The potential of kangaroo grass for modern food systems

Kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*) is a perennial native grass found all over Australia. It was extensively cultivated, harvested, ground and consumed by Australians before 1788 to make bread and a type of porridge. Reports of leavened bread also exist in the historical and oral record.

Working with Bruce Pascoe, of the Bunurong clan of the Kulin nation, historian and award winning author of *Dark Emu*, researchers at the university have started investigating the composition, agronomic potential and food-making possibilities of the grain.

Research facilities at our Parkville campus allow small scale breadmaking, analysis of the bread and sensory evaluation.

Aims and objectives

- Complete nutritional profile to allow inclusion into modern foods
- Technical knowledge to increase exposure to food industries
- Working with bakers to lead popular trend and dietary inclusion
- Provide research pathway for Aboriginal students in tertiary education

Harvesting and cleaning the grain from the seed head (right)

Image analysis of crumb can reveal details of bread structure and function (left).

The work in this project is a collaboration between Bruce and Jack Pascoe and Dr Kate Howell (microbiology and food). FVAS academics Dr Dorin Gupta (crop scientist, Dookie), Prof Richard Eckard (agronomist) and Prof Rudi Appels (geneticist) are contributing knowledge to this research.

- This research will stabilise Australian farming ecosystems in a changing climate.
- We can support vibrant Aboriginal businesses in regional areas with R&D and educational pathways.
- We acknowledge the moral imperative of research in this overlooked historical, biological and social field.
- Further research will consider Yam daisy (*Murnong*); Native millet (*Panicum*); water lily (*Nymphaeae*)

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