

The health of native food and native food for health

Sharon Dennis, University of Tasmania, TAS

The Health of Native Food and Native Food for Health

Sharon Dennis, Natural Environment and Wilderness Studies, University of Tasmania

An investigation of consuming native food for one month in Tasmania, as an Aboriginal researcher, has instigated a grassroots approach in education about native food and the omission of native food in the consciousness when consuming food. Sharing the positive health benefits of eating native food, physical and mental, provided a foundation of learning igniting an interest to develop partnerships. However, access to Tasmanian native food is limited with many constraints. Introduced food dominates the food market and landscape. Native food is absent in policies compared to introduced food allowing the destruction of food ecosystems. The choice to consume native food as a complete diet is thus becoming more constrained.

Questions

1. What is the confusion about Tasmanian food?
2. Why am I not eating native food?
3. Is it possible to consume native food?

Project Overview

- Identify the native food in Tasmania
- Research the colonial overlay, impact, omissions and prejudice about native food and native food security.
- Eat native food for a month as an experiential participatory learning case study including the health markers related to medical records.

Preparation

- Ethics and Medical
- Licences and Permission
- Native Food Location/Resources
- Pre consumption Processes
- Indigenous Rights/Intellectual
- Season and Weather

Participatory Research

- Eating Native Food
- Journal
- Photos
- Documentation/Language



Photo: Sharon Dennis
Top of Table Cape, Wemyard
Cleared land for colonial agriculture. Aboriginal site and fish traps at base of hill.



Photo: Sharon Dennis
Table of Tasmanian native food



Photo: Sharon Dennis

Examples of the photos of the Tasmanian native food meals included in the daily journal and diary collection over a period of one month.

Journal Entry Day 18

"I have found that I am after different tastes during the day, and I enjoy the collection and combination of the native foods. I am growing in confidence and comfort in what I eat. I am still cautious, and I read what I can first, but I think the skill of being self-sufficient and less reliant and manipulated by food that is not native and processed is liberating."



Photo: Sharon Dennis

Lunch pack for work



Photo: Todd Walk

Fresh Water Lobster
Native food that my children will never get to taste or experience or the technique of catching them

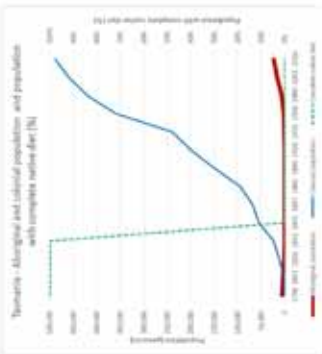


Photo: Sharon Dennis

City of Devonport, Mersey river, Tasmania.
Coastal vegetation dominated by development



Photo: Sharon Dennis
Tasmania promoted as the 'Apple Isle'



Tasmanian Native Food Consumption and Tasmanian Aboriginal and Colonial Population. Lutruwita, Tasmania. First Nations People 40,000 prior to 1798 of colonial occupation. Graph indicates approximate First Nations, palawa, population and colonial occupation from 1798. The decrease in First Nations people and the increase in the colonial population have an impact on the time line of history and the percentage of consuming a complete diet of native food.

Food Consumed	Percentage
Native Food	10%
Introduced Food	90%
Aboriginal Food	5%
Islander Food	5%
Colonial Food	90%
Palawa Food	5%
First Nations Food	5%
Other Food	5%

Results

Health

- Connection with food - thinking more about it as a long term survival resource.
- Mood improvement
- Improved body movement/weight loss
- Improved taste
- No Sugar or processed foods
- Seasonal preparation
- Family connections and identity

Research

- Understanding the layers of colonisation
- Colonial food, transported food, comfort food, considered 'safe food', introduced food, foreign food and the written knowledge of food.
- Tasmanian time line of population and the time period of solely consuming native food
- Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural roles and food security. Continuation of culture.
- Introduction of educational presentations, partnerships and programs
- Access to Food
- Food regulations
- Ownership of native food
- Disconnection of generations
- Preservation of native food
- The more I have to find native food the more I notice its absence

Food Consumed; table to the right. Table includes the day, the food eaten and in order including water intake, the Tasmanian native food name documented early 1800's and the palawa karni name... Other information collected, but not included in this table, are the amount and types of exercise, the source or location of the native food, the costs associated with purchase or collection and the use of native medicine when required.