

## **Anzac Soup, Curried Galahs, and Sea Weed Jelly. The *Western Mail's* 1938 Bush Recipe Competition**

August 2024

In March 1938, the *Western Mail* (a weekly newspaper in Western Australia) announced the opening of a 'Bush Recipes Competition'.

Our new competition "Bush Recipes" is open from now until April 14. All recipes submitted must be taken from the natural resources of the Australian bush. Country people should find scope in this competition for their bush-craft and originality. Useful prizes are offered for entries gaining first, second and third places in the competition, which will be decided on the votes of readers in the same way as the Tight Corner contest.<sup>1</sup>

In this article I review the competition entries for what they tell us about Australians' engagement with native food in the 1930's.<sup>2</sup> The caveat here is that it is only native animals, one native fruit and a seaweed for which entries were provided.

Most of the entries were for a single recipe but there were also entries that bracketed a few recipes together as dinner menus (see the examples below). The full list of entries is Appendix 1.

### **Native food in earlier cookery books and newspaper recipes**

Recipes for native foods had been published over the 1930s in cookery books and newspapers. I reviewed nine cookery books plus two from a decade earlier. The recipes offered limited opportunities for engagement. There were only two recipes for kangaroo and one for wallaby. There were four recipes for wild duck. There were several recipes for pigeons but it's ambiguous if these are for domestically raised pigeons or wild pigeons. A list of the cookery books reviewed together with the recipes is Appendix 2.

A search in newspapers between 1930 - 1939 found just two recipes for kangaroo and one for emu. There were seven for quandongs, one for pigeon, several for wild duck.

### **The 'Bush Recipes'**

Sixty-seven recipes for native foods were published: 30 for kangaroo, 7 for quandong, 7 for emu, 5 for possum, 2 for galah, 2 for fish, 2 for goanna, 3 for pigeon, 4 for parrot, 1 for gilgies (freshwater crayfish), 1 for black duck, 1 for mock duck, 1 for bardie (witchetty grub)', 1 for seaweed.

With a few exceptions the recipes were firmly within Anglo-Australian cuisine. For example, there are 26 recipes for kangaroo<sup>3</sup> in soups, stews, rissoles, casseroles, camp pies, curry, baked and braised, made into brawn and this one for Fried Roo Steak:

#### **Fried Roo Steak and Onions**

Cut the flesh from the loin of the 'roo in slices half an inch thick. Dip them into flour, pepper and salt. Have ready a large pan with fat boiling hot. Put in the steak and on each piece put a thin slice of bacon. Sprinkle two cut up onions over the whole, turn over meat when brown and when both sides are done give whole a good stir through. Shift on to meat dish, sprinkle flour into pan, pour in two cups of water, stir for a few minutes and put into gravy boat. Serve with mashed potatoes

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<sup>1</sup> 'Bush Recipes Competition', *Western Mail* 17 March 1938 p.33

<sup>2</sup> I take 'natural resources of the Australian bush' to mean native foods and use that term throughout. Recipes for rabbits, honey and pie melon were accepted in the Competition but are excluded from this article.

<sup>3</sup> Unaccountably there are no recipes for wallaby

and mushrooms. Peel and stem plenty of mushrooms, shake and wash. Have ready a large saucepan quarter full of milk, one tablespoon butter, salt and pepper to taste, add the mushrooms and cook till tender. Mix one tablespoon of arrowroot in cold water and thicken the mushrooms to suit taste.<sup>4</sup>

And here's a recipe for Emu Egg Sponge:

Emu Egg Sponge.

Beat one emu egg for five minutes; add one and a half cups of sugar, beat for 15 minutes longer, then add two cups of flour to which two teaspoonfuls of baking powder have been added. Lastly add one cup of boiling water in which one tablespoonful of butter has been melted. Bake in a quick oven. This recipe makes two large sandwiches.<sup>5</sup>

Vegetables, too, were firmly from Anglo-Australian cuisine: onion, carrot, parsnip celery, potato.

Anzac Soup.

Take one kangaroo tail. Boil in plenty of water the day before required. Skim and add two sliced potatoes, four onions, four carrots and seasoning the day required. Before serving lift out tail and thicken if desired.<sup>6</sup>

The boundary was pushed between what was thought of as edible and acceptable and what was thought of as inedible and unacceptable. There were recipes for possum, goanna, galah, parrot and bardie/witchetty grub.

Possum in the Ashes

This is an unusual and delicious way of cooking possum (native, of course). Take one nice fat possum, pluck all fur off and clean, making as small a hole as possible. Pound the liver and replace, then skewer firmly. Roast in hot ashes. When cooked, the skin pulls off cleanly and result, a very appetising dish.<sup>7</sup>

(Savoury) Bardie

Two bardies to each person. Take away heads, squeeze from cases. Add them to half-cup of salt, pepper, teaspoon butter, half teaspoon white flour. Mix quickly. Serve on buttered toast.<sup>8</sup>

There are recipes that assure the cook prejudiced against native foods that they will not be able to distinguish native food from non-native food.

Kangaroo Camp Pie

Take one and a half pounds kangaroo, half pound lean bacon, one egg a little ground mace and thyme, pepper and salt to taste. Mince finely the kangaroo and bacon (putting through] mincer twice), add seasoning, then blend thoroughly with the egg. Pack into a small billy or pudding mould with a lid and steam like a pudding for two hours. When cooked remove the lid and set aside until cold, then turn out. "Wild meat" done in this way defies detection.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> 'XLII Fried Roo Steak and Onions' *Western Mail* 28 April 1938 p.36

<sup>5</sup> 'II Emu Egg Sponge' *Western Mail* 21 April 1938 p.34

<sup>6</sup> 'XL A Menu of Bush Fare. Anzac Soup', *Western Mail* 28 April 1938 p.36

<sup>7</sup> 'LXII. Possum in the Ashes', *Western Mail* 12 May 1938 p.33

<sup>8</sup> 'XXIX '(Savoury) Bardie', *Bush Recipes, Western Mail* 21 April 1938 p.34

<sup>9</sup> 'LXVII Kangaroo Camp Pie', *Bush Recipes, Western Mail* 5 May 1938 p.33

Herbs are used sparingly usually as 'mixed herbs' or parsley. I have a particular fondness for this recipe for goanna – it's sort of a fusion between Indigenous and Anglo cuisines.

#### Goanna Tail and Parsley Sauce

Skin tail and cut into small pieces. Place in a saucepan, and just cover with water. Cook till tender. Make parsley sauce as follows:- Boil one pint of water, throw into it one tablespoon finely minced parsley and half a teaspoonful of salt. Then add two ounces flour, mixed to smooth paste in a gill of water. Stir over fire until it thickens. Break into it one or two ounces of butter. Put cooked tail into this, and serve hot.<sup>10</sup>

There is also little spicing other than a couple of recipes inevitably using curry powder and one using nutmeg.

#### Curried Galahs

Take six galahs, cover with about one quart of water. When boiled for half an hour add two onions, pepper and salt to taste and let boil for half an hour longer. Then take out half a cup of the galah stock and add to it one tablespoon of curry and two tablespoons of flour. Mix well together and add to galahs. Let simmer for quarter of an hour before serving.<sup>11</sup>

Surprisingly, there are recipes for only one native fruit – the quandong, with eight recipes. This recipe introduces another native plant - pigface a thick leaved creeper commonly found on the coast.

#### Quandong Rings

Pour boiling water over ripe quandongs. This takes the harsh, woody taste off the berries. Take a sharp knife and cut a ring round the centre. The fruit will then leave the stone clean.

Thread them on a string and hang out in the sun to dry, just as you dry apples. They must be properly dried before storing, and kept in a dry place, or they will mildew. To prepare for table, take off the string that you require and place in warm water overnight, drain and place in pot, covering with cold water. Gather a few pig-face honey pots to sweeten. Extract the honey by splitting the flower with a sharp knife and draining the honey into a saucer. Only the dead, ripe flowers carry honey.<sup>12</sup>

Disappointingly there is a paucity of fish recipes – just two - though they have been a staple food in Indigenous cuisine, both ocean and riverine fish. This recipe for Fish Head Soup was probably the most confronting entry in the Competition:

#### Fish Head Soup.

Clean heads and boil until a mash. Strain through a gravy strainer, put in enamel saucepan with as much milk as soup, add sago to thicken, boil well. Half an hour before serving add chopped onion and ten minutes before serving add a little mixed cornflour and chopped parsley.<sup>13</sup>

This was the first time I came across a recipe for Gilgies – freshwater crayfish.

#### Gilgies

Put gilgies into a tin pan or saucepan, cover with cold water and bring to the boil. When boiled, gilgies should have turned a rich, red colour. Pinch off the heads and tails, and take off the outer

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<sup>10</sup> 'XXX III 'Goanna Tail and Parsley Sauce' Bush Recipes, *Western Mail* 21 April 1938 p.34

<sup>11</sup> 'XXXIX Curried Galahs', *Western Mail* 28 April 1938 p.36

<sup>12</sup> 'LXIX Quandong Rings', *Western Mail* 12 May 1938 p.33

<sup>13</sup> 'XXV Fish Head Soup', Bush Recipes, *Western Mail* 21 April 1938 p.34

husks from centre flesh. Place flesh in a heap on dish, sprinkle with salt and pepper and a little vinegar.<sup>14</sup>

Finishing off the recipes was an unusual one for Seaweed

#### Sea Weed Jelly

This is most nutritious and has been known to cure consumption, as it carries a lot of Iodine. The weed is cast up on our beaches after every storm, is light cream in colour and of a glutinous nature. Must be washed in fresh, clean water for several days, then hung up to bleach until dry and hard. It may then be stored for years, and when required is ready in a few hours by soaking in cold water. One ounce of this dried weed will make enough jelly for six persons. To prepare:-Wash well and cover with cold water overnight. Before cooking cut up into one inch pieces. Half an ounce requires two cups of cold water, placed with it in pot, and two tablespoons sugar. Gradually bring to boil, stirring occasionally, as weed sticks to pot and soon burns. Boil slowly until all weed dissolved. If a clear jelly is wanted, add only, sugar; if clouded, condensed milk but less sugar. The skin of a grated lemon with half the juice gives a nice flavour. For coloured jellies, use mulberry or other wines, or cochineal with sugar to taste. These to be added just before taking off fire. This weed can also be used as a vegetable by using a little salt only, but must be soaked overnight and cut up into small pieces. Boil quickly for about ten minutes and strain before it jells. It tastes just like cauliflower.<sup>15</sup>

#### Dinner Menus

These are two examples of an entry giving a whole menu.

##### *A Complete Bush Dinner*

Soup (Emu)

Savoury (Bardie)

Alternative savoury (Goanna Tail)

Joint (Emu Leg)

Quandong Chutney

Mushrooms

Bush pancakes

Dessert<sup>16</sup>

##### *A Tasty Bush Dinner*

Yong Nint Soup (Kangaroo tail)

Kumare en Casserole (Possum)

Stewed Quandongs with Waitch Custard (Emu Egg Custard)<sup>17 18</sup>

#### Bush Craft

It's usual in competitions like this to publish the names and towns/suburbs of the entrant. 'Virgilia', the Competitions' administrator, decided 'On the suggestion of readers the names of entrants will not be announced until after the final voting.'<sup>19</sup> I couldn't find the article in which this was done so am unable to report on how many 'country people ... found scope for their bush-craft and

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<sup>14</sup> 'XXXI Gilgies', Bush Recipes, *Western Mail* 21 April 1938 p.34

<sup>15</sup> 'LXX Sea Weed Jelly', *Western Mail* 12 May 1938 p.33

<sup>16</sup> 'XXIX A Complete Bush Dinner', *Western Mail* 21 April 1938 p.3w

<sup>17</sup> 'LVIII A Tasty Bush Dinner', *Western Mail* 5 May 1938 p.33

<sup>18</sup> These three and the recipes for Bardie and Gilgie are unusual for using the Indigenous language name for the native food.

<sup>19</sup> 'Bush Recipes Competition' *Western Mail* 21 April 1938 p.34

originality'. Looking at the recipes, and without stereotyping, I wonder if the majority of recipes which pushed the boundaries - possum, goanna, galah, parrot and bardie/witchetty grub – were from 'country people' who may have had more occasions on which to use the native animal to make up for regular meat?

There were instances where "bush craft" methods for cooking were suggested.

One advantage is that (Kangaroo en Casserole) can be quite as well cooked in a camp oven in a hole in the earth as in a stove.<sup>20</sup>

A kerosene tin in the open can be used with success for cooking (Bush Pudding de Luxe)<sup>21</sup>.

### **Competition v everyday**

Recipes entered in a competition are designed to showcase the skills of the competitor. The promo for the Bush Recipe Competition suggested that it gave 'country people' the opportunity to display their 'bush-craft and originality', for example. The argument could be put that the dishes produced were divorced from the everyday, not typical fare.

I disagree. I think several recipes in the Competition give evidence that the dishes, even the most outré, were in the repertoire of the competitor and had been made on other occasions. A few examples:

This is delicious and beats all mutton joints (Baked Possum).<sup>22</sup>

This is delicious eaten cold; cut into slices for tea or breakfast (Kangaroo Roll).<sup>23</sup>

The result is a cheap and appetising dish (Galah Savoury).<sup>24</sup>

A great favourite with everyone (Kangaroo Rissoles).<sup>25</sup>

Parrots are very tasty braised instead of baked, and they make delicious pies (Parrot Pie).<sup>26</sup>

### **Final remarks**

The 'Bush Recipes Competition' conducted by the *Western Mail* in 1938 produced 67 recipes for native foods ranging from kangaroo through possum to witchetty grub, greatly widening the number and range of published recipes for native food. They contribute to the body of knowledge of Australians' engagement with native food prior to the bush food revival of the 1980s.

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<sup>20</sup> 'L Kangaroo en Casserole', *Western Mail* 5 May 1938 p.33

<sup>21</sup> 'XLVIX Bush Pudding De Luxe', *Western Mail* 5 May 1938 p.33

<sup>22</sup> 'XI Kangaroo Roll', *Western Mail* 7 April 1938 p.40

<sup>23</sup> 'IV Baked Possum', *Western Mail* 7 April 1938 p.40

<sup>24</sup> 'XXIII Galah Savoury', *Western Mail* 21 April 1938 p.34

<sup>25</sup> 'XXXVI Kangaroo Rissoles', *Western Mail* 28 April 1938 p.36

<sup>26</sup> 'XLV Parrot Pie', *Western Mail* 5 May 1938 p.36

## Appendix 1. List of entries

- I. -Kangaroo Tail Stew.
- II. -Emu Egg Sponge.
- III. -Kangaroo Curry.
- IV. -Baked Possum.
- V. -Kangaroo Tail Brawn. .
- VI. -A Bush Menu.
  - Rabbit Soup.
  - Savoury Rabbit.
  - Steamed Honey Pudding.
- VII. -Baked Kangaroo. (I.)
- VIII.-Kangaroo Steak. (1.)
- IX. -Kangaroo Steak. (II.)
- X. -Stewed Possum.
- XI. -Kangaroo Roll.
- XII. -Quandong (Wild Peach) Jam.  
[07 Apr 1938 - BUSH Recipes Bush Recipes Competition. - Trove \(nla.gov.au\)](#)
  
- XIII. -An Australian Dish.
- XIV. -Braised Kangaroo Steak.
- XV. -Australian Menu.
  - Brush Tall Soup.
  - Brush Rissoles.
  - Pie Melon Pie.
  - Sausage Rolls.
- XVI. -Kangaroo Mince Ball.
- XVII. -Corned 'Roo.
- XVIII. -Tasty Kangaroo Stew.
- XIX. -Uses for Kangaroo Tail.
- XX. -Economical Meal for Four (cont.).
  - Kangaroo Tail Soup.
  - Baked Babbit.
  - Pie Melon Tart.  
[14 Apr 1938 - BUSH Recipes - Trove \(nla.gov.au\)](#)
  
- XXI. -Kangaroo Rissoles.
- XXII.-Rabbit Baked in Milk.
- XXIII. -Galah Savoury.
- XXIV. -Black Duck Soup.
- XXV. -Fish Head Soup.
- XXVI. -Stuffed Leg of 'Roo.
- XXVII. -Braised 'Roo Tail.
- XXVIII-Brush Tail Pie.  
[21 Apr 1938 - BUSH Recipes - Trove \(nla.gov.au\)](#)

XXIX. -A Complete Bush Dinner.  
    Soup (Emu).  
    Savoury (Bardie).  
    Alternative Savoury (Goanna Tail).  
    Joint (Emu Leg).  
    Quandong Chutney.  
    Mushrooms.  
    Bush Pancakes.  
    Dessert

XXX. -Kangaroo Rissoles (II.).

XXXI. -Gilgies.

XXXII. -Bronze Wing Pigeon.

XXXIII. -Goanna Tail and Parsley Sauce.

XXXV.-Fried Babbit.

XXXV.-Braised Roo Tail (II.)

[21 Apr 1938 - XXIX. A COMPLETE BUSH DINNER. - Trove \(nla.gov.au\)](#)

XXXVI.-Emu Liver Savoury.

XXXVII.-Emu for Beef.

XXXIX.-Curried Galahs.

XL.-A Menu of Bush Fare.

    Anzac Soup.

    Entree: Bush Olives.

    Rabbit en Casserole.

    Honey and Wholemeal Pudding.

XLI.-Steamed Babbit Savoury.

XLII.-A Country Dinner.

    Kangaroo Tail Soup.

    Fried 'Roo Steak and Onions.

    Quandong Pie.

XLLL-Braised Galahs.

XLIV.-Australian Brown Stew.

[28 Apr 1938 - BUSH Recipes XXXVI. Kangaroo - Trove \(nla.gov.au\)](#)

XLV.-Bush Toad in the Hole.

XLVI.-Wild Bird Stew or Pie.

XLVII.-Stuffed and Baked Parrots.

XLVIII.-Creole Babbit.

XLIX.-Bush Pudding de Luxe.

L.-Kangaroo en Casserole.

LI.-Bunny Two-in-one.

LII.-Honey Sponge.

LIII.-Honey Kisses.

LIV.-Uses for Quandong.

LV. -Rabbit en casserole.

LVI.-Parrot Pie.

LVII.-Kangaroo Camp Pie.

LVIII.-A Tasty Bush Dinner.

Yonga Nint Soup.  
Kumare en Casserole.  
Stewed Quandongs with Waitch Custard.

[05 May 1938 - BUSH Recipes XLV. Bush Toad In The Hole. - Trove \(nla.gov.au\)](#)

LIX.-Galahs en Casserole.

LX.-Rabbit Mould.

LXI.-Menu a la Bush.

Kangaroo Tail Soup.

Fish.

Poultry.

Joint.

Cranberry Tart.

Quandong Jam.

LXII.-Possum in the Ashes.

LXIII.-Camp Pie.

LXIV.-Virgilian Mock Duck.

LXV.-Another Australian Dinner.

Soup a la bush.

Pigeon Pie.

Pie Melon Jelly and Cream.

LXVI.-A Bushman's Dinner.

Kangaroo and Dough Boys,  
Vegetables.

LXVII.-Two Useful Bush Products.

Wild Hops.

Honey Drink. \_

LXVIII.-Quandong Jam (II.).

LXIX.-Quandong Binga,

LXX.-Sea Weed Jelly.

[12 May 1938 - BUSH Recipes LIX. Galahs in Casserole. - Trove \(nla.gov.au\)](#)

## **Appendix 2. Cookery books reviewed**

*Cookery book of good and tried receipts.* Compiled by the Women's Missionary Association of the New South Wales Presbyterian Church of New South Wales, 1931

Drake, Lucy, *Everylady's Cook-Book: containing more than 600 recipes tested and proved good, with many splendid lessons on every sort of cookery*, 1924 – 'Pigeon Pie' p.41

*Green and gold cookery book; containing many good and proved recipes*, issued by Combined Congregational and Baptist Churches of South Australia in aid of the King's College Fund 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. rev and with supplement, 1925

*The Lady Mayoress cookery book*, 1938

McCarthy, Mrs. Walton, *The New Goulburn Cookery Book* 1937

Maclurcan, Hannah, *Mrs Maclurcan's Cookery Book. A collection of practical recipes specially suited for Australia*, 1930 – 'Roast Wild Duck' Recipe No. 328, 331, 'Salmi of Wild Duck, Recipe No. 330, 'Roast Pigeons and Oyster Stuffing' Recipe No.338, 'Pigeon Pie' Recipe No.339, 'Braised Pigeons' Recipe No.340

Moore-Simms, Sarah, *The Coronation Cookery-book*, 1937 - 'Wild Duck' p. 48, 'Salmi of Pigeon' p.49, 'Compote of Pigeons' p.49, 'Roast Pigeon' pp. 49, 50, 'Casserole of Pigeons' p.50, 'Pigeon Pie' p.50,.

New South Wales Public School Cookery Teachers Association, *The Commonsense Cookery Book*, 1937

Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union, *W.M.U. Cookery Book; every one a tried recipe* , 1938

Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. Emily McPherson Department of Home Economics and Food Services, *Household Cookery* 1937

Forster Rutledge, Mrs., Compiler, *The Goulburn Cookery Book* 1937 - 'Kangaroo or Wallaby Steamed' p.47, 'Pigeon Pie' p.47, 'Stewed Pigeon' p.47

Vesta, *Recipes for all meals* 1938

Wylie, Margaret A, Yewers, Mabel E, Reeves, Margaret H, Gray, Doris S, McKinnon, Maria A, *The Golden Wattle Cookery Book*, 1926 - 'Kangaroo Tail Soup' p.33