

Pavlova – Australian or New Zealand?

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 Wednesday, 07 November 2007
 Last Updated Saturday, 16 February 2008

{mosbanner:id=9}Traditional Pavlova, as we now know it today, is a soft centred meringue dessert, with the essential ingredients of meringue (made of beaten egg whites, sugar, cornflour and vinegar), whipped cream and fruit. It is a dessert that has evolved jointly from both New Zealand and Australian influences. Click here for the Pavlova Recipe. The origin of pavlova for many years has caused great debate between Australia and New Zealand. When the Russian ballet dancer Anna Pavlova visited Australia and New Zealand in 1926 and then Australia again in 1929 chefs in both countries created desserts or cakes in her honour. She was famous for her solo dance The Dying Swan in Swan Lake, and the pavlova dessert was inspired by the shape and colour of its namesake's tutu. In 1982, Pavlova's biographer Keith Mooney stated in *Anna Pavlova, Her Life and Art* that a chef at a hotel in Wellington in New Zealand created pavlova when Anna visited in 1926. The chef, inspired by her tutu draped in green silk cabbage roses, used the meringue case as the basis for the tutu, whipped cream to suggest the frothy netting of the skirt, and kiwi fruit as the green cabbage roses. There appears to be no evidence that they are the same ingredients or method that Australian Bert Sache used when he baked a cake at the Esplanade Hotel in Perth on 3 October 1935, which would lead Australian's to claim the dessert as their own. When Bert Sache was interviewed in 1973 for a magazine, he explained that he had wanted to improve Meringue Cake. A recipe for Meringue cake appeared in 1935, *Women's Mirror Magazine* on April 2. It was submitted by New Zealand woman, and possibly the recipe Bert Sache adapted. It contained vinegar, but no cornflour and was of two parts filled with whipped cream. Bert Sache's recipe included cornflour, an ingredient now used in traditional pavlova. In 2004 Professor Helen Leach, Food Historian, University of Otago was interviewed by Gerge Negus, on ABC Television in Australia. This interview put much doubt on Australia's claim the dessert was invented by them. She pointed out the discovery of recipe books in New Zealand as early 1929 containing recipes for pavlova, and stated, "Now, it's the correct name and it's also the correct ingredients and the correct method. This year, I found an even earlier recipe for a pavlova. It's 1929, and it's in a New Zealand rural magazine. So as you can imagine, I thought, "Well, there's clearly something wrong with the Australian claim." Food historians believe the European cooks of the Renaissance used to whisk egg-whites in several dishes, but it was not until the 18th Century that they perfected meringue. Meringue recipes date back to 1782. Neither New Zealand cooks or Bert Sache could have their separate dishes honouring Pavlova without first having the recipe for basic meringue. By looking at the time line on the next page, and comparing it to what are the traditional ingredients used for making the sweet today, it appears that both countries contributed to the final recipe of what is termed traditional pavlova. Pavlova Time Line 1926 - Home Cookery for New Zealand by E Futter contained a recipe for "Meringue with Fruit Filling." The name Pavlova is not used, but the recipe is similar. 1926 - Anna Pavlova tours Australia and New Zealand. 1927 - Terrace Tested Recipes, collected by woman from the Terrace Congregational Church, the second edition published in Wellington, there was a recipe submitted by a Mrs. McRae for Meringue Cake. This recipe contains whipped egg-whites, sugar and cornflour (the pavlova ingredients less vinegar). 1927 - Davis Dainty Dishes (sixth edition) by Davis Gelatine in New Zealand contains a recipe called Pavlova containing gelatine.

1929 - Anna Pavlova tours Australia and stays at Esplanade Hotel in Perth. 1929 - Mrs. McKay's Practical Home Cookery, Chats and Recipes calls for baking 3 dozen little Pavlova Cakes. 1929 - Dairy Exporter Annual in New Zealand - contains meringue ingredients and corn flour. 1933 - 'Rangiora Mothers' Union Cookery Book in New Zealand - contains recipe for Pavlova cake. 1935 - Women's Mirror Magazine on April 2, 1935 in Australia. A recipe for Meringue Cake is submitted by a New Zealand woman. It contained vinegar, but no cornflour and was partly filled with whipped cream. 1935 - Chef Bert Sache bakes a cake at the Esplanade Hotel in Perth on 3 October. 1935. Someone remarks either the licensee, the manager, or chef Sachse remarked, "It is as light as Pavlova." It is then named Pavlova. 1939 - Edmonds Sure to Rise Cookery Book included the basic meringue ingredients, vinegar but no corn flour. 1940 - Westacott Lowenstein 275 Choice Recipes - contains a recipe very similar to today's pavlova including whipped cream and passion fruit on top. 1973 - When Bert Sache is interviewed for a magazine, he explains that he had wanted to improve Meringue Cake. 1984 - Anna Pavlova. Her life and Art by Keith Money claims that a chef at a hotel in Wellington in New Zealand created the dish when Anna visited in 1926. 2004 - Professor Helen Leach, Food Historian, University of Otago is interviewed by George Negus.

Traditional Pavlova as we know it today is prepared as a large, circular sweet containing the following ingredients; beaten egg whites, sugar, cornflour and vinegar, whipped cream and fruit.

Read more about Australian food and the recipes that we have grown into as a nation. Australian Flavour - The Story of Australian Cuisine

Link to Photographers

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