



OSCAR Hospitality Food Safety Auditor, Geoff Ramsden

“Hello all, my name is Geoff Ramsden, Food Safety Auditor, and I have been invited to share with you my many and varied experiences in the catering and food service industry. From my early days in various managing positions, to a chef, here and overseas, I am keen to reflect on changes in the Aged Care sector over the last 30 years. I am keen to stir the pot on issues still existing in our Food Catering and Care sector, with a few old chestnuts to throw in the fire. I hope you enjoy this article I wrote.”



Early Settlement – Hard days

Before European settlers arrived in Australia, there was a thriving food culture, one that happily sustained the Aboriginal people for tens of thousands of years. However, that food culture, often referred to as bush tucker, has been largely ignored over the past 200 years.



It's estimated there are up to 5,000 native food species (almost 20 per cent of Australia's native flora and fauna) that were utilised by the Aboriginal people. Traditional bush tucker is innovative and unique.



The loss of traditional land, coupled with the availability of non-native foods, has resulted in a near abandonment of this style of cooking.





Up until the 1990's, the only native Australian food product being commercially cultivated was the macadamia nut.



Fortunately, Australia's native foods have seen a revival over the past couple of decades. Native foods are naturally adapted to Australia's environment, as they are more resistant to Australia's extremes in temperature and rainfall.

Many restaurants are also embracing emu, crocodile, yabbies and eels, in addition to flavouring their dishes with bush tucker species. There are now producers all over the country supporting these new industries, from Tasmanian pepper to Victorian eel farmers and an innovative group of growers in South Australia who have initiated significant plantings of quandongs, bush tomatoes, and native citrus.



Photo: Image of Melbourne 1955

