Local culinary historian Allison Reynolds has been chosen to help design and write a leaflet for the special edition ANZAC biscuit commemorative tins for 2015.

Allison has had a love of food all her life. After many years as a cooking teacher, she decided to get her masters in Gastronomy at the University of Adelaide. She has also been a guest on ABC radio talking about culinary history and has written articles for local publications.

It was during her Cookbook Roadshow, a presentation series where guests were invited to bring along home recipes and have them dated by Allison, that she came across an old ANZAC biscuit recipe that sparked her interest.

“I was helping a lady named Carol Moore, secretary of the Mount Lofty Historical Society with one of her grandmother's books when I noticed an early recipe for the ANZAC biscuit,” Allison said.

“The recipe didn't have coconut in it. So I started looking and I found out that coconut wasn't included in the early recipes. That was what got me going.”

“I wanted to find the earliest recipe, then I discovered there were several precursors to the ANZAC biscuit. The actual ANZAC biscuit couldn't have happened until 1915.

“There were always biscuits being sent to the troops from the home front but they were definitely not called ANZAC biscuits. As early as the 1920s there were versions but the actual biscuit as we know it today with coconut wasn't established until 1924.

Allison was presented with a grant from the ANZAC Centenary Local Grant's program to write a book about the history of the ANZAC biscuit.

During her research, Allison found that the commercial biscuits made by Unibic were allowed to be produced on mass after an agreement with the RSL that 4 per cent of all profit would go to the club.

Unibic, now known as the Modern Baking Company, first released the limited edition commemorative tins in 2002. Every year the company brings out a new range of tins to raise money and awareness for the RSL and RNZRS to support serving veterans.

After spending time with the company researching for her book, Allison was asked to write and contribute to one of the 2015 limited edition ANZAC tins.

“I'm doing something about what the tins are all about,” Allison said.

“So far they've done tins to do with battles or military personnel, so I felt like no one had recognised the home front. They weren't putting their lives on the line but they were supporting the troops and keeping the country running.”

“I found this picture that I had to source from the war memorial, of soldiers receiving their Christmas gifts from home,” Allison said.

“The ACF had put the gifts into billy cans. It is a great photograph that shows the soldiers in their slouch hats looking happy, which makes a pleasant change.”
“I have made and tested I don't know how many recipes,” Allison said.

“I try to make sure that it is a well tested recipe that goes out. I want to try and make a recipe that even someone who has never cooked before can cook.

“I have three recipes that I give out. One is the original pre 1920s recipe with double the oats, half the sugar and no coconut.

“The second and third recipe have got coconut in them, but one is for people who like their biscuits crispy and one is for people who like their biscuits chewy.”

Allison’s tins can be found in the Woolworths supermarket in Stirling, as well as various other supermarkets around the Hills. If you would like a copy of the leaflet Allison wrote for her tins email her at cookingschool@netscape.net, call 8370 1497, or visit her Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/pages/Culinary-Historian-Allison-Reynolds/455170867903521. To find out more about Unibic's commemorative tins visit www.unibicanzabiscuits.com