

With the coming of the white man a change began to take place in Maori diet. Quite early in the story of settlement the Maori obtained and cultivated the potato, pumpkin and Indian corn. He learned to steep corn in running water until it was partly decomposed. From this he made a kind of porridge which many Maoris today still like. It is pleasant to taste but the nose rather than the stomach finds it a trifle on the exotic side. It's a case of one man's meat....

In general terms the Maori of old liked his food a little more on the oily side than those with a palate cultivated in the English tradition. In fact the southern Italian taste in many things, including oily food, is not unlike that of the Maori. I have eaten sea eggs on the fishermen's beach at Bari, in Italy, washed down with rough red wine, and have had at Taranto octopus simmered in milk. The only other people who have offered me such food have been Maoris. It's a matter of taste, tradition and social patterns.

Like many Mediterranean peoples and like some Asian races such as the Japanese, the Maori also liked fish-flavoured food, often fish with too strong a tang to it for the average New Zealander. Your New Zealanders will eat shark if no one tells him what it is. Your true Maori likes shark for itself, and if it is unmistakably so he likes it better.

Thus the Maori of old and many today liked to put a little shark or eel — well seasoned by the passage of time if possible — in the hangi so that the flavour would be taken up by the potatoes and kumaras.

But preferences change and perhaps New Zealand tastes may change too in these matters. It doesn't seem long ago when I heard people say that they couldn't understand how anyone could eat so repulsive looking a shellfish as the paua. But now it is highly regarded and may even now be exported.

Maori Recipes

Crayfish a la Pa

If you can get them, boil several dozen freshwater crayfish. (You'll have to catch them, because they're not sold in shops.) Or take a large sea crayfish and cut the meat into pieces. Cream enough potatoes to make a goodly mound, mixing in with them a small minced onion. Pile the potato on a large dish, quickly terracing it after the manner of a Maori pa for fortification.

Arrange the crayfish on the terraces in the manner of defenders — or the pieces of crayfish in the likely event of the little fellows proving too elusive. Mass round the base sliced lettuce or whole leaves if you prefer your salad unmassacred. This is the forest surrounding the pa, and in its place, as attackers, the rest of the crayfish. As-

sume you are a third force or a fifth column and demolish with knife and fork friend, foe and fort.

Pork and Puha

Take a knife and vanish in the lupins. You are looking for puha, which is also called sow thistle or rauriki. You will find it growing in the shade in long grass, usually in damp, dank places and often in association with old tin cans, beer bottles and abandoned buckets. Faint not nor fear, you're going to boil it, anyway.

Alternatively, gather watercress from a fresh flowing stream and boil the blazes out of it in close association with pork bones chosen for the amount of meat your butcher has been persuaded to leave on them. Or you could buy one or two pork strips; what in the United States would be called sow belly. I suggest that you then throw discretion to the wind and manners out the door and, holding each bone in turn between thumb and forefinger, nibble the meat off. A certain restrained amount of noise is permissible. The vegetable may be eaten with a fork. Seriously, the liquid makes the most delicious soup, especially if kept overnight and reheated after the fat has been skimmed.

A matter of infinite regret is that my Maori ancestors never invested a drink of a cheering nature. However, New Zealand wine comes from the same good soil and the grapes are brought to bursting point by the same good sun. Try a dry white with the crayfish and muttonbird, a dry red with the pork and puha. Try them both with the hangi meal, before, during and after.

And if you decide not to try any of the foods suggested, have the wine, anyway. And may Te Atupakunui, who is a newly invented ancient Maori god of good food and good fellowship, look kindly upon your endeavours.

Pua

Shake as much pollen (yellow) from the *raupo* heads as is required and to every pound of pollen use ½ cup of cold water to mix. Put into a greased bowl and steam for about 2 hours. (The Maori used to wrap the *raupo* leaves around the mixture and steam in the hangi.) This tastes just like ordinary bread.

Pukeko Stew

Skin the bird. When cutting off the legs, make sure the sinews are removed. If they are left, watch carefully when eating as they are like sharp fish bones. Cut in joints, roll in flour and brown in hot fat. Brown also several sliced onions. Drain, barely cover with water, season well and simmer until tender. Thicken the gravy with flour mixed to a paste with water.

Nga tuhituhi

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir,

In the April/May issue of *Tu Tangata*, there was an article of mine entitled 'He waiata tangi mo Maihi Paraone Kawiti'. The words of this waiata tangi were taken from an untranslated collection of waiata which was published in 1898, ten years after the song had been composed, by an unknown poet, to mourn the death of Maihi Kawiti. In my article I supplied a translation and attempted an interpretation.

In the June/July issue, two members of Ngati Hine, the iwi of Maihi Kawiti, wrote saying that my interpretation is incorrect on a number of points. I wish to discuss the matters they raised.

My translation itself has not been criticised. What is at issue is the identification of the place-names mentioned in the waiata, and the correctness of the historical information that was given. There is also the criticism, made by Kene Hine Te Uira Martin, that I did not consult Maihi Kawiti's descendants before writing my article.

I should have much preferred to do so. The descendants of such a person obviously have much information about their tupuna which is inaccessible to others, and when it can be arranged, such consultation is clearly very desirable in the interests of accuracy, as well as being a courtesy to the persons concerned. Unfortunately it is not always possible in practice, because of difficulty in tracing the people concerned and for other reasons. In my case, I live in Christchurch, at the other end of the country, and my domestic responsibilities make travel difficult. I am sorry that Ngati Hine are upset by my lack of consultation in this case. I should like them to know that it does not imply any lack of respect on my part.

I am also sorry to have made a mistake in my identification of Mount Puketutu. Kene Hine Te Uira Martin explains that the mountain referred to in this first line of the song is not the Puketutu where Maihi's people fought, but the high hill of this name at Waiomio.

Kene Hine Te Uira Martin also explains that Motau is a short form of Motatau, the name of a mountain