

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

Week 5 ingredients notes

Curry of chickens, à l'Indienne

Curry became popular in Britain in the mid-18th century, with the first printed recipes appearing from the 1740s. The word itself is probably an Anglicisation of the Tamil 'kari', but curry as it evolved in Britain and, eventually, Europe, had very little to do with the foods actually eaten on the Indian sub-continent.

19th century curries were based on returning nabobs (British people coming home from India) with their memories of Indian food, and was frequently influenced by, if not cooked by, the Indian cooks they brought back with them. The first curry house opened in London, in 1810, specifically aimed at this market. Curry quickly became an established part of the British culinary repertoire, especially for middle class leftover dishes.

Queen Victoria had 'curry de poulet' in 1847, and was a regular curry eater. In the 1880s she employed a group of Indian servants to act as her personal attendants. They had their own cook, and on one occasion in 1887 she sampled a curry made by him, pronouncing it, 'excellent'.

Francatelli, who wrote the following recipe, was Queen Victoria's chief cook in the 1840s, and one of the best known chefs of his day.

Peach ice water

Ice cream originated in Italy, and reached the UK by the early 17th century. The first ice house in Britain was a royal one, which opened in Greenwich in 1619. Italians continued to be connected to the trade, and many street sellers of ices in Britain were Italian. Manchester and London had large Italian communities – in London the area around Kings Cross was known as 'Little Italy'.

Ice, until the late 19th century most was obtained from frozen lakes and rivers, and stored in ice houses. However, ice was commercially 'harvested' in New England and Norway, and by the end of the 19th century was imported to the UK and kept in commercial ice houses.

Noyeau, from France, is a bitter-almond-based drink.

Carmine, the red food colouring shows the range of shortcuts available to the cook by the end of the 19th century. With artificial colourings and flavourings, and cheap tin moulds available to all, the late Victorian era has become known as one of kitsch food, transformed beyond all recognition. It's great fun, though often alarming. And the royal table did not embrace such middle class fads.

Peaches, while Queen Victoria would have had fresh ones, the middle classes may well have been buying tinned imports from California by the end of the 19th century.