

Bush foods



Mangata, desert quandong

Hunting and gathering has linked Anangu with the land since the very beginning (creation time). Gathering food expresses and reaffirms knowledge and ownership of the land.

Pitjantjatjara words for bush foods

Mai (pronounced may)

- Vegetables such as tjanmaṭa (bush onion) and wakati (native pigweed)
- Fruits such as kampurarpa (desert raisin), arnguli (bush plum), ili (native fig) and mangata (quandong)
- Seeds such as wakalpuka (dead finish) and wanguṇu (woollybutt grass).

Tjuratja (pronounced joo-rrat-ja)

- Sweet foods such as nectar from kaliny-kalinypa (honey grevillea) and tjaḷa (honey ants).

Maku (pronounced mah-koo)

- Edible grubs such as witchetty grubs.

Kuka (pronounced koo-ka)

- Meat such as tinka (sand goanna), ngintaka (perentie) and rabbit
- Eggs of birds and lizards.

Tasks for women, men and children

Anangu women were traditionally responsible for gathering mai, tjuratja, maku and some kuka.

Men can, and do, dig for honey ants or collect fruit, but generally they are more likely to be hunting larger kuka (meat).

The men use a kuḷaṭa (spear) with the addition of a miru (spear thrower) to hunt maḷu (red kangaroo), kanyaḷa (most common arid-zone sub-species of kangaroo) and kaḷaya (emu).

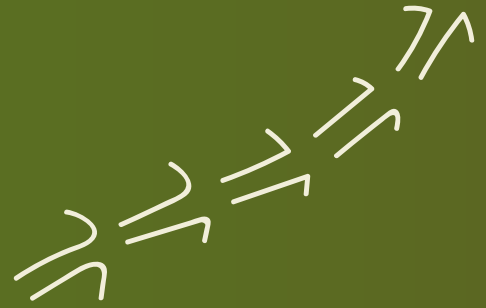
Children have an important role to play in gathering and hunting. They accompany their parents and other adults to collect bush food and play, dig and work with the adults while watching and learning.

With bush food collection, women and men perform specific tasks that contribute to the benefit of the whole community.

Traditionally, the separation of men's and women's functions exists by law, and these functions are balanced by a strong sense of cooperation.

Men and women perform specific bush food collection tasks to benefit of the whole community.

Today, people still enjoy hunting and gathering bush foods for teaching, enjoyment and experience



Maku, witchetty grubs



Seeds and grindstone



Implements used in food collection

Women use three types of bowls for food collection. A wira is the smallest of the three bowls and is also used as a digging tool. Kanilpa is used primarily for cleaning seeds and pitj, the largest dish, can be used for rocking a baby, or carrying water (depending on the shape). A head ring, manguri, is used to carry dishes on top of the head and a wana (digging stick), is used to loosen the earth to find bush foods.

A large grindstone is used to process seed and the ground seed is then made into nyuma (seed cake). A smaller grindstone is used for preparing medicinal plants and ochre.

These traditionally designed implements are now often made for sale as artefacts. They are also used for demonstration and learning purposes.

The wana (digging stick) and wira (small scoop) are now often made of metal and the kulata (spear) is often replaced by a rifle.

Today people still enjoy hunting and gathering bush foods for teaching, enjoyment and experience. Animal foods are still prepared according to the Law. Such knowledge is highly valued and the older people are keen to pass it on to their children and grandchildren.

There is a great deal more to learn

- The information in this fact sheet represents only a small fraction of the traditional knowledge of Anangu.
- Anangu spend a lifetime learning from their parents and grandparents and it is the richness of this living tradition and culture that makes Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park a World Heritage living cultural landscape.

We hope you enjoy the opportunity to learn about Anangu culture. You will gain a new appreciation of the importance of conserving the park's natural and cultural values.

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