

WHEN DO REGIONAL DISHES GIVE RISE TO A REGIONAL CUISINE?

Some thoughts from Southern New Zealand

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Abstract

Confirming the status of certain dishes popularly accepted as 'regional' proves particularly difficult when hard evidence is sought from localised cookbooks. Attempts to track the recipes for such dishes back in time add a further dimension to the problem. Because regional cuisines are necessarily founded on regional dishes, their status becomes problematic in turn. This article considers the criteria by which certain dishes are deemed 'regional' (by regulation, professional judgment or popular association); and, by examining several dishes widely associated with New Zealand cuisine, shows how such labeling can conceal (or at least obscure) more culturally nuanced and complex histories. The examination of dishes through their proxies, recipes, shows that an evolutionary approach, combined with the concept of the culinary tradition, offers a clearer perspective on the phenomenon of localisation than the ahistorical concept of a regional cuisine.

Keywords

regional dishes, regional cuisine, cultural evolution, culinary tradition, Southland, New Zealand, *Euroterroirs*

Introduction

Regional cuisines began to attract attention in English-speaking countries after World War I. Americans acknowledged their own regional cooking styles in cookbooks such as Stieff's volume on Maryland cuisine (1932), or *The United States Regional Cookbook* (Berolzheimer, 1939). British cooks were more likely to recognise the cuisines of other nations, in cookbooks such as *French Cooking for Everywoman* (Marcellys, 1930) or Townley Searle's *Strange Newes from China* (1932). However they also celebrated dishes that were seen as representative of particular British counties, as in *County Recipes of Old England* (Edden, 1929). The cookbooks that portrayed national or regional cuisines, or regional dishes, were directed at readers who did not identify with those regions or nations, and to whom the recipes were different, even exotic. After World War II, the exploration of other people's cuisines accelerated, and was manifest in tourist experiences, and in the adoption and adaptation of 'foreign' dishes. Two phases have been recognised in New Zealand. The earlier, termed 'internationalisation', was represented by the appearance in the 1950s–1960s of dishes with exotic names, such as goulash, lasagna, stroganoff, or coq au vin, each bearing little resemblance to the dish in its homeland, or in the case of kai-si-ming, was a local invention masquerading as an exotic dish (Leach, 2010: 64). The second and later phase was linked to globalisation, and has been marked by a greater concern with 'authenticity' and a desire for more knowledge of other cuisines in their cultural context. Culinary tourism has emerged within this framework (Long, 2004), as has a proliferation of publications offering advice on 'authentic' regional dishes, and the regional cuisines to which they belong. As with the earliest books of this genre, these books are addressed to outsiders. When we examine the community cookbooks written by and for the people of the region – the insiders – serious questions arise as to the validity and usefulness of the concept of a regional dish, especially when those cookbooks appeared over an extended period of time. Because regional cuisines are founded on regional dishes, the validity of this concept is equally at issue.

Identifying regional dishes proves to be problematic as soon as their history and distribution is probed more closely. For a start it is important to distinguish between

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regional dishes and the regional foods that may be their key ingredients (Long, 2009: xi, 45). In New Zealand, there is a widespread impression that Southland, the country's southernmost region, has some distinctive dishes. Bluff oysters, for instance, are widely associated with Southland – yet this is not so much a regional dish as a regional foodstuff, as with the cheeses of King Island near Tasmania (Khamis, 2007). In view of the fact that Bluff oysters from Foveaux Strait (which separates the South Island from Stewart Island) are transported all over New Zealand, to be eaten on the shell with a squeeze of lemon or similar accompaniments, the dish itself is not so much regional as national. This would be true of many of New Zealand's regional foods. There is no reason why a regional dish has to be exclusive to the region, as long as it is recognised as having originated there and remains important there. Nonetheless, eating oysters on the shell with lemon is a cosmopolitan practice – and herein lies a definitional problem.

The paradox of regional cookbooks

In his textbook, *American Regional Cuisine* (2007), author and editor Michael Nenes identifies at least eleven regional cuisines within the United States. Nenes collected his regional recipes from members of The Art Institutes' Culinary Programs, professional chefs involved in education. In the Foreword, Martin Yan writes:

Some say the American national cuisine is a melting pot of ethnic cuisines; others describe it as a mixed salad with distinct ingredients. Regardless of which analogy you prefer, each American regional cuisine is a special treat, combining its unique local history and culture with distinct regional ingredients. It's not by chance that certain parts of the country maintain a particular taste or flavor in their dishes. Regional cuisines reflect the characteristics of the locale. (Nenes 2007: v)

The words "unique", "distinct", and "particular" are noteworthy here, especially in relation to the cuisine of regions such as California, one of the regions with its own section. The bibliography suggests that the regional dishes slotted into the eleven regions were not derived from any systematic survey of local cookbooks or restaurant menus, but were perceived to be regional by the contributing chefs of each

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area; in just the same way as one may casually link Bluff oysters with Southland. In this way, these stereotypic regional dishes are used to affirm identity (ours or the Others'). Anthropologist Sidney Mintz (1996: 112,114) believes that regional cuisines are the only 'real' cuisines – national cuisines don't exist in the same sense – but he wrote in 1996 that America's regional cuisines had been diluted and modified over the last half century and debilitated by commercialisation. It's possible then that the Culinary Programs' chefs are depicting regional cuisines that no longer exist (if they ever did), or have created their regional cuisines by assembling some historically localised dishes.

It is argued here that, when considered more closely and historically, dishes labeled as distinctively regional actually belong to more complex (even contentious) pathways. Like Bluff oysters, for example, swede soup is also considered a regional specialty of Southland, where swede turnips are grown extensively as a winter fodder crop. Its prevalence in New Zealand cookbooks only weakly supports a South Island provenance. The earliest such recipe was in the *Home Science Scholar's Note Book*, published in Christchurch about 1945 (my copy is dated from the pupil's receipt). Later printings of this book were used in Wellington schools in the early 1950s as well as in the South Island. Yet this distribution can hardly be described as 'regional'. The recipe also appears in the Roslyn Presbyterian Church's *Jubilee Cookery Book* published in Dunedin in 1951. Later examples are from a Dunedin-published scout group cookbook of the 1960s, and, in the North Island, from the Eastern Bay of Plenty Country Women's Institutes in 1973 or soon after. There are still later recipes from Dunedin in 1976 and 1982; Invercargill mid 1980s, early 1990s, and 2005; and Tapanui (Otago) from the 1990s. My first curried swede soup recipes are from the *Mataura Golf Club Cook Book* (Southland), and Dunedin's Abbotsford School's cookbook, both published in 1991. On the basis of this distribution in time and space, it cannot be proven that swede soup originated in Southland, only that it became increasingly visible there towards the end of the 20th century. My earliest Southland cookbooks from the World War I era do not include swede as either a soup highlight or as an ingredient in a mixed vegetable soup; oyster soup and tomato soup were far more popular. This overview of swede soup recipes thus points to the flux of

foodways as dishes move through space and time. In turn, attempts to fix particular foods to specific regions warrant some interrogation – and skepticism.

***Euroterroirs* – regional cuisine by regulation**

Yan's statement that "Regional cuisines reflect the characteristics of the locale" is similar to the concept of *Euroterroirs*. This has stimulated much of the interest in regional products and cookery in Europe since 1992, as well as debate into the notion of authenticity (Hosking, 2006). The concept posits that foods produced for many generations on local soils subject to the same local climate supposedly acquire a character that is distinctive of that location. These foods take on *le goût du terroir* – the taste of the soil in its broadest sense, or local taste (Mason, 2004: 12; Trubek, 2005: 268). *Euroterroirs* are associated with many famous wines, cheeses, and sausages. Throughout the 20th century, though, industrialisation of the food supply and the globalisation of production and distribution posed an increasing threat to such named products. As long ago as 1925, French producers introduced the *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* cheese specification for Roquefort cheese (Bromberger, 2006: 92), and the same regulatory system is the reason why *Méthode Champenoise* sparkling wine is produced in New Zealand, and not champagne. In 1992 the European Economic Community (now European Union) extended the process of protective registration of regional products to the whole Community, creating the two level classification of PDO (Protected Designation/Denominations of Origin), and PGI (Protected Geographical Indications of Supply); also recognised were TSG (Traditional Specialty Guaranteed) and CSC (Certificates of Special Character). The criteria were negotiated between members in order to cover as many products as were considered threatened by imitation, and deserving of a premium price (Rubel, 2006: 385). Even the processes were included, as producers sought intellectual property rights over knowledge that had once belonged to whole communities.

As several commentators have observed, the existence of these regulations, together with a powerful economic motive to gain protection for a wide range of foods and techniques, has resulted in the invention of tradition, and spurious claims for authenticity (Mason, 2004: 13; Bromberger, 2006: 96). As well, the process of

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registration has encouraged the localisation of particular foods and dishes. In turn this helps to give a regional cuisine a reality and boundaries for which there is little independent evidence. Authenticity becomes linked to place and present practice is tied to the past (Rubel, 2006: 385). Much of the evidence, however, does not stand up to historical scrutiny.

The registration process in France benefited from the compilation of numerous volumes cataloguing regional products along with their claims to be *terroir*-based and showing continuity with traditional items. According to Laura Mason, in relation to the French record: “every place seems to have some food claimed as an historic specialty and if there is no tradition, they invent one” (Mason, 2004: 13). As compiler, with Catherine Brown, of the British inventory, she could not clearly identify the boundaries of many products, yet was required to provide a regional tag. The centralisation of England, beginning in the 12th century and accelerating as railways, canals and improved roads were formed in the 19th century, encouraged emigration from rural to urban centres, and eroded regional differences (Mason, 2004: 14). In particular the perception of the link between the soil and the food it produces was diminished. But the criteria under which she worked encouraged a locality name to be attached to the food, as in Banbury Cakes. The criteria also required a demonstrable tradition, extending back three generations (at 25 years per generation) or longer. A specific body of knowledge was necessary in the production process. Significantly the product had to be for sale, and not just in restaurants.

This last requirement for registration suggests that protectionism drives the *Euroterroir* process. Despite warm sentiments about conservation, it was not designed to preserve the traditional knowledge of European food producers or their artisan foods at all. If it were, it would have included the dishes made in home kitchens, the wines and ales brewed in back sheds, and the heirloom fruits and vegetables grown in home gardens. Equally revealing was the exclusion from registration of national dishes. In the case of England’s iconic dish, roast beef, the argument seems to have been that there is no point protecting a product with multiple producers: since roast beef cannot be protected, there is no point including it. Mason’s cynicism about the criteria shows through in her introduction, when she

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writes: “the frame of regionalism itself is suspicious... Is a region a town, a valley, a county, or some bigger unit?” (Mason, 2004: 14). Despite obvious inconsistencies, like grouping together in a region named the South-West the people of Gloucestershire and those of Cornwall, which she acknowledged made little sense historically, the resulting work recognises nine regions in England, and adds Scotland and Wales. She warned readers that “the imperative to allocate a regional pigeon-hole was stronger than the British evidence sometimes merited” (Mason, 2004: 14). She felt that in the past regional differences were much stronger than today, as Mintz argued for America, but that it was still a worthwhile exercise to collect the data on traditional British dishes and foods. Thirteen years of wartime and post-war rationing had destroyed some food traditions, and accustomed consumers to cheap substitutes. The criterion that allowed the listing of recently extinct products meant that at least knowledge still held by older members of the communities could be recorded.

The futility of applying the *Euroterroir* process to New Zealand

Were the regional foods or regional cuisines of New Zealand recorded for such a protectionist enterprise, locality names for many products would have to be included – such as Kerikeri goldfruit (formerly known as New Zealand grapefruit), or Roxburgh apricot jam, or Clevedon oysters, or Palmerston mutton pies. In truth though, several areas produce or have in the past produced such foods, and this can be historically demonstrated. We would have to be extremely creative in finding proof of historical continuity over three or more generations. And the foods of the Maori, despite their much greater continuity of use, would be liable for exclusion as for a long period they were not sold commercially. Such an exercise would exaggerate New Zealand’s regional divisions, eliminate its national dishes like pavlovas and Anzac biscuits, as well as its national fruits such as goldfruit and certain animal breeds, and render the contributions of New Zealand’s home kitchens invisible.

It would be difficult to identify one New Zealand item that would satisfy the criteria applied in Europe. Toasted cheese rolls are worth considering, though these would

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have to be renamed Southern Toasted Cheese Rolls (with pre-cooked filling). There is oral evidence that they were sold commercially in Dunedin by 1950, and they appear in the Roslyn (Dunedin) Presbyterian Church's *Jubilee Cookery Book* in 1951. If it is assumed that New Zealanders used to breed at a young age, three generations can be squeezed in up to the present. They are still sold commercially, though in many cases the recipe for the filling is a pale imitation, even degeneration, of the original—but this fact would have to be concealed from authorities. The concept of the Toasted Cheese Roll has continuity both in time and space; it reached the North Island much later than it appeared in the South, and spread only slowly, reaching Taranaki by the 1980s (Leach and Inglis, 2008). Nonetheless, one obstacle to recognising the Toasted Cheese Roll as a regional dish has been revealed, and that is that the modern product does not always have a pre-cooked filling. A second difficulty is that there never was a single authentic original filling. Detailed examination of the recipes showed that several variants have been used, and that even within these there was some flexibility in proportions. It is possible to nominate the filling that imitated Australian Rex cheese as the authentic recipe since it was the earliest pre-cooked filling, but there is also the variant in which chopped onion is infused in milk. If the recipe most commonly made were selected, it would have to be the one with the convenience food filling (a bag of grated cheese, a tin of unsweetened condensed milk and a packet of Maggi onion soup), but this filling did not emerge until 1972. Moreover, there were two versions of that recipe, one with twice as much cheese as the other.

The whole process of registering a regional food or recipe for protection makes a mockery of the evolutionary nature of culinary traditions. Extant recipes travel constantly and with respect to their region of use, may be recorded from a greater or lesser territory in a decade from now. Their boundaries are affected both by natural barriers and social constraints. The means by which they are transmitted from one cook to another also affect their distribution, as cooks who submitted prize-winning recipes to the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* could testify (Inglis, 2007). Publication there could convert a regional dish into a national favourite. As the recipes are passed on, they are modified to suit current conditions such as the availability of ingredients and the equipment in the kitchen. The regional boundary of a food

product, dish, or recipe is both shifting and permeable. If regional cuisines are to be defined as assemblages of regional dishes, we cannot expect their boundaries to be any better defined than those of their components.

Studies of recipe distribution in space and time

What is to be gained by locking dishes that have complex evolutionary histories (as I argue all do) into a single time frame and treating them as static components of some bounded regional cuisine? Is there a better approach to the interpretation of distribution in time and space? I will sketch out an answer by reference to two more New Zealand dishes. The dishes themselves are quite widespread, and in the case of one, is a national icon. But as with the Toasted Cheese Roll, there is variation that encourages us to look at micro-evolutionary processes in time and space.

The first example is a variant of the interchangeably named Boston Bun/Sally Lunn, which contains cooked mashed potato. The original Sally Lunn was a yeasted product with connections to Bath. Laura Mason provides an excellent summary of its contested early history in her regional inventory (2004: 239–240). In New Zealand I have found Sally Lunn recipes where the yeast is replaced by chemical raising agents from the 19th century. One recipe calling for baking powder was published in *Brett's Colonists' Guide* (Leys, 1883: 613). Another recipe using cream of tartar and baking soda was published in Wellington's *Evening Post* on 13 September, 1890. I suspect that both originated in the United States. Such quick variants of the Sally Lunn occur in a range of authored and compiled American cookbooks from 1870. They are not evident in my British cookbooks. In New Zealand the potato variant appears in the early 1970s.

The origin of the name Boston Bun is uncertain. One commercial baker's web site says it came from the United States, and can be traced to the 18th century. The searchable web site, 'Feeding America', provides not a single recipe to support this story. In Australia, Boston Bun is well-known to linguists as a regional name. Writing in 1985, Pauline Bryant classified the case as one of regional synonymy in several areas:

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The round yeast cake about 20 cm in diameter, with usually pink icing and desiccated coconut on top, has regional names plus synonyms in three areas of Australia, and no name that covers a majority area that could be termed 'elsewhere'. In South Australia and Broken Hill, the regional name is yeast bun, in Victoria it is Boston bun, and in NSW teacake. In each of these areas synonyms are used, including tea bun, fruit bun and bun loaf. (Bryant, 1985: 61-62)

From a search for recipes with these names it is apparent that most teacakes in New South Wales have a sugar glaze and are sprinkled with cinnamon. I suspect that we are dealing with more than one concept. The Australian National Dictionary Centre's online article on Australian food terms, published in 2004, says that:

Another interesting term is Boston bun, although there is some uncertainty about what exactly it is. A basic feature is that the large bun is iced and sprinkled with coconut... Some Australian recipes call for sultanas and currants to be added to the dough, while others call for mashed potato. Our earliest printed record for this term is 1992. (ANDC, 2004: np)

Judging from comments attached to some of the Australian recipes for Boston Buns on the web, it has been made in Australia for some decades. One recipe from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in Hobart is identical to one of the most popular Boston Bun recipes in New Zealand. As yet it is not known which way the recipe travelled.

Until 1970 the Boston Bun was relatively uncommon in New Zealand recipe books, and the recipes seem to represent several lines of transmission. As early as 1905, the basic ingredients (in the correct proportions) appear as Boston Scones in Dunedin (Unattributed, 1905: 153). By 1918 a closely related recipe enriched with an egg is listed as Boston Buns in Wellington's *Tried Recipes* (Nathan, 1918: 153). During the 1960s another recipe circulated which included butter and vinegar. None of these recipes included dried fruit or potato. Then in the 1970 Newlands Home and School Association (Wellington) *Recipe Book* we encounter a very different Boston Bun recipe, to which one cup of mashed potato is added; the sugar is increased to one

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cup, and instead of vinegar a cup of currants is stirred in (Baine and Stevens, 1970). With the fruit changed to sultanas, the same recipe was contributed to the *League of Mothers Cook Book*, issued nationally sometime after 1974.

By this time, the same recipe was also circulating in the lower North Island as a Sally Lunn. It is recorded in Martinborough in 1972, Wanganui in 1978, and Castlecliff, Hawera and Manawatu during the 1970s. It appears in the South Island in Dunedin in the late 1970s, at Waimate and Cromwell in 1980, East Taieri in 1981, and Feilding in the early 1990s. In Dunedin cookbooks it reappeared during the 1980s and in 1992. Meanwhile a mutation had occurred in the Boston Bun version. Contrary to most contemporary baking trends, the amount of sugar was reduced from one cup to three-quarters of a cup. This variant circulated rapidly in Canterbury, Otago and Southland from 1980 and in two cases appeared under the name Sally Lunn (Larkins, 1985: 48; Brown and Fastier, 1980: 40).

Embedded within this distribution in time and space are two regional clusters: the Sally Lunn recipe that spread through the lower North Island in the 1970s; and the Boston Bun recipe (with 3/4 cup sugar) that circulated in Canterbury, Otago and Southland particularly in the 1980s. New Zealand linguists are as interested in this distribution as food historians. In a recent book on *New Zealand English*, we read that “As you travel round the country, you will find that a large bun with pink or white icing is called a *Sally Lunn* in the north and a *Boston bun* farther south” (Hay et al., 2008: 97). But my research reveals that these only became contemporaneous distributions in the 1980s, and that the recipe for the Boston Bun was in most cases consistently different from that of the earlier Sally Lunn.

This case is not unique. When I was analysing the many standardised types of pavlovas, I found examples of variants that to my knowledge had never appeared in any national cookbook or magazine, but had spread from home cook to home cook, with their travels marked from time to time by submission to a fund-raising community cookbook. One such type was the ‘three plus three’ pavlova (my shorthand for a three-egg-white pavlova to which three tablespoons of water are

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added). In its original form it contained one and a half cups of sugar and three teaspoons of cornflour, and first appeared in Dunedin in 1951. Three other variants of the recipe were in circulation from the 1960s, and two became nationally adopted with the assistance of the widely read commercial cookbooks of Mrs. S.D. Sherriff, Des Britten, Tui Flower and Edmonds. But this first version has only been recorded from South Island fund-raising cookbooks. Another version, with just one teaspoon of cornflour, was restricted to Otago and Southland (Leach, 2008: 101, 103).

It is common practice for travelers to copy appealing recipes from their hosts, and this can lead to the seeding of a regional variant in another part of the country. However the confinement of recipes or their variants to regions, as in the examples I have discussed, shows that it is easier for a recipe to spread from person to person within contiguous regions such as Otago and Southland than between non-contiguous areas. Rapid national distribution requires the assistance of national media or national publications. What this analysis has revealed is a much more dynamic situation than emerged from the *Euroterroirs* exercise. Using recipes as proxies for dishes, my case studies catch dishes in the course of continuous evolution, not frozen in time for as long as the inventories are extant. Domestic cooks play just as significant a role in a culinary tradition or cuisine as commercial food producers and manufacturers. Furthermore, a dish can achieve regional popularity and significance in as little as a single decade, not the three generations stipulated by the European regulations.

The global and the local

Returning to my original question, 'when do regional dishes give rise to a regional cuisine?' my answer must be 'only when social and/or environmental boundaries leave a population relatively isolated and unwilling or unable to draw on new ideas from outside'. Such isolation might be based on ethnicity or religious proscriptions, or breakdown in transportation systems. It might follow colonisation of a remote island, or immigration to a large country from many separate ports of origin, as with the United States. But there can be no expectation that such regional cuisines can persist indefinitely. Their practitioners must have a strong motive to resist external

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influences. The European Union offered brand-protection and higher returns to producers as that motive, but left out the other essential element of a regional cuisine, the consumers. History will judge whether the regional cuisines of Europe will be strengthened, or just temporarily shored up by their regulations.

Commentators who portray globalisation as the most significant threat to regional cuisines forget that food ideas move with every migrant, and that the history and prehistory of the world is as full of migrations as it is of wars; indeed migrations often lead to wars that in turn usually trigger further migrations. Yet despite these mass movements, and the reverberating information highway of the past few decades, the cooking that many people perform in private kitchens is by no means identical, nor can it be matched elsewhere. Only some of the recipes I choose to follow are shared with my family and friends. If I travel to Auckland or Canberra, Washington or London I will increasingly encounter dishes I have never tried before. Yet all of these cities belong to an apparently globalised English-speaking First World. It is a mistake to predict from the movement of single recipes or products across national boundaries that a global cuisine will eventuate. Extrapolation in the opposite direction from regional produce and regional dishes to regional cuisines is equally unwarranted.

The tendency to regional distinctiveness is counterbalanced by the homogenising effects of communication between regions. Social anthropologists have increasingly recognised that the global and the local are interconnected (Appadurai, 1999: 231; Cwiertka and Walraven, 2001; Wu and Cheung, 2002). They have observed, for example, that the global player McDonalds is required to adapt to local tastes wherever it opens a franchise, and that certain regional dishes of China or Pakistan and India have become national favorites in the United States and Britain. Culinary globalisation could only ever become a *fait accompli* if humans were force-fed and could no longer select their food – but even enslaved and imprisoned humans strive to exercise some choice in the ways they mix their rations (Cate, 2008).

Conclusion

Cultural evolution, like biological evolution, constantly throws up variation, and without it there can be no evolution, for there is nothing on which selection can act differentially. That variation is produced whenever there is replication or reproduction. So we can expect that in a country like New Zealand where only a small percentage of the cooks resident in Southland interact on an annual basis with those from Northland, there will continue to be a tendency for new variants of dishes emerging from home kitchens to be distinctive and to spread within Southland or Northland to the point where visitors from outside these regions will start to see them as regional dishes. Counteracting this trend is the influence of national media, including the internet, magazines, newspapers and nationally-distributed books. Dishes have to be particularly good for their recipes to survive long enough to become recognised as regional, and if they are highly popular in one region, there is a good chance that they will find their way into national publications. Each dish or variant has a unique history. They emerge within their region of origin at different times, last different periods of time, spread to a different extent before being replaced or significantly modified.

Recipes are like the words or accents that linguists plot on their distribution maps. The data is only a snapshot of an ever-changing situation. Southland and South Otago still display a regional difference in accent, attributed to the large number of Scottish settlers in the 19th century, but the rolled 'r' as in 'Gore' is retreating, along with the short 'a' as in 'dance' (Bayard, 2000; Hay et al., 2008: 98). One might assume that there are more recipes of Scottish origin in early recipe books from Southland and Otago than from contemporary books produced in Wellington or Hawkes Bay; numerically, though, these supposed markers of Scottish-ness are swamped by recipes shared with generic British cookbooks. It's doubtful that there are enough to set up Otago and Southland as the home of a regional cuisine. Forcing recipe data into a framework of regional cuisines sets them in concrete. It is argued here that the more rewarding and less distorting approach is to use the data to trace the evolution of culinary traditions.

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Such an evolutionary approach should not be confused with the socio-biological treatment of human cultural behaviour that sees culture as a product of selection in the same way as the human genotype. Instead it simply draws analogies to evolutionary processes such as variation, adaptation, and differential selection. What I am advocating is what Arjun Appadurai (1999) had in mind when he argued for a shift away from 'trait' geographies to 'process' geographies. The old style culture areas were defined by relatively unchanging collections of traits, with stable boundaries. These apparent stabilities, he suggests, are artifacts of disciplinary history and Cold War legislation (ibid: 232). For Appadurai, today's globalised world is marked by objects in motion: "ideas and ideologies, people and goods, images and messages, technologies and techniques." The paths along which they flow are "not coeval, convergent, isomorphic or spatially consistent" but "have different speeds, different axes, different points of origin and termination" (ibid: 230-231). My argument is that cooking knowledge, particularly in its codified form, the recipe, flows just as variably. From time to time regional clusters of dishes may become obvious, but setting them in concrete by legislation or for educational purposes denies their and our need to adapt.

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