes is evidenced by their appearance in contributory recipe books and in turn influenced

14 Leach, 2011.

by the popularity of those books. Some contributory publications claim to have been spectacularly successful. Each new edition of the *Cookery Book of Good and Tried Receipts*, distributed by the Women's Missionary Association of the Presbyterian Church in NSW ran to 30,000 copies. By their twentieth edition printed in 1931 they had produced 380,000 books. The *WMU Cookery Book* from Queensland boasts having distributed over 115,000 copies by 1930. In South Australia the *Green and Gold Cookery Book* had run to 30,000 copies by 1932 and, by its tenth edition in the 1940s, 55,000 copies of the *Barossa Cookery Book* had been printed. Recipe books published early in the twentieth century were still on book shelves in the 1930s and 1940s and indeed many contributory books, although reissued, remained substantially unchanged for many years so these first lamington recipes remained available to home cooks over an extended period. There can have been few Australian kitchens which did not have a cook book containing a lamington recipe of one sort or another and it seems clear that these recipes were not confined to the communities or to the states where they had originated. Since the written word does not give us access to actual kitchen practise, we cannot know for certain that women did follow these recipes word for word, just as quoting the recipe verbatim from the newspaper is not proof that they had not made the cake themselves. Popularity measured in terms of the frequency with which a recipe is recorded is not in itself evidence of its use. There are however clues in the lamington recipes that women submit to contributory collections which suggest that they were indeed tried and tested.

Not all recipes in these compilations are attributed to individuals but in the case of cakes in particular, if we accept the connection of baking prowess with general domestic capability, women would surely be reluctant to risk their reputations on recipes that they had not made themselves. Nor do contributors repeat recipes published by established authors. Despite her credibility it is not one of Miss Schauer's lamington recipes which is circulated but one with an unknown provenance which has been cut out from the newspaper. It would seem that contributors provide recipes with which they feel some personal connection, at the very least ones which they have sourced for themselves. To one's

peers outright plagiarism was perhaps the clearest indicator of a lack of ingenuity. Contributory cookbooks are collections of recipes that cooks feel are worth recording and preserving, but they also represent an alternative source of information to those books written by known authorities. These compiled books are the repository for those otherwise ephemeral newspaper clippings and for the results of personal discoveries and experiments. Women who go to the trouble to provide recipes do so on the understanding that their contributions are based on their own broad, practical experience, that they have knowledge worth sharing and that the compilation as a whole represents what Mina Rawson called 'the cleverness of the whole number' (1895, p. 14).¹⁵

All recipes are, at best, coded summaries of the processes involved, but one of the conspicuous absences from most of these early lamington recipes is any mention of how big the cubes of cake should be, either a specification of the size or an indication of how many the mixture might make. When 'M.M.' in *The Worker Cook Book* (1915, p. 115), recommends that '*the cake should be as high as a sandwich*' this detail is meaningless to someone who has no previous knowledge of cake making. The note in the PMWU cookery book of Victoria (1916, p. 136) that '*half the quantity given ... makes 24*' is almost as opaque but it does indicate that originally lamingtons were intended to be small, dainty cakes. To obtain a total of 48 pieces from the recipe given, each cake would be roughly a four centimetre cube, no more than a couple of mouthfuls. Few books mentioned that the cake was easier to cut and ice if left to stand overnight, a recommendation that was included with the recipe published in *Queensland Country Life* in 1900 (17 December, p. 29). As in all recipes some knowledge was assumed, but without precise information even experienced cooks needed to work out many of the details of this new concept for themselves. Anyone who has made lamingtons can attest that the challenging part of the operation is the icing of the cake. Words like 'spread', 'roll' and 'cover' belie the difficulties involved in manipulating the cubes of cake and the icing

15 Rawson, Mrs Lance (Mina). *Australian enquiry book of household and general information; A practical guide for the cottage, villa and bush home*. Pater & Knapton, Melbourne, 1894.

mixture. The process is messy and time consuming. The success of the operation depends on both the consistency of the icing and having the right amount, which is in turn dependent to some extent on the size of the cubes of cake. Although the modifications various cooks make to the icing formulation (see Tables 3 and 4) may seem minor—slightly more or less cocoa here, slightly more or less boiling water there—these subtle variations demonstrate individual attempts to encode the knowledge gained from practical experience. Along with suggestions such as holding the cake pieces on a fork and spreading the icing with a knife dipped in boiling water these are the trifling matters that home cooks appreciate are worth sharing. Details like these support the contention that women did in fact contribute recipes which reflected their own experiences.

The Committee of The Lady Victoria Buxton Girl's Club included a lamington recipe in the first edition of *The Kookaburra Cookery Book* (1911) published in Adelaide, South Australia. Attributed to Mrs. Rohlach, Miss Ayers and Mrs Maund, this formulation (see Table 4) is very similar to that from *The Colac Herald* in 1909, although the icing recipe has been amended. The more significant change however is the method they recommend. Instead of creaming the butter and sugar together they melt the butter and pour it over the sugar and eggs before adding the flour. Creaming the butter and sugar is a way of incorporating air into the cake batter which helps to produce a well risen cake with a fine crumb. Eliminating this step is common in cakes with a denser texture such as gingerbread (see for example gingerbread recipes in *The Kookaburra Cookery Book* 1911, p. 233). The use of this method here suggests that there was a clear understanding of the sort of cake required to make lamingtons successfully. This same recipe with the melt and mix method is repeated in subsequent editions of the *The Kookaburra Cookery Book* and is also contributed to the first edition of the *Barossa Cookery Book* (1917), another South Australian publication, by Mrs. Kleeman and Mrs Bevan. In August 1934 *The Advertiser*, an Adelaide based newspaper asked readers to submit lamington recipes. Twenty one women responded and submitted the recipe and melt and mix method attributed to Mrs Kleeman and Mrs Bevan.

Although both *The Kookaburra Cookery Book* and the *Barossa Cookery Book* were available in other states, this melt and mix method is not repeated in any of the other community books considered here and appears to be peculiar to South Australia. Since in both books the names of the ladies contributing the recipes are published, this perhaps lent credence to their method in communities where their skills or simply their social reputation gave them some standing. Within this community there has obviously been active experimentation with both formulations and methods based on past knowledge of techniques and practical experience of making lamingtons. Although we cannot know the exact sources from which these women drew their recipes the evidence here does demonstrate the potential influence of locally produced contributory books. Some recipe books must have earned a reputation for being more reliable than others but there is not enough evidence to indicate how any one title may have influenced the popularity of any one recipe other than in this instance. The strong attachment to a particular formulation and to a specific method suggests that, at least within this community, there is some consensus on the right, or the correct way to make lamingtons.

There is also some evidence of a wider understanding that there is a proper way to make lamingtons. After lamenting that lamington cakes are often ‘merely slabs of ordinary cake rolled in chocolate and cocoanut’ the women’s editor of the *Cairns Post* (3 October 1925, p. 12) provides the ‘correct recipe’, in this case the cake and icing formulation repeated word for word from the *Sydney Mail* of 1901, but with the instructions to use some of the icing as a filling, which in turn refers back to what may be the very first published lamington recipe from *Queensland Country Life* (1900). The recipe from the *Sydney Mail*, in its original form, is subsequently repeated as ‘the original recipe’ in the *Sunday Times* (Perth) (8 October 1933, p. S2) and in the *Central Queensland Herald* (4 June 1936, p. 6) with the additional detail that the cake is thought to be named for Lord Lamington and originated in Queensland. These references are intriguing at least in part because they are the first to have come to light which allude to a creation myth, the more so because the recipe they quote is indeed one of the first

published references to lamington cakes. Did all these women have the recipe from the *Sydney Mail* carefully preserved in a kitchen scrap book? This suggestion is not beyond possibility since the *Sydney Mail* was a weekly magazine-style publication, companion to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and was widely distributed. Had it been handed down to them so that it had some sentimental as well as practical value? Was it something about the authoritative tone and the attention to detail which gave this particular rendition of the recipe an air of credibility? This same recipe is also quoted verbatim in Mrs O’Neill’s *Coronation Cookery Book* (1912) and in *The Worker Cook Book* (1915). Did the original author have some first hand knowledge of the genesis of the lamington? What is pertinent to the discussion here is the evidence of a long held attachment to a particular formulation.

Over time, the popularity of the 5-egg version seems to dwindle. Whilst I found it reproduced ten times in newspapers in the decade to 1919 it then appears only a further ten times in the next twenty years. Contributors to the newspapers of the 1930s favour recipes with three, two or even only one egg and, consistent with the austere times, recipes for ‘utility’ cake which could be used for a multitude of purposes (everything from sponge pudding, through fruit cake, rainbow cake, coffee cake to lamingtons) appear more frequently. However women continue to circulate the original recipes. Mrs Lewing contributes the 5-egg recipe from 1901 to *The Woman’s Mirror Cookery Book* published in 1937, and Mrs Wallace is awarded a consolation prize of 2/6d for the 1909 recipe from *The Colac Herald* which she submits to *The Australian Women’s Weekly* in 1938. In both cases the recipe is reproduced in its original form.

The availability of both baking powder and self-raising flour pre-dates the first lamington recipes—the recipe from 1900 in *Queensland Country Life*, in fact, calls for baking powder. None the less many home cooks of the 1930s appear to be steadfast in their adherence to the use of bicarbonate of soda and cream of tartar as leavening agents despite the fact that there is no logical or technical reason why they should do so. Of the women who contributed the lamington recipe to *The Advertiser* in 1934, only five advocated the use of self raising flour. Cake making is more art than science. There is an air of mystery about the way the batter rises

and then sets and baking requires a certain act of faith that the result will be as expected—once the oven door is closed there is no turning back. Experienced cake makers know that there are any number of variables from the freshness of the ingredients they use to the prevailing weather conditions, which may influence the outcome of their cake making on any particular day. In the minds of many home cooks the cake and the recipe become inter-related—this is the way it is done, this is the way I have always done it, this is what I do when I make lamingtons. We cannot be certain that the recipe exactly replicates the kitchen practise but the perpetuation of the language of the recipe is consistent with the idea that there is a ‘correct’ way of making lamingtons. Never entirely fool-proof but always reliable, the recipe and the language of the recipe become tied to the object produced and to its production. Making lamingtons is reproducing the recipe.

That some recipes endure and continue to be circulated is not just a consequence of sentimental attachment. The most obvious and therefore perhaps the most easily overlooked explanation for their apparent popularity is the simple fact that they work. Cakes sit on the fault line between food and non-food—good to eat but by no means essential. It follows that cake making is more a matter of choice than necessity. Eating cake is a pleasurable experience for the consumer. Similarly, for the cake maker, cakes are associated more with pleasure and leisure than with the day-to-day routine of kitchen duties. None the less few home cooks can afford to waste precious time not consumed by necessary tasks or significant resources, such as butter and eggs, on recipes that do not produce the desired result. Many experienced cake makers know by simply reading the recipe whether or not it will be successful and what sort of cake it will produce, but such knowledge only comes after considerable practise. In the end the only way to test the recipe is to make it.

Recipes for lamingtons with a filling are less common than those for plain lamingtons and probably for good reason. Introducing a filling adds another step to the process which means having to allocate more time, whilst icing two pieces of cake only tenuously glued together is bothersome, and arriving at a small, neat finished product is tricky. From my own experience many recipes, in particular those that suggest less

than one pound (or 500 grams) of icing sugar, simply do not produce enough icing, and this is especially true of those recipes where the icing is also meant to be used as a filling. Of the icing formulations, the easiest to manipulate are ones using cocoa, icing sugar and boiling water with, or without, butter. That said, the consistency of the icing can vary from batch to batch and adjustments for the amount of cocoa and/or icing sugar often have to be made ad hoc. This variability helps explain why there seems to be a plethora of icing formulations, all of which are, at best, only an approximation, a guide to what is required.

Matching the quantity of batter the recipe produces, to the appropriate baking tin, is a crucial step in the process, influencing both how long the cake will take to bake and the final appearance. A round tin means too much wastage, having to trim the cake so that it will cut into neat cubes; too small a square or rectangular tin results in a thicker slab of cake and bigger lamingtons, or a domed cake which results either in wastage, again because the cake has to be trimmed down, or a non-uniform finished product. Both the 5-egg and the 4-egg recipes, baked in an appropriately sized tin, produce a good volume of cake, which can be cut into forty eight, albeit small, cubes. The batter rises evenly and the finished cake has a firm texture making it easy to cut neatly. The cake does not crumble too much when cut, making it less likely to transfer crumbs to the icing, and is robust enough to stand up to the handling involved in the icing process. These cakes eat well, keep well and, just as importantly, the recipe is easy to remember. The melt and mix method does not appear to offer any significant advantage, other than that it is certainly easier to make if all the mixing has to be done by hand, rather than using modern electrical appliances. Coming up with the ideal lamington recipe involves balancing a reliable cake recipe with a similarly reliable and consistent icing formulation. It is little wonder then that, having experienced the vagaries of making lamingtons, once they found a recipe which they were confident would work, women stuck to it.

The abundance of cake recipes in Australian recipe books in the first four decades of the twentieth century suggests that Australian women were at least as obsessed and passionate about baking as their American sisters, if not more so. Their enthusiasm gave them a thirst for new ideas,

many of which were supplied from American sources. Just where the idea of the lamington sprang from is unclear. What is certain is that someone, somewhere, gave the concept its name and that, from the first recorded use of the name, the basic three elements were determined—butter cake base, chocolate icing and coconut. Whilst the lamington may not seem like much of an innovation, the cake makers and cake eaters of the early 1900s were perhaps more discerning than their modern counterparts—they knew their cakes and appreciated subtle differences in both form and formulation. It is not difficult to understand how new ideas may have been spread—word of mouth, letters, newspapers, magazines, contributory cook books are obvious sources and vehicles, although we might be surprised at how far and how quickly news travelled without the endorsement of celebrity chefs and a national advertising campaign. That the lamington captured the public imagination is evidenced by how rapidly it became an established part of the schedule at cooking competitions and incorporated into contributory recipe books.

Because the concept of the lamington was so clearly established from the outset, it is possible to track the progress of recipes over time much more easily than more general ideas such as chocolate cake or orange cake. Part of the initial success of the lamington would seem to lie in the fact that it could be made using cake recipes that were already familiar to, and popular with, home cooks. With a little more time and effort something could be produced which was altogether more alluring than the sum of its parts. We cannot know for certain whether the recipes submitted to contributory recipe books were ‘tried and tested’ or simply representative of what women thought was appropriate to provide, but the subtle variations in the lamington formulation, especially the icing recipe, does support the contention that their contributions reflect the cook’s practical experience. The repetition of two particular cake formulations would also seem to be an indication that there was an understanding of, and attachment to a ‘correct’ and ‘original’ formulation for lamingtons and of the influence of contributory cookbooks on perpetuating those recipes.

Individual recipes endure because they work. The first lamington recipes published more than 100 years ago still work just as well today.

Kitchen technology and gadgetry may change but the basic techniques and chemistry of cake making remain constant. It is also true that the recipes for ‘Silver cake’, ‘Gold cake’, ‘Lady Baltimore cake’, ‘Railway cake’ and a host of others that appeared in recipe books a century ago still work today, although these concepts have not all lasted. Some are just re-branded, others slip away as tastes change. In the case of the lamington the recipe is only one chapter in the complicated story of how it became a National Treasure.

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1936 'Kitchen Craft.' *The Central Queensland Herald* (Rockhampton, Qld.), 4 June, p. 6.

1938 'Small cakes...Win Big Prize.' *The Australian Women's Weekly*, 30 July, p. 46.

1982 'Len Evans.' *The Australian Women's Weekly*, 17 Mar, p. 109.

APPENDIX I

LAMINGTON RECIPES 1900 - 1909

Version I

Lamington Cakes

½ cup of butter, 1 cup sugar. 1 cup flour, 3 eggs, 1 teaspoon baking powder, 4 tablespoons milk.

Beat butter and sugar; add eggs well beaten with the milk, sift in flour and baking powder; flavour with vanilla or lemon to taste. Bake in sandwich tins.

Cut into squares next day.

Icing: 3 oz. icing sugar. 1 oz. butter. Beat these to a cream and spread between

layers, as jam would be used. For the outside icing – 3 oz. sugar, 1 oz. butter, 3 teaspoons or more of cocoa; vanilla to flavour. The square of cake, when doubled, are in the shape of a cube. Ice all over the cube with the cocoa icing, spreading it with a knife, then dip and roll in cocoanut.

Queensland Country Life, 17 December 1900, p.29

This newspaper repeated the same lamington recipe almost exactly twelve months later on 1 December 1901, p. 31. The ‘Lamington cake’ recipe published in the *W.M.U. Cookery Book* (1908) reproduces the cake recipe, but does not include a formulation for the icing (this is the first time that a recipe for lamingtons appear in a recipe book in Queensland).

The same cake recipe is reproduced in *The Brisbane Courier*, 6 October 1927, p. 16, but with a different icing formulation.

These three instances, all from Queensland, were the only references I found to this formulation. Although the exact origins of the recipe are unknown it is almost identical to a recipe for ‘Jelly Cake’ published in *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 13 December 1879, p. 28.

Version II

To make a most delicious cake suitable for afternoon tea I can recommend the following recipe:

Lamington Cake

Take one cup butter, three cups flour, two cups sugar, five eggs, leaving out the whites of two for icing, one small cup milk, one small teaspoonful carbonate of soda, two small teaspoonfuls cream of tartar dissolved in the milk.

Rub the butter and sugar together; add the eggs and the milk with the flour in which the soda has been mixed. Bake for 20 minutes in long, flat tins, and when cold cut into small blocks and ice all over with an icing made as follows: ¼ lb butter, 1 lb icing sugar, beaten well together. Add the whipped whites of the two eggs, with three large tablespoonsful grated chocolate (or

cocoa of a dark colour), essence of vanilla to taste. Cover the blocks all over and immediately roll them in desiccated cocoanut. This cake is delicious and well worth trying.

‘Answers to Correspondence.’ *The Sydney Mail*, 12 October 1901, p. 38

French¹⁶ attributes this recipe to Zora Aronson, sometime editor of the women’s pages of the *Sydney Mail*, although it does not appear under Aronson’s normal byline of ‘Thalia.’ Rather, the column is headed ‘Answers to Correspondence by Housewife.’

In addition to those recipes mentioned in the text, Leach¹⁷ refers to a version of this recipe called ‘Ames Cake’ in *Miss Parloa’s New Cook Book, A Guide to Marketing and Cooking*, published in Boston in 1884. In my own collection I have a facsimile copy of *Centennial Buckeye Cookbook* first published in Ohio in 1876 which also includes a version of ‘Chocolate cake’ made with one cup butter, two of sugar and four of flour with 5 egg yolks, and 2 whites (pp. 72 -73).

Version II also appears in the following publications:

Hobart cookery book. Davies Bros., Hobart, Tas., 1908, p. 82

Coronation Cookery Book. O’Neill, Edith. Edwards Dunlop, Brisbane, Qld, 1908, p. 52

Schauer Cookery Book (The). Schauer, A. and M. Edwards Dunlop, Brisbane, Qld, 1909, p. 321

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The Housewife’s Shopping Guide and Cookery Book. E. B. Bayliss, Perth, WA., 1924, p.13

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‘Woman’s Mirror’ Cookery Book. The Bulletin, Sydney, NSW, 1937, p. 297

16 French, 2013, p. 31

17 Leach, 2011.

Table 3: Version II Chocolate Cake and Lamington Recipes.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Chocolate	Chocolate	German	Nell's	Chocolate	Lamington	American	Lamington	Lamington
	Chocolate	Chocolate	German	Chocolate	Chocolate	Lamington	American	Lamington	Lamington
Cake:									
Butter	½ C	1 C	½ lb	1 C	1 C	1 C	1 C	1 C	1 C
Sugar	1½ tC	2 C	2 tC	2 C	2 C	2 C	2 C	2 C	1½ C
Flour	enough	3½ C	3 tC	3 C	3 C	3 C	4 level C	3 C	2½ C
Whole eggs	-	-	5	-	-	-	5	5	5
Egg yolks	5	5	-	5	5	5	-	-	-
Egg whites	3	3	-	3	3	3	-	-	-
Baking powder	-	-	-	2 t	-	-	-	3 T(?)	-
Bicarb. soda	1 t	½ t	1 t	1 t	1 t	1 small t	½ t	-	½ t
Cream of tartar	2 t	1 t	2 t	-	2 t	2 small t	1 t	-	1 t
Milk	1 tC	1 C	1 tC	1 scant C	1 small C	1 small C	-	¾ C	½ C
Flavouring	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Icing:									
Icing sugar	2 T	1 ½ C	-	1½ C	1¼ C	1 lb	-	6 oz	½ lb
Butter	-	-	-	-	-	¼ lb	-	2 oz	-
Cocoa/chocolate	3 T choc	3 T choc	-	6 T choc	4 T coc	3 lg T coc	-	?	2 T coc
Flavouring	-	1 t vanilla	-	vanilla	1 t vanilla	or ¼lb chocolate	-	vanilla	or chocolate
Egg whites	2	2	-	2	2	2	-	-	vanilla
Water	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

C = cup, tC = teaspoonful, T = tablespoonful, lb = pounds, oz = ounces (1lb = 16 oz), coc = cocoa

SOURCES OF VERSION II RECIPES IN TABLE 3 (OPPOSITE).

1. *Australian Town and Country Journal* (NSW), 28 September 1878, p. 28
2. *Australian Town and Country Journal* (NSW), 29 January, 1881, p. 28
3. Wicken, Mrs Harriet F. *The Kingswood cookery book*, 1898, p. 251.
4. *The Home Cookery Book*. Compiled by ladies of Toronto and chief cities and towns in Canada, p. 340 (same recipe, Chocolate Cake, p. 330)
5. *W.M.U. Cookery Book of Tried Recipes*, 1894, p. 32
6. *The Sydney Mail*, 12 October 1901
7. *W.M.U. Cookery book*, 1908, p. 87 (Bake as a large cake, or as sandwiches or as patty cakes)
8. *Hobart Cookery Book*, 1908, p. 82
9. Schauer, A and M., *The Schauer Cookery Book*, 1909, p. 321

Version III

Lamington Cake

The weight of two eggs in butter, sugar and flour, two eggs, half-teaspoonful baking powder.

Beat the butter to a cream, add the sugar and yolks of eggs, one by one, then the whites beaten stiff, lastly add gradually flour and baking powder. Bake in a moderate oven. When cold cut the cake like a sandwich and put the white mixture between, then cut into small pieces and cover on all sides with the chocolate mixture. Dip the cakes in grated cocoanut and put in a cool place.

The Mixture. – 2 oz. butter, 6 oz icing sugar, beat to a cream, and divide equally in two basins, and to one half add one and a half teaspoonful cocoa (to be had in small tins) dissolved in three teaspoons boiling water. Beat well.

The Queenslander, Saturday, 4 January 1902, page 30

Despite its apparent simplicity this formulation was not popular, perhaps because it relied on the more traditional weighing of ingredients rather than the easier and quicker cup measurements. It was repeated only twice to my knowledge—the first time in the *Sunday Times* (Perth), 31 January 1904, p. 6, and again in *Mrs Vivien Voss's Cookery Book* (p. 71) of 1934, which was compiled from recipes her mother had published in 1914 in aid of the Rockhampton YWCA.

Version IV

Lamington Cake

Cream together 1 cup of butter, 1½ cup of sugar, when quite white, add 4 well-beaten eggs. Sift in 2½ cups of flour, with a full teaspoon of cream of tartar.

Add ½ cup of milk, with ½ teaspoon of carbonate soda mixed into it. Pour the mixture into a square tin, and cook slowly for 1½ hour. When cold, cut into squares, spread with icing, then roll in cocoanut.

Icing: Sift into a bowl 1lb icing sugar, rub in ¼ lb butter, mix 6 teaspoonful of cocoa with ½ cup of boiling water, flavour with vanilla, and mix well together.

The first version IV recipe, reproduced above, was published in the *Australian Home Journal*, 1 August 1904, pp. 37 – 38, and contributed by Miss Illidge of Gladstone, Queensland. Not long afterwards, Amy Schauer was credited with a similar recipe:

Lamington Cake

Ingredients – 1 breakfast cupful of butter, 1 breakfast cupful of sugar, and 3 breakfast cupfuls of flour, ½ teaspoonful of carbonate of soda, 1 small teaspoonful of cream of tartar, 4 eggs and ½ teacupful of milk. Cream the sugar and butter together until white, then add the eggs (well beaten), then add the flour, cream of tartar and soda (all passed through a flour sieve). Mix with the milk. Line a shallow square baking dish (a meat dish), and bake in a moderate oven for one hour. When cold cut into squares and spread the top and sides of each piece with chocolate icing and roll in desiccated cocoanut. The icing is made as follows:– Pass 1/2lb of icing sugar through sieve, and mix in one large tablespoonful of cocoa dissolved in one tablespoonful of boiling water. Mix with sugar, and flavour with vanilla. If not thick enough add a little more sugar.

The Queenslander, 26 November 1904, p. 6

Miss Amy Schauer was an instructor at Brisbane Technical college from 1895, and is considered by some as a likely candidate for the original ‘inventor’ of the lamington.¹⁸ Amy and her sister gave classes and very popular cooking demonstrations in Brisbane and regional centres and it is possible, given the similarity of the recipes, that Miss Illidge may have attended one of these. For all Miss Schauer’s reputation her recipe does not appear to have been reproduced elsewhere, nor did she repeat this formulation in her own subsequent publications. Miss Schauer’s recipe makes no mention of cutting the cake into cubes.

The following recipe appeared in *The Colac Herald*, 30 July 1909, p. 7.

Lamington Cakes

Required: one cup butter, 1½ cups sugar, 3 cups flour, 1 cup milk, 2 teaspoons cream of tartar, 1 teaspoon carbonate of soda, 4 eggs, vanilla essence.

Method: Beat the butter and sugar to a cream, add the eggs well beaten, and then the milk with the soda dissolved in it. Then add the flour, sifted, with the cream of tartar and vanilla essence. Bake in a swiss-roll tin, in a moderately hot oven, and when cold cut into squares and ice. Icing for these cakes may be made thus: 1 lb icing sugar, ¼ lb butter. Beat well together, adding 1½ tablespoons boiling water, 4 teaspoons cocoa, and vanilla to taste. Mix all well together; spread the icing on all sides of the cakes, with a knife dipped in boiling water, then roll the cakes in desiccated cocoanut.

This is the most often repeated variation of version IV although the original source remains unknown. Variations of version IV appear in:

- Kookaburra cookery book (The)*, Lady Victoria Buxton Girls' Club, Adelaide, 1911, p. 230
The Kookaburra cookery book, E. W. Cole, Adelaide, 1914 and 1928, p. 242 and 301
 Monro, Amie M., *The Practical Australian cookery*, 1913, p. 160
Pinnaroo Soldiers' Memorial Cookery Book Pinnaroo (South Australia), 192?, p. 29
 Gilmore, Mary (ed.). *The Worker cook book*, The Worker Trustees, Sydney, 1915, p. 115
P.W.M.U. Cookery Book of Victoria, Brown Prior & Co., Melbourne, 1916, p. 136
Everyday and Everyway Recipe Book. Disabled Men's Association of Australia, Melbourne 1922, #62
The 'All in One' Recipe Book and Household Guide, (compiled by Mrs C. Vassal Cox), Disabled Men's Association of Australia, Melbourne, 1925?
 Hackett, Lady Deborah (ed.). *The Australian Household Guide*, E.S. Wigg and Son, Perth, 1916, p. 1010.
Barossa Cookery Book, Soldier's Memorial Institute, Tanunda, 1917.
The Barossa Cookery Book, Soldier's Memorial Institute, Tanunda, 1940s? p. 76
The Berrambool Recipe Book, (Mrs Willie Moffatt) The Speciality Press, Melbourne, 1915?, p. 67 and 84.
 Wylie, Margaret A. *The Golden Wattle Cookery Book*, E.S. Wigg and Son, Perth, 1924, p. 132.
The Maryborough Cookery Book, 4th edition, Spectator Publishing Co., Melbourne, 1927, pp. 39-40.
 Eddy, Bessie. *Bessie Eddy Australian Cookery Book*, Exchange Press, Melbourne, 1930s?, p. 54.
The Housewife's Shopping Guide and Cookery Book, 4th edition, E.B. Bayliss, Perth, 1933, p. 21.
The Lady Mayoress Cookery Book, Queensland Country Women's Association, Brisbane, 1938, p. 96.

Table 4: Version IV Lamington Recipes

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Cake:												
Butter	1 C	1 bkfst C	1 C	1 C melt	¼ lb	1 C	1 C	1 C	1 C melt	1 C	1 C	1 C
Sugar	½ C	1 bkfst C	1½ C	½ C	¾ lb	2 C	2 C	1½ C	1½ C	1½ C	2 sm C	1½ C
Flour	2½ C	3 bkfst C	3 C	3 C	1 lb SR	3 C SR	3 C	3 C	3 C	3 C	3 C	3 C
Whole eggs	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Baking powder	-	-	-	-	-	-	2t	-	-	-	-	-
Bicarb. soda	½ t	½ t	1 t	1 t	-	-	-	1 t	1 t	1 t	1½ t	1 t
Cream of tartar	1 t	1 t	2 t	2 t	-	-	-	2 t	2 t	2 t	3 t	2 t
Milk	½ C	½ t C	1 C	1 C	1 C	1 C	1 C	1 C	1 C	1 C	a little	1 C
Flavouring	-	-	vanilla	lemon	vanilla	1t vanilla	lemon/ vanilla	-	lemon	vanilla	-	lemon/ vanilla
Icing:												
Sugar	1 lb	½ lb	1 lb	¼ lb	1 lb	-	-	1 lb	1 lb	1 lb	1 lb	½ lb
Butter	¼ lb	-	¼ lb	¼ lb	¼ lb	2 T	-	¼ lb	¼ lb	¼ lb	¼ lb	2 oz
Cocoa/ chocolate	6 t co	1 lg T co	4 t co	4 t co	4 T co	3 T co	2 cakes choc	5 t co	4t	4 t co	4 t choc	1 t co
Flavouring water	vanilla	vanilla	vanilla	-	-	1 t vanilla	1 T	vanilla	-	vanilla	vanilla	-
	½ C	1 T	½ T	½ T	4 T	1 dsp	1 T	2/3 T milk	½ T	½ T	½ T	1 T

C = cup, t C = teacup, bkfst C = breakfast cup, t = teaspoonful, T = tablespoonful, lb = pounds, oz = ounces (1lb = 16 oz), dsp = dessert spoonful, SR = self-raising, co = cocoa, choc = chocolate.

SOURCES OF VERSION IV RECIPES IN TABLE 4 (PREVIOUS PAGE).

1. *Australian Home Journal*. (Sydney, NSW), 1 August 1904, pp. 37-38.
2. *The Queenslander*, 26 November 1904, p. 6 (attributed to Amy Schauer)
3. *The Colac Herald*, 30 July 1909, p. 7.
4. *The Kookaburra Cookery Book*, 1911, p. 230; 1914 and 1928 editions, p. 242
5. Monro, Amie M., *The Practical Australian Cookery*, 1912, p. 160; *The Pinnaroo Soldiers' Memorial cookery book*, 192?, p. 29
6. *The Kookaburra cookery book*, 1914 and 1928, p. 301,
7. Gilmore, Mary (ed.). *The Worker Cook Book*, 1915, p. 115.
8. *Barossa Cookery Book*, 1917 (Miss Doorne), repeated in 9th edition, 194?, p. 76
9. *Barossa Cookery Book*, 1917 (Mrs Kleeman, Mrs Bevan)
10. *P.W.M.U. Cookery Book of Victoria*, 1916, p. 136; *Everyday and Everyway Recipe Book*, 1922, #62; *The 'All in One' recipe book and household guide*, (compiled by Mrs C. Vassal Cox), 1925?
11. *The Berrambool Recipe Book*, (Mrs Willie Moffatt), 1915?, p. 67.
12. *The Berrambool Recipe Book*, (Mrs Willie Moffatt), 1915?, p. 84.

Version V

Lamington Cake

½ lb butter, beaten to a cream with ½ cup sugar, 2 well beaten eggs, ½ cup milk in which a teaspoon of soda has been dissolved, 1½ cups flour, 1½ teaspoons cream of tartar.

Put into a flat tin and bake for about 30 minutes.

Icing: ¼ lb butter, 1 cup icing sugar; beat to a cream; 2 tablespoons of cocoa, mixed with 2 tablespoons boiling water. Mix all together and put over the Lamington.

Guild cookery book. Holy Trinity Church, Port Melbourne, 1909 (as reproduced in French 2013, pp. 254 - 256)

In this case there is no mention of 'cocoanut' and no mention of cutting the cake into cubes. These may of course be editorial errors. Many community cookbooks were poorly proofed so that instances of missing ingredients, lack of clear directions and misrepresentations of the amount of ingredients are common.

Version VI

Lamington Cakes

3 eggs, ¼ lb butter, 3 cups flour, 1 cup milk, 2 cups sugar, 1 teaspoon soda, 2 teaspoons cream of tartar, vanilla essence.

Cream the butter and sugar, sift cream of tartar with flour, and dissolve soda in milk. Add all the ingredients together, and bake in a square tin in a rather warm oven. When cool, cut the block of cake into small squares and roll each square in a mixture composed of ¼ lb butter, ½ lb sugar, and 1 large dessert spoonful of cocoa. Then sprinkle with desiccated cocoanut.'

Bendigo Advertiser (Vic.), 10 July 1901, p. 5

Both versions V and VI are sufficiently different from one another and from the other recipes considered here to lead to the supposition that they are original contributions, presumably based on reliable recipes adapted for the purpose. I have found no evidence that either of these recipes was reproduced elsewhere, despite the popularity of less extravagant recipes, with one, two or three eggs, in the 1920s and 1930s.

Finally it should be noted that the icing recipes also draw on pre-existing formulations. 'Hard'icing or 'sugar'icing made using fine sugar and beaten egg whites has a long history and would have been familiar to most home cooks. Similarly making chocolate icing by melting chocolate and mixing with powdered sugar and water was also an established method common in recipe books. The cake made with 5 eggs, was nearly always coupled with a recipe for 'hard' icing, whether the cake recipe called for five whole eggs or specified keeping two egg whites aside for the icing. The 4 egg cake recipe was always teamed with icing made using chocolate/cocoa, sugar and water, with or without the addition of butter.

APPENDIX 2

LAMINGTON PROTOTYPES

Chocolate Cakes

Beat ¼ lb butter with a wooden spoon until it is soft and creamy, then stir in 4 oz powdered sugar and beat the butter and sugar together until the mixture is quite white; add half a teaspoonful of essence of vanilla, and the yolks of 2 well-beaten eggs. Dissolve 3oz of powdered vanilla chocolate in a little milk, and stir it into the other ingredients; mix well, and add by degrees ½ lb of flour; beat the cake mixture for a few minutes after the flour has been worked in and stir in lightly the whites of the eggs whisked to a very stiff froth, and the last thing before putting the mixture into the tins in which it is to be baked, sprinkle in a small teaspoonful of baking powder. Should the cake be too stiff (owing to small eggs having been used) a very little milk may be added

to it. Butter some small patty pans, dust them with flour, and put some of the cake mixture into them (they should be about three-parts full) and bake in a quick oven. When done turn the cakes onto a sieve to cool, and when quite cold brush them all over with some red currant jelly which has been partly melted, and scatter some desiccated cocoanut over them.

The Queenslander, 19 August 1899, p. 386 S
Sunday Times (Sydney), 11 November 1900, p. 11

Small chocolate cakes with chocolate icing

Take the weight of three eggs in sugar and flour. Boil the sugar with a little water to a syrup and in the meantime whisk the three eggs in a basin until they are quite thick. Then add the sugar and go on whisking until it becomes as thick as cream. Next lightly mix in the flour, and when quite smooth flavour with essence of vanilla. Bake for half an hour in a flat buttered tin. When cold cut into small squares and ice.

Icing: 1 lb icing sugar, 1 gill water. When boiling add 2oz grated chocolate.

Chronicle (Adelaide) 27 Mar 1897, p. 37
Traralgon Record (Vic.), 18 Mar 1898, p. 1S
Bairnsdale Advertiser and Tambo and Omeo Chronicle (Vic.), 19 Mar 1898, p. 1S

Leach¹⁹ notes that this recipe also appeared in the *Otago Witness*, 11 March 1897, and even earlier in an American publication *The Rural and Workman* in 1890. This recipe appears again in 1903, which is after the first lamington recipes are published, as 'small chocolate cakes' in the *North Melbourne Courier* and *Western Melbourne Advertiser* (Vic.), 27 November 1903, p. 3.

19 Leach, Helen. 2011.