

## Channel 4 chef Simon Rimmer takes a trip down memory lane, revisiting our favourite foods of yesteryear imon Rimmer isn't The results are pretty Simon doesn't bother points out. "Suddenly here that let you create all these

imon Rimmer isn't happy with his Angel Delight. Specifically, the butterscotch variety. It's not exactly terrible, but it doesn't taste the way he remembers it as a kid.

So as part of his new show, Britain's Favourite Food, the Channel 4 chef (and ex-Strictly star, let's not forget) decides to do something about it. Teaming up with a taste technician, he sets out to create a version of this instant dessert that replicates the one he grew up with.

grew up with.
"I want to be
transported
back to my
mum's
kitchen as a
10 year old,"
he tells him.

good and it's the starting point for what, over two nostalgia-tinged episodes, becomes a major excursion down memory lane. Simon, 54, revisits a whole range of food and drink products for which the nation went crazy in the 70s and 80s – and reflects on how much we've changed as consumers.

Another example is Smash, the instant mashed potato sold back then by Cadbury and advertised

Cadbury and advertise by cute little tin

**CONVENIENCE** 

**FOODS FELT** 

LIBERATING'

SIMON RIMMER

aliens, chuckling at the idea that silly, primitive humans would go to the faff of mashing actual spuds. Simon doesn't bother making his own version of this, mind you, because he wasn't much of a fan.

"I remember the first time I was served it," he tells us. "I was so excited. The ad had sold us the dream. And then I tasted it and I thought it was garbage."

But that advert, like many food commercials of its time, was tapping in to the nation's desire for sophistication. Not the sophistication of nowadays, when it's all about fresh, healthy ingredients, but sophistication 70s-style, when chemicals were cool and kind of space age.

"That was the industry being sophisticated back then because it had never happened before," Simon points out. "Suddenly here was this amazing product in powdered form. It meant freedom.

"One of the big things we discover in the series is that these convenience foods felt liberating, particularly with more women going to work. Here was something that let you create all these flavours just by adding milk, water or whatever."

Vesta curries were another example: "I remember being given one, as a birthday tea, and thinking I was king of the world!"

But it wasn't all powdered stuff in packets. Among

Maid and aimed at boys. Fab, advertised by *Thunderbirds*' Lady Penelope, was made by rival Lyons and aimed at girls. Simon says he actually preferred the latter "although my absolute favourites were Count Draculas. Remember those? Blackcurrant, ice cream and, in the top

Simon's fondest recollections

are 70s lollies. Before many homes had freezers, the ice

cream van pulling into your

street was a major event.

remembers two lollies in

particular. Zoom, shaped like a rocket, was made by Lyons

The programme

Perhaps hinting at the foodie he was destined to become, Simon was violently opposed to Findus Crispy Pancakes ("The thought still makes me gag") but instantly fell for the taste of garlic, first experienced on a family holiday in Italy in 1973.

third, red ielly."

Marks & Spencer's Chicken Kievs, oozing garlic butter, were one of the first attempts to sell its delights to home diners in Britain. But when Simon chats to the M&S developer, we discover the product was nearly pulled just weeks before launch. "My boss said, 'You can't put garlic in that," she tells him. "It's foreign – the public won't like it."

Drinks-wise, the series recalls how Blue Nun and Piat D'Or aimed to impress a nation where wine was still deemed a bit alien.

"Suddenly we had this ridiculously sweet product that appealed to a very unsophisticated British palate," says Simon. And Babycham? That was all about persuading women to break with convention.

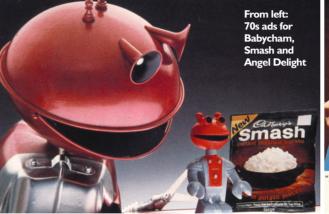
"Back then it was considered vulgar for women to go to pubs and drink alcohol," he says. "Babycham was the first drink geared towards them."

So it's fair to conclude that times have changed a tad. But however unappealing some of these old products may seem to the modern palate, Simon can't help but recall them with fondness. That tends to be the way with nostalgia.

"It might just be a rose-tinted taste buds kind of thing," he concedes. "Looking back on your past, you edit out the rubbish bits and store the nicer memories. But that's often the way. The world may be in turmoil right now, but in 30 years' time we'll probably say, 'Oh, life was so much nicer in 2018!"

Mike Ward







na flavour Angel Delight is pure genius. ste to tempt any palate."