



Bush banana

Marsdenia australis

Central Australian Aboriginal names:

Alyawarr:	alkwarrer
Anmatyerr:	parl, altyey
Eastern Arrernte:	alangwe (fruit)
Western Arrernte:	altyey
Pintupi:	ipala, ipalu
Pitjantjatjara:	ngunala
Warlpiri:	yuparli



Common names: Silky pear, Native pear, Bush pear, Doubah, Cogola bush, Austral doubah

Distribution: Bush banana is widespread in the arid to semi-tropical regions of South Australia, Western Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.

Description: This vine has long twining stems to 4 metres high, which have a milky sap when broken. To the untrained eye, the *Marsdenia* fruit often seems to be part of the tree or bush it is climbing on. The leaves vary from thin and spiky in the Flinders Ranges, to long and wide for most plants that grow around Alice Springs. The leaves broaden even more as you go northwards to the Gulf Country.

The fruit is shaped a little like a large jalapeño chili. The fruit contains high levels of thiamine and its flavour is like crunchy snow peas and zucchini when small, but becomes very woody and fibrous when fully grown.

Traditional uses/preparation: The young fruit is eaten raw straight from the bush, after the skin is removed. Older fruit is cooked whole in hot ashes, or the seeds are discarded and the thick outer rind is eaten raw. The flowers and fresh young leaves are eaten raw, and the older leaves are eaten after steaming. The edible roots and the tuber at the base of the vine (to 16 cm diameter) are reportedly only consumed during times of hardship.

Commercial use: The fruit is available finely sliced and pickled in jars.

Recipes for bush bananas

Sweet potato and bush banana bake

From: <http://www.theoutbackcafe.com>

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| 2 tablespoons butter | 1 teaspoon dried marjoram |
| 2 cloves garlic, crushed | 1 teaspoon dried oregano |
| 2 leeks, trimmed, halved and sliced | 1 teaspoon ground pepper-berry |
| 1 kg sweet potato, peeled and thinly sliced | 1 tablespoon dried basil |
| 600 g young bush banana, halved lengthways | 1 tablespoon paprika |
| 2 cups cream | 2 tablespoons grated parmesan |
| 1/2 cup chicken stock | |



Preheat the oven to 200°C and lightly grease a large oval baking dish. Heat butter in a frypan, add garlic and leek and sauté for 3 or 4 minutes until soft. Layer half the sweet potato in the dish, top with leeks, then with the halved bush bananas, then top with the remaining sweet potato slices. Combine cream, chicken stock and herbs and combine well. Pour the cream mixture over the vegetables, sprinkle with the parmesan cheese and bake for 1 to 1 1/2 hours, or until the potatoes are tender. Cover with foil if the top starts to brown too quickly.

Crusted kangaroo fillets

From: <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/cookandchef/>

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| 2 kangaroo fillets | Bush banana salad: | Quandong glaze: |
| 1 teaspoon whole dried bush tomatoes | 6 whole bush bananas | 4 fresh Quandong, sliced in half |
| 2 teaspoons coriander seeds | 2 tablespoons desert lime, diced | 60 ml veal demi-glaze |
| 1/8 teaspoon ground lemon myrtle | 1 lemon, juiced | 60 ml orange juice |
| 1/4 teaspoon ground fennel seed | Pinch salt | 15 g sugar |
| 1/4 teaspoon ground pepper-berry | 80 ml olive oil | 1 star anise |
| 1/2 teaspoon salt | | |
| 1 tablespoon olive oil | | |



To make the crust, roughly crush and combine the bush tomato, coriander, fennel and pepper-berry in a mortar and pestle and then add the lemon myrtle and salt. Trim the fillets of any sinew and roll in the prepared spices to form a crust. Heat a fry pan, add the oil, sear the roo fillets for 4 minutes on the first side, and then turn and sear for 3 minutes on the other side. Cover with foil and rest for 8 minutes.

Bring the orange juice to the boil, add the sugar to dissolve, add star anise, Quandong halves and veal glaze, stir to melt the glaze and then rest off the heat for 5 minutes. Slice the bush bananas thinly and sauté in a little oil for 5 minutes, add desert lime and a squeeze of lemon juice (the ratio is 3:1, oil: lemon). Let it rest, season lightly with salt.

To serve, place the bush banana salad on a plate, slice the roo fillets into 3 or 4 pieces across the grain on a sharp angle, arrange on top of the bananas. Top with the glaze and serve.