

The following articles were taken from New Zealand newspapers and journals published between 1848 and 1961. They demonstrate the evolving portrayal of Chinese food, meals and cooking— from initial awe at the complexity of the cuisine to making Chinese food at home, and buying frozen Chow Mein. Against this evolution there is the waxing and waning background of racism that persisted from the last decades of the 19th century until after the end of the Second World War.



## A CHINESE DINNER OF STATE

*New Zealand Spectator and Cook's Strait Guardian, 28 March 1846*

We extract from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the following graphic description of a Chinese dinner of State, given by Keying, the Chinese High Commissioner, on his visit to Hong Kong, to Sir J. Davis, the Governor of that settlement. The account was originally published in the *China Mail*, November 27.—[Ed. N. Z. S.]

Dinner being announced, the company proceeded up stairs to the sound of music which had not the least resemblance to the “Roast Beef of Old England.” A large table was set out in the spacious saloon, at the centre of which sat Keying with Sir John Davis on his left hand, and Major-General D’Aguilar on his right; and proceeding round the table in the Chinese order, from left to right, the following, so far as we can remember, were the other guests:—

...

To our readers at home it may be interesting to have a pretty minute account of the whole menu of the dinner, especially as it differed in several respects from the description of Du Halde, Father Bouvet, and other more modern writers. From the number of dishes successively served up, we infer that it was a feast of the “more solemn sort,” spoken of by the former of these authorities; but instead of a small table for each guest, there was, as we have said, only a single large one in the English fashion for the whole company, and except such a general invitation to be seated as might have passed unnoticed in Europe, there were none of the ceremonious bows to individuals which Father Bouvet speaks of.

Before each guest was placed a plate and kwaitz, or chopsticks, on one side, and a knife, fork, and spoon, on the other. The chopsticks, however, were pretty generally used, a little awkwardly it must be admitted, by the English, while the mandarins, probably out of politeness to their guests, occasionally made use of the fork and spoon. Beyond the plates were ranged innumerable little pyramids of preserves, pickles, and dried seeds, which from the experiments we made, we presume were not intended to be eaten, but placed merely for show; but at the left hand there was a small saucer of sweetmeats and salted relishes, which were partaken of and washed down with a glass of wine. And then commenced the more important part of the feast, by the army of servants setting before each guest a small bowl, about the size of a moderate breakfast cup, of Bird’s Nest Soup, which might pass for very good vermicelli at home, and scarcely merits