CRUNCH BITES PODCAST

BITE SIZED CHILDREN'S NUTRITION INFO

Season 2 Episode 11: Discover bush foods with Dale Tilbrook

Mikala: Hello and welcome to Crunch Bites, a podcast for parents where we discuss all things children's nutrition and inspire you to build those healthy habits in the home. Join us as we chat about reading food labels, cooking with kids, understanding ultra processed foods and so much more. Brought to you by the Crunch and Sip team at Cancer Council WA and presented by qualified nutritionists. This podcast is packed with goodness and full of fresh ideas. Hello and welcome to Crunch Bites. My name's Mikala. I'm your host for today. I'd like to start by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land we are recording on this morning, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation and pay my respect to elders' past, present and emerging. Today's episode is brought to you by desert limes, otherwise known as a wild lime or a desert kumquat. This very small grape sized fruit packs a really intense citrus flavour and is typically eaten whole. But is it also a Aboriginal bush food that is considered quite a highly prized native fruit and not surprisingly considering the lime component is very high in vitamin C. Desert lime can be used obviously to flavour your food in the way that you would use lime ordinarily or used to make delicious marmalades or sauces or pickles or chutneys, which sounds amazing and something I would love to give a try. In today's episode, we're going to explore the world of bush foods and to help us understand this space a little bit more, we have welcomed Dale Tilbrook to our podcast. So welcome Dale.

Dale: Thank you very much, Mikala.

Mikala: Dale is a proud Wadandi Bibbulmun woman whose traditional Aboriginal country is the Margaret River Busselton area, is that correct? That's right. And Dale, I believe you spent many years gathering knowledge from those around you, from elders and your space that you're very passionate about is the world of bush food.

Dale: Yes, I've been doing this for about 30 years, concentrating on increasing my knowledge and sharing it about bush food.

Mikala: Yeah. Okay. So, I suppose in part, that's about sort of raising awareness around what bush foods actually are, but then also working to kind of encourage people to incorporate or show them how to actually bring them into their everyday food. Is that correct?

Dale: Yes. You know, I find that there's little knowledge about what's out there in the big bush supermarket and a lot of people would be a bit wary of using these products if they

haven't encountered them before. So, my job is to make them feel at home in the world of bush food.

Mikala: Yeah, lovely. I must admit the term bush foods, I think it sometimes feels confusing or hard to connect with in terms of, is that something that I need to go and source? Are they, you know, hard to find? Are they available within a supermarket in the way that you go and buy other fruits and veg? You know, so like it sometimes I feel like bush foods feels like it's not something that's at my fingertips.

Dale: And that would be right because for most people, bush foods are not at their fingertips. It's, you know, with all the land clearing and development that has happened, it's much harder to find bush food in the bush these days. But a lot of food is now under cultivation, but it still can be difficult to source because you don't find them readily in supermarkets. And a lot of stuff goes straight overseas, it's exported. Because a lot of our food is very high in nutrients, it's used also in the cosmetics industry. So, I have a friend who grows all sorts of things just north of Perth, and she's just sent a, I can't even remember how many hundreds of kilos of a certain bush food to Paris. Wow, that's fascinating. It is. So, it ends up in skincare products, but not on our tables. Oh, seems a shame really, doesn't it? It does. But that doesn't mean to say that these things aren't accessible in other ways. And the great thing is that a lot of these things you can grow yourself at home.

Mikala: See, that was one of the things I was really curious about is, yeah, how do you, what are some of the great bush foods that are able to be grown at home? How easy is it to jump into that space?

Dale: Well, you can jump into the space very easily just with saltbush. So, if you're not a green thumbs person, saltbush is lovely because it's a local, so it'll grow in sandy or well-drained soil and it needs very little love. And it will reward you by providing this amazing leaf, which is actually really high in phytonutrients and protein as a flavouring for your food, or you can just pull them off the branches and eat them.

Mikala: Yeah, okay.

Dale: So, it has that lovely salty sagey flavour.

Mikala: Oh, wow.

Dale: So, you can just toss little branches into your soups or stews or casseroles. It can be dried and ground up and used as a sprinkle instead of salt. It does contain salt because it takes salt from the soil. So, it's very useful to farmers to plant in marginal land. Oh, so drawing that excess salt out. Yes, so it doesn't work in salt scalds because nothing grows there. But between the scalds and the good land is the marginal land where the salt is coming through. So, you can grow saltbush there. It's taking salt out of the soil, but that only works if something comes along and takes the saltbush away. So that's either us eating it or animals eating it, and sheep love saltbush. Oh, there you go. So, in South Australia, they have a whole industry around saltbush fattened lamb. You know, we don't make a big fuss of it here, but a lot of sheep here will be fattened up on saltbush.

Mikala: Would that have been a more ordinary, like a more normal practice historically for sort of managing the fluctuation of the land and keeping things in balance to have that planting routine?

Dale: We wouldn't have needed to think about the salt coming to the surface, because the reason we have the salt coming to the surface in the southwest of WA is because of all the land clearing. When you take away the deep-rooted trees and replace them with shallow rooted crops, so that's all those European crops that were planted, like wheat, the water table rises and pushes salt to the surface. So traditionally, we weren't worried about salt coming up to the surface because we had lots of trees. It's hard to imagine that where we are now was part of the great western woodlands. It is hard to imagine, you're right. Trees from the coast to the desert. So, everything has changed and we're lucky to still have our bush food out there. Although, as I said before, there's not as much of it as there once was. And now it's hard to imagine that we once had so many spider orchids coming up that we could afford to dig up the tubers and eat them.

Mikala: Oh, so true.

Dale: And we ate other orchid species as well. And those little tubers are kidney shaped. So, we call that food chupak, because your kidney is a chupak.

Mikala: So, did you grow up with more bush foods in your home where you were actually able to harvest and live on bush foods from your environment quite easily?

Dale: Well, not really, because I grew up in the northwest of Western Australia, even though the southwest is my traditional home. My dad was working in the northwest, and we moved around a lot. I spent most of my young years in the Pilbara and Kimberley, Port Hedland, Broome, Derby and all points in between. So, we weren't on our traditional land. I guess the most I remember about bush food as a kid would be eating boab nuts in Derby. And, you know, there may have been other occasions when the local people treated us to food, but they don't spring readily to mind because that was a long time ago now.

Mikala: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So how does it work with wild harvest? What are the customs when it comes to what might be out there in the land around you that there's an edible bush food and what you can and can't just go and forage for yourself?

Dale: Well, foraging is one of those terms that is a bit misleading because people always talk about going out on country and foraging. But, you know, if you're not Aboriginal, you can't just go out there and take bush food. So as an Aboriginal person, you can collect food for cultural purposes, but if you have any commerciality, then we need a license just the same as anyone else. So bush food is a bit like wildflowers. You can't just go out and pick them. And I know it's a popular thing, you know, chefs talk about foraging, but, you know, if DBCA catch them, they'll get fined. And that applies to us as well. So, it's difficult, therefore, just to sort of pop out and get something if it just happens to be growing near you. So, if you're by the coast, you might have some Quandong trees growing around you. You know, if you go to Triggs Reserve or the dunes at North Beach, you know, all around the coast, around

Fremantle, Kwinana, all the way down to Busselton, you'll find Quandong trees growing. But you're not allowed to just go and pick the fruit. If it's on private property, of course, that's a different story. You can go and pick that fruit if you have permission to do so, if it's your property. And on lots of farms, there will be Quandong trees growing and they will have been planted often close to farmhouses because when the Europeans first came, they would have come from a tradition of being able to go out and harvest from hedgerows and lots of fruit trees around. And there must have been a horrible shock to the system for these poor women in the wheat belt looking around and saying, well, where's the fruit? Because there wasn't very much. Quandongs are the major fruiting tree here in the southwest. And after that, there isn't very much. Can you think of a single other fruiting tree, native fruiting tree in the southwest?

Mikala: No, because they're all introduced, really, aren't they?

Dale: Yeah, yeah. So even Lilly pillies are from the eastern states. They're not from WA. Yeah. So, once you get past Quandongs, the next thing would be the Persoonia, which get called snotty gobbles.

Mikala: I have heard that one before.

Dale: A very unfortunate name for a green gelatinous fruit, which isn't that tasty. It's sort of like eating and not very sweet grape with one big seed inside. So that's more of a snack food rather than a serious food like Quandongs.

Mikala: Yeah, OK.

Dale: So Quandongs are very high in vitamin C and lots of other nutrients. And everybody would have their own little patch of Quandongs in the past that they would have gone and visited September, October. We also dried the fruit because it made a good storehouse fruit, kept its shape and colour and taste for many years. And we can also eat the kernel inside the Quandong seed, but they're very hard to crack open. So sometimes we would wait until the emus had eaten them first.

Mikala: And done the hard work for you.

Dale: So, in September, October, when you go through the bush, you might come across all these big upside-down ice cream cones of emu poo studded with Quandong seeds. And you can pull them out and you can wash them if you like. The digestive juices don't go all the way through the seed.

Mikala: Yeah, well, it's a bit like that. There's a coffee bean that has a similar story that's actually harvested from...

Dale: Civet cat seed.

Mikala: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, if someone then is interested in eating Quandong, but obviously doesn't have a tree in their backyard, where do they find a source that is ethical,

that they know was sustainably sourced? How do people find bush foods for themselves in that shopping arena?

Dale: In the shopping arena, very difficult.

Mikala: Yeah.

Dale: Occasionally, you'll see things on the shelves in the upmarket produce sellers. And, you know, if you see it, that's fabulous. Buy it there and then. Somebody was telling me the other day that they found finger limes in a couple of Chinese supermarkets in Northbridge. And I thought, wow, OK. And I said, did you buy them? She said, no, they were really expensive. A lesson B. So that's the other problem. But you can buy, say, dried Quandongs. That's much easier to get. Because, you know, fresh Quandongs have a very short life. You know, it's only a small picking season, September, October. Then, you know, the fruit becomes a frozen product. But you don't really see frozen Quandongs in the supermarkets yet. But it's a watch this space sort of thing. Because, you know, as bush food becomes more popular and the demand increases, it will encourage people to grow them in cultivation. And then they will make their way to supermarket shelves. So, you know, go and nag your local supermarket. Have you got any bush food? Have you got any Quandongs? Can I buy finger limes from you? Until it's like the squeaky wheel.

Mikala: Yeah.

Dale: That gets the oil.

Mikala: Yeah. Would be wonderful to be able to source foods from the supermarket that have that, you know, that origin and that are part of the history of the land that we're actually standing upon.

Dale: Absolutely. And, you know, there are some foods that will come first. And it's already happening a little bit. And that's more the herbs. There are a couple of places where you can buy the fresh herbs in punnets. And as I said, you can grow them at home. So, if you go to native nurseries that specialise in bush food, then you can buy things like the saltbush, like native thyme, native oregano, river mint. Now, they're all from the eastern seaboard, but you can buy them for here. You can buy the native spinach or warrigal greens that grows along our coastline here. Sea parsley, sea celery, their local sea purslane, sea blight, also local, samphire. So, there are things that you can do now to start your bush food experience at home. And of course, there's lots of dried herbs and spices that you can add to your cooking. You know, I'm sure people have heard about lemon myrtle.

Mikala: Yeah, yeah.

Dale: So again, not from Western Australia, but growing here, a small amount growing here in plantation. And that's very important that it's grown locally because anything that comes in from the eastern seaboard, which is in the myrtaceae family, ends up being gamma irradiated. Unfortunately, on the eastern seaboard, they have myrtaceae virus, which came from South America. So, we're lucky to have a small amount grown here because obviously

it's very fresh and processed here, dried here, milled here, and has those amazing flavours. So that's lemon myrtle and there's some of its cousins as well, cinnamon myrtle and anise myrtle. And on that little plantation, there's also strawberry gum growing. So, a lot of people may have come across strawberry gum. It's an amazing eucalyptus tree that does not smell like eucalyptus. Does it smell like strawberries? It does because it's full of methyl cinnamate and that's what gives strawberry things their flavours and aromas. So, it's very confusing when you smell this and think that doesn't smell like eucalyptus. And you can use it as a flavouring in food, make a tea with it. If you add it to fruit dishes, it makes anything fruity taste fruitier, gives it all the sparkle and it's a natural probiotic.

Mikala: Oh, there you go. There you go. Ticking all the boxes.

Dale: I know. So that one's in the eucalyptus line of the myrtaceae family, but the others, the myrtles, I mean, they have lots of great party tricks as well. So, lemon myrtle is the plant with the highest vitriol content of any plant in the world. And that gives it great antioxidant properties. You can grow that yourself or you can buy the dried spice as well.

Mikala: And so, before when you mentioned native thyme and native mint, how did they differ to the thyme and the mint that I have frequently used or that I go and buy?

Dale: Well, the native thyme and the native oregano aren't related to their namesake plants.

Mikala: Right.

Dale: They look a little bit about like thyme and oregano and have really, you know, quite amazing herbaceous aromas similar to thyme and oregano, but they're also a little bit camphoraceous. So, if you have a clogged-up nose, eat a couple of those leaves and they will relieve your sinuses.

Mikala: Ah, like a good chili dose.

Dale: Well, yes, but it's more like sniffing rosemary or eucalyptus because of that camphoraceous sort of note. And they're easy to grow at home and probably much better behaved than some of the imported varieties. And of course, in growing them, you're supporting native vegetation, although that comes with the rider that those two are not native to WA, but they do not tend to be spreaders. So, they're not going to race off into the wild. I think the river mint has already raced off into the wild. I've heard reports of river mint growing on waterways here, but that grows, you know, sort of, we've got lots of things that grow in our waterways here, like pennyroyal. So, if you are picking from the wild, you know, identification is always very important. So, you need to know what you're about if you were picking the river mint. And you can do that because that's not native to WA.

Mikala: Oh, OK.

Dale: So it's a weed.

Mikala: Right.

Dale: So, you can go out and pick weeds.

Mikala: Helping with a little bit of gardening at the same time.

Dale: I know, it's a fine distinction, isn't it?

Mikala: Yeah, so when you're talking with groups about how to bring bush foods into the kitchen, how to start cooking with them day to day, what are some of the sort of, obviously, you've got the herb, the world of herbs, which is a lovely way to just, you know, immediately boost flavour and also nutrition in the food that you're cooking. What are some other ways that you talk about bringing bush foods into the family meals?

Dale: Well, one of my favourites is wattle seed. In Australia, we have about 900 varieties of acacias, species of acacias or wattles. Only about 100 produce edible seed. So again, identification is very important. But where we've got our wonderful local wattles like acacia saligna, acacia microbotrya, cyclops, they all grow around Perth. So, and you can identify those pretty easily once you study the trees. And the cyclops in particular is easy to identify in the bush because when the pod ripens, it splits open and twists. And so, you see all these lovely little seeds surrounded by a bright red arrow. So, it looks like all these eyes looking at you. And that's one of our edible wattles. So, wattle has to be roasted before we eat it. And our old girls always said, roast your wattle.

Mikala: Yeah.

Dale: And now Western science can tell us why, because it neutralises anti-nutrients.

Mikala: Oh, there you go. Just like some of the processing of common nuts that people reach for.

Dale: So, wattle seed is one of my favourites because of its nutrient profile. It's high in protein. Depending on the species, you're looking at 20 to 30% protein, high in lots of minerals like copper, iron, zinc, magnesium, calcium, naturally low GI. So wonderful for people with diabetes and up to 40% dietary fibre. And it's easy to add it to your diet because you can put it in your smoothies. You can put it on your breakfast cereal. You can make cakes and biscuits, stick it in your Anzac biscuits. Chocolate wattle seed biscuits are amazing. You can put it in stews and casseroles to add deep umami flavours and to thicken because it attracts in moisture. So easy to use at home. The biggest problem is getting hold of it. But because it's a dried product, it's one that's easier to get hold of than, say, fruit.

Mikala: OK, so via an actual outlet or the internet or how do people actually get their hands on it?

Dale: I have seen wattle seed, particularly Acacia victoriae, which is the one that has coffee, hazelnut aromas in those sort of pantry shops.

Mikala: Yeah, the bulk food.

Dale: You can come to me in the Swan Valley or other places that specialise in Australian native edibles. That sounds better than bush food, doesn't it? And buy it online. So, we are a little bit more specialised in that we do harvest and process local wattle seed. So, we're probably the only place we can come and buy local wattle seed. So, in particular, we will process Seligna and Microbotrya. And they are quite different from the victoriae that I was speaking about, that has those real coffee notes. They are much sweeter, nuttier varieties. Every wattle variety that's edible will produce different flavours.

Mikala: And do you require a lot of foliage in order to actually gather a decent amount? Or are they a good-sized seed? Are they quite fine or are they a little bit larger?

Dale: They vary a lot. When I'm doing my talks, I'll hand out raw, unprocessed wattle seeds. And Seligna is a really tiny seed. Microbotrya is quite a large seed. So, it does vary a lot. And the pods are usually ripe around Christmas time. And there's no real easy way to harvest wattle other than the old way, which is to put something underneath to gather the pods as they drop. And the seeds shake the tree, beat the tree. Recently in Australia, there's been some trials of growing wattle seed. And one of the tasks was to look at mechanisation for harvesting. But the industry is not really big enough to attract that kind of investment yet.

Mikala: And if the investment occurs and then the harvesting grows, then the price can come down, then people can access more. It's a lovely flow on effect because at the moment, the cost can be prohibitive. Yes, yes.

Dale: And particularly with wattle, it's quite an expensive food. But as you say, as demand increases and then the supply increases, then you get all those economies of scale and prices will come down. So again, it's that, you know, sort of squeaky wheel. Go and ask your supermarkets, why don't you have any wattle seed?

Mikala: Yeah, I know what I'm going to be asking at the supermarket next time I go there.

Dale: I know I'm a bit of a stirrer.

Mikala: Well, someone has to stir the pot Dale, otherwise change doesn't occur.

Dale: Exactly. And wattle seed has been noticed by people overseas and they would like to have it in great quantities because they want to add it to things like baked goods, to up the nutrition and to reduce the GI. So, you know, putting it into bread is perfect because you're adding all that extra protein, you're helping to lower the GI. So, you know, the benefits are just amazing.

Mikala: Yeah, when I bake for the family, I often put in LSA, so the blend of linseed, sunflower, almond, but it would be really lovely to be able to reach for, you know, a wattle seed blend or something of that nature to do the same job.

Dale: Even adding salt bush.

Mikala: Yeah, well, that's right. I'm very curious to take a trip to my native nursery and find which herbs they actually have on site and start doing a bit of growing, because that sounds like a beautiful addition to the foods that we cook.

Dale: Indeed. And, you know, often people will ask me to make damper and I don't like to make just plain damper because that's ration food. In the days when we were forced onto reserves and camps and settlements and given rations, you know, so the really healthy food like white flour, white sugar, salt, tea, jam, tinned corned beef. And, you know, those dampers made from white flour. It's just nothing food. Nothing food. You know, tasty. My late partner liked nothing better than to cook a damper and open a tin of corned beef because that was a food memory for him that evoked sitting around the campfire and having this treat. Imagine that's a treat.

Mikala: I know. Yeah. So then when you do make damper, I'm assuming you like to weave in the wattleseed and saltbush.

Dale: Yeah, absolutely. I'll add those in to up the nutrition and the flavour as well.

Mikala: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, because it's about both. And I suppose that's a lovely education point for you with the groups that you're talking to. Yeah, we can weave in the flavour, but as you said in the very beginning, often bush foods are really high nutrient sources. They tend to be very potent, very concentrated. So, you get a lot of bang for your buck, which is great.

Dale: You do. And that little desert lime who's bringing this program to us today, not only high in vitamin C, but also E, folate, calcium and B6.

Mikala: Wow. I know.

Dale: And they're delicious just to eat on their own.

Mikala: Yeah, I'll bet they are.

Dale: They're sort of like eating lemon and lime together, but not quite as acidic.

Mikala: Tart, right. Yeah.

Dale: So really nice. I mean, one of my favourite snack foods in the summer to eat them straight out of the freezer.

Mikala: And do you grow them?

Dale: I do have a little tree that I'm nurturing at the moment, but I'm a bit spoiled because I buy all my desert limes from a lady who grows them.

Mikala: Lovely.

Dale: She has quite an extensive business growing all the different native limes and other things just north of Perth.

Mikala: Yeah, lovely.

Dale: But, you know, most of it goes to chefs and export and food manufacturers. So not a lot making its way to the supermarkets or the produce stores yet.

Mikala: Yet. Exactly. Yes. And so I noticed that you do have a shop on your website and also a gallery. Is that correct?

Dale: Yes, we are located at Mandoon estate in the Swan Valley, and our gallery is called Maalinup.

Mikala: And what's on show at the gallery?

Dale: Well, we obviously have Aboriginal art and giftware, and we have a big range of bush food, particularly the herbs and spices and things that people may not have even heard about, like sandalwood nuts. And sandalwood nuts are, you know, our unique nut from the southwest. They're actually a kernel, not a nut.

Mikala: Yeah.

Dale: And sandalwood and quandong are relatives. Quandong is santalum acuminatum, and then we've got santalum spicatum, which is the sandalwood. And that's unfortunately grown mostly in plantation now for the heartwood because that produces the essential oil.

Mikala: Oh, I see.

Dale: And most of those big plantations will not harvest the nuts. But we do have a lady who does harvest nuts from her own farm and from other little farms from the Mount Marshall Shire, which is the sandalwood shire, and brings these to your table. So, we sell sandalwood nut products, roasted sandalwood nuts, raw sandalwood nuts, sweet and salty sandalwood nuts, and lots of duukahs, which are 50% sandalwood nut. And the reason to get excited is because sandalwood nuts are high in protein, have more protein than macadamia nuts, for example, and have a compound which is anti-inflammatory. So, in the past we ate them not only as food but as medicine. And we would crush those kernels up and apply the brown paste and odourless, colourless oil to a sore joint to relieve the pain of arthritis.

Mikala: Is that a common use that bush foods often had, not only the consumption, not only were they delicious to eat but that they had another medicinal purpose?

Dale: Absolutely, yep. So, food and medicine go hand in hand for us. So, we do have separate medicine plants. But because our food has really high nutrient values, that in itself is medicine. But some do have specific medicinal purposes. And some common plants that you might walk past every day can be used for medicine like the peppermint tree. If you

take the leaves of the peppermint tree and squash them up, they smell like Vicks Vapora. So traditionally we use these as a decongestant.

Mikala: Yeah, okay.

Dale: Most people would not know that the staple food for Aboriginal people in the southwest were roots and tubers. So, all along Derbyllirrigan when the invasion happened were huge yam gardens.

Mikala: Oh.

Dale: Where are they now? So, you know, they were in the way. Can they be restored? Difficult. Difficult because the land has changed so much. And, you know, one thing that the invaders found was that where we grew our yams was a great place to grow grapes.

Mikala: Oh. So hence the Swan Valley. Oh, it's full of...

Dale: If you want to see the remnants of yam gardens, you can go to Walyunga and in the Aboriginal Heritage Area you can come across what looks like a stone patch, but it's actually a bank that's been shored up with rocks collected by women who were working the yam gardens. When they were digging the yams, if they found a rock or a stone, they would use it to shore up the bank to impede the flow of water, so their yam gardens didn't get washed away.

Mikala: Eroded, yeah, okay.

Dale: And we harvested those yams only twice a year, once in the season of Djeran, that's right now, and once in Kambarang. So, this is the time of the year when it's great to go and see that remnant yam garden because the yams are up. So, you can see the aerial part of the plant. So, they have a little spear leaf, a little heart-shaped leaf, tiny little yellow flowers and then, of course, when we dug the yams, when you dig the yams, it comes out as sort of like a double thing. So, you've got last year's yam, this year's yam and then the crown of this year's yam is everything to produce next year's yam. So, you take that off and plant that as you're digging the yams. And this kind of agriculture was called pit agriculture because we didn't dig one yam at a time, and I can tell you that that's really hard work because I have done it when my knees were a lot younger. And the women would dig big holes, collapse the soil into it, sort through and bring out the yams like that and they wouldn't fill in those holes. So, there are times of the year when we weren't there, those holes would attract in leaf litter and water and create the substrate for the next generation of yams.

Mikala: Oh, wow. That's a lovely cycle.

Dale: It is. And pit agriculture is practised in many forms around the world, where you dig a big hole and plant something in the middle of it so that the water and the leaf litters and nutrients flow into that pit.

Mikala: And collect, yeah. So much knowledge and so many lovely cultural practices that you hope there's a growing space for education and raising awareness and learning so that it can inform, you know, practice going forward.

Dale: There is a huge amount of interest out there for knowledge about bush food and those practices and bush medicine as well. Sometimes we're a little bit reticent to share everything because in the past, you know, when people have got knowledge, they've just picked it up and run away with it and done something with it which benefited them, and they didn't come back to benefit the people who shared the knowledge with them in the first place.

Mikala: Yeah.

Dale: So that is one of the problems with the bush food industry at the moment. Our participation is only 1% to 2%.

Mikala: That's not really good enough at all, is it?

Dale: No. So that's not an equitable sharing of the benefits of our knowledge, what is essentially our ecological knowledge that's gone out there. And, you know, that's one of the things that we're working hard to address at the moment, getting more Aboriginal people involved in this space in a meaningful way that brings benefits back to communities. So, the more industries.

Mikala: yeah.

Dale: the more industries that we can encourage on country and create jobs and wealth, the more it encourages kids to stay on country. And the old people don't want the kids to leave because if the kids leave, they don't come back. And so, it's really important to look at ways of keeping the kids on country by providing them with something meaningful to do. And if you've ever been out to some of the communities, you know that this is really, really needed.

Mikala: I haven't been to many but in my limited exposure I would agree with you, and I think what a wonderful way to bring people back to country for such a wonderful purpose and for something that hopefully grows into a much bigger and more prominent industry.

Dale: Yes, and things that are grown on country do really well on country because they're growing where they should be growing.

Mikala: Yeah, absolutely. It's a lovely message to land on really, isn't it?

Dale: It is.

Mikala: So, I mean I personally live in the Perth Hills and know of Mandoon, but I haven't been out and seen your little shop so I'm very keen to come and visit and I hope to see it for

myself. But if others are interested, they can find you on the actual premise of Mandoon Estate. Is that correct?

Dale: We occupy the little heritage house down by the river. It's built by the eldest son of John Septimus Rowe who was the Surveyor General of the colony. It's an opportunity to talk about that history as well and for people to understand that, you know, this was the land of the Whadjuk people and in 1829, very quickly they were pushed away from their land along the river and all the food sources that had provided them. So, John Septimus Rowe, for example, had a land grant of 3,000 acres which includes what is now Sandalford Winery, Mandoon Estate, all down Harris Road and all the way back to Mirrabooka.

Mikala: Wow.

Dale: I know, for nothing.

Mikala: Wow.

Dale: So that created generational wealth for those first settlers and meant that Aboriginal people were quickly pushed away from traditional lands and from food sources. So, it's history that needs to be talked about. I mean it's not the fault of anybody walking around today but it's truth telling. It's the truth telling of what really happened.

Mikala: Yeah, I think that's so important. We just need to be raising awareness and talking about the past so that the future is in every way different and more positive.

Dale: Yes, and it does go a long way to explain where we are today. So, if you look at a timeline from, you know, the invasion and all the events and the legislation that happened that shaped our lives along the way, then you get a better understanding of why it is the way it is today.

Mikala: Yeah.

Dale: So, when you talk bush food, talk land, talk history, you know, one is connected to the other.

Mikala: Yeah, absolutely.

Dale: You can't separate. But, you know, it's an interesting journey and I think it's lovely to be able to talk about everything but at the same time be enjoying eating some bush food.

Mikala: And sharing and bringing other people to the table and allowing them to hopefully enjoy that journey going forwards as well.

Dale: Absolutely, absolutely. I look forward to many more people enjoying bush food at home, incorporating it in their cooking and eating more kangaroo too.

Mikala: Well, we had kangaroo just last night.

Dale: Yes, it's such a good meat.

Mikala: It is, it's fantastic. It's one of the favourites in our house actually. We had kangaroo tacos which was delicious.

Dale: Excellent. So high in protein, high in iron, low in fat, low in cholesterol.

Mikala: That's right and so tasty as well.

Dale: So tasty. And I always say that if you get served up kangaroo that tastes gamey or tough, then that person didn't know how to cook kangaroo.

Mikala: Thank you so much, Dale. It's been really lovely to spend some time talking to you. You know, I know that you're off for a very busy day so I'm sure you're going to go and share the bush food message with lots of other people. They're very lucky to be able to share with you.

Dale: Well, thanks for having me, Michaela, and it's always a great pleasure to talk about bush food and to get everybody's interest sparked so that they incorporate more bush food in their everyday life.

Mikala: Yes, absolutely. My task is growing some herbs and finding some wattle seeds so I'm on a bit of a mission.

Dale: Good. Thank you.

Mikala: Thank you. Well, thanks to the listeners. I hope you enjoyed this episode. If you did, feel free to like and share with anyone that you know might be keen to learn a little bit more about bush foods as well. And we'll talk to you next time. Have a great day. Bye.