

Food Preparation

Aboriginal Food Preparation



Nardoo

(*Marsilea drummondii*)
Nardoo is a fern that grows in fresh water. The leaves float on the surface and look like a four-leafed clover. The seeds lie under the water and are gathered and ground into a paste. Cakes and small breads were made by cooking the paste on hot rocks. A good source of food to satisfy hunger, but has little or no nutritional value unless prepared properly into a type of flour.



Wattle

There are many varieties of wattle trees found all over Australia. Seeds were harvested green by taking the whole immature legume. The pods added to a hot burning log fire or laid on hot coals until the seed was steamed. The seed pods were split open and the seeds taken out. These were then eaten like the English garden peas.



Many foods are not safe to be eaten raw or untreated so they are prepared in different ways.

Food can be prepared in many ways. Fire is used often to cook meats and fish, seeds and nuts were ground or roasted on the coals and shellfish, vegetables and meats are also steamed and boiled. **Washing**

To remove poisons and bitter tastes from some vegetables, they were sliced or ground into a paste and put into a dilly bag and hung in running water in a stream.



Grinding

A little water was sprinkled onto a flat stone slab and the seeds were added and ground into a paste or mashed using a small round stone thus making a type of dough. **Pounding**

Some roots have a horrible taste to them. By pounding the roots with a heavy stick or stone this taste would be reduced. Sometimes the root would be pounded then roasted to remove the taste. **Straining**

Dilly bags or bundles of grass or even a depression in the sand was used to drain excess water away from some vegetables and plants. **Grating**

Graters made from pieces of rough bark or very rough grass leaves were used to grate some vegetables before washing them. **Boiling**

Water was boiled using bark troughs, coolamons or large sea shells. This was used in many ways to prepare food. **Tossing**

Coolamons or bark troughs were filled with seeds and other bits of bark that were gathered. By lightly tossing the seeds in the wind the light rubbish would float in the air and blow away leaving the heavy seed to fall back into the container. Heavy rubbish could be later separated from the seeds with a rocking motion.