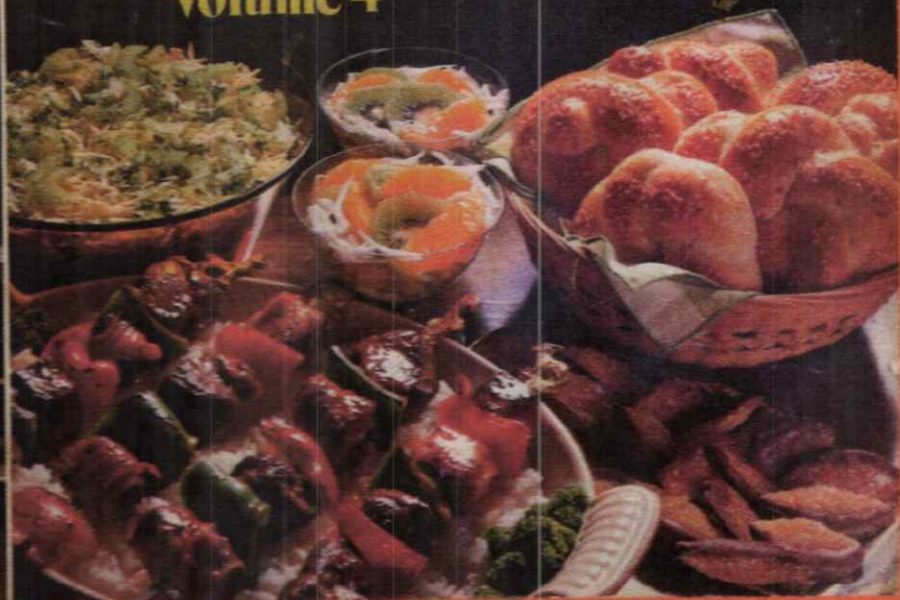




Alison Holst's **KITCHEN DIARY** Volume 4



The Holst diaries

Alison Holst taught us that food is an intrinsic part of history, writes Colleen Brown in the second part of her project to cull her cookbook collection.

In many ways, cooking legend Alison Holst was ahead of her time. She gently nudged us into having greater awareness of alternative ways of cooking. She opened our eyes to what was possible. The *Kitchen Diary* series introduced new ideas to us all to experiment with – vegetarian recipes using lentils with a cautionary postscript for our tastebuds: “Do not expect a mixture like this to taste of meat. It doesn’t!”

In her role working for the then NZ Meat Producers’ Board, Holst extolled the delights of ox hearts to her followers. One keen cook served an ox heart steak to her unknowing husband who declared

it was the “best steak he’d had for a long time”. That was a recipe too far for me. I stuck with her chicken that came out like a stuffed chook but was layered into a casserole. The family wolfed it down. Much safer.

The content was seasonal. In April she had us mincing our green tomatoes to create a fruit mincemeat. I tried that, it worked. We weren’t so keen on July’s pease pudding. From the sounds of it, neither were her family. In August, we experimented with lemon drinks, puddings, and massive beef casseroles. With the price of meat today, I’d be using far more of the lentils than the beef.

In October, we were persuaded to try rhubarb sago.

Foods commonplace today were introduced with brief explanations – “Hummus – a Middle Eastern dip” – and a rationale of its nutritional value and how to present it. People sent her recipes which she then adapted. Elsie’s Special Salt was contributed by an American who attended one of Holst’s Honolulu cooking demonstrations. She cautioned us not to use the salt on everything as “all the food will taste the same”.

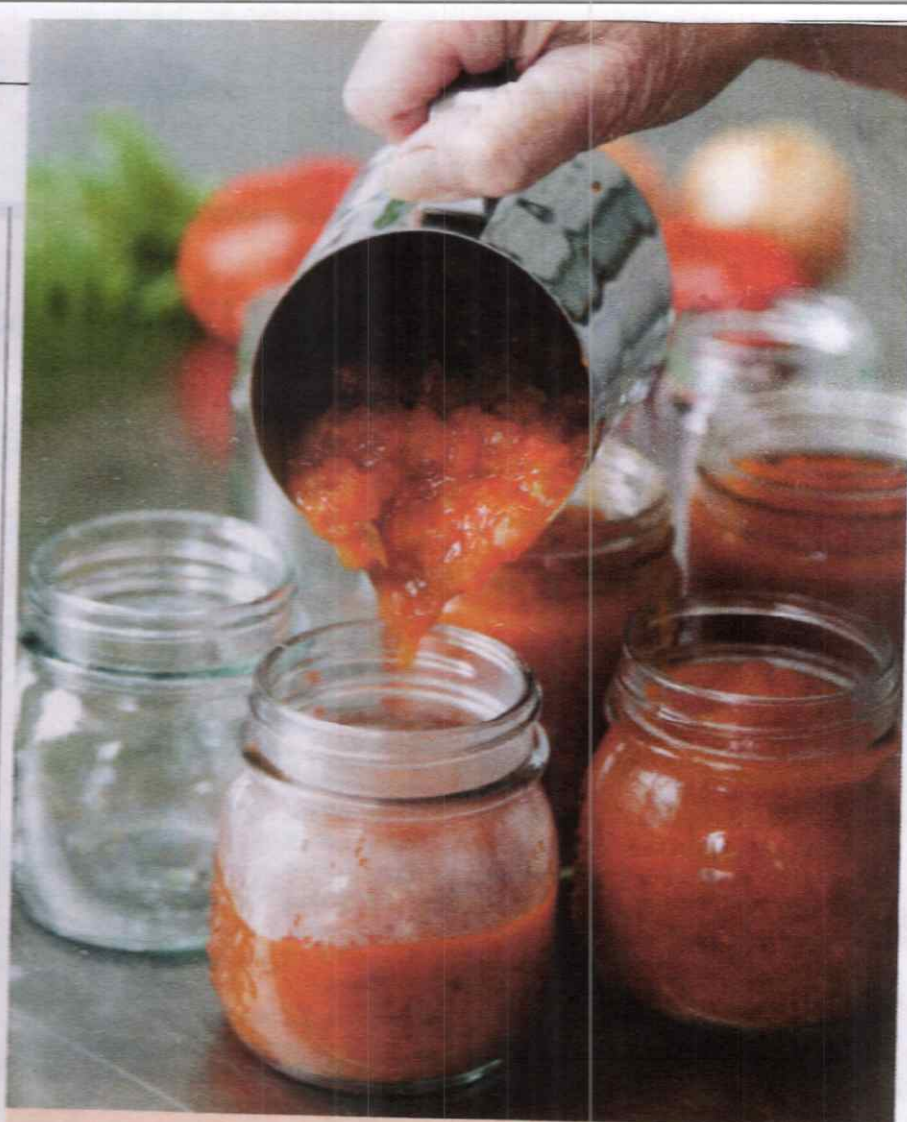
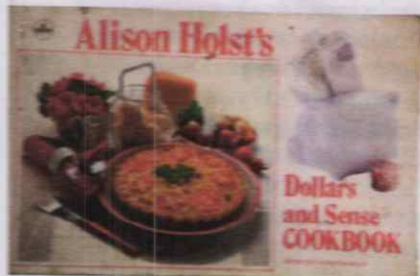
Year by year, we confidently expanded our cooking horizons. Under her tutelage, we absorbed an “I can do that” attitude.

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My Kitchen Diary collection is a measure of that time in my life, a busy time with four small children, reaching for a reliable recipe to get us through the crazy dinner hour. They are part of my history as well, a bit like my mother's cookbook with Doreen Elrick's Canadian slice, still made two generations later. They also enabled me to have a wonderful relationship with my mother-in-law, swapping the best bits we'd discovered in the latest edition.

The recipes were produced in simpler times. There's nothing too sophisticated or scary in any of the cookbooks, they're mainly basic recipes that a busy family could make with ordinary ingredients found in most pantries. They harked back to times when people shared excess produce, made food with a nod to the seasons and cooked from scratch.

Having been brought up on a large suburban section with a huge vegetable garden and a small orchard, I was used to seeing the fruits of my father's labours transported, often by me, from the garden to the table. I often reflect on how my father, a veteran who served more than four years in World War II, the latter part in Burma, would have found peace and solitude in his garden, well before anyone made podcasts or wrote blogs about the benefits of getting your hands deep in dirt. It was his spot, and providing for his family was important for him on many different levels. It's a tradition I carried on for our family. Seeing my tomatoes go into Holst's tomato relish recipes or my cucumbers diced up for one of her



MRS COXHEAD'S TOMATO RELISH

- 1kg ripe red tomatoes, skinned
- 3 large onions, minced or finely chopped
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup malt vinegar
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp dry mustard
- 1 tsp curry powder
- 1 tsp cornflour
- ¼ cup extra vinegar

Skin the tomatoes by pouring boiling water over them and leaving them to stand for about a minute, or until the skins will peel off easily. Then pour off the hot water.

Discard the skins and cube the tomatoes into a large saucepan or a medium-sized jam pan.

Peel and mince or chop the onions finely, and add to the tomatoes.

Add the sugar, vinegar and salt, using level standard metric cups and spoons, and bring to the boil, stirring constantly until the sugar dissolves.

Boil fairly briskly for about 15 minutes, then add the mustard, curry powder and cornflour, mixed to a paste with the extra vinegar.

Simmer gently for 5 minutes more then pour into jars, which have been thoroughly washed and heated in a low oven.

Seal immediately with metal lacquered lids (from bought jams or pickles) or with regular preserving seals, or bottle in jam jars and top with melted paraffin wax then clear tops when cold.

Variations: Reduce sugar to 1 cup, if desired.

Add to the tomato and onion mixture 1 green pepper, 1 red pepper and ¼ cup celery, all finely chopped.

Alison Holst's recipe notes said that as well as using this relish in rolls with cheese, she added it to browned cubes of beef for an "easy, well-flavoured casserole".

From Alison Holst's Kitchen Diary, Volume 8.



Ahead of her time: Alison Holst in 2014.

exceptional pickle recipes gave me intense satisfaction.

Every book is jam-packed with ideas and hints on how to sharpen a knife, carve a chook or glaze hogget. Holst shared with us a host of characters from her life with the back story to the recipes – Joe's Special (stir fry); Mrs Chaston's Birdseed Bar (for humans), Gayleen's Chicken. When you read about Mrs Coxhead's tomato relish and see that this recipe, still made today, has survived the various food fads since 1918, you understand the bigger picture of food being an intrinsic part of history. You also feel that Holst has somehow included you in a special club of people who loved to cook, who enjoyed good food and sharing it with others.

My daughters mostly rely on the internet and YouTube for their recipes. No clutter, no annoying crusty bits sealing pages together, no notes in childish writing, no price tags or season's greetings from family members. It's all a bit clinical for me. I love the smell, the touch, the connections, the memories.

I have been bold and brave. I have tossed out several of Holst's books. It has been like peeling off some of who I am at the same time. But sneakily, I have my special collection of pages from all my *Kitchen Diary* books in plastic sleeves because some things are too good to let go. ■

Next week, Colleen Brown turns her sights to her *Cordon Bleu* collection.

Mapping Marlborough

A new map divides the area into subregions based on wine style, challenging the status quo.

BY MICHAEL COOPER

Are Marlborough's sauvignon blancs almost identical, in terms of their aromas and flavours? No way, insist the members of Appellation Marlborough Wine, a body that includes about a third of the region's winegrowers. "Producers of very large volume, region-wide blends have engendered a widespread belief that all our sauvignon blanc wines taste the same. This is not the case."

As a result, it has produced a beautiful, detailed Wine Map of Marlborough. "Marlborough's hugely diverse soils, microclimates and ultimately, terroirs, mean producers can craft wildly different expressions of sauvignon blanc here," says Matt Thomson, of Blank Canvas Wines. "The vision is that wine enthusiasts will be able to use the map to pinpoint the subregional style they desire, whether that be the lemongrass-accented Blind River, passionfruit and blackcurrant-driven Dillons Point, or elderflower and white currant expression of Condors Bend. And there are many more."

Appellation Marlborough Wine was established in 2018 to protect the "integrity, authenticity and brand value" of the region's wines. The new map challenges the status quo. The national organisation, New Zealand Winegrowers, and the overall regional body, Wine Marlborough, depict Marlborough as having three major subregions – the Wairau Valley, the Southern Valleys and the Awatere Valley (or Awatere and South).

By contrast, the map divides Marlborough into three "macro subregions" (Wairau; Awatere and Blind River; and Southern Coast), seven "meso subregions" (for

Wine of the week

Clos Henri Otrira Single Vineyard Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2022 ★★★★★

This partly barrel-fermented wine was estate-grown in stony, glacial soils. Weighty, complex and richly flavoured, with a resounding finish, it is classy and full of personality. (13.5% alc/vol) \$36

instance, lower Wairau, inland Awatere), and 18 "micro subregions" (such as Rapaura, Dashwood). Some subregions have been marked on the map by location, without borders, in the expectation that future debates will define where those borders lie.

The most striking change is the decision to classify the Southern Valleys, on the south side of the Wairau Valley, within the Wairau macro subregion. Why the change? The five southern valleys (Waihopai, Ōmaka, Brancott, Benmorven, Taylor) are all tributaries of the Wairau Valley.

The map has no legal standing but is seen by Appellation Marlborough Wine as a first step in assembling evidence to eventually submit to the Intellectual Property Office of New Zealand, to create official GIs (geographical indications).

Rightly ambitious, these Marlborough producers have taken their lead from major European regions, which defined their land by geography and similarity of wine styles. The printed maps, in three different sizes (\$69-\$130), and a digital version (\$25), are on sale now (www.appellationmarlboroughwine.co.nz/store). ■