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**A note on foraging native plants:**

Many native plants are protected or hold deep cultural significance for Traditional Owners, and some can be harmful if not correctly identified or prepared.

If you are foraging or consuming native plants, we strongly advise you to consult reliable guidance or Aboriginal knowledge holders to ensure safety and cultural respect.

Always seek permission before foraging on Country, and source ingredients ethically from trusted suppliers.

*native* AUSTRALIAN INGREDIENTS

# GATHER

*modern* AUSTRALIAN RECIPES

**EDDIE BULATAO**



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## Eddie Bulatao

**Food has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. Not just eating it, but cooking it, sharing it, experimenting with it.**

I was raised by my grandparents on a small farm in Urbiztondo, Pangasinan, in the Philippines. Some of my earliest memories are of running around the farm with my cousins, climbing trees and picking guavas, mangoes and coconuts. I think that's where my love for foraging really started. Back then, it felt kind of magical that food just grew on the trees and plants all around me, and it was almost a game to find the ripest, sweetest fruit.

When I was old enough to start school, I was sent to live with my siblings in Quezon City. Outside of school, I spent most of my time with the kids who lived on our street. One of my neighbours, JM, earned extra pocket money by making and selling little hotcakes. I was fascinated, and asked him to teach me how he did it. Before long, I was making and selling hotcakes, too (admittedly stealing his business idea). I was only about eight or nine at the time, but I remember the sense of satisfaction I felt when someone enjoyed one of my treats. From there, cooking became a big part of my life, but it wasn't always easy. I actually failed the cooking unit in high school – the teacher said my food was good, but I wasn't interested in the theory part ... or the homework.

My first real hospo job was in fast food. After a while, I wanted to do more, so I started sending out resumes and HGT (Hospitality Group Training) called me up to offer an apprenticeship in cooking. I started working in kitchens around Perth, and my first real break was at a small restaurant called Three Five Three in Wembley. The head chef there, Todd Thorburn, taught me everything.

Foraging was reignited for me around 2019. I got a copy of *Noongar Bush Tucker* (by Vivienne Hansen and John Horsfall) and was working with a chef in Claremont who was really interested in native ingredients. We'd go out looking for edible plants, taste things, and slowly I started recognising more and more bush tucker. One day, I was out running in Northbridge and spotted a tree I thought looked familiar. I remembered it from the book – Illawarra plum – even though they're not native to WA. They weren't ripe yet, but the shape of the fruit and the seed just clicked in my head. I went back the next day, and sure enough, I was right. I spoke to a neighbour who'd lived next to the tree for fifty years, and he had no idea the fruit was edible. He'd always been told that it was poisonous (only the seed is toxic – the plum itself is delicious).

**That sort of thing happens a lot – these incredible ingredients are growing all around us, and most people don't even realise.**

That curiosity has never left me. I still forage, and I'm still learning. I've worked with amazing people like Aunty Viv and Uncle Mort, who have shared their knowledge and taken me out on Country to taste and experience bush tucker. I mostly forage around Perth and down south, but I'd love to explore the north of WA — the ingredients are so different. Foraging and cooking go hand in hand. It's about curiosity, respect and knowing what's around you. There's still so much I don't know, and I'm learning every day, which feeds my creativity in the kitchen.

A lot of my recipes are based on nostalgia. There are items on our menu that remind me of my childhood — Milo, sherbet, and mac and cheese. I like combining those favourites with local produce and bush foods; it makes something new feel familiar, and something familiar feel new. My cooking style is simple — nostalgic, comforting and fun.

**Everything I do starts with flavour. When I taste something — native lemongrass, samphire, cinnamon myrtle — I trust my palate and imagine what it could go with; the same way that some people see colours and know they work together. It's all about balance.**

In this cookbook, the ingredients I use are all accessible: ingredients you can easily buy, forage or grow. And many of the native ingredients can be purchased dried, making them easier to store and cook with year-round. I use a lot of dried ingredients in my cooking, but some ingredients are stronger when dried, and others need to be rehydrated through steeping or slow-cooking to draw out the flavour properly. It's all a process of experimenting and learning. What I hope is that the recipes in this book motivate you to integrate the foods that are all around into your cooking — not just for special occasions, but every day.

I joined Gather Foods [now Manjaree] as Head Chef in 2024, and that's when things really took off. Gerry, the founder, had heard about me through a friend — apparently, I had a bit of a reputation for being 'that chef who loves foraging'. Gather was already using native ingredients, but I wanted to take it further with local foods, and my own style of cooking. I wanted Gather events to showcase the best of what's local — not just in produce, but in culture and community, too.

This book reflects all of that — the flavours I grew up with, the ingredients I've come to love, and the ways I combine them.

**It's about sharing some of what I've learned so far, and hopefully inspiring you to get curious, try something new and look at the ingredients that are all around you a little differently.**





## Tasmanian salmon, Bush tomato broth, Native herb butter, warrigal greens

*Serves 2*

Bush tomato broth (*pg. 43*)

2 x 160 g Tasmanian salmon portions, skin on

30 g Native herb butter (*pg. 149*), divided with  
15 g melted and 15 g chilled

80 g fresh warrigal greens

Warm the Bush tomato broth over medium heat.

Meanwhile, place a frying pan over medium heat. Sear the salmon, skin side down, basting with a bit of the melted Native herb butter, until cooked to your liking.

Place 2–3 ladles of broth into serving bowls and add the salmon. Top with the warrigal greens, then shave the chilled Native herb butter over the salmon just before serving.



## Braised kangaroo tail

*Serves 4–6*

1 kg kangaroo tail, skin removed

salt

30 g ground pepperberry

olive oil

2 brown onions, diced

2 carrots, diced

4 celery sticks, diced

4 tomatoes, diced

80 g Dijon mustard

200 ml Worcestershire sauce

200 ml red wine

3 bay leaves

2 L water

In a large stockpot, sear the kangaroo on all sides over high heat (approx. 10 minutes). Season with salt and half of the pepperberry, then remove and set aside to rest.

Add some oil to the stockpot, then add the onion, carrot and celery and sauté until browned. Add the tomatoes and sauté for a further 2 minutes.

Add the mustard, Worcestershire, wine, bay leaves and the remaining pepperberry. Bring to the boil, then reduce heat to low and simmer until the mixture reduces by three-quarters (15–20 minutes).

Add the water and the rested kangaroo to the pot, cover tightly with foil and cook for 1 hour over low heat.

Remove the meat, and continue to cook the sauce, uncovered, until it has reduced by half. Serve the kangaroo with a few spoonfuls of the sauce.

### **Note**

*You can buy kangaroo tail from most butchers.*



## Fudgy Davidson plum brownies

*Serves 12*

The origin of this recipe comes from my friend Jade Jones (who is actually more like a little sister to me). While I was living with her, she made a batch of these brownies, but with blueberries. I asked for the recipe and updated it using Davidson plums for a bit of punch.

This is one of those standout recipes that's really easy to make.

250 g unsalted butter

250 g dark chocolate, broken into pieces

310 g caster sugar

4 eggs

150 g plain flour

pinch of salt

60 g freeze-dried Davidson plums, finely chopped,  
plus extra milled to a powder to garnish

Preheat the oven to 170°C. Grease and line a square cake tin (20 cm).

Melt the butter in a large saucepan over medium-high heat.

Add the chocolate and sugar and cook, stirring to combine, until the chocolate has melted. Remove from heat.

Add the eggs, flour and salt to the melted chocolate, then whisk until smooth.

Fold the plums through the batter, then pour the batter into the lined tin and bake for 25 minutes (170°C), or until it holds its shape.

Set aside to cool; the brownies will still be soft and fudgy when cooled. Dust with a bit of Davidson plum powder before serving.