

# ROYAL DINNERS AT NSW GOVERNMENT HOUSE

NSW State Council were thrilled to receive a letter from their Patron, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC after the July Pedals. This led to the Governor offering to contribute an article for the October issue. We are very honoured to publish the following.

I very much look forward to receiving Pedals every quarter. The content is always interesting and relevant. On receiving the July edition and, in particular, reading Sally Kersh's Campfire Cooking recipe and Maeike Best's piece on Mint Chocolate, I was inspired to share a little of what goes on here at our historic Government House, Sydney - no cooking tips and tricks, no recipes and no minty health advice though. Rather, I thought I would share with you some of the menus and seating plans for the Royal dinners that have been held at Government House.

One of the oldest menus we have on record was for the dinner to celebrate Her Majesty's Birthday.

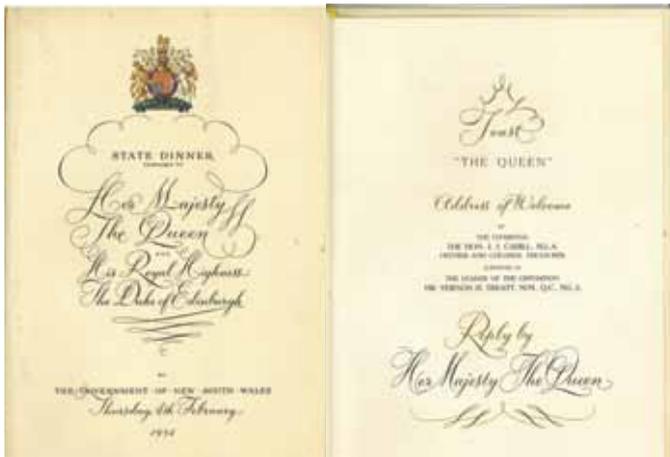
"Her Majesty" was Queen Victoria and the occasion was Her Majesty's 80th birthday on 24 May 1899. The Governor of the time was Lord Beauchamp, the 20th Governor, who took up office only 6 days before. The guests were judges, parliamentarians, senior members of the military, senior bureaucrats, and the Chaplain to the Governor. No females attended the dinner. The absence of female judges and parliamentarians is notable, although explicable as women were not entitled to be admitted as lawyers, to become judges, to be elected to parliament or to become Lord Mayor of Sydney until the passage of the Women's Status Act, 1918. The menu was French in style and scripted in French in beautiful cursive handwriting. Beauchamp was an avid diarist, (his diary is maintained by the State Library), meticulous with dinner plans and a supporter of the arts, assisting Henry Lawson in fulfilling his dream of pursuing his literary career in England. Keen literary historians will know that Lawson's move, although initially successful, saw a decline in the quality of his work and a destruction of his family life.

Our next menu comes more than half a century later, when Queen Elizabeth visited Australia in February 1954. There had been other royal visits. On the very first royal visit, that of Prince Alfred the Duke of Edinburgh and 4th child of Queen Victoria on 12 March 1868, the Prince was shot on Clontarf beach in an assassination attempt by Henry James O'Farrell, an Irish Fenian supporter. The Prince was attended to in the drawing room of Government House (at least so the story goes) before being treated at Sydney Hospital. The Prince's inclination was to have O'Farrell's death sentence referred to The Queen for the exercise of the prerogative of mercy, an inclination not acted on by the New South Wales Government. Arising out of the terrifying event, the citizenry of New South Wales responded by raising money for a new hospital - Prince Alfred Hospital - later named 'Royal Prince Alfred Hospital', in Camperdown.

Although not the first royal visit, Queen Elizabeth's visit was the first of a reigning monarch. Her Majesty and Prince Philip stayed in what became known as The Queen's Suite but which, in most recent renovations at Government House, was transformed into a living, dining and kitchen space in the private apartment.



Seating Plan and Menu for Queen Victoria's 80th birthday



The cover of the State Dinner Booklet 1954



Dinner Menu – Prince Edward

A State Dinner was held on the evening of 4 February 1954.

The menu for the State Dinner was more typically Australian: Fresh Tropical Fruit Cocktail, Poached Local Snapper with Cucumbers, Champagne Sorbet, Roast Spring Chicken with Asparagus tips, Minted Peas, Potato and Tomato Spirals. For dessert Ice Cream Moulds with Crushed Almonds were served, followed by Petits Fours and Coffee. The wine selection was also typically Australian: Corona Private Bin Flor Sherry, Lindeman Grand Vin Porphyry; Lindeman Cawarra Riesling; Penfolds Minchinbury Champagne, Penfold’s Club Port, Penfold’s Old Liqueur 1914 and Seppelt’s Orange Curacao.

During her stay a garden party was held, catered for by contractors who were asked to submit quotes from 5,000 pounds and upwards. Assorted sandwiches were the go as was vanilla ice cream with wafers. Afternoon tea was undoubtedly served to Her Majesty during her stay as she asked Chef Pat Commens for her ginger cake recipe. Pat was, apparently, a deft hand with desserts as, during his visit in 1983, His Royal Highness Prince Charles particularly liked her lemon soufflé.

From the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales in 1983, we have located the breakfast menu given to Princess Diana’s Lady in Waiting, Miss Beckwith-Smith. For breakfast, she was given a choice of what might then have been found at the best of country motels, (indeed it is still the case) with the usual set of parentheses on the printed breakfast menu for her to indicate her choices of: juice, fresh fruit, various cereals including cornflakes, eggs cooked as desired accompanied by tomato, sausages and/or bacon. Sadly, our Government House records don’t reveal the choices of Prince Charles and Princess Dianna on that Sydney summer’s morning. Their breakfast choice remains a State secret!

Most recently, Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex, stayed at Government House during celebrations for the 60th Anniversary of the Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award.

As you will see, the focus now in Government House is showcasing New South Wales produce and only New South Wales produce. When we host events, whether formal dinners or larger receptions, we proudly talk about our produce, making people more aware of the wonderful array of our State’s food and wine, whilst all the time encouraging everyone to engage in a little ‘conscious bias’ when shopping and when entertaining. More recently, we have been sourcing produce in our badly hit areas – initially drought affected areas which was almost state-wide, and then the areas affected by fire and flood.

**Pedals**, of course, is a national magazine, which makes it all the more interesting and relevant. For the other states, don’t despair, I can assure you your Governors are looking after your interests.

**The Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC**  
**Governor of New South Wales**  
**Patron of ICPA (NSW)**

