



Food and drink

opportunities for Aboriginal cultural tourism



Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge and honour the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory and recognise the continuation of culture, connection to lands, water and country. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

About this guide

More and more, visitors are interested in learning about food and drinks that are natural, local, have stories and special preparation methods, are good for them and don't harm the environment. Aboriginal people know their Country, knowledge of plants and animals and the right way to grow, harvest and prepare traditional food and drinks. This creates an opportunity for Aboriginal people to showcase, build, grow and benefit from their own food and drink tourism experiences and product. In this guide, learn about how to protect, plan, share and sell your own food and drink Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences and product.

More information

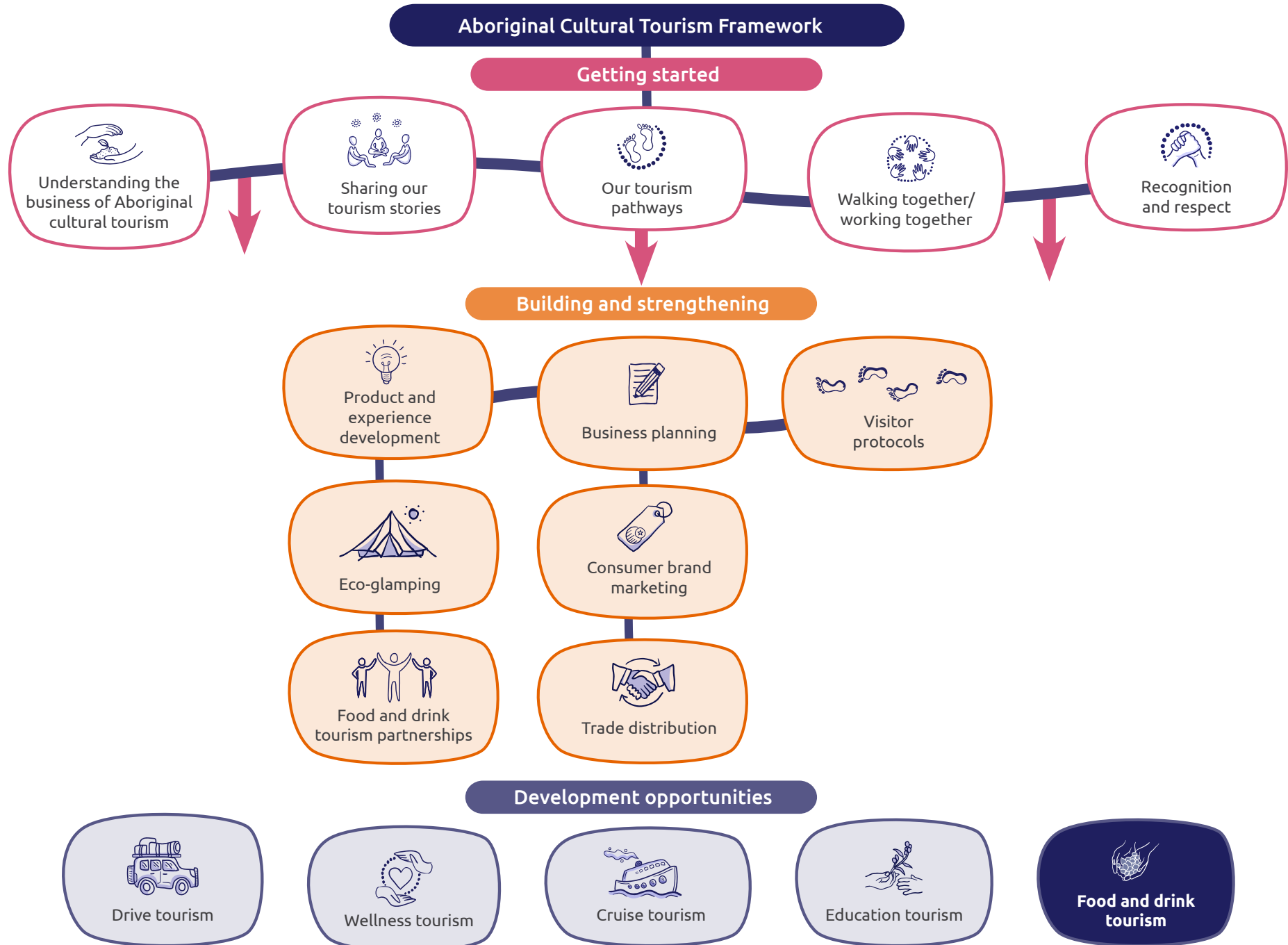
For more information and access to other Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Framework resources visit tourismandeventsnt.com.au or contact Tourism and Events NT's Aboriginal tourism team today.

PH: 08 8999 7420

E: Aboriginal.Tourismeventsnt@nt.gov.au



Tools to help you



Food and drink – cultural way

For Aboriginal people, food and drink is part of Creation, culture and Country. Food is language, knowledge, practice, responsibility and identity. There are laws for who can collect and when, where it is found, who can consume, how to harvest, hunt and prepare and how to protect it for future generations.

Food and drinks are found in the land, waters and skies – reading and responding to Country is sacred knowledge that has been passed down through Ancestors in song, dance, art, story, language and traditional practices. This is called biocultural knowledge. This type of knowledge is different across each Aboriginal language in the Northern Territory (NT).¹

“Every bush food has its own creation story, its own song and dance and cultural knowledge that has been handed down by our ancestors for thousands of years. The challenge for us is how do we bring our ancient foods into a contemporary industry while maintaining our connection to our culture, because for us, it’s not just about money, it’s about our identity.”²

Pat Torres

Northern Australia Aboriginal Kakadu Plum Alliance (NAAPKA)

Our food and drink



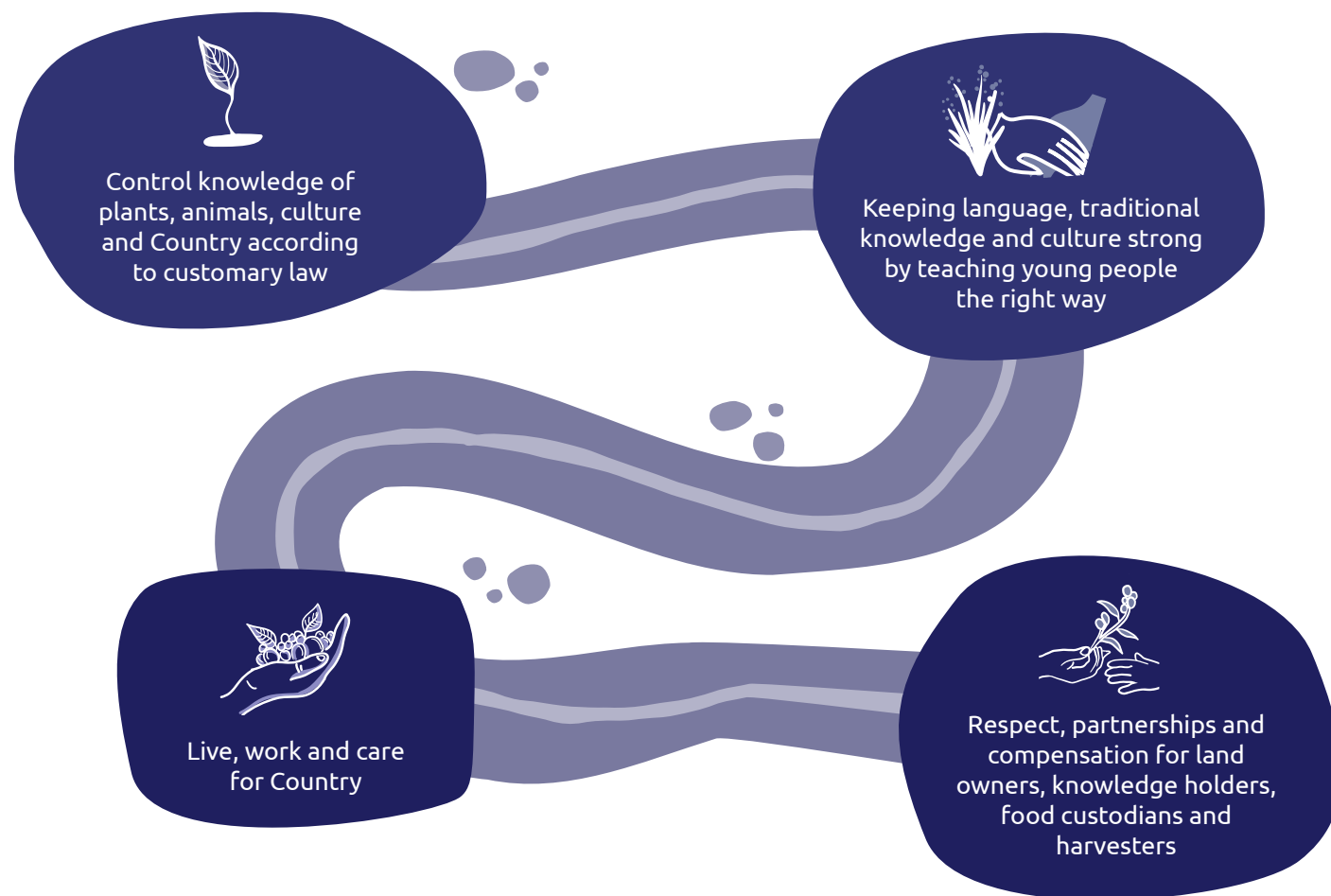
¹ [Aboriginal knowledge: plants and animals | NT.GOV.AU](https://www.nt.gov.au/aboriginal-affairs/aboriginal-knowledge-plants-and-animals/)

² [Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation Annual Report 2019-20](#)

How we can benefit from our food and drinks

Many people are interested in Aboriginal native food and drinks. They want to know where these foods come from, how they are grown or collected and how they are prepared. People also want to learn about the health benefits and look for natural, eco-friendly ingredients. Food and drink tourism creates an opportunity for Aboriginal people to benefit from growing, protecting, sharing knowledge, producing products and creating unforgettable tourism experiences that are good for culture, Country and communities.

Why should I become involved in food and drink tourism?³



Did you know

Kangaroo meat has less than 2% fat, making it the healthiest red meat option and one of the most sustainable wild harvest operations in the world.

Kakadu Plum is the world's richest vitamin C source with more than 100 times more than oranges!

³ Adapted from Strategies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Interests in Gourmet Bush Food Product Development, CRC-REP Plan Business Project – www.nintione.com.au

What is food and drink tourism?

Food and drink tourism or culinary tourism describes the people who travel in search of unique food experiences and product. The World Food Travel Association defines 'culinary tourism' as 'the pursuit and enjoyment of unique and memorable food and drink experiences, both far and near.'⁴ Food and culinary tourism is an opportunity to share stories of places and people, build community pride and the local economy.

Types of food and drink tourism

Food and drink tourism highlights the unique flavours, environments and stories of a place, offering visitors a deeper sense of its identity and culture. It invites travellers to discover traditional dishes, learn cooking techniques and experience culinary customs that share the unique flavours and stories of a destination. Types of food and drink tourism can include:



Foraging/harvesting

Gathering native plants, fruits, roots, seeds and nuts using sustainable traditional methods guided by cultural and seasonal knowledge.



Food tasting and preparation

Hands-on foraging, preparation and tastings showcase native ingredients and traditional methods, Aboriginal knowledge and seasonal bush foods.



Cooking classes and hands-on experiences

Interactive demonstrations and group cooking sessions led by Aboriginal cooks, chefs or guides teaching traditional methods.



Meet the maker

Visitors meet Aboriginal food producers, cooks and chefs for hands-on insight into seasonal ingredients, cultural techniques and the stories behind bush food.

⁴ [Culinary tourism | Research Starters | EBSCO Research – www.ebsco.com](https://www.ebsco.com)

Types of food and drink tourism can include:



Fine dining and long table dinners

Special meals created by cooks and chefs showcasing seasonal and local ingredients.



Tasting trails

Self-guided or guided food and drink tours with tasting stops to sample local food and drinks at your own pace.



Paddock-to-plate

Experiences where visitors tour a cattle station, farm or plant nursery, learn how food is grown and enjoy meals made from local produce.



Markets

Where fresh local produce is sold. Markets support local growers, encourage seasonal harvesting, and provide communities with locally sourced foods.



Fishing

Fishing and traditional methods of catching crabs, fish and other aquatic life in shallow waters.



Festivals and events

Celebrating special events and cultural diversity with unique food and drink activities and sales.



Educational tours and activities

Guided tours of food producers, natural areas or stories related to food such as artworks, tools and techniques.

Understanding food and drink visitors



International visitors are particularly interested in experiencing Aboriginal cultures including tasting and learning about unique foods and how they are prepared.

- 40% of global travellers are attracted by Indigenous food experiences and product.
- 35.2% of international travellers are interested in hands-on Indigenous food experiences such as learning a new cooking skill.
- International visitors spend \$1 in every \$5 on food and drink in Australia.



40%
want
Indigenous
food



35.2%
want
hands-on
experiences



\$1 of \$5
spent on
food & drink



Visitors from China, USA, France, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the UK and South Korea consider Australia the world's number 1 destination for food and drink experiences.⁵

⁵ Future of Global Tourism Demand, Tourism Australia November 2022

Why are visitors interested in Aboriginal food and drink experiences and product?



Taste of place and culture

Gives visitors the chance to learn directly from Aboriginal cooks and guides, deepening their understanding of culture, history and the land through hands-on food experiences and storytelling.



Unique native ingredients and flavours

Unique bush foods and ways of preparing offer new flavours and culinary traditions visitors can't find at home.



Ancient food techniques and stories

Grind stones, tools, baskets, nets, digging sticks, traps and other food technologies. Sharing evidence and ways the Ancestors harvested and ate, methods that are still used today.



Hands-on learning and skills

Guided gathering, preparation and cooking with Aboriginal guides and cooks teaches traditional methods, practical knowledge and skills unavailable anywhere else.



Community connection

Meeting custodians, producers, cooks, chefs and guides turns a meal into shared stories and relationships with local people and communities.



Wellness, sustainability and food sovereignty

Visitors value low-impact food experiences that care for Country and support Aboriginal-owned enterprises and local supply chains.

What do food and drink visitors need?

Both international and domestic visitors consider many things before they travel and book a food and drink experience and product. They need:



A safe and secure destination



Value for money



Good, local food and wild harvested or cultivated produce



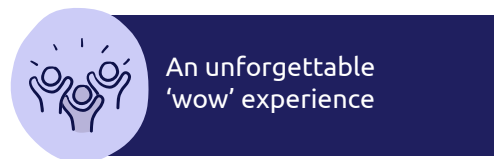
Friendly and open people with local hospitality



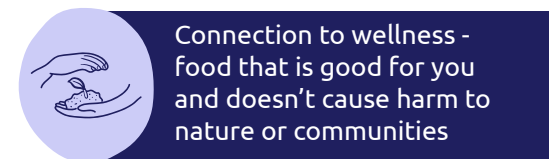
Rich history and culture



Food hygiene and certification



An unforgettable 'wow' experience



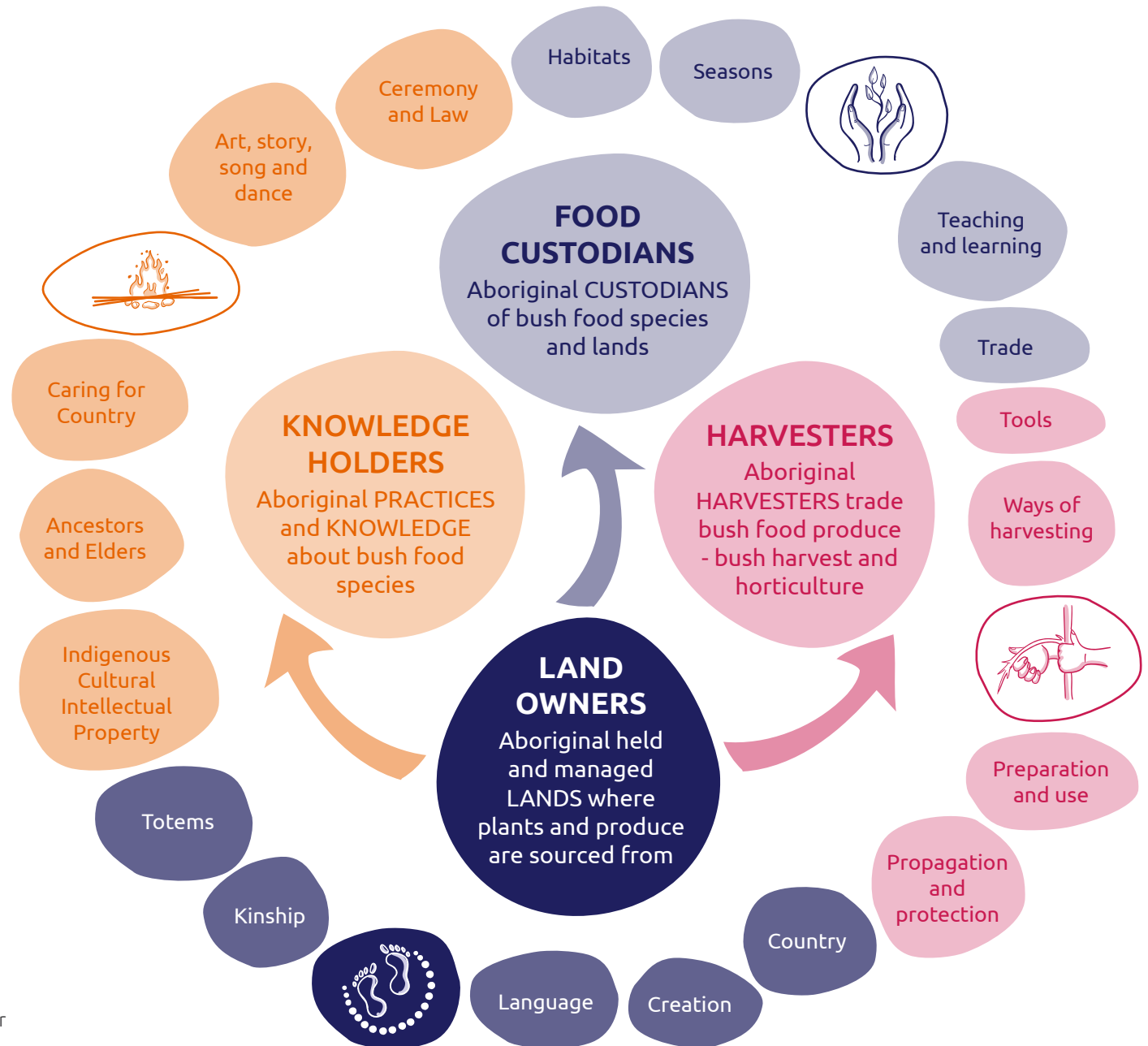
Connection to wellness - food that is good for you and doesn't cause harm to nature or communities

Learn more about the NT's visitors in the [Understanding the business of Aboriginal cultural tourism guide](https://www.tourismandeventsnt.com.au) – www.tourismandeventsnt.com.au

Getting started in food and drink tourism

Cultural pathway

Cultural way, developing food tourism experiences and product involves understanding whose Country the food comes from, identifying knowledge holders and respecting what can and cannot be shared. It requires following protocols for gathering, preparing and consuming food, considering seasons and traditions and ensuring appropriate compensation to landowners, custodians, knowledge holders and harvesters.



Adapted from Aboriginal people, bush foods knowledge and products from Central Australia: Ethical guidelines for commercial bush food research, industry and enterprises

Getting started in food and drink tourism

Business way, there are many decisions to make for your food and drink tourism journey. What will you sell to visitors – is it a packaged product like jam or spices, is it a guided walk for visitors to learn about traditional foods, will visitors have the opportunity to taste, is it a demonstration or cooking class, is it a campfire dinner or restaurant experience? Where are the food and drink products or ingredients coming from – will you gather and prepare it yourself or will you buy it from a certified food and drink supplier or harvester?



What is a product and experience?

A product is what you sell to your customers. It can be an item, a tour, a service, entry to a special place or an activity.

An experience is what visitors remember about their visit. It includes the place, the people, the activities, the transport, the food and drinks.

Learn more about planning your food and drink product or experience in the [Product and experience development for Aboriginal cultural tourism guide](http://www.tourismandeventstnt.com.au) – (www.tourismandeventstnt.com.au)

Building your business

To start, grow or strengthen your business, you need a business plan. A business plan explains what your business is, why you want to run your business, what you will sell, how you will manage your business, who your customers are, what approvals you need and laws to follow. A business plan maps your pathway to business success.

Learn more about in the [Business planning for Aboriginal cultural tourism guide](http://www.tourismandeventstnt.com.au) to support you with preparing your business plan to meet your vision and goals (www.tourismandeventstnt.com.au)

Working with partners

Partnerships can be a powerful way to combine both cultural way and business way knowledge, skills and resources. Working with the right partners, you can build a stronger business, reduce risk and create better opportunities.

Learn more in the [Food and drink partnership opportunities for Aboriginal tourism guide](http://www.tourismandeventstnt.com.au) (www.tourismandeventstnt.com.au)

Food and drink tourism responsibilities and safety

For visitors to taste or consume food and drinks as part of your tourism product and experience, there are government laws you need to follow. These laws ensure you, your business, staff and visitors are safe when collecting, preparing and enjoying the foods and drinks you share with them.



FOOD SAFETY STANDARDS

[Food Safety Standards](#) – it is the law to keep customers and staff safe when running a food business. The NT Food Safety Act 2004 and Standards are there to protect you and your customers. Learn about food safety standards and becoming a registered food business. This includes how to keep your business clean, temperature control, staff training, hygiene, labelling, food poisoning and contamination.

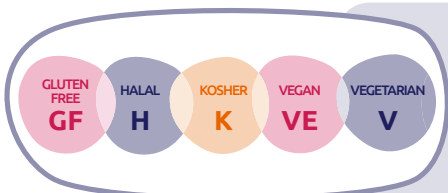
Learn more here - [Food safety and regulations | NT.GOV.AU](#)



PERMITS TO HARVEST NATIVE PLANTS AND ANIMALS

Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory can take native plants and wildlife for traditional use, protected under the [Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976](#). Section 122 allows traditional hunting, food gathering and ceremonial use, provided it is for personal/subsistence use. If using native plants and animals for business purposes, you will need a permit.

To check if you need a permit, visit [Permits to take or interfere with wildlife | NT.GOV.AU](#)



UNDERSTANDING DIETARY REQUIREMENTS AND ALLERGIES

A dietary requirement is a special need or rule about what someone can eat or drink. This might be because of health, religion or personal choice. For example, some people do not eat meat or need food with no gluten or low sugar if diabetic.

An allergy means some foods or drinks can make a person sick, like nuts, dairy or seafood. When you run a food business, it is important to know about these needs so everyone stays safe and has an enjoyable experience. If you can't cater for these needs, it is important to clearly label or provide warnings to visitors before they book, buy or consume your products.

To learn more about allergies and special diets visit [Food allergens | NT.GOV.AU](#)



Examples of NT Aboriginal food and drink tourism

The Northern Territory offers a diverse range of Aboriginal owned and operated food and drink experiences and product. Below are examples of Aboriginal experiences and product that showcase food and drink.



Karrke Aboriginal Cultural Experience

Ownership: 100% Aboriginal owned and operated

Location: Watarrka National Park, Northern Territory

Offer: Karrke provides a 1 hour cultural experience led by local Aboriginal guides. Visitors learn about traditional foods and medicine, tools and artefacts and the significance of native plants and seeds. Activities include hands-on demonstrations of food preparation, explanations of seasonal bush foods and insights into cultural practices and storytelling. This is a demonstration only with no food tasting involved.

www.karrke.com.au



Kungkas Can Cook

Ownership: 100% Aboriginal owned and operated

Location: Alice Springs, Northern Territory

Offer: Kungkas Can Cook is a bushfoods supplier and cultural tourism operator that ethically sources native seeds and fruits. Their online shop offers jams, chutneys, sauces, syrups, teas and spices that share the unique flavours and significance of foods in Central Australia. Kungkas Can Cook also provide immersive bushfood and cultural experiences and product that connects visitors to Country through guided walks, traditional knowledge sharing, cooking classes, unique catering and tastings blending cultural knowledge with food practices.

www.kungkas.com



Nabilil Dreaming Sunset Dinner Tour

Ownership: 100% Aboriginal owned and operated

Location: Nitmiluk Gorge, Katherine, Northern Territory

Offer: This tour combines a sunset cruise through the sandstone cliffs of Nitmiluk Gorge with cultural storytelling about Jawoyn traditions and the Dreaming. Guests enjoy a gourmet three-course dinner on board featuring fresh, local Australian produce while learning about the spiritual significance of the gorge and its connection to the Jawoyn people.

www.nitmiluktours.com.au



Karrimanjebekkan An-me Kakadu: Taste of Kakadu Festival

Ownership: Jointly managed Kakadu National Park

Location: Kakadu National Park

Offer: Each year the joint management Board of Kakadu National Park hosts the Karrimanjebekkan An-me Kakadu: Taste of Kakadu Festival. The Festival offers a unique, immersive cultural food experience in Kakadu National Park, showcasing 65,000 years of Aboriginal culture through bush tucker, traditional cooking, workshops and performances. Local Aboriginal people offer food and drink tourism workshops, market stalls, products for sale, guided tours, performances and activities. Highlight activities include an exclusive Kinhkinh dinner under the stars, Yellow Water Canape cruise, Bininj ground ovens featuring seasonal and native ingredients such as Magpie Goose and Kakadu Plum. A mix of free and paid for events are available.

www.kakadu.gov.au

Examples of cultural food and drink tourism outside of the NT



Dale Tilbrook Experiences, Western Australia

Ownership: 100% Aboriginal owned and operated

Location: Maalinup Aboriginal Art Gallery, Caversham, Western Australia

Offer: Dale Tilbrook offers immersive 2 hour sessions that explore the world of Australian bush foods and their cultural significance. Guests learn about traditional ingredients used for nutrition and healing, including fruits, nuts, seeds, herbs and teas and how these foods are incorporated into modern dishes. Visitors can explore the bush food garden and enjoy a bushfood-inspired lunch, morning or afternoon tea, featuring a range of savoury and sweet dishes made with native ingredients. The experience includes tastings and discussions on seasonal food gathering, the Nyungar Six Seasons and sustainable practices, providing insight into Aboriginal culture through food.



Kuku Yalanji Cultural Habitat Tours, Queensland

Ownership: 100% Aboriginal owned and operated family business

Location: Cooya Beach, Far North Queensland

Offer: A traditional hunting and gathering 'catch and cook' experience with Kuku Yalanji Traditional Owners. Tours include a coastal beach and mangrove walk – 2 hours, traditional Aboriginal fishing activity, mud-crabbing, spear fishing and a coastal beach night time walk – for guests to try a night-time fishing activity.

www.kycht.com.au



Te Pā Tū - Summer Evening Experience, New Zealand

Ownership: 100% Māori owned and operated

Location: Rotorua, New Zealand

Offer: Te Pā Tū provides an immersive cultural evening celebrating Māori traditions and kai (food). Guests are welcomed with ceremony and storytelling before enjoying a seasonal hākari (feast) that includes dishes cooked using traditional methods such as hāngī, alongside contemporary Māori cuisine. Tū Te Rā highlights the season's harvest and shares rituals, stories and traditions connected to ancient Māori concepts of warfare and peace, presented through a cultural and culinary celebration.

www.te-pa-tu.com



Shash Dine Eco Retreat, Northern Arizona USA

Ownership: 100% Diné (Navajo) owned and operated

Location: Navajo Nation, Northern Arizona, USA

Offer: Guests spend the night in a traditional hogan (earth and stone hut) and sample traditional Navajo meals, such as stews with lamb, native vegetables and Navajo tea, prepared by Navajo hosts. Guests can also enjoy cookouts under the stars, with all meals served at a large communal fire pit. The experience includes desert walks focused on edible plants, storytelling and connections to ancestral land.

www.shashdine.com



WiisinidaA - Let's Eat Culinary Tour, Canada

Ownership: 100% Indigenous-owned and operated

Location: Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada

Offer: This guided 3 hour walk follows the Anishinaabe food journey from seed to harvest, specializing in educational walks through the woods. Depending on the season, participants may help plant, harvest, prepare or cook traditional ingredients while learning their cultural significance. Every tour includes storytelling, teachings and a shared meal. Guests explore native ingredients such as berries, seeds, herbs and teas and discover their use in both traditional and contemporary dishes.

www.walkamongthetrees.com

Planning your food and drink tourism

Use this checklist to help plan your food and drink Aboriginal cultural tourism product or experience.

| CULTURAL WAY PLANNING | |
|--|--|
| Knowing Country – what native plants and animals do you want to share as a food and drink tourism experience? | |
| Who are the Traditional Owners, knowledge holders or food custodians relevant to your chosen area and ingredients? | |
| Have you consulted with your local community, family, Elders or representatives for guidance and permissions? | |
| What knowledge or stories will you share with visitors about your native foods and ingredients? | |
| What knowledge, stories or practices are not appropriate to share publicly? And who is the right person to deliver this experience or share this knowledge? | |
| How will you acknowledge and protect your Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property, the cultural significance of plants, animals and locations in your experience? Learn more about Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property in the Walking together/working together guide and the Visitor cultural protocols guide (www.tourismandeventsnnt.com.au) . | |
| How will income, opportunities or recognition be shared with Traditional Owners, knowledge holders and community? | |
| How will you ensure ongoing consent and approval as your experience or product grows or changes? | |

BUSINESS WAY PLANNING

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>What type of experiences and product will you offer?</p> <p>To learn more read the Product and experience development for Aboriginal tourism guide (www.tourismandeventsnt.com.au)</p> | |
| <p>Where will your food or drink experience or product be offered?</p> <p>Do you need a lease, licence or permit?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To conduct commercial activities on Aboriginal Land Trust areas, an Aboriginal Land Rights Act Section 19 lease or licence may be needed – check with your local Land Council. • To conduct activities in National Parks, you may need to apply for a tour operator licence, permit or sublease with NT Parks and Wildlife Commission (www.nt.gov.au) or Parks Australia (www.parksaustralia.gov.au) | |
| <p>Will you be harvesting food and native ingredients?</p> <p>Harvesting of native plants and animals for commercial use and production requires Permits to take or interfere with wildlife NT.GOV.AU</p> | |
| <p>Will you need to register as a food business for the type of product or experience you want to offer?</p> <p>To learn more about food business registration visit Register a food business NT.GOV.AU</p> | |
| <p>What steps do you need to take to make your food and drink tourism experiences or product safe for visitors?</p> <p>Learn more about food safety here - Food safety and regulations NT.GOV.AU</p> | |
| <p>What are some of the dietary and allergies you need to think about for your food and drink experiences and products?</p> <p>Meats, nuts and seeds, dairy, gluten, seafood or others?</p> | |

References

Photo credits

Front Cover – Tali Wiru dining experience – Tourism & Events NT/Tourism Aust

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Page 4 – J&L Outback Experience – Tourism & Events NT/Helen Orr/J&L

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Page 6 – Second from left – J&L Outback Experience – Tourism & Events NT/Helen Orr/J&L

Page 6 – Second from right – Tiwi Islands – Tourism NT/Helen Orr Tarntipi Bu

Page 6 – Right – Rayleen Brown Kungkas Can Cook

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Page 7 – Top far right – Parap Village Markets – Tourism NT

Page 7 – Bottom left – Bawaka Experience – Tourism NT/Shana McNaught

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Back Cover – Voyages Ayers Rock Resort – Tourism NT/Helen Orr/Voyages

