

Food Rules & Laws

Aboriginal Food Rules & Laws



Witchetty grubs



Mudga Tree
(A. aneura)

Seeds were collected in a container filled with water. The seeds were then worked between the hands detaching the oils which are very oily and flavour the water with the taste of the oils. This provided a tasty energy drink. The seeds were then used to make damper.

The laws laid down by The Dreaming affect the types of food eaten, who gathered or hunted what type of food, eating habits and the way in which food is prepared or stored.



Rules and Laws differed from one language group to another depending on the environment and The Dreaming stories that belonged to that area. There are many, many laws and rules, too many to list.

In many language groups the men and women eat separately. In some seasons when food is short, some people have preference over others for various types of food. Heart, liver, kidneys and other animal organs are often saved for the elders in the language groups.

Some foods have spiritual significance to some people. These are often called totems. These animals and plants need to be protected and were often not eaten or only eaten during ceremonies.

Pregnant women, boys prior to initiations and girls prior to puberty would be denied foods for sacred reasons. Certain foods are prepared by women, others by men. Yams, roots, nuts, fruit and shellfish are often prepared by women, whilst flesh foods such as kangaroo and emu are often prepared by men. This rule is not the same in all language groups.

In some language groups the men do all the cooking, whilst in others it is the women's job. In some language groups, the food prepared by a man was not eaten by a women, and vice versa. At times of sadness (mourning) or during some ceremonies only certain people could feed particular people. For example in some areas a person who is mourning may not touch food until ceremonies for the deceased are over.