

BEAT AROUND THE bush foods

AUSTRALIA HAS ALWAYS BEEN A BIT OF AN UNDERRATED BEAST. OUR FARAWAY LAND IS NOT ONLY HOME TO SOME OF THE MOST PICTURESQUE BEACHES, VAST DESERTS AND LUSH RAINFORESTS BUT IT IS ALSO WHERE SOME OF THE MOST SUPER SUPERFOODS IN THE WORLD GROW.

A powerful group of fruits and seeds are flourishing in the land down under and they are so packed full of goodness, they put the humble blueberry and kale to shame.

These superfoods have been growing in Australia for more than 50,000 years, with Aboriginal people harvesting and using them for food and medicine.

The Australian Superfood Co is an Australian company tapping into the benefits of native bush foods.

Owner Hayley Blieden was working as a dietician at North Melbourne Football Club when she first came across Australian native foods.

"We were working with Indigenous players and they would go home for pre-season and come back in better physical shape than when they left. They were talking about these foods I'd never heard of, so I started looking into the nutritional profiles of these foods and the quality was exceptional," Hayley says.

Kakadu plum, for instance, has the highest vitamin C content of any food.

Then there's wattle seed, which is high in protein and has a low glycaemic index.

"They're planting it in Africa to feed starving people and yet, in Australia, most people have never heard of it," says Hayley, who has spent years researching native bush foods, working with food technologists and liaising with Aboriginal communities.

"Wherever possible, we work with indigenous communities: getting ingredients from indigenous communities to give back to indigenous communities and we've done that along the two years we've been working."

They're constantly meeting new growers, many of them farmers diversifying their crops.

"A number of our fruits and herbs are still wild harvested," Hayley explains.



Kakadu Plum

The Kakadu plum is considered a gift of the Dreamtime. It grows wildly throughout the subtropical woodlands of the Northern Territory and Western Australia. The small stone fruit has the highest recorded levels of vitamin C of any fruit in the world – up to 100 times more than an orange. It is also packed full of antioxidants (five times more than a blueberry) folic acid and iron. The Kakadu plum has a tart taste, and can be used in jams, sauces and juices, as well as in medicines. It is also known as a bush plum, billygoat plum, gubinge, murunga or kabiny plum.

Davidson Plum

The deep dark purple Davidson plum boasts a blood red flesh and soft, juicy pulp. It is one of the most powerful of Australia's native superfoods, packed full of potassium, vitamin E and zinc. It is also a unique dairy-free source of calcium, and contains more lutein – a carotenoid vitamin that is important for eye health and improving macular degeneration symptoms – than an avocado. The plum is super sour and has a low sugar content, so is rarely eaten raw. It's intense flavour is instead better suited in a range of desserts.

Quandong

The quandong, or 'wild peach', has been a staple food source for indigenous Australians for thousands of years. The glossy, red fruit has a sweet taste with a slight sour aftertaste, and is best eaten fresh. The quandong contains twice the vitamin C of an orange and is also a great source of vitamin E, folate, magnesium and calcium. The kernels of the fruit are also full of protein and complex oils, with Aboriginal people storing them to eat when meat was in short supply. The kernels can also be made into anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory pastes.

Riberry

Ribberries are commonly referred to as 'medicine berries' by Indigenous Australians. They provided essential vitamins and minerals to keep the immune system strong and the pulp was also used to treat ear infections. The small, red fruit contains three times the folate of a blueberry, and is also rich in manganese, calcium and anthocyanin. The berries are eaten raw and are bursting with a refreshing, spicy flavour. They are ideal used in salads, jams and desserts.



Finger Lime

With their elongated form and delicate beads that burst with flavour in your mouth, finger limes are on the up-and-coming. Demand for this zesty fruit, which grows in South East Queensland and northern New South Wales, is skyrocketing both in Australia and overseas. It comes in a wide range of colours, including green, yellow, purple, pink and bright red and when sliced open, it reveals 'caviar like' pearls, which are filled with delicious lemon-lime juice making them a beautiful accompaniment to any dish (or cocktail). Finger limes are also rich in folate, potassium, and vitamins E and C.



Wattleseed

Wattleseed is the dark horse of Australian native foods. With a rich source of protein and carbohydrates, wattleseed has been a mainstay in the diet of Indigenous Australians for thousands of years. It was traditionally ground into a flour, mixed with water and made into a cake or damper. The nutritional value of wattleseed is so great, it has been grown in Africa since the 1970s to provide protein to drought-stricken populations. It is also high in potassium, calcium, iron and zinc.



Lemon Myrtle

Lemon myrtle is without doubt one of the most popular of Australia's native herbs. It has a beautifully sweet, citrus aroma and creamy taste. The lemon myrtle tree grows along the Queensland coast and is used in loads of different ways – from soaps, shampoos and beauty products, or the leaves can be thrown in any dish to add a refreshing lemon flavour. Sucking on the leaves can provide hydration and a boost of nutrients, vitamins and minerals. Lemon myrtle has the most concentrated source of plant citral, which contains powerful antifungal properties. It is also an exceptional source of calcium, lutein, antioxidants, folate, vitamins A and E, as well as zinc and magnesium.

