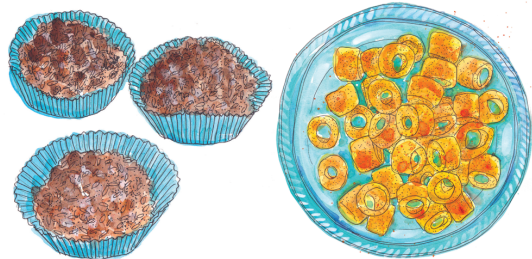


party down
SINEAD STUBBINS SCOFFS HER
WAY THROUGH SOME CLASSIC
AUSTRALIAN KIDDIE TREATS.

ILLUSTRATIONS DAWN TAN



CHOCOLATE CRACKLES

Good grief! I had completely forgotten how heavenly this mysterious congealed Rice Bubbles concoction is. If you added a little rum (or if someone on *Masterchef* ‘deconstructed’ it) I could totally see this making a grown-up comeback. Every aspect of the sensory experience is incredible. The crunch! The pockets of solid chocolate! The way it holds its shape, even when you gnaw at it like a rat chewing through cable! Why did I ever stop eating chocolate crackles? Why did any of us? I inhaled this like a kid discovering The Works at the Pizza Hut dessert station for the very first time. Is it possible that in our fast-paced world of melting ice caps, national terrorism alerts and Tinder profiles we’ve forgotten about the simple pleasures in life? A chocolate crackle isn’t just a chocolate crackle, my friends. Chocolate crackles are freedom.

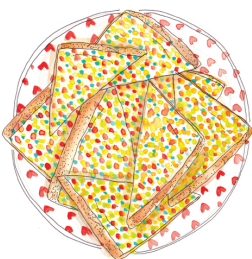
CHEEZELS

The only way to eat Cheezels is to put them on your fingers like rings, and bite them all off individually. Australia doesn’t have a Bill of Rights, but if we did, that would definitely be in there. What I don’t remember about this process is orange residue stuck everywhere, accidentally biting your fingers when you miss the Cheezel, and the deafening sound in your ears when you munch into its styrofoam texture. Are Cheezels actually cheese-flavoured? On the packet it says they’re made with the “goodness of real cheese”, which, in this case, is a very ambiguous statement. Really it’s a unique substance, like kryptonite or sea monkeys. But be warned: if you have a packet to yourself, good luck trying to stop eating them. I had to physically give them to someone else and make them promise not to bring them back.



RED CORDIAL

Cordial is one of the weirder treats we used to consume at kids’ parties. I guess you would think that it’s a healthier alternative to soft drink, but is that really true? All I know is that I’d completely forgotten about the sickly smell, and that ruby red colour that absolutely does not exist in nature. In saying that, if you get the one part cordial to nine parts water right, it’s pretty refreshing! The trick is, once you start drinking it you cannot stop because the moment you do, you descend into a pit of lethargy, headaches and irritability. [My housemate said “Your face!” when I entered the room, which I assume meant I looked bad because there were no follow-up adjectives.] I guess it’s like a kiddie version of vodka and raspberry in that way.



FAIRY BREAD

Let’s be real: fairy bread was always kind of lame. It had a tacky name and too closely resembled a sandwich – something you are biologically destined to hate as a kid and pay far too much for as an adult. Now with mature tastebuds, though, I can tell you that this sprinkle-topped snack is freaking delicious. The combination of the already sugary white bread with that crunch of hundreds and thousands is gastronomic perfection. For the amount of effort it requires, I can’t understand why fairy bread doesn’t remain a dinner party staple into adulthood. Of course, you have to get the butter-to-sprinkle ratio right for optimum fusion: I somehow wound up with a kitchen covered with hundreds and thousands, my bedroom floor covered with hundreds and thousands, and I think I saw a couple in my housemate’s hair. I regret nothing.



COCKTAIL FRANKS

If there was any indication that I’ve been training for this article my entire life, it’s that I still eat cocktail frankfurts on a pretty regular basis. On days I find myself in a weakened state, unable to contend with the world (read: hungover), I’ll cook a whole packet of ‘little boys’ and eat them in bed. Don’t judge me. I refuse to believe that these little wonders are relegated to the world of kids’ parties, because they are straight-up delicious (you need to have them with tomato sauce though, that’s non-negotiable). They probably have the nutritional value of licking a telephone pole, but who cares? You can keep your juice cleanse and kale chips, I’m going to eat cocktail franks until I drop dead, probably from heart failure, definitely with half a cocktail frank still hanging out of my mouth.



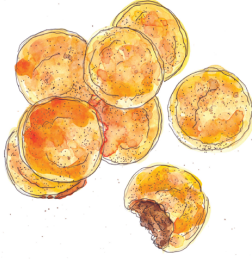
FROG IN A POND

When embarking on this road test I decided that, rather than having a strategy, I would just eat one thing after another. Do kids have a strategy for eating party food? Hell no! This resulted in me feeling like a sloth on quaaludes by the time I ate this. Although there was some conjecture as to what a frog in a pond actually was [some think that the Freddo should be submerged/drowning in jelly, which seems a little macabre for a child’s snack], the basic premise is still the same. It tasted great, but I can’t really foresee an occasion where I would make one for my mates, unless there was a shot situation involved. Jelly is a pain in the arse to make, but the aesthetic value is very pleasing. It did, however, make me feel like I needed to brush my teeth with bleach.



LOLLY FACE CUPCAKES

Cupcakes have experienced a resurgence of late, emerging as a snack that’s totally acceptable for grown-ups to eat without any weird adult baby, cutesy, I-wear-bunny-slippers subtext. But no store-bought red velvet whatever compares to the homemade stuff. Like all great works of art, it’s all about balance: the cake must be sweet, but not so sweet as to overpower the icing. The icing must be plentiful, but not so thick that it coats your mouth like gritty, sugary concrete. I can’t fathom how I used to eat four or five of these guys in one sitting, stuffing the sticky wrappers in my pockets to hide the evidence from the closest parent. Maybe when you get old your tastebuds start to degrade and you’re just more sensitive to sweetness? Could be why I eat so much more stinky cheese now.



PARTY PIES

OK, this is another one that I never really stopped eating. Was I supposed to stop eating party pies? I don’t know if I can accept that. When you buy pies from the freezer aisle of your supermarket, you’re going to have to lower your expectations a little. Sometimes you’ll get a pie that has five times more gravy than meat, causing a volcanic rush of molten goop when you bite into it. Sometimes it’ll taste a little gristly (if you want to continue to enjoy meat pies in the future, don’t think about that too much). But the thing is, despite their questionable fillings, party pies are exactly the right size to munch on while you’re watching TV/when you’ve run out of cocktail franks. If loving party pies over the age of 10 is wrong, I do not want to be right. ✱