

Abstract:

Australian native food has come to be called bushfood. However, this term has several different connotations depending on the context. Firstly, while it is often used to denote both flora and fauna, it has been widely adopted by many people as a synonym for products obtained only from plants. Secondly, the term would mean slightly different things to an Aboriginal Australian and a European Australian. Before 1788, the Aboriginal people of Australia ate bushfood within a holistic philosophy that encompassed social structures, belief systems and survival strategies as well as nutrition. When Europeans came along new foods and cooking styles were introduced and to speak about bushfood now is to conjure up a very different image of the way in which the food is prepared and regarded.

Many of the products that come under the title of (plant) bushfood are, in fact, fruits. This paper gives an overview of a number of aspects of tropical and subtropical indigenous Australian fruits including their history of use, their place in the more general Bushfood Industry and a discussion of some of the key species within both the traditional Aboriginal and commercial European context.