

Food, nutrition and the Afrikaans housewife in *Die Huisvrou*, 1922-1945

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Abstract

Within *Die Huisvrou*, a South African magazine that claims to be one of the first periodicals for Afrikaans women, lie a myriad of curious recipes, nutritional tips and expectations about the relationship between women and food. An examination of the magazine provides evidence of the significant role that food was expected to play in the lives of housewives. These recipes and articles provide a glimpse into what was considered “nutritious” in the period between 1922 and 1945 and the part that food-related activities were supposed to have in women’s everyday lives. The contents of *Die Huisvrou* reveal that women were believed to determine the health of their family with their cooking. They were expected to use food to ensure the health of the family and, by extension, “the nation”.

Key words: Women; nutrition; cooking; domesticity; Afrikaans housewives; magazines.

Opsomming

In die bladsye van *Die Huisvrou*, ’n Suid-Afrikaanse tydskrif wat een van die eerste tydskrifte vir Afrikaanse vroue was, lê daar vreemde resepte, voedingswenke en verwagtinge oor die verhouding tussen vroue en kos. ’n Ondersoek van die tydskrif bewys dat daar ’n verwagting was dat kos ’n baie belangrike rol moes speel in die lewens van huisvrouens. Hierdie resepte en artikels gee ’n blik op wat tussen 1922 en 1945 as “voedsaame” kos beskou was, asook die deel wat voedselverwante aktiwiteite in vroue se alledaagse lewens sou hê. Die inhoud van *Die Huisvrou* onthul die idee dat vroue die gesondheid van hul gesin met hul kookkuns kon bepaal. Dit was van vrouens verwag om voedsel te gebruik om die gesondheid van hul gesin, en verder, “die nasie”, te verseker. Die tydskrif gee ook inligting oor hoe vroue dié ideaal kon bereik.

Stelwoorde: Vroue; voeding; kookkuns; huishouding; Afrikaanse huisvrouens; tydskrifte.

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Introduction

'n Fris en gesonde volk is nodig om ons volksideale te verwesenlik. Die spierkrag van 'n volk hang in groot deel af van die kookkuns wat die moeders besit ...¹ [A strong/robust and healthy nation is necessary to achieve the ideals held dear by our people and our nation. The muscle power of a nation depends largely upon the cookery skills that mothers possess.]

The role of Afrikaans women as the promoters and guardians of the health of “the nation” was an ideal expressed in print media in the early twentieth century. Here I explore food and nutrition trends and the role that food was expected to play in the lives of Afrikaans housewives as represented by *Die Huisvrou (The Housewife)* for the period 1922–1945. The period represents an important time in women’s history in South Africa when white women gained the vote and played increasing roles in political activities. There were also significant developments taking place in the field of nutrition – both internationally and in South Africa. There are two main purposes to this article. The first is to observe the portrayal of the relationship between Afrikaner housewives and food in the magazine; and the second is to explore the nutritional messages that it communicated.

This discussion addresses a few gaps in South African historiography. The most obvious one is food. Today little is known about what foods were considered nutritious in South Africa in the period 1922–1945. Magazines won’t tell us what people ate, but they do reveal what people were open to eating, what ingredients people had at their disposal and what kinds of food they were interested in consuming. After all, the magazine wanted to appeal to its readers and provide aspirational content. Magazines also reveal what readers were exposed to in terms of nutritional messaging. Unsurprisingly, some obvious trends emerge in the articles and recipes and these remain prominent throughout the period, namely the expectation that housewives would be preparing food for their husbands and children. What is worth exploring, however, is the emphasis this particular magazine places on nutrition and health. More than simply pleasing their families with the preparation of tasty food, housewives were charged with ensuring that food served to family members was healthy and nutritious. This was because, according to Mynie Malherbe as quoted above, housewives were in large measure the guardians of the muscle power of the volk in the food that they served.

1. The cookbook introduced by this quotation was compiled by Mynie Malherbe the wife of D.F. Malherbe, the well-known author and poet who was very involved in advocating for and establishing Afrikaans as an official language. The cookbook is accredited to Mev. D.F. Malherbe (rather than Mynie in her own right). She was, we are told, an avid gardener, imaginative cook and an excellent hostess. See the Foreword (by M.T. Steyn) in her cookbook *Eet met Lus* (Bloemfontein, 1926), that was presumably published privately. See also B. Kok, E.V. Lategan en R. de Beer, *D.F. Malherbe in Beeld en Woord* (Perskor, Kaapstad en Johannesburg, 1981), p 43.

After a brief historiography and a background to *Die Huisvrou* as a source, I investigate the expectations the magazine introduced concerning food and its preparation, and then consider what the magazine revealed about nutrition at the time. Early Afrikaans magazines have received academic attention – especially with regard to their role in fostering Afrikaner nationalism. The area of food and nutrition, however, has not yet been explored in magazines in the South African historical context and in this article, I seek to take the first steps towards that endeavour.

This article straddles various aspects of South African historiography: women, food and public health. Afrikaner women have received much attention as *volksmoeders* (mothers of the nation).² Deborah Gaitskell and Elaine Unterhalter outline three representations of Afrikaner motherhood linked to phases of Afrikaner history in the twentieth century. The first phase, after the South African War (1899–1902), represented Afrikaner motherhood as “saintly in suffering” and essential to the “strength [and] inspiration” of the Afrikaner nation in the face of defeat. In the second phase, from 1913 onwards, linked to the formation of the Afrikaner National Party, Afrikaner motherhood was portrayed as “active and mobilising”. During this latter phase, magazines such as *Brandwag* and *Die Boerevrou* began to prescribe the mother’s various roles in the private and in public spheres.³ Gaitskell and Unterhalter explain that “Afrikaners in the 1920 and 1930s ... hoped their homes would be a maternal powerhouse of domestic ethnic mobilisation”.⁴ The final phase is associated with the National Party’s win in the 1948 election.⁵ Later, magazines like *Huisgenoot* became important sites of the construction and spread of ideals of Afrikaner femininity.⁶

Food is not currently a prominent concern in South African historiography although existing research covers diverse aspects of the topic. Diana Wylie’s *Starving on a Full Stomach* outlines the prominence of food and hunger in segregation and cultural racism in South Africa in the twentieth century. She argues that the foods eaten by black Africans bewildered white doctors and politicians and that this compounded racist and

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2. See S. Chetty, “Mothering the ‘nation’: The Public Life of Isie ‘Ouma’ Smuts, 1899–1945,” *African Historical Review*, 47, 2, 2015, pp 37–57; L. Kruger, “Gender, Community and Identity: Women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the *Volksmoeder* Discourse of *Die Boerevrou*, 1919–1931”, MA Social Science, UCT, 1991; and E. Brink, “Man-made Women: Gender, Class and the Ideology of the *Volksmoeder*”, in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (David Philip, Cape Town, 1990).
 3. D. Gaitskell and E. Unterhalter, “Mother of the Nation: A Comparative Analysis of Nation, Race and Motherhood in Afrikaner Nationalism and the African National Congress”, in N. Yuval-Davis, F. Anthias and J. Camping (eds), *Women-Nation-State* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1989), pp 61–62; L. Rabe, “Women’s Voices in the Media of the Afrikaans Language Community: An Historical Perspective”, *Communitas*, 9, 2004, p 41.
 4. Gaitskell and Unterhalter, “Mother of the Nation”, p 63.
 5. Gaitskell and Unterhalter, “Mother of the Nation”, p 64.
 6. L. Viljoen and S. Viljoen, “Constructing Femininity in *Huisgenoot*”, in A. du Preez and J. van Eeden (eds), *South African Visual Culture* (Van Schaik, Pretoria, 2005), pp 90–118.

oppressive policies.⁷ In *Gender, Modernity and Indian Delights: The Women's Cultural Group of Durban*, Goolam Vahed and Thembisa Waetjen focus on gender and tell the history of a cookbook, *Indian Delights*, and the women who brought it into being – the Women's Cultural Group.⁸ With a specific focus on the history of the food consumed by European settlers at the Cape, Hester Claassens wrote her doctorate on the history of *Boerekos* from Jan van Riebeeck's arrival to the British possession of the Cape in the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁹ Marlene van Niekerk has explored the role of food in Afrikaner history, critiquing the desire to manufacture a culinary tradition.¹⁰ There is, therefore, space to discover other depictions of food in South African history, especially with regard to nutrition.

The period 1922 to 1945 was an important one in the realm of nutrition and food safety in the Union. As Diana Wylie puts it, "... in the early twentieth century, many leaders of South African white opinion, reflecting popular insecurities about the destiny of the new nation, worried openly that both whites and blacks were degenerating physically".¹¹ Malnutrition was a concern in the Union amidst droughts, the Great Depression, the threat of rickets and tuberculosis and investigations into "poor whites" and malnutrition in school children.¹² The first research into nutrition in the history of the country was into scurvy – a disease caused by a lack of vitamin C. Another advance in public health was that the number of hospitals for the white population of the Union more than doubled in a decade from 107 in 1925 to 227 in 1935.¹³ The *Carnegie Commission Report*, published in 1932, includes a whole volume on the effects of bad health on what was called "the poor white problem". The volume has a chapter on malnutrition, outlining the causes and negative effects of too little food, especially in children.¹⁴

Historian Susanne Klausen highlights the concerns faced in the first decades of the twentieth century explaining that "though the middle classes and ruling elite had long been uneasy about the future of South Africa, the Great Depression sparked fears that the country had begun to decline because of the rapidly deteriorating health of

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7. D. Wylie, *Starving on a Full Stomach: Hunger and the Triumph of Cultural Racism in Modern South Africa* (University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 2001).
 8. G. Vahed and T. Waetjen, *Gender, Modernity and Indian Delights: The Women's Cultural Group of Durban, 1954–2010* (HSRC Press, Cape Town, 2010).
 9. H. Claassens, "Die Geskiedenis van Boerekos, 1652–1806", PhD thesis, University of Pretoria, 2003.
 10. M. van Niekerk, "The Eating Afrikaner: Notes for a Concise Typology", in A. Grundlingh and S. Huigen (eds), *Reshaping Remembrance: Critical Essays on Afrikaans Places of Memory* (Rozenberg Publishers, Amsterdam, 2011).
 11. Wylie, *Starving on a Full Stomach*, p 127.
 12. Author given only as M.B., "Correct Diet" as suggested by Mrs van Duyn-Slade], *Die Huisvrou*, 5, 6, September 1939, p 22.
 13. Wylie, *Starving on a Full Stomach*, p 130; *Union Statistics for Fifty Years: Jubilee Issue, 1910–1960* (Government Printer, Pretoria, 1960), D-3.
 14. W.A. Murray, *The Poor White Problem in South Africa: Report of the Carnegie Commission, Part IV, Health Report: Health Factors in the Poor White Problem* (Pro Ecclesia-Drukkery, Stellenbosch, 1932).

the population”.¹⁵ The Gluckman Commission of Inquiry of 1942–1944 reported on the state of public health services and indicated the growing involvement of the state in providing affordable access to health care.¹⁶ The commission’s report also included a chapter on food and nutrition in which food was viewed as an indispensable part of accomplishing public health.¹⁷

Women’s magazines have been used by others to reveal ideas about food and nutrition and expectations of women’s relationship with food. Some studies of magazines use quantitative methods to determine trends in food-related content.¹⁸ As a historical source of food-related information, magazines are useful in a number of ways. Food historian Anneke Geyzen, for example, explains that “magazines closely follow societal concerns that are described in the various articles, including the culinary pages and the recipes.” She states that these magazines are valuable because they “balance the introduction of novel foods and cooking techniques on the one hand and the preservation of familiar culinary knowledge on the other.”¹⁹ Although women’s magazines provide rich information about food and women’s role in the provision of food, the source has been underutilised in the field of food history.²⁰ Magazines do not disclose the “realities” of women’s lives, beliefs and food-related

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15. Klausen suggests that the focus on public health was also evident in the debate about birth control to uplift poor whites and that its “advocates had convinced Afrikaners, anxious about the health of the *volk*” to give their support for more state intervention to redress social problems that threatened white South Africa. The state began to take seriously the need to promote a proactive approach to public health. See S. Klausen, “‘Poor Whiteism’, White Maternal Mortality, and the Promotion of Public Health in South Africa: The Department of Public Health’s Endorsement of Contraceptive Services, 1930–1938”, *South African Historical Journal*, 45, November 2001, p 78; and S. M. Klausen, *Race, Maternity, and the Politics of Birth Control in South Africa, 1910–39* (Palgrave Macmillan, London and New York, 2004), p 40.
 16. [Author unknown], “Gesondheidsdientie in die Unie, 1: Die Opdrag van die Gluckman-Kommissie”, *Die Huisvrou*, 22, 1184, 9 Januarie 1945, pp 1, 12.
 17. *Die Nasionale Gesondheidskommissie* (Staatsdrukker, Pretoria, 1944), p 30.
 18. N.L. Wilson and A.E. Blackhurst, “Food Advertising and Eating Disorders: Marketing Body Dissatisfaction, the Drive for Thinness, and Dieting in Women’s Magazines”, *The Journal of Humanistic Counselling, Education and Development*, 38, 2, 1999, pp 111–122; A. Schoonees, T. Young and J. Volmink, “The Advertising of Nutritional Supplements in South African Women’s Magazines: A Descriptive Survey”, *South African Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 26, 2, 2013, pp 12–18; L. Jacobs and T. Tyree, “The Construction of Femininity, Race and Sexuality in Alcohol Advertisements in South African and American Women’s Magazines”, *Gender and Behaviour*, 11, 2, 2013, pp 5788–5803; Z. Abrahams, N.J. Temple, Z.J. Mchiza and N.P. Steyn, “A Study of Food Advertising in Magazines in South Africa”, *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition*, 12, 3, 2017, pp 429–441.
 19. A. Geyzen, “Food Preservation in Flemish Women’s Magazines, 1945–1960”, in A.D. Drouard and D.J. Oddy (eds), *The Food Industries of Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Routledge, Abingdon, 2016).
 20. M.E. Barker and J.D. Burrige, “Nutrition Claims in British Women’s Magazines from 1940 to 1955”, *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics*, 27, 2, 2014, p 117.

activities, but they do reveal what women were consuming and what ideas there were of food at a specific point in time and in a specific context.

The source for this article is *Die Huisvrou* magazine which introduced itself as one of the first fully Afrikaans women's magazine in South Africa. It was a weekly magazine first published in 1922, but it was in fact the second Afrikaans women's magazine, after *Die Boerevrou*. *Die Boerevrou* was in publication from 1919 to 1931. *Die Huisvrou* was printed in Cape Town by English printers Samuel Griffiths & Co.²¹ The *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa* describes *Die Huisvrou* as a "conservative, Christian magazine for mothers and daughters" with most support in rural areas.²² In the first issue, the purpose of the magazine was presented clearly – and its purpose was to support the activities of white South African housewives, especially those resident in the rural districts.

Minnie Donovan (née de Smidt) was the magazine's first editor.²³ She edited *Die Huisvrou* from 1922 to 1927. She was married to Irish-born Alfred Daniel Donovan who was the editor and founder of the English satirical weekly journal, *The Cape*. *The Cape's* aims included "fostering among English-speaking Cape Colonists the idea of a single loyalty to a South African nation".²⁴ Under Donovan, *Die Huisvrou* was "exceptionally conservative", opposing women getting the vote and working outside of the home, while providing tips on how to be a "proper housewife".²⁵ Minnie is also credited with writing articles in *The Cape* under the pseudonym "M".²⁶ Despite the magazine being proudly Afrikaans, with the first editor being married to an Englishman, and her relationship to *The Cape*, *Die Huisvrou* never displayed a clear allegiance to Afrikaner nationalist ideals and did not express political association overtly.

The absence of an overt political persuasion differentiates Minnie Donovan and *Die Huisvrou* from another well-known magazine, *Huisgenoot*. From its inception *Huisgenoot* was clearly a mouthpiece of Afrikaner nationalism.²⁷ Minnie was later replaced by a male editor known as M. Brisley, who remained at the helm until 1943.²⁸ During the 1930s, Louise Latsky (the first woman to be awarded a doctorate at Stellenbosch University) started writing articles for *Die Huisvrou* under a pen

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21. L. Rabe, "Die Onstaan en Ontwikkeling van *Sarie Marais* as Massatydskrif vir die Afrikaanse Vrou", MA tesis, Universiteit van Stellenbosch, 1985, p 8.
 22. Rabe, "Die Onstaan en Ontwikkeling van *Sarie Marais*", p 8.
 23. D.W. Krüger (hoofredakteur tot 1972) en C.J. Beyers (sedert 1973), *Suid-Afrikaanse Biografiese Woordeboek*, Deel 3 (Tafelberg, Kaapstad, 1977), p 242.
 24. D.J. Potgieter and P.C. du Plessis (eds), *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa, Volume 4* (Nasou, Cape Town, 1971), p 67.
 25. Rabe, "Die Onstaan en Ontwikkeling van *Sarie Marais*", pp 10, 12.
 26. D.W. Kruger en C.J. Beyers (reds), *Suid-Afrikaanse Biografiese Woordeboek, Deel 3*, p 242.
 27. J. Froneman, "Dominante Motiewe in die Transformasie van *Huisgenoot*, 1916–2003", *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies*, 25, 1, 2004, pp 61–79.
 28. Potgieter and Du Plessis (eds), *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa, Volume 5*, p 654.

name. She also wrote for *Huisgenoot* and *Brandwag*.²⁹ Audrey Blignault, who became a well-known Afrikaans writer and poet, held the position of editor from 1943 to 1954, and numerous early articles were penned by famous Afrikaans authors under pseudonyms.³⁰ Blignault later wrote a column for the *Sarie* magazine for 25 years. Blignault's mother was Irish and her father was an Afrikaner.

Die Huisvrou as a source has not received the academic attention it deserves. Afrikaans magazines have been explored as transmitters of Afrikaner nationalism, especially to women, because women were the first to access Afrikaner literature through print media that they read at home while men were working. But none of the existing literature seeks to understand representations of women and nutrition in magazines. *Die Huisvrou* therefore presents a useful snapshot of ideas concerning Afrikaans women and nutrition apart from specifically Afrikaner nationalist themes.³¹

There is no statistical data on the readership of the magazine in the period covered by this article. By 1959, when *Die Huisvrou* became a monthly publication, it sold between 3 000 and 4 000 copies a month. By way of comparison, *Rooi Rose* sold about 15 000 copies per month in 1958.³² It does not seem as if there is any information on the early readership, but some indications of its popularity are the letters written by readers and its lifespan of over 50 years. From 1931 to 1942 *Die Huisvrou* was the only magazine aimed specifically at Afrikaans-speaking women. Other magazines, such as *Huisgenoot*, had sections addressed to female readers, but from the time when *Die Boerevrou* ceased publication to the inception of *Rooi Rose* (in 1942), *Die Huisvrou* was the only publication targeting Afrikaner women. Upon its inception the *Rooi Rose* was, however, on the opposite spectrum to *Die Huisvrou* as far as its content was concerned, with a sensationalist approach aimed at modern women.³³

By 1924, when readers of *Die Huisvrou* were invited to correspond with the editorship about their preferences on the content, women sent letters from various parts of the Union, including Mooiplaats (near Johannesburg), Paulpietersburg (1 600 km from Cape Town where the magazine was published) and Burgersdorp (in the Karoo), to express their thoughts. This displays a wide and varied readership from early on. One reader even sent her suggestions from Maramba in Zambia (although it is unclear how *Die Huisvrou* travelled almost 2 500 km across national borders to reach her). An article in 1929 assured its readers that the magazine would be free of racial and political debate. The same article also discussed a pride in Afrikaner heritage, emphasising the remarkable achievements of the Voortrekkers.³⁴ The magazine did, however, also cover some of the endeavours of the British royal family.

29. Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, *Women Marching into the 21st Century* (Shereno Printers, Boksburg, 2000), p 108.

30. Potgieter and Du Plessis, *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa, Volume 5*, p 654.

31. M. du Toit, "The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism: *Volkmoeders* and the ACVV, 1904–1929", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 1, March 2003, p 156.

32. Rabe, "Die Onstaan en Ontwikkeling van *Sarie Marais*", p 15.

33. Rabe, "Die Onstaan en Ontwikkeling van *Sarie Marais*", p 13.

34. [Author unknown], "Die Suidafrikaanse en die Oorsee se huisvrouens", *Die Huisvrou*, 7, 372, 11 Junie 1929, p 1.

From the very first issue in 1922, recipes and articles about food were an integral part of the magazine. Every issue also included editorial comment, fashion-related content and a number of articles on topics ranging from how matters of the day affected women, to marriage advice. Articles about how to manage workers within the home – referred to as “servants” – also featured occasionally, although these were not a regular occurrence. However, one article shows the extent to which these servants were expected to do much of the work in the home. It provides an example of the possible division of labour within a home:

Schedule for the servant

Work begins at 07:00 in the morning

Prepare and serve breakfast

Discuss the meals of the day with the mistress of the house

Normal housework

Prepare and dish the midday meal

Organise the children

Rest until afternoon tea/coffee

Prepare and serve supper

Free time after supper and organising the kitchen

Sleep at 21:00.³⁵

While the work that servants did was obviously extensive and clearly essential to the preparation of food, it will not be discussed at length in this article, because my focus is concerned chiefly with how food and nutrition and the housewife’s relationship to food were portrayed.

Women and food in *Die Huisvrou*

En die *gesonde gees*, sowel as *die gesonde liggaam* van die kinders, sal baie meer bevorder word deur die vrou en moeder wat tuis bly en haar kos goed kook en klaarmaak, as deur die vrou-advokaat en die vrou-parlements lid!³⁶ [And the healthy attitude, as well as the healthy body of the children, will be furthered far more by the woman and mother who stays at home and cooks her food well, than the [career oriented] woman-advocate and the woman-member of parliament.]

In the 1920s, when women were beginning to move into occupations outside of the home (mostly because of urbanisation caused by a series of droughts and other economic hardships) articles in *Die Huisvrou* emphasised that these women should not stray from their “household professions”. Although most white South African women in the 1920s and 1930s did not engage in paid work outside of the home, the contents of the magazine expressed the view that as women moved into office jobs and became typists, for example, they were spending their time on developing skills that would not equip them to be good mothers. Articles encouraged young women to

35. [Author unknown], “Die Diensbode-vraagstuk”, *Die Huisvrou*, 5, 207, 13 April 1926, p 13.

36. *Die Nasionale Gesondheidskommissie* (Staatsdrukker, Pretoria, 1944), p 30.

refine their domestic skills instead, especially those involving cooking, rather than moving into occupations that would render them useless in the home.

Being married was seen as the most important goal for women. An article in a December 1923 issue puts it unequivocally:

Elke meisie, al word sy ook opgelei vir 'n professie waarmee sy 'n verdienste kan maak, moet haar ook voorberei vir 'n huwelik – tenminste seker hier in ons land. Geen enkele ander roeping of professie kom naby 'n huwelik nie.³⁷ [Each girl, even if she is trained for a profession and is thus equipped to earn a living, must also prepare herself for marriage – certainly at least here in our country. No single other calling or profession comes anywhere near a marriage.]

This emphasis on marriage or housewifery as a calling or profession snowballed in the aftermath of the Second World War in English-speaking parts of the world with the growth of the Home Economics movement. Terms such as Domestic Science and Home Economics elevated housewifery and domestic work as an academic discipline and validated the idea of working in the home.³⁸

Articles in *Die Huisvrou* expressed apprehension that young women were not sufficiently concerned about cooking. In 1923, an article headed “Die Meisie wat nie kan Kook nie” [The girl who cannot cook] appeared in the magazine. It lamented the fact that young white girls seemed to be interested in everything but cooking, claiming that in South Africa more girls were taking music as a subject than cooking. It declared that in many schools, departments which taught cooking were closing down, and complained that being able to recite a poem, or play a piece on the piano, would certainly not help a woman to prepare a meal. It insisted that gaining knowledge about food and health would enable a young woman to make a nutritious, frugal and tasty meal for her family.³⁹ The article closed by pointing out that while it was true that most women would probably figure out how to prepare food, even if they were not well-equipped in such skills when they were first married, they should consider the cost of being poorly equipped in the kitchen: “Sy sal miskien later, as sy die regte soort meisie is, dinge regkry, maar dit sal waarskynlik wees ten koste van haar eie gesondheid en die gesondheid van haar man en kinders.”⁴⁰ [She will probably later, if she is the right kind of girl, get things right, but this will probably be at the cost of her own health, as well as that of her husband and children.]

Women were encouraged to cook “properly” as opposed to well. An article in *Die Huisvrou* in 1926 claimed that housewives needed to plan meals in “the correct

37. [Author unknown], “Die Meisie wat nie kan Kook nie”, *Die Huisvrou*, 3, 85, 11 Desember 1923, pp 1-2.

38. J. Barnard, “Home Economics and ‘Housewifery’ in 1950s America”, 2010, at [<https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/bitstream/handle/1808/6333/Barnard.pdf;sequence=1>], p 42.

39. [Author unknown], “Die Meisie wat nie kan Kook nie”, *Die Huisvrou*, 3, 85, 11 Desember 1923, pp 1-2.

40. [Author unknown], “Die Meisie wat nie kan Kook nie”, *Die Huisvrou*, 3, 85, 11 Desember 1923, pp 1-2.

way” to ensure the health of their families. “Want die regte soort ete, van tyd tot tyd, beteken veel vir die gesondheid van die hele gesin.”⁴¹ [Because the right sort of meal, from time to time, means a great deal for the health of the whole family.] The article emphasises that housewives are not only essential to the well-being of the family, but can also be solely responsible for destroying the family’s health. Another article in the same year takes a similar line of thinking, blaming “ignorant women” for the large majority of illnesses:

Vrouens is verreweg die belangrikste mense in die wêreld. Hulle gee vir ons al die plesier en geluk wat ons geniet; maar deur verkeerde voeding en ongesonde opleiding van hulle kinders, is hulle ook verantwoordelik vir byna al ons siektes en liggaamlike swakhede.⁴² [Women are certainly the most important people in the world. They give us all the pleasure and happiness that we enjoy; but through incorrect food and unhealthy training of their children, they are also responsible for almost all our sicknesses and physical weaknesses.]

Similar encouragement to excel in the preparation of nutritious meals continued throughout the period and in 1943 an article proposed that young women attend cooking courses in order to learn to cook “carefully”.⁴³

Information concerning international progress in the field of nutrition, such as the existence of vitamins, was imparted to women through articles in *Die Huisvrou*. One article highlighted that rickets was a disease which affected many children in South Africa.⁴⁴ Another explained that because of high infant mortality and maternal death rates, the subjects of public health of women and children were at the forefront of government health concerns at the time.⁴⁵ Articles in the magazine repeatedly stressed that the preparation of food was essential to the housewife’s role as a good mother to her children and was also a means to build and strengthen the nation. An excerpt from the introduction to an article called “Voedsel en Gesondheid: Wat Moet Ons Eet” in *Die Huisvrou* in 1926 reads:

Die enigste manier om die regte en gesonde kos te kry, wat al die nodige bestanddele het om ons liggaam te voed en fris en sterk te maak, en siektes af te keer, is dus om kennis te hê van die voedingswaarde van die verskillende soorte kos wat nodig is om die liggaam gesond en sterk te hou. Daarom word

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41. [Author unknown], “Die Regte Reëling van Maaltye”, *Die Huisvrou*, 5, 207, 13 April 1926, pp 13–14.
 42. [Author unknown], “Die Regte Reëling van Maaltye”, *Die Huisvrou*, 5, 207, 13 April 1926, pp 13–14.
 43. I.J.D. v D, “Leer Sorgvuldig Kook”, *Die Huisvrou*, 22, 1057, 4 Augustus 1942, p 5.
 44. W. Gratzner, *Terrors of the Table: The Curious History of Nutrition* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005), p 167; [Author unknown], “Wat is Vitamienes?”, *Die Huisvrou*, 7, 305, 28 Februarie 1928, p 25.
 45. [Author unknown], “Publieke Gesondheid: Die Aandeel Daarin van die Huismoeder”, *Die Huisvrou*, 2, 99, 18 Maart 1924, pp 1–3; [Author unknown], “Wat doen die Goewerment vir Ons Kinders?”, *Die Huisvrou*, 1, 52, 24 April 1923, pp 1–3.

huisvrouens so sterk en gedurig aangeraai om daardie kennis te kry.⁴⁶ [The only way to get the correct and wholesome food, which has all the necessary ingredients to feed the body, making it strong and healthy, and to avoid sickness, is therefore to have knowledge of the nutritional value of the different kinds of food that are needed to keep the body healthy and strong. It is for this reason that housewives are strongly and often advised to gain that knowledge.]

By the 1940s, articles expressed similar ideas relating to the relationship between food and the housewife's task to care for her family. One article observed that women of the time took a keen interest in researching and training in specific fields such as dietetics.

Sy besef goed dat haar eerste plig die versorging van haar gesin is. Alleen wanneer 'n volk sterk en gesond is, kan hy sy ideale verwesenlik. Om hierdie rede het talle vrouens in die jongste tyd groot belangstelling in voedingsleer gestel.⁴⁷ [She knows very well that her first duty is caring for her family. Only when a nation is strong and healthy can it realise its ideals. For this reason, these days many women take great interest in dietetics.]

More than the pressure to provide perfect health for their families, articles in *Die Huisvrou* communicated that the health of the "nation" was in women's hands. Encouraging a serious approach to housework was not unique to *Die Huisvrou*. Isabel Hofmeyr argues that Afrikaans magazines aimed at women, in the 1920s such as *Die Boerevrou*, "focussed on the domestic sphere which it tried to dignify and professionalise."⁴⁸ *Die Boerevrou* also encouraged technical and precise methodologies and knowledge concerning food and nutrition.⁴⁹ One article in *Die Huisvrou* suggested that women should resort to organising public protests if the quality of food purchased from their local grocer was not up to adequate standards of health and safety. Women were called to boycott such stores until the offenders, usually grocers selling old meat or sour milk, realised the gravity of the situation and mended their ways.⁵⁰

The articles encouraged women to approach the preparation of food with great care and women's fascination with different kinds of food and their properties was explained as a desire to learn how to provide the most nutritious meals. Scientific methods were viewed as the best way of completing this task.⁵¹ *Die Huisvrou* created

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46. [Author unknown], "Voedsel en Gesondheid: Die Najaag van Gesondheid en wat Moet ons Eet?", *Die Huisvrou*, 6, 228, 7 September 1926, p 13.
 47. Mej. S. Naude, "Voedselbeheer Organisasie: Uitsaaipraatjie", *Die Huisvrou*, 22, 304, 7 Julie 1942, p 15.
 48. I. Hofmeyr, "Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans Language, Literature and Ethnic Identity, 1902–1924", in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (Routledge, Abingdon, 1987), p 114.
 49. Hofmeyr, "Building a Nation from Words", p 114.
 50. [Author unknown], "Publieke Gesondheid: Die Aandeel daarin van die Huismoeder", *Die Huisvrou*, 2, 99, 18 Maart 1924, p 1.
 51. [Author unknown], "'n Groot Nasionale Verantwoordelikheid vir Vrouens", *Die Huisvrou*, 7, 304, 21 Februarie 1928, pp 1–2.

the expectation that women would take the provision of nutritious food very seriously. As an article in September 1926 put it: “Die najaag van gesondheid is iets wat elke mens besighou. Niemand kan dit verwaarloos nie.” [The pursuit of health is something that keeps everyone busy. No-one can neglect this.]⁵²

Ideas about nutrition in *Die Huisvrou*

In the previous section I explored how *Die Huisvrou* expected women to interact with food and found that women were expected to provide nutritious food to ensure the health of their families, and on a broader scale, the nation. This was something they needed to take seriously to provide proper nutrition for their families. Now I turn to what types of food were seen as nutritious. Today women’s magazines pay close attention to nutrition messages – specifically with regard to dieting and weight loss. In British women’s magazines today slimming messages dominate food-related content, but in the 1950s cooking tips often made up 100% of the food content in similar publications.⁵³ In *Die Huisvrou*, the focus was on foods that had high vitamin content and other health benefits for the family. Furthermore, food was seen as “medicine” and the magazine provided a number of recipes for food for invalids. Health was directly related to eating the correct foods. For example, an article in *Die Huisvrou* indicates: “... in die laaste jare het dit almeer duidelik geword dat die najaag van gesondheid dieselfde is as die soek van die regte voedsel” [... in recent years it has become increasingly obvious that the quest for sound health depends on eating the correct food].⁵⁴

The publication of articles about the health benefits of specific foods continued throughout the period. Food was described in terms of providing good health, correct nutrition and a balanced diet. Articles also focussed on describing the importance of vitamins, minerals and proteins. In 1922, an article headed “Wenke oor Regte Voeding en Dieet” [tips for the correct nutrition and diet] explained that food should not only be tasty, but also nutritious. It went on to describe that the proper meal should include all the main categories of food such as proteins, carbohydrates, fats and minerals.⁵⁵

These ideas are the foundation of New Nutrition – an approach to nutrition based on the pioneering work of American nutritionist Wilbur Olin Atwater in the 1880s. This approach was characterised by grouping foods into the categories

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52. [Author unknown], “Voedsel en Gesondheid: Die Najaag van Gesondheid en wat moet Ons Eet?”, *Die Huisvrou*, 6, 228, 7 September 1926, p 13.
 53. M.E. Barker, K. McNeir, S. Sameer and J. Russell, “Food, Nutrition and Slimming Messages in British Women’s Magazines, 1950–1998”, *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics*, 27, April 2014, p 124.
 54. [Author unknown], “Voedsel en Gesondheid: Die Najaag van Gesondheid en wat Moet Ons Eet?”, *Die Huisvrou*, 6, 228, 7 September 1926, p 13.
 55. [Author unknown], “Wenke oor Regte Voeding en Dieet”, *Die Huisvrou*, 1, 9, 27 Junie 1922, p 15.

mentioned above.⁵⁶ By 1926, vitamins were added to this understanding of what constituted “correct nutrition and diet” and became an important focus of food-related articles that appeared in the magazine. For example, in 1926, an article described fruit as being “filled with vitamins and minerals that were recently discovered”.⁵⁷ Although vitamins were identified first in 1912 by Casimir Funk, a Polish-born biochemist, a spate of studies followed in the 1920s and 1930s and their sudden popularity is reflected in *Die Huisvrou*.⁵⁸ An article in 1933 claimed that this was ground-breaking research and there had never been a greater scientific discovery. It explained that with this information at hand, women should plan their meals carefully to ensure that the correct quantities of vitamins would be provided.⁵⁹ By 1945, these articles were more precise. Honey, for instance, was introduced as “a wholesome and nutritious food” with an abundance of vitamin A, “which advances people’s growth and health”.⁶⁰ Historian Harvey Levenstein shows the great advancements that were made in the field of nutrition between the World Wars by explaining that the United States Food Administration’s motto for the First World War was “Food Will Win the War”, but by the Second World War it was “Vitamins Will Win the War”.⁶¹

Most commonly, the magazine conveyed information on nutrition by introducing a specific ingredient, discussing its health benefits and then providing recipes using that ingredient. Foods such as cheese, eggs, citrus, tomatoes, salad, *mieliemeel*⁶² (ground maize, a little coarser than flour) and vegetables featured most regularly. The article mentioned in the previous paragraph explained the vitamin and nutritional content of fruit before refuting the belief that fruit caused rheumatism. It attempted to convince readers that fruit allowed the body to release “suurstowwe” [gasses], often caused by eating too much meat. Fruit, it averred, would encourage the appetite and promote the flow of digestive juices as well as being good for teeth. The article closed by indicating that it would be far better to spend one’s money on fruit than on medicine.⁶³

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56. H. Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1994), p 9.
57. [Author unknown], “Weet u Waarom u Vrugte moet Eet?”, *Die Huisvrou*, 5, 211, 11 Mei 1926, p 16.
58. Gratzner, *Terrors of the Table*, p 167; Barker and Burridge, “Nutrition Claims in British Women’s Magazines”, p 120.
59. A. Holzhausen, “Kookkuns: Kennis van die Vitamiene”, *Die Huisvrou*, 12, 584, 27 Junie 1933, pp 27–28.
60. Dina, “Gebruik Meer Heuning”, *Die Huisvrou*, 22, 1146, 18 April 1944, p 9.
61. Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty*, p 64.
62. Maize is a South American grain that was introduced to Spain in the 1490s. The Portuguese then spread it to Africa. By the Second World War, indigenous Africans survived largely on a diet of maize and maize meal. See K.F. Kiple and K.C. Ornelas (eds), *The Cambridge World History of Food, Volume 2* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008), p 105; and Y. Albertyn, “Upsetting the Applegate: Government and Food Control in the Union of South Africa during World War II c. 1939-1948”, MA dissertation, Stellenbosch University, 2014, p 5.
63. [Author unknown], “Weet U Waarom u Vrugte moet Eet?”, *Die Huisvrou*, 5, 211, 11 Mei 1926, pp 16.

A similar article appeared three years later concerning the medicinal benefits of eating certain vegetables. Carrots were seen as beneficial for the skin and providing respite to those suffering from gout. Cabbage was thought to be good for the relief of constipation and a means of returning good colour to the skin and a sparkle to dull eyes. Celery was purported to prevent and cure rheumatism while onions were hailed as blood purifiers – especially if eaten raw.⁶⁴ The Cape Province branch of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) produced comparable articles in the 1920s with a view to promoting raisins and currants by touting their excellent nutritional value. These efforts were to discourage the use of grapes for alcohol and were supported by the Dried Fruit Board.⁶⁵ Although some of the articles in *Die Huisvrou* that promoted specific foods seem to have been sponsored by government agencies, this was not always clear.

These articles also provide indications of how these nutritious ingredients could be served. One such article on the benefits of serving cheese was headed “Use More Cheese” and began by saying that “it is surely hard to find a food that is more valuable for the constitution than cheese”.⁶⁶ While some of the suggested recipes were quite simple, including a “recipe” for cheese on bread, a fascination with salads and oranges,⁶⁷ almost as superfoods, made for some unusual dishes.⁶⁸ A salad introduced as *dadelslaai* (date salad) was made by stuffing dates with cream cheese, raisins and almonds. These stuffed dates were then served on a bed of lettuce with a French dressing.⁶⁹ Another recipe combined a passion for salads with a love of gelatine; it called for a jelly made with lemon juice, water and gelatine into which fresh salad ingredients such as cucumber and tomato were added. The salad would

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64. [Author unknown], “Kookkuns: Die Geneeskundige Waarde van Verskillende Groentes”, *Die Huisvrou*, 7, 353, 29 Januarie 1929, p 26.
65. J. McKinnon, “Women’s Christian Temperance Union: Aspects of Early Feminism in the Cape, 1889 to 1930”, MA dissertation, University of South Africa, 1995, pp 95–96.
66. The original text reads: “Daar is seker nie maklik ’n voedsel te kry wat meer waardevol is vir die gestel as kaas nie.” See B. Jacobs, “Kookkuns: Gebruik meer Kaas”, *Die Huisvrou*, 14, 702, 8 Oktober 1935, p 27.
67. The full value of oranges as a food source was only recognised in the magazine in the mid to late 1930s and early 1940s, a time when there was an oversupply of this fruit in South Africa because significant investments had been made to plant citrus in the 1930s. During the Second World War the export of citrus fruit to Europe declined dramatically. In 1939, a Citrus Council was formed and a glut of oranges seemed unavoidable. Attempts were made to foster interest in Britain by displaying South African products, including oranges, in the exhibition hall at South Africa House. but ultimately exports dropped from 10 900 pockets weighing 30lbs each in 1939, to 2 305 pockets in 1944. See J.M. Tinley, *South African Food and Agriculture in World War II* (Stanford University Press, Los Angeles, 1954), pp 40–41; and Albertyn, “Upsetting the Applecart”, pp 24–25.
68. B. Jacobs, “Kookkuns: Gebruik meer Kaas”, *Die Huisvrou*, 14, 702, 8 Oktober 1935, p 27.
69. B. Jacobs, “Kookkuns: Slaai Geregte Gee die Nodige Vitamiene”, *Die Huisvrou*, 15, 750, 22 September 1936, p 25.

therefore be served as a slice of jelly filled with suspended fruit and vegetables and garnished with watercress.⁷⁰

There is also evidence of the belief that the addition of a wholesome food to a recipe gave the entire dish beneficial properties. The introduction to an article about *mieliemeel* described it as a wholesome food that should be used often because of its nutritious properties.⁷¹ As the author of an article explained: “Enige voedsel wat deur die gebruik van mieliemeel gemaak word is baie gesond en voedsaam ...”⁷² [Any food that is made with maize meal is very wholesome and nutritious]. Suggested uses for *mieliemeel* include one for soup and another for fritters, but most of the recipes are for sweet dishes such as cakes and puddings – revealing the belief that the addition of *mieliemeel* could also somehow transform dessert into a “wholesome and nutritious” dish. A baked pudding recipe, for example, included two cups of milk, two eggs, half a tablespoon of soft fat or butter, preserves and syrup to taste and half a cup of *mieliemeel*. The milk and *mieliemeel* were made into a porridge-like mixture over the fire before the mixture was taken off the heat. The egg yolks, fat and “enough syrup to make it sweet” were then beaten in. This mixture was then poured into a buttered dish and baked. When taken out of the oven a preserve was spread over it and topped with a meringue and then returned to a warm oven until the topping turned light brown.⁷³ *Mieliemeel* remained a favoured ingredient throughout the period – especially for use in sweet dishes. There is evidence that new recipes using *mieliemeel* were often requested by *Die Huisvrou* readers.⁷⁴

Similar articles promoting specific foods appeared in other magazines, such as *Die Boerevrou*, at the time and there was an increase in the number of women training in the field of domestic science. One such woman, Jeanette Slade (née Van Duyn), worked for the government as a domestic science educator. She organised roadshows and wrote a number of books to endorse certain foods. *Mielies as Voedsel* (Maize as food) was one such publication.⁷⁵ Mrs Slade, as she was known, wrote various other books and pamphlets including *Over 100 Novel Ways of Cooking Eggs and Young Table Birds*.⁷⁶ Domestic science took off in the United States, Canada and Britain towards the end of the nineteenth century. In 1909, Jeanette Slade was sent to

70. [Author unknown], “Kookkuns: Soorte Slaai”, *Die Huisvrou*, 4, 187, 24 November 1925, p 30.

71. Maize was a prominent ingredient in cooking across various cultures in South Africa at the time and in 1906 *mieliemeel* appeared in no less than five recipes in E.J. Dijkman, *Die Suid-Afrikaanse Kook-, Koek- en Resepteboek*. See Claassens, “Die Geskiedenis van Boerekos”, p 337.

72. [Author unknown], “Kookkuns: Mieliemeel”, *Die Huisvrou*, 14, 680, 7 Mei 1935, p 31.

73. [Author unknown], “Kookkuns: Mieliemeel”, *Die Huisvrou*, 14, 680, 7 Mei 1935, pp 31–32.

74. Dina, “Mieliemeel in die Kookkuns”, *Die Huisvrou*, 21, 1083, 2 Februarie 1943, p 18; [Author unknown], “Kookkuns–reseppe wat Leseresse ons Gevra het”, *Die Huisvrou*, 6, 227, 31 August 1926, p 31.

75. See Claassens, “Die Geskiedenis van Boerekos”, p 480.

76. J.C. van Duyn-Slade, *Over 100 Novel Ways of Cooking Eggs and Young Table Birds* (Fishwick, Durban, 1929).

study domestic science in Canada in an attempt to advance the field in the Union and as her career progressed, she was hailed as a “pioneer of home economics”.⁷⁷

An incorrect diet and eating processed foods were perceived as dangerous to one’s health and therefore posed a threat to society, while other foods were treated as a form of medicine. Distinctions between food classified as “appropriate” for those who were ill and frail, as opposed to food for the healthy, have long been known and each new era provides evidence of different ideas about the properties of food and which foods should be classed in different categories. In the 1920s an article in *Die Huisvrou* argued that constipation and indigestion were two of the most prevalent conditions caused by eating incorrect foods, specifically a diet which lacked vitamins and roughage.⁷⁸ An article that appeared in 1923 explains that doctors believed that a third of all ailments could be cured by eating properly.⁷⁹ In 1924, the magazine featured another which attributed juvenile delinquency to poor nutrition and came to the conclusion that a good cook could have as much influence on a child’s wellbeing as an educator. The author also railed against imported, tinned and mass-produced food while praising food that was produced in the home, freshly made by the housewife.⁸⁰ The article closed with the statement that the discovery of food’s effects on people was the greatest progress that the field of medical science had ever made. It went on to clarify that doctors were beginning to prescribe specific diets to treat ailments instead of medicine. The author also called upon women to embrace cooking as the most admirable occupation for the benefit of a family.⁸¹

Eating the wrong foods or preparing food incorrectly was claimed to make people sick and ultimately place the good health and future of the nation in jeopardy.⁸² *Die Huisvrou* featured a number of articles on making food for invalids. The recipes that appeared in these sections were for dishes considered especially nutritious and essential to good health; they were suited specifically to the needs of those who were frail and ill. An article published in 1927, for example, distinguished between three different diets for invalids: a liquid diet, a soft or semi-solid diet and what it described as a “light diet”. A liquid diet included raw eggs, beef tea and barley water, while a soft or semi-solid diet comprised jelly, toast soaked in milk and custard pudding. A light diet was one including thin toast, soft cooked eggs, spinach, peas and

77. *Dictionary of South African Biography, Volume 5* (Van Rensburg Publications, Pretoria, 1987), p 713.

78. [Author unknown], “Die Gesondheid van ’n Volk is die Rykdom van ’n volk II”, *Die Huisvrou*, 4, 194, 12 Januarie 1926, pp 1–2.

79. [Author unknown], “Ons Daaglikse Ete”, *Die Huisvrou*, 1, 48, 27 Maart 1923, p 10.

80. [Author unknown], “Benodig! Beter Kokke”, *Die Huisvrou*, 2, 105, 29 April 1924, pp 1–2 and 4.

81. [Author unknown], “Benodig! Beter Kokke”, *Die Huisvrou*, 2, 105, 29 April 1924, pp 1–2, 4.

82. [Author unknown], “Die Gesondheid van ’n volk is die Rykdom van ’n Volk”, *Die Huisvrou*, 4, 193, 5 Januarie 1926, pp 1–2.

meat.⁸³ Beverages made from some form of meat were seen as particularly essential to providing nutrition for the ill. Beef tea (also known as beef/meat extract) was a favourite that was made from mincing fresh meat, pouring water over it, allowing it to draw and then straining the water from the meat, after which it was served.⁸⁴ Beef juice was made by squeezing a lightly grilled piece of beef that was cut into small pieces.⁸⁵ Recipes for beef tea first began appearing in British print media in the late eighteenth century. It was touted as being a beneficial “health drink” and was used in British hospitals by the 1870s.⁸⁶ A desire for drinkable beef resulted in the invention of Bovril in the 1880s, which is still considered a British staple today.⁸⁷ By the 1920s, articles in *Die Huisvrou* still claimed that beef tea was a cure-all.

Meat was not the only ingredient the magazine considered useful in making nutritious drinks for patients. Barley water was a thick drink made by boiling barley kernels in water with sugar and lemon. Raw eggs were also considered highly nutritious and easier to digest than their cooked counterparts and a serving suggestion included beating them with brandy and milk.⁸⁸ Rice jelly, another popular dish discussed in *Die Huisvrou* and other magazines and cookbooks of the time, was made by mixing rice flour with boiling water and adding a dash of lemon juice, salt and cinnamon. The mixture was poured into a bowl to set and when cool cut into slices and served with milk or cream and sugar.⁸⁹

Die Huisvrou also published recipes for remedies to treat family members who were struggling with ill health. While properly prepared food was considered the best medicine, the magazine suggested that housewives could also produce their own concoctions using ingredients to treat specific ailments. One article that appeared in 1934 explained that a very bad head cold could be treated with a mixture of raw egg, lemon and brandy taken three times a day. Furthermore, the water extracted by soaking raw turnips in sugar was beneficial as a cough syrup. Another useful cough syrup could be made by baking carrots slowly with sugar and then using the liquid in the pan to administer to the patient. Sage leaves that had been soaked in boiling

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83. [Author unknown], “Kookkuns: Kos vir Siekmense”, *Die Huisvrou*, 6, 254, 8 Maart 1927, p 27.
84. [Author unknown], “Kookkuns: Ligte en Maklik Verteerbare Geregte vir Kinders en Siekmense”, *Die Huisvrou*, 7, 312, 17 April 1928, p 27.
85. Union of South Africa Department of Agriculture and Forestry, *Foods and Cookery (The Housewife’s Guide)*, Revised and combined edition of the pamphlets “Foods and Cookery” and “Preserving of Fruits and Vegetables” (Government Printer, Pretoria, 1939), p 210.
86. W.O. Markham, “Correspondence: Beef-tea”, *The British Medical Journal*, 2, 982, 25 October 1879, p 676.
87. M.R.P. Dorman, “Beef-tea and Meat Preparations”, *The Hospital*, 31, 802, 8 February 1902, p 329.
88. B. Jacobs, “Kookkuns: Voedsel vir die Sieke”, *Die Huisvrou*, 12, 599, 17 Oktober 1933, p 26.
89. Dept. of Agriculture and Forestry, *Foods and Cookery*, p 212; [Author unknown], “Kookkuns: Nog Meer Resepte vir die Dieët van Siekes en Herstellendes”, *Die Huisvrou*, 14, 716, 14 Januarie 1936, p 27.

water which was then allowed to cool, could be combined with honey and vinegar and used for gargling to alleviate sore throats.⁹⁰

Such descriptions of food considered appropriate for sick people, it seems, were in great demand. Published during the Second World War, an article began by saying that the magazine had received many complaints that Afrikaans magazines focussed too much on food for those who were healthy and not enough on food for the sick.⁹¹ This same article also shows that by 1942, rice water, barley water and egg-based dishes were still being suggested as favourable food for those who were ill.⁹²

In the 1940s *Die Huisvrou* magazine featured articles giving the specifications of what to eat and how much to eat on a daily basis. Basic daily diets for adults and for children were suggested. These diets were specifically recommended to achieve good health. One article explained that adults should drink at least ½ a pint (230ml) of milk a day. Along with the milk, it recommended that adults should eat the following every day: two kinds of vegetable (at least one raw), potatoes or sweet potatoes, fruit (raw and cooked, preserved or dried), two items from the protein section (meat, fish, eggs, cheese, dried beans or lentils) and water (which could be drunk alone or with fruit juice, 6-8 glasses a day). Furthermore, it was recommended that if meat was left out of the diet, more milk, eggs and cheese should be eaten. Butter was hailed as a valuable food while it was suggested that other fats should only be eaten sparingly.⁹³ Although these prescriptions sound something like what one would expect to see on a dietician's food pyramid, such pyramids were first used to convey nutritional information in the last quarter of the twentieth century.⁹⁴

An article written by a qualified nurse in 1945 provided detailed information about the quantities and types of foods that children (specifically those younger than school-going age) should eat, as well as the time at which they should eat them. Breakfast, it was suggested, should consist of: two to three tablespoons of stewed or dried fruit, 4-6 tablespoons of sorghum porridge with milk and sugar, ½ to 1 whole slice of toast with butter and *moskonfyt* (a type of grape jam) and a glass of milk. The nurse also suggested ½ a glass of pure orange juice or tomato juice and ½ an apple or banana should be taken as a snack at 11 a.m. Lunch should consist of 2 tablespoons of liver (cooked and then minced), 1 tablespoon of green beans (cooked until soft), 2 tablespoons carrots (cooked until soft), a medium potato baked in its skin, one leaf of lettuce, 1 slice of pineapple, fruit jelly with custard and a glass of milk. An afternoon snack was ½ a cup of orange juice and a handful of raisins. Supper included steamed

90. [Author unknown], "Huismiddels", *Die Huisvrou*, 13, 628, 8 Mei 1934, p 25.

91. Spero, "Geregte vir Siekes", *Die Huisvrou*, 22, 1060, 25 Augustus 1942, p 19.

92. Spero, "Geregte vir Siekes", *Die Huisvrou*, 22, 1060, 25 Augustus 1942, p 19.

93. [Author unknown], "Voedselbrief: 'n Voedselplan vir Gesondheid", *Die Huisvrou*, 22, 1116, 21 September 1943, p 11.

94. C.A. Davis, P. Britten and E.F. Myers, "Past, Present, and Future of the Food Guide Pyramid", *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 101, 8, August 2001, p 881.

fish with stewed tomato or a soft-boiled egg with 2-3 tablespoons of rice pudding, brown bread and butter, a glass of milk and a hard rusk.⁹⁵

Prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, South Africa's agriculture sector produced sufficient quantities of barley, oats, rye and maize for the country's needs, though wheat, butter and dairy were imported to supplement production. The country's production of dried citrus, sugar, meat and deciduous fruits was sufficient to export to European countries before the interruption of trade channels during the war. A number of control boards were created for specific food industries between 1937 and 1939. However, by the 1940s, serious drought conditions in some areas of the country and flooding in others led to grave shortages of wheat and maize.⁹⁶

The Second World War also saw a number of food shortages which were reflected in articles about food and nutrition in *Die Huisvrou*. In 1941 an article entitled "The Necessity of Vegetables in the Diet" explained that although vegetables were more expensive because they were in such short supply due to the war, they were an essential part of any diet and should still be eaten.⁹⁷ As the war progressed, different foods were noted as being scarce. These included milk, flour, vegetables, eggs and meat.⁹⁸ Although nothing was rationed in South Africa during the war years it is clear from *Die Huisvrou* that shortages existed.

By 1942 fats, bacon, ham, sugar, meat, tea, cheese, jams and marmalades, eggs, canned meats, milk and onions were being rationed in Britain.⁹⁹ Most of the articles about meat being in short supply appeared in 1942 and 1943. Meat prices were very high in the Union during this period because of over-slaughtering in 1940 which was followed by patchy supply.¹⁰⁰ Wages rose as the Second World War progressed which

95. Suster R. Olivier, "Voorgestelde Spyskaart vir die Voorskoolse Kind", *Die Huisvrou*, 22, 1196, 24 April 1945, p 15.

96. Albertyn, "Upsetting the Applegart", pp 4-5 and 7-9.

97. E.M. Ackerman, "Noodsaaklikheid van Groente in die Dieët", *Die Huisvrou*, 21, 1023, 9 Desember 1941, p 21.

98. [Author unknown], "Die Aanvulling van Vleis in die Dieët", *Die Huisvrou*, 22, 1100, 1 Junie 1943, p 18; [Author unknown], "As Melk Skaars is", *Die Huisvrou*, 22, 1104, 29 Junie 1943, p 18; [Author unknown], "Hoe om die Vleisrekening onder Beheer te Hou", *Die Huisvrou*, 22, 1105, 6 Julie 1943, p 43; [Author unknown], "Gebruik van Minder Bekende Vleisstukke", *Die Huisvrou*, 22, 1106, 13 Julie 1943, p 21; [Author unknown], "Spaarsame Aankoop van Voedsel", *Die Huisvrou*, 22, 1115, 14 September 1943, p 15; Mirlle, "Maak dit sonder Eiers", *Die Huisvrou*, 22, 1117, 28 September 1943, p 18; Martha Magdalena, "Spek sonder Eiers", *Die Huisvrou*, 22, 1120, 19 Oktober 1943, p 18; Lucille, "Ekonomiese Leweregeregte", *Die Huisvrou*, 22, 1121, 26 Oktober 1943, p 18; Lucille, "Kerskoeke wat Almal kan Bekostig", *Die Huisvrou*, 22, 1128, 14 Desember 1943, p 22; E. du Rand, "Geregte om Eiers en Vleis te Vervang", *Die Huisvrou*, 22, 1145, 11 April 1944, p 18; Lucille, "Gedagtes vir Vleislose Woensdae", *Die Huisvrou*, 22, 1151, 23 Mei 1943, p 9; S. Naude, "Die Huisvrou en die Vleisprobleem", *Die Huisvrou*, 22, 1158, 11 Julie 1944, p 23.

99. Barker and Burrigge, "Nutrition Claims in British Women's Magazines", p 118.

100. Albertyn, "Upsetting the Applegart", pp 55-56.

led to increased spending power. This in turn led to shortages, especially in dairy and meat products, because those who were previously unable to afford to eat much protein now had the funds to do so. Various institutions were initiated by the government during this time to address the shortages and the potential for crises. Propaganda was used to ensure public compliance and awareness. The publicity section of the state's Food Control Organisation, for instance, gave advice to housewives on food conservation, prevention of wastage, balanced diets, and purchasing practices.¹⁰¹

During the war, the focus of food-related articles also changed; articles began to provide added information on the best way of providing energy through the consumption food.¹⁰² These articles also attempted to convince readers that the foods that were available were just as nutritious as those that weren't. In the war years British women's magazines focussed on energy provision through food to a far greater degree than *Die Huisvrou* did.¹⁰³ Another trend in *Die Huisvrou* during the war was that food-related articles listed the full names of their authors (as opposed to acronyms or first names) more frequently than before. Their credentials and affiliations were also noted. Miss S. Naudé, for instance, was described as a dietician working for the food control organisation [voedselbeheerorganisasie].¹⁰⁴ Another author, a Miss E.M. Ackerman, worked for the farming magazine *Boerdery in Suid-Afrika* and another, Miss Santi Snyman, was a domestic scientist for the Department of Agriculture and Forestry.¹⁰⁵ Providing the credentials of the authors could perhaps have been to make these food-related articles seem more trustworthy. The end of the period was therefore marked by a formalisation and affirmation of the developments in nutrition which were apparent in the magazine since 1922.

Conclusion

Magazines provide researchers with the opportunity to understand what was expected of the women who read them. While various Afrikaans magazines have received academic attention in South Africa, *Die Huisvrou*, the second oldest Afrikaans magazine for women, has not been researched. Food history is also an under-explored area in this country. In this article I have sought to understand two things: firstly, how the relationship between women and food was communicated through the magazine and secondly, what ideas about nutrition were expressed. More than just providing meals for their families so that they would not be hungry, women were expected to ensure the health of their families by preparing nutritious food.

In order to be equipped to cook nutritious food, the preparation of food was

101. Tinley, *South African Food and Agriculture in World War II*, pp 23 and 25.

102. Naude, "Voedsel vir Energie", *Die Huisvrou*, 21, 1068, 20 Oktober 1942, p 18.

103. Barker and Burridge, "Nutrition Claims in British Women's Magazines", p 119.

104. Naude, "Voedsel vir Energie", *Die Huisvrou*, 21, 1068, 20 Oktober 1942, p 18.

105. Ackerman, "Noodsaaklikheid van Groente in die Dieët", *Die Huisvrou*, 21, 1023, 9 Desember 1941, p 21; S. Snyman, "Sitrusvrugte in die Dieët", *Die Huisvrou*, 22, 1156, 27 Junie 1944, p 19.

expected to be taken seriously. In the pages of *Die Huisvrou* women were advised to acquire the necessary training in the cooking and serving of meals if they were ill-equipped. Ultimately, food, if used correctly, was considered better than medicine. Specific foods were outlined as being appropriate for invalids, but food to keep the family healthy was the priority of the magazine. Beyond keeping their families satisfied with the provision of food, food-related content in the magazine expected women to sustain the health of the family through correct nutrition.

Evidence on what was considered “correct nutrition” is also evident in the magazine. Vitamins were the central focus of many food-related articles and the expression of ideas on nutrition became clearer over the period when advancements were made in the field. It is perhaps because of these developments in the field of nutrition – and the increased ability to communicate these ideas through the print media in South Africa – that expectations of the role of women in the health and general wellbeing of their families intensified.

During the Second World War articles about ensuring proper nutrition despite the shortages and rising prices of certain foods show that housewives were expected to adapt to the new circumstances. The magazine shifted to providing the names and credentials of some of the contributors of food-related content, which also emphasised the importance of training in being able to provide the correct nutrition and the formalisation of the field of nutrition in South Africa. While this article has not provided a complete picture of ideas about women and nutrition in South Africa for the period, I hope that it may encourage future research into women and food in the country’s history. There is also certainly further work to be done in comparing ideas about nutrition in different women’s magazines.

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