

Colleen's
biscuits.



Alison Holst's KITCHEN DIARY Volume 5



The Holst Diaries

In a three-part series,
Colleen Brown farewells a much-
loved recipe book collection.

ASHER FINLAYSON

We are trying to sell our family home. Enough said, especially in an indifferent housing market. Our adult children have accepted this major decision better than when we decided to do away with our landline.

As anyone who has shifted after decades of living in the same house knows, getting rid of "stuff" is problematic. I eyed up my four shelves of cookbooks and started with my *Alison Holst's Kitchen Diary* collection.

This was always going to be a hard task. I love cooking. Just as well, with a household of children and half the neighbourhood's as well. There always had to be a spare something for that unexpected stray who stayed over. Later, feeding a growing teenaged rower who hoovered food, it meant meals had to be instantly available. Cue the Holst diaries, a collection of cookbooks that came out pretty much annually in the 80s and 90s.

Alison Holst was a household name when we were bringing up small children. She appeared on all media outlets, providing sensible recipes for families on a tight budget. My mother-in-law, Myrt, was a convert. Every Christmas, the latest Alison Holst cookbook would arrive for me, often inscribed with a note from Myrt stuck on the front of the book. They are still there today, as are the ticks against favourite recipes in the index, tags and comments. The books are spotted with age, smeared with indeterminate liquids, dog-eared and crumpled.

Trawling through my *Kitchen Diaries* was like falling back in time.

The books are basic; recipes in black and white, embellished with clever sketches by Holst's sister, Clare Ferguson, with a coloured cover that became more sophisticated over time. A photo of Holst featured on the cover of later editions. She looked so reassuringly normal, relatable – one of us. The books were the "no frills" kind, selling for a few dollars each. They were Aunt Daisy cookbooks for baby boomers.

I've flicked through my books as part of our sorting and packing, stopping to mull over a particular recipe, recalling those days and the food we ate. At the time, you didn't appreciate the intimacy of Holst's writing, her sharing of her family's life in New Zealand and overseas. Duncan's Dumplings are typical: Holst explains that this recipe started with one of her son's friends, his favourite converted into a dessert, and enjoyed no doubt by many Kiwi cooks.

As Christmas approached, the Holst fans had some hard choices to make. Did you select the Dark Christmas Cake with its six eggs and sensory overload of spices, with the option of pouring brandy, whisky or rum over it as soon as it was taken out of the oven? Or would you choose the Pineapple Christmas Cake? ▶

“**The books are spotted with age, smeared with indeterminate liquids, dog-eared and crumpled.**”



COLLEEN'S BISCUITS

Alison Holst's notes on the recipe include that the biscuits are "excellent for families that include biscuit-tin raiders".

About 100 biscuits
(or 75, according to Colleen Brown)

- 250g butter
- ¼ cup golden syrup
- 1 tsp baking soda
- ¼ cup warm water
- 2 cups flour
- 1 ½ cups sugar
- 2 cups coconut
- 2 cups rolled oats

Melt the butter in a large saucepan. Add the golden syrup and remove the pot from the heat as soon as there are no lumps of butter in the mixture and the syrup is warm enough to mix with the other ingredients. Do not boil the mixture.

Stir the baking soda and water together, ready to add. Measure all remaining ingredients into the pot, then add the soda and water, and stir together until everything is evenly mixed. Put the mixture in teaspoon lots on cold trays, leaving room for spreading.

Bake at 180°C for about 12 minutes, until biscuits are a rich golden brown.

NOTE: If the biscuits on the first tray spread too much as they cook, stir in a little extra flour to the remaining mixture. If they don't spread enough, add a little extra water or a little milk, and remember to use less generous measures of dry ingredients next time.

From Alison Holst's *Kitchen Diary*.





Lifesaver: Alison Holst was a household name.

◀ I somehow always opted for the pineapple version, possibly encouraged by my oldest daughter Olivia's note of "very good" with a tick of approval. Family rules!

My mother was one of nine children brought up during the depression. I was used to seeing her bake, bottle, preserve and freeze everything homegrown. She was a machine. It wasn't until I became a mother that I realised that not everyone had the same upbringing.

Holst certainly introduced my generation to the wonders of what to do with excess seasonal fruit and vegetables until we could chop, brine, bottle, pickle and preserve with the best of them.

And her tips! Whoever knew that adding a vitamin C tablet to stewed feijoas made them stay a lighter shade? The patter that she used in her books was like having your best mate in the kitchen advising you. Not sure of what to do with your buckets of feijoas? Holst zipped through a repertoire of options, from frozen, defrosted and stuffed into crepes, plonked onto cheesecakes, replacing apples in a crumble, or as toppings for scones, freshly out of the oven, of course.

In one of her *Kitchen Diaries*, she reveals that she has been in hospital for a week's enforced rest. During that time, she devised a lime marmalade recipe creatively enhanced with a bamboo skewer dipped in green food colouring.

Holst breathed a different life into my kitchen - I knew that if I picked up any one of her books, dinner was sorted. For a working parent, you can't get much better than that. ■

Part two of Colleen Brown's "The Holst Diaries" will appear next week.

Spanish flair

New Zealand is punching above its weight when it comes to tempranillo.

BY MICHAEL COOPER

How's that for prescience? At a tasting that took more than a month to plan, just three days after the Fifa Women's World Cup final, we were blind-tasting six classic Spanish reds, alongside six from New Zealand. All were made from the world's third-most extensively planted red-wine variety - tempranillo.

Why is tempranillo not better known here? Unlike varieties such as cabernet sauvignon and merlot, which are grown widely around the world, 87% of tempranillo's total plantings are in Spain. The classic red-wine grape of Rioja, in northern Spain, in recent decades this early-ripening, thick-skinned variety has spread successfully to cooler Spanish regions, notably Ribera del Duero, Navarra and Penedès.

Does tempranillo have untapped potential here? The short answer is yes. The Spanish reds had a slight overall edge in quality, but on average cost \$12 more. My favourite was **Bodegas Muga Selección Especial Reserva Rioja 2018** ★★★★★ (\$62-\$67), an impressively complex and savoury red, weighty and invitingly perfumed. These New Zealand bottlings, especially those from the Hawke's Bay region, are well worth discovering.

Esk Valley Artisanal Collection Hawke's Bay Tempranillo 2021 ★★★★★

Still very youthful, this is a refined, deeply coloured red. Mouthfilling and vibrantly fruity, it has strong, ripe blackcurrant, plum and spice flavours, a subtle seasoning of oak, savoury notes and firm, ripe tannins adding backbone. Fine value. (13.5% alc/vol) \$29

Hans Herzog Marlborough Tempranillo 2018 ★★★★★

This organically certified red was

Wine of the week

Trinity Hill Gimblett Gravels Hawke's Bay Tempranillo 2021 ★★★★★

This standout red was barrique-aged for a year. Weighty and brambly, it is deeply coloured, fragrant and full-bodied, with rich blackcurrant, plum and spice flavours, earthy, savoury notes and a resounding finish. (14.5% alc/vol) \$40

estate-grown in Wairau Valley and barrel-aged for three years. Full-coloured, it is savoury and nutty, with berry, plum and spice flavours showing good complexity. (14% alc/vol) \$66

Marsden Bay of Islands Tempranillo 2020 ★★★★★

This elegant, ageworthy Northland red was matured for a year in French oak barriques. Full-coloured and fragrant, it is mouthfilling, with strong, fresh, berryish, spicy flavours, savoury notes adding complexity, and has obvious potential. (14% alc/vol) \$37

Obsidian Waiheke Island Tempranillo 2020 ★★★★★

Estate-grown at Onetangi, this is a stylish red, full-coloured, mouthfilling and savoury, with concentrated, complex flavours that build well to a lingering, smooth finish. (13% alc/vol) \$51

Rock Ferry Trig Hill Vineyard Tempranillo 2022 ★★★★★

Certified organic, this was estate-grown at Bendigo, in Central Otago. Deep ruby, it has lively, berryish flavours, seasoned with nutty oak, fresh, cool-climate acidity, and considerable complexity. (Not yet released.) (13.5% alc/vol) ■