

Elcho Is. Foods



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Language: Djambarrpuyŋu

Story by Senior Girls with support from Helen Rrikawuku, Pam Stephenson and Michel Lapointe

Original illustrations by Senior Girls, David Gelma and Paul Biyarranydjarrawuy © 1980.

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Pam Stephenson, our Teacher Linguist, corrected the Yolŋu Matha spelling.

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INTRODUCTION

Food is a significant focus for all people, especially for those whose way of getting it is by hunting and gathering it. Due to lack of time and the small number of girls in this class, this booklet barely touches on the vast and fascinating wealth of information that could be collected in this community.

The girls based their articles by answering the following questions.

1. Name

(The name of the food in Yolŋu Matha and in English.)

2. Location

(Where these foods would be found? E.g. on mud flats, in the bush, on rocks, etc.)

3. Seasons

What time of the year are these found in abundance?

E.g. Wet, Dry or ALL year round.

4. Signs/Symptoms

How does one tell when these foods are ready for consumption?

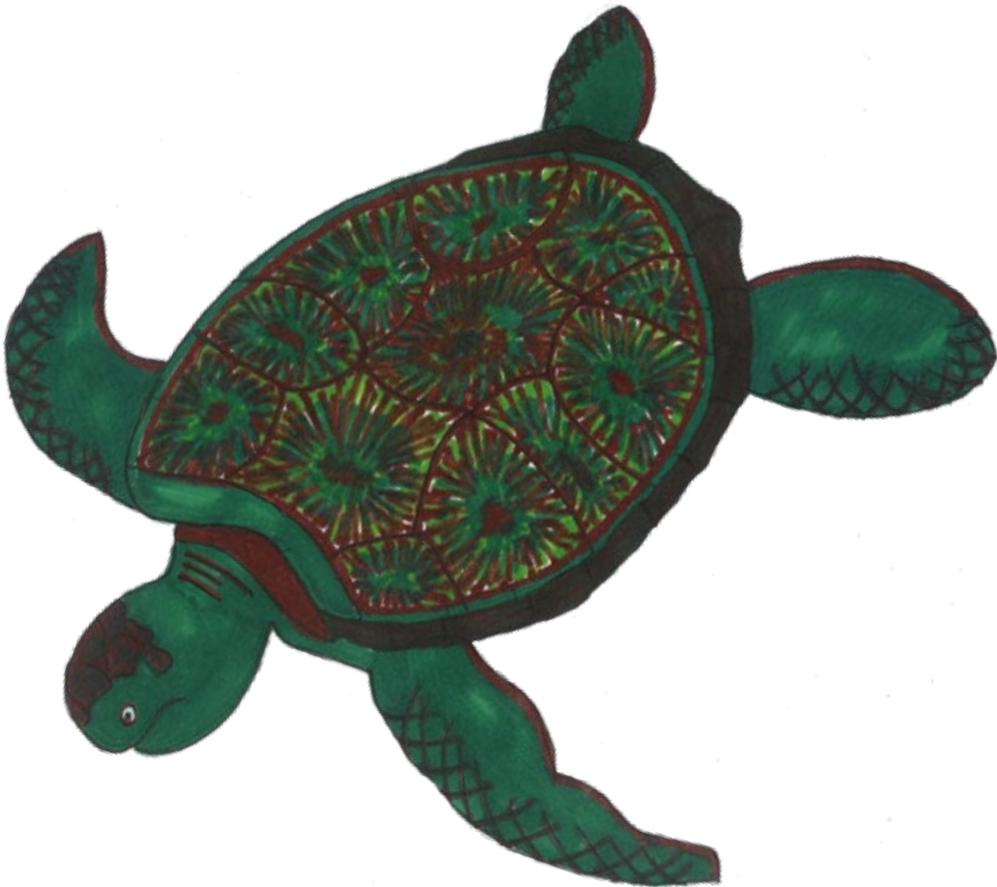
E.g. Gäŋa, or Wild Passionfruit. When the skin turns from green to yellow, it is read to eat.

5. Cooking Method

Both Traditional & Modern boiling, roasting, baking no cooking done.

In some articles the students have written out recipes.

To conclude the booklet, the different types of food have been classified according to the following table.



FOOD CLASSIFICATION

Name

Season

Yolŋu Matha	English	Wet	Dry	All Year
djanda	goanna			*
ganguri	wild yam	end		
gäŋa	passion fruit			*
guku	wild honey		*	
gurrumattji	wild duck		*	
latjin	mangrove worm			*
ŋarraŋi	wild apple	*		
mädi	crayfish			*
maranydjalk	stingray			*
maypal mekawu mitawara	seashells of all kinds oyster shellfish (species)			* * *
miyapunu miyapunu mapu'	turtle turtle eggs			* *
ŋathu	cycad			
ŋarirri	fish			*
numurray	wild fruit	*		
nyoka'	crab			*
räkay	wild fruit	*		
wäk wak	water lily	*		
warrukay	barracuda			*
wurrpaŋ'	emu			*
weti'	wallaby			*
wuŋuymuŋ	wild grapes	*		
yukuwa	(similar to yam)	*		

WETI'

Wallabies or weti' are plentiful on Elcho Island. They are found in the bush, mostly around billabongs. We get weti' all the time. The men go out to kill weti. Everybody in the family eats weti'.

BOILED WETI'

Ingredients

Weti'

Water

Salt

Equipment

Big Saucepan

Knife for cutting

Method

1. Make a big fire.
2. Burn all hair on weti' and cut it up to clean it.
3. Pour some water and salt in the saucepan.
Put pieces of weti' in and boil it until they turn brown.
4. Eat weti' with damper or wild yams.



MARANYDJALK

Maranydjalk or stingrays are found in shallow or deep waters, but mostly they hang around in shallow waters.

We get maranydjalk all year round.

When maranydjalk is cooked everybody eats it, except women who are having their monthly periods at that time.

My family once told me a story about maranydjalk. It's a sad one too.

Long ago there was a man and his wife who lived at Mandji.

The man went fishing and caught a stingray. When he brought it home, his wife cooked it. At that time his wife was menstruating.

When the time came for the maranydjalk to be eaten, both the man and his wife ate greedily.

The following day the man went fishing again. He was eaten up by a shark. Since then, it is believed that women must not eat maranydjalk while they are having their period, or someone might get killed by a shark when fishing or bitten by a snake.



ROAST MARANYDJALK

Ingredients

Maranydjalk

Water

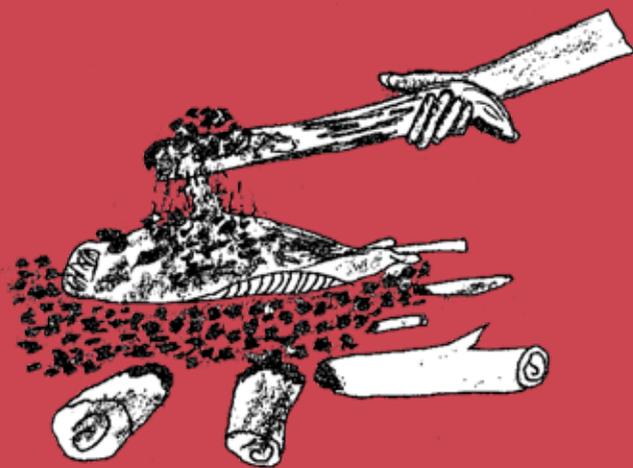
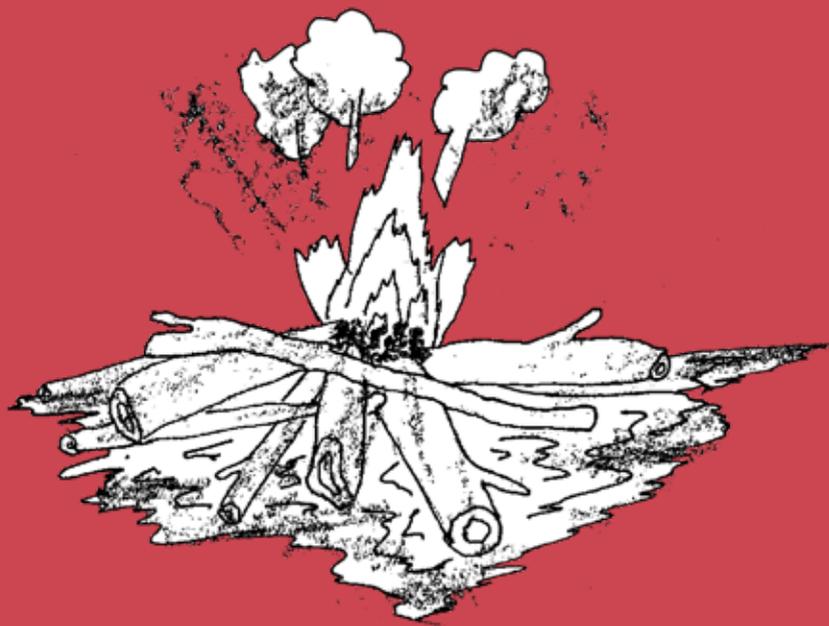
Equipment

wood to make fire

Stick to turn maranydjalk

Method

1. Make a fire.
2. Cut off maranydjalk's tail.
3. Put maranydjalk on the fire and cook it. When it is cooked take fat out and bury it in the sand. This is to stop it from drying out.
4. Take flesh of maranydjalk and wash out any sand or coal.
5. Use fresh water and wash the meat once more, squeezing out excess water.
6. Mix the meat with the fat and everybody is set to eat except menstruating women.



WÄKWAK

Wäkwak in English is water lilly.

They grow in billabongs, where the water is not running.
We find wäkwak during the wet season.

We can pick them when they are big or small, and with flowers or no flowers on them. Both the flower and the stem are eaten. We take out the yellow part of the flowers and the skin but we eat the rest. We do not cook wäkwak.



YUKAWA

One of the types of food that grows from roots found on Elcho Island is called yukuwa. It is similar to ganguri (yams).

Yukuwa is like ganguri, found under the ground. We use digging sticks to get yukuwa out.

The differences in these two types of foods are that ganguri(s) have bigger leaves and are bigger in size.

They have a different taste to yukuwa.

When eating yukuwa, we find a lot of strings in it, and that is why yukuwa has to be chewed. Everybody eats yukuwa.

BOILED YUKUWA

Ingredients

Yukuwa (any number)

Water (enough to cover yukuwa)

Equipment

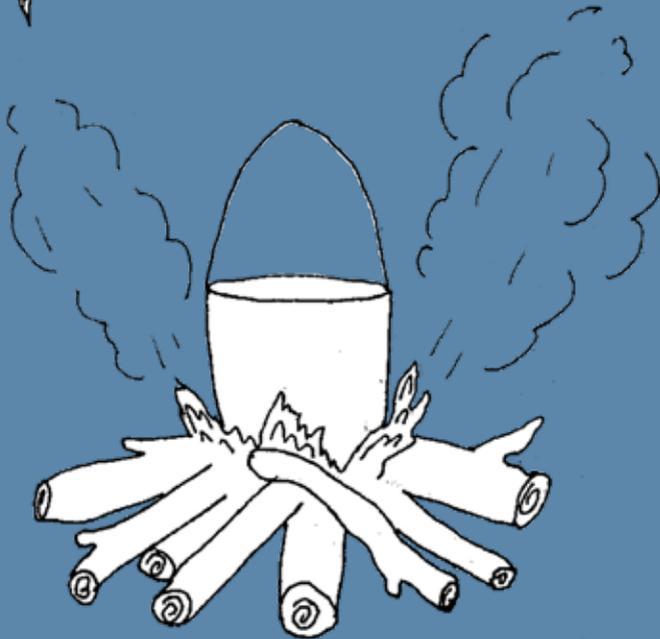
Wood for fire

billy/empty milk tins

Method

1. Make a fire.
2. Put yukuwa and water in the tins and put on the fire to boil. When the yukuwa(s) turn brown, they are ready to be eaten.

We don't eat the outside skin. We take it off and eat the white part.



MIYAPUNU AND MIYAPUNU MAPU'

Miyapunu(s) or Turtles live in the sea. They come ashore to the sandy spots to lay their eggs.

First of all, they dig very deep holes, about the length of a person's arm, and put all their eggs inside. Before the miyapunu go back into the sea, they fill the holes up with sand.

Men hunt for miyapunu in the dry season. Miyapunu mapu' (turtle eggs) are also hunted for in the dry season.

When hunting for miyapunu mapu', we look for tracks that miyapunu had left. When we find these tracks, we use a long stick to poke it into the spot where the miyapunu had dug. If the stick comes out with yellow stuff on it, we know that mapu's are in that spot. The yellow colour is the colour from the egg yolk, that the stick has pierced. We then dig the sand out, and take out all the eggs from the hole.

As soon as we take the mapu', we don't wait around. We cook them by boiling them in fresh water for a short time and EAT THEM.

Miyapunu hunting is men's work. They use spears with a strong string tied to the end. When they see a miyapunu, they throw this spear at it. If they are lucky, the miyapunu is hit, someone jumps overboard to get the injured miyapunu. They bring the miyapunu home for tucker.

Everybody in the family eats it, except for women having their monthly period.



ROAST MIYAPUNU

Ingredients

Miyapunu

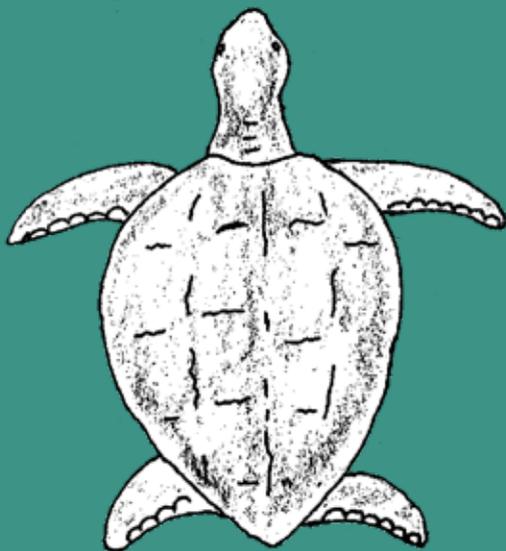
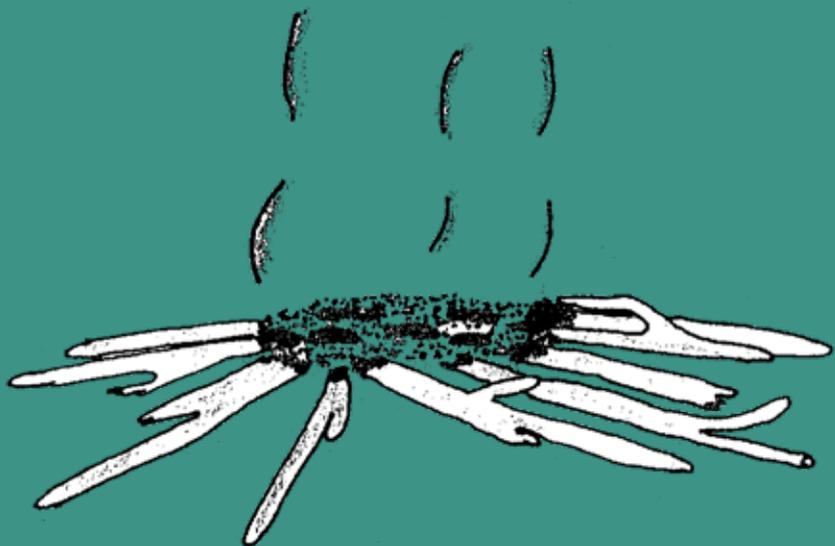
Equipment

Firewood

Stones

Method

1. Make a big fire and heat stones up. The stones must get very hot.
2. Chop head off and take out the parts that are not eaten.
3. Put hot stones inside miyapunu through the neck. Stand the miyapunu in the sand for a while. During this time the blood and some of the intestines are cooked.
4. Cut the miyapunu into pieces. Some of the intestines can be eaten at this stage.
5. Put miyapunu pieces in the shell and cook it under hot stones until cooked.
6. Serve the meat with blood.



NYOKA'

Nyoka' or crabs are found in holes in the mangroves, or on mud flats. We find nyoka' all the time. We eat big nyoka' and small nyoka'.

The only people who are not allowed to eat nyoka' are the women who are having their monthly period at the time when the nyoka' is eaten. If they break this taboo, someone might get bitten by a snake or eaten by a shark when hunting or fishing.

ROAST NYOKA'

Ingredients

Nyoka' (any number)

Equipment

Wood for fire

Stick for turning nyoka'

Method

1. Make a big fire.
2. While the flames are going, put the nyoka' on.
3. The nyoka', while on the fire should start to change colour. From green-orange-red.
4. Use stick to turn the nyoka' over to cook the other side.

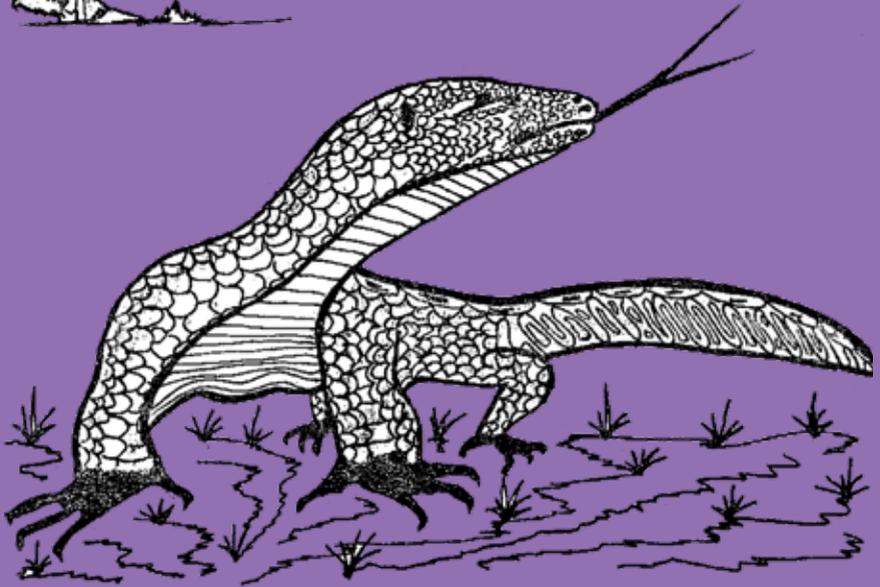


WULUYMUN

The name of this wild fruit is called wuluymun.
In English, it is called wild grape. It is found in the bush and it grows on vines. We find wuluymun in the wet seasons. When this fruit turns purple, it is eaten raw and there are no taboos about it. The whole family can eat it.

DJANDA

Goanna in Yolŋu Matha is Djanda.
Goannas are found in holes in the ground or in trees. They can be found in wet or dry seasons. The little ones are called lapakarra. We eat both djana and lapakarra. Whenever we get the chance to see a djanda, we try to kill it, either by a stick or nowadays with guns. Like miyappunu, nyoka' and maranydjalk, women having monthly period must not eat djanda.



GANGURI

The food that I am going to talk about is called GANGURI or GULAKA. In English, it is called Wild Yam. Ganguri is found at the end of the wet season. It grows under the ground like roots, but gets bigger in size. We use digging sticks to dig out ganguri. We can dig out ganguri either small or big, as long as it is at the end of the wet season. There are no taboos about eating ganguri. Everybody in the family eats ganguri.

ROAST GANGURI

Ingredients

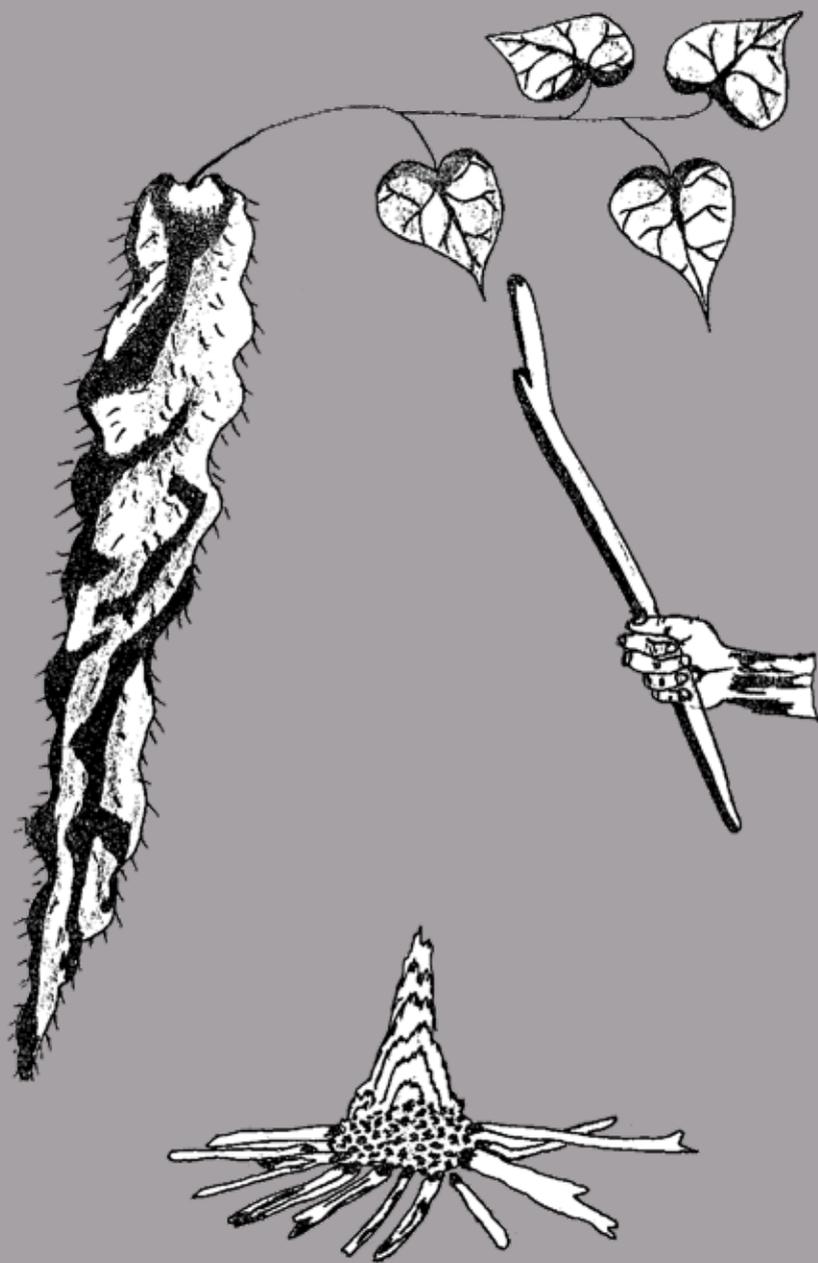
Ganguri

Equipment

Firewood to make a fire
Stick for turning ganguri

Method

1. Make a big fire.
2. Put ganguri in the fire.
3. Cook one side first and then turn it to cook the other side.
4. If it turns brown/black, it is ready to be taken out, cleaned and eaten.



NATHU

Then name of this food that I am going to write about is called Cycad or N̄athu in Yolŋu Matha (wild damper). N̄athu trees grow everywhere in the bush.

These trees start producing nuts in the middle of the dry season. In the middle of the wet season these nuts fall to the ground and are ready to be picked. This is women's job.

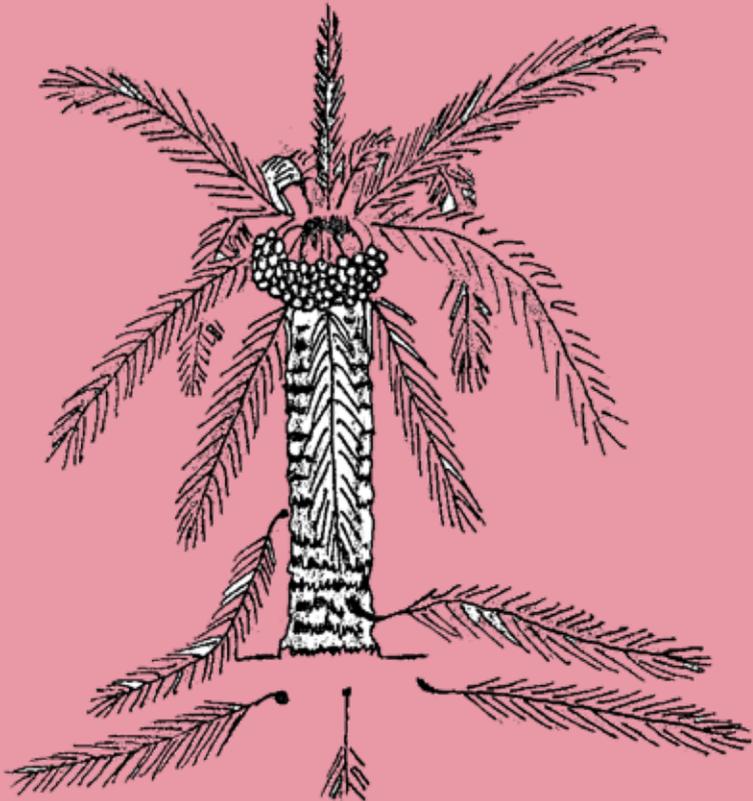
They collect the nuts and put them in paper bark baskets and take them home. Sometimes they leave them in the bush.

They leave these nuts alone for approximately two months. After that, the women crack the shells open to get the meat out. They use two big stones to flatten the nut.

The flattened n̄athu are put into bags and are left in small creeks or billabongs with fresh water for about 4-7 days.

After this period, they take the bags out and grind the nuts again. It can be eaten raw or it can be cooked. It tastes good and the Yolŋu people like it very much.

N̄athu (cont).



BAKED NATHU (DAMPER)

Ingredients

Nathu

Water

Equipment

Paperbark

Firewood

2 big round stones

Method

1. Make a fire
2. Grind nathu again with stones.
3. Add a little water to moisten it.
4. Make it into a damper. Wrap it up in paperbark, and when the fire has turned into hot coal, put wrapped up nathu in hot ashes and cover it up.
5. Bake it until cooked. It does not take very long to cook.
6. EAT IT. YUM! YUMMMMM.



GUKU

I am going to talk about GUKU or in English it is called WILD HONEY. Guku can be found in trees or on the ground.

The guku we find in YIRRITJA trees is called NIWUDA and the one found in DHUWA trees is called YARRPANY.

We also get guku from mangrove trees but it is a bit hard and it is cold to eat, as though it has been left in refrigerators.

Guku occurs at the beginning of the dry season. We call it RARRANDHARR. The guku found on the ground is called BARNGITJ. Guku comes to end at the beginning of the wet season. Other wild fruits replace them on the trees.

If we eat too much guku, it makes us thirsty. There are no taboos relating to the eating of guku. Everybody eats it whether it comes from DHUWA or YIRRITJA trees.

Sometimes if we haven't got golden syrup for damper, we use guku instead.



RÄKAY

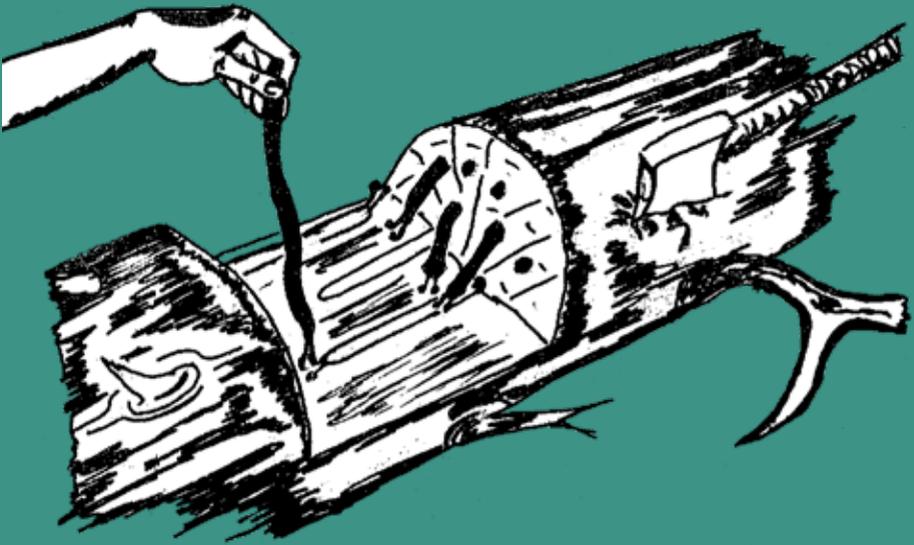
Räkay is wild fruit. It grows on vines. It has a brown colour on the outside. When the skin turns black we get it and eat it. The inside part is white. Räkay has a sweet taste. We find räkay in the wet season. Everybody eats räkay when they get them.



LATJIN'

The name of this food is Latjin'.

In English, it is mangrove worms. We find them in trunks of mangrove trees. To get them out of the tree trunks, we have to split open the trunks. These mangrove worms make tunnels in the tree and live there. They are easy to get out because they don't move very fast. Mangrove worms are all year round food. They are good source of protein for us, we can eat latjin' raw or we can cook them by boiling them. Sometimes when they are eaten raw, they taste a bit salty.



GÄŃA

GäŃa or Wild Passionfruits are found all year round in the bush. They grow on vines that creep along the ground or climb trees and bushes.

When the green fruit turns yellow in colour, we get them and eat them. Everybody eats GäŃa. We don't cook gäŃa, we eat them when they are yellow. They have sweet taste and a sweet smell.

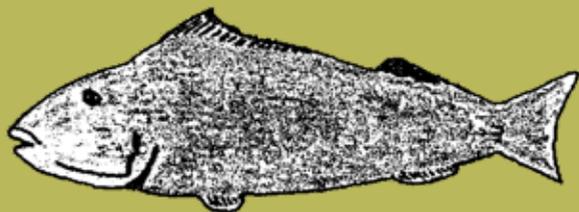
ELVIRA DJAKIRRI Grade 10

WARRUKAY. (ŃARIRRI)

I am going to talk about one type of fish.

This fish is called Warrukay. Warrukay in English is called Barracuda. We find Warrukay all the time, in shallow waters or deep waters. Warrukay have very big and sharp teeth. The law about this is that pregnant women are not allowed to eat it. It is believed that if this taboo is broken, their babies will have sores on their belly buttons, sore all over their bodies or will have deformed teeth. We cook Warrukay just like any other fish. We put them on hot coals and cook them until we see no blood coming out.

JENNY WULUMDHUNA YUNUPIŃU Grade 9



MEKAWU

Mekawu in English are oysters. We find mekawu on the rocks all the time. When we go looking for mekawu, we use stones to hit them off the rocks. We crack open the shells and take the meat out, and put them in tins. We use fresh water to cook the mekawu. They take only a short time to cook. When they are cooked we use our fingers, sticks or spoons to eat them. The only people who are not allowed to eat mekawu, are those women who are having their period.

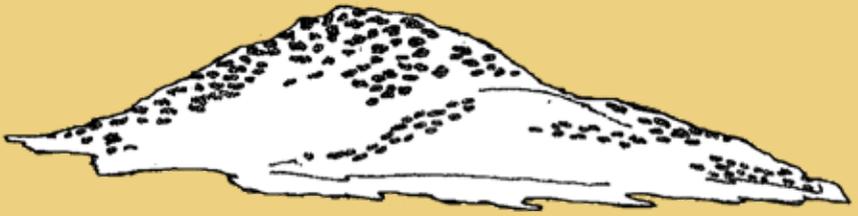
RHODA GOLUŃ grade 8A

NUMURRAY'

Numurray' is a wild fruit found on this island. We get them at the end of the wet season.

When the colour changes from green to yellow it is ready to be eaten. We do not cook this fruit, and everybody eats it. It tastes like gäŃa and we love them very much.

MAVIS WARRŃGILŃA Grade 9



DJULUKUN

Djulukun is a wild fruit. We eat this fruit when it is green. We don't cook it. This plant climbs up the trees, so sometimes we have to climb the trees. We find Djulukun all the time.



