

Unit 1.2.2

Challenges Encountered by First Non-Indigenous Settlers

Key Knowledge and Key Skills

Key Knowledge 1.2.2

The challenges encountered by the first non-indigenous settlers in striving to establish a secure and sustainable food supply.

Key Skills 1.2.1

Evaluate foods and flavourings indigenous to Australia and through practical activities demonstrate, observe and reflect on contemporary culinary uses.

Key Skills 1.1.7

Participate in and reflect on practical activities to explore the history and culture of food in Australia

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First Non-Indigenous Settlers

On 26 January 1788, Captain Arthur Phillip guided 11 ships of the First Fleet into what is now known as Sydney Harbour, leading to the founding of Port Jackson. The British landed with the intent that, over time, they would use their own agricultural practices to provide the food necessary for the new settlement of 1000 people. The new settlers were a combination of convicts, militia, and free settlers, who had paid to travel to the new colony.

A range of supplies, intending to last the new settlement for 2 years, was brought on the voyage from England. These supplies included alcohol, dried peas, flour, rice, salted meat, sugar, vinegar, and seeds and vine cuttings for planting. Six cattle, seven horses, 29 sheep, 12 pigs, and a few goats survived the journey. These animals were to be used for breeding and producing milk, which could be made into other dairy products.

The voyage from England was long and challenging, so it was not practical to bring much food. Remember that the intention was that the early settlers would produce and grow their food.

[Click here](#) to view the list of supplies that the First Fleet carried.

Watch this video about the First Fleet arrival from an English perspective: <https://youtu.be/MnUNEkMsifY>

Watch this video about the First Fleet arrival from an Indigenous perspective: <https://youtu.be/8IfqSS8kpLA>

Challenges Encountered by First Non-Indigenous Settlers

Challenges Establishing a Food Supply

Early settlers planted the crops and raised the animals they brought from England. They used their own farming methods to cultivate the crops and rear the animals.

The first crops that the settlers planted mostly failed because:

- Climatic conditions in Australia were different from England.
- Crops were planted during summer, but the seeds could not survive the heat.
- Fertiliser was in short supply as only a few animals survived the voyage from England.
- Limited agricultural equipment was available to clear the land.
- Mice and rats that arrived on the ships ate the crops.
- Most of the people on the First Fleet had little agricultural knowledge and skills.
- The soil in and around Sydney Harbour lacked nourishment for the crops.
- Weather conditions such as severe thunderstorms ruined crops and farming infrastructure, such as fencing.

The new settlers also experienced a lack of other supplies such as milk and milk products. Some animals died on the journey from England or shortly after arriving, which limited the amount of available milk. Some of the surviving animals wandered off into the bush before adequate fencing could be built.

The new settlers also expected additional supplies from England. However, not all ships survived the journey, and many goods and food were lost at sea. When the ships arrived, they may have brought additional food, but they also brought more people who needed food, putting further strain on an already insufficient supply.

The settlers did experience some success when they planted seeds of fruit trees on Garden Island. Although it is joined to the mainland now, Garden Island was originally a small island located in Sydney Harbour. Apple, fig, orange, and pear trees were successfully planted and cultivated on the island. The First Fleet sourced these trees from Rio de Janeiro and the Cape of Good Hope on their journey to Australia. One settler also experienced success growing cauliflower and melons. A grapevine was planted, but was too close to the water and did not survive.

Watch the first 10 minutes of this video to learn how James Ruse, a convict with a farming background, was able to grow the first European crop in Australia: <https://youtu.be/BzCSBYCbjc4>

Watch this video to learn how James Ruse became a well recognised convict farmer in Australia:
<https://youtu.be/GCBN0r1Siic>

Challenges with Food Rations

Although some farms were successfully growing food, the new settlers required more than what could be farmed. Unlike James Ruse, the vast majority of convicts were from cities in England and had no little, if any, agricultural knowledge. Food rations were introduced for all members of the new settlement, regardless of whether they were convicts, free settlers, or militia.

Men received the following rations per week:

- 6 ounces (185 g) of butter;
- 1/2 pound of rice (220 g);
- 3 pints of split peas (1800 g);
- 4 pounds (1760 g) salted pork or 7 pounds (3080 g) of salted beef; and
- 7 pounds (3080 g) of flour (enough to make four standard loaves of bread).

Women received two-thirds of this amount, and children received half. This amount of food was sufficient to provide enough energy required by a labouring man. However, without any fruits and vegetables to eat, people lacked essential vitamins and minerals in their diet.

Eventually, because the new settlement was not that successful at producing food, the food supply started to dwindle. By 1790, when it seemed that the new settlers would suffer from starvation, the rations were reduced by a third. The Second Fleet arrived in May 1790 and did bring some much-needed food supplies. Still, with many more new people coming on the Second Fleet, the settlement struggled to provide sufficient food for all. Food theft was common, and the penalties for this crime were harsh. Depending on the severity of the food theft, the punishment could be up to 500 lashes or even hanging.

Watch this video that shows how meat was salted in the 18th century: <https://youtu.be/ZdmPlpQZPRg>

Watch this video that shows how damper was cooked in the coals of fire:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhkRi90xG_s

Challenges with Indigenous Foods

It has been suggested that the early settlers did not adopt local indigenous foods; however, this is not entirely true. When they first arrived, the settlers had little in the way of food supplies; they were hungry. For this reason, some settlers chose to eat the foods that Indigenous Australians ate. A lack of variety in the supplied rations may also have contributed to their interest in native foods.

Initially, they consumed fish and seafood from the rivers, lakes, and ocean. While the fish species in Australia were not the same as in England, they were still familiar. At times, the settlers also supplemented their rations with kangaroo meat, with many claiming it tasted like wild game. Kangaroos were an important food source when food supplies were low and rations were limited.

Deriving food from plant sources was perhaps more challenging for the settlers. At first, they could find very little in their new environment that appeared edible because they were looking for English plants. They were also unsure how to safely prepare the plants for consumption.

One popular plant among the settlers was the native sarsaparilla. They tried this plant because they saw Indigenous Australians sucking on its leaves. Another theory is that Indigenous Australians communicated with the settlers about which indigenous plants were safe to eat. The settlers soon realised they could make tea by shredding the plant's root, pouring boiling water over it, and leaving it steep for several minutes. The plant produced a sweet licorice-flavoured tea, often called 'sweet tea.'

Some historians believe that the settlers developed a liking for indigenous foods and continued to experiment and cook with them. The settlers began cooking fish, kangaroo, and other native animals in similar ways that they would cook meat from home.

Fish, fruit, marine life, and indigenous animals were plentiful when the settlers first arrived; however, supplies became unreliable and dwindled over time due to over-harvesting.

Challenges with Farming

By 1792, life in Australia for the new settlers seemed more secure. Houses and other buildings were built, the land was cleared and prepared for farming, and roads were developed. Due to their lack of experience planting crops around Sydney Harbour, the settlers turned their agricultural efforts to the more fertile land around Rose Hill. Rose Hill was situated on a riverbank; its name was later changed to Parramatta and Parramatta River on the King's birthday in 1791. Parramatta quickly became more populated than Sydney.

Despite some crippling droughts, farms in Parramatta began to thrive as the settlers adapted to their new environment. A much-needed water supply was provided by converting a series of angular rock pools into a stream. Despite lacking fertiliser, the settlers eventually worked out how to grow corn, maize, and vegetables.

During the early settlement days, many free settlers attempted to grow vegetables in home gardens. The convicts were also provided with seeds and free time to plant gardens. Although there were many early failures, vegetables such as turnips, potatoes, and cabbages proved successful. These farmers experimented with the different seeds and cuttings from England.

An additional smaller settlement was also set up on Norfolk Island, approximately 1600 km from Sydney. Despite plagues of caterpillars, parrots, and rats, this settlement successfully grew a range of fresh produce. Within a year, artichokes, bananas, barley, celery, leeks, lettuce, onions, oranges, parsley, potatoes, pumpkins, rice, sugar cane, turnips, and wheat were all transported back to Sydney.

The natural resources and the land where these farms were developed were no longer available to Indigenous Australians. This triggered a lot of problems and hostility between the settlers and Indigenous Australians. At this time, an Indigenous leader called Pemulwuy, other Indigenous men, and even some convicts attacked farms by burning crops.

Establishing a Sustainable and Secure Food Supply

The Use of Indigenous Ingredients in British Recipes

Despite the establishment of farms, European settlers continued using indigenous ingredients in their cooking. They prepared these ingredients in typical European recipes.

The use of kangaroo became commonplace in a variety of different recipes. One of these dishes, the Kangaroo Steamer, was very similar to a dish they would have had back home called the Jugged Hare. These dishes were prepared by slow cooking the meat, either the kangaroo or hare, with bacon and other seasonings. Slow cooking meat was a popular method, especially during winter, as running the stove to cook the family meal also kept the house warm.

Slippery Bob was a dish of kangaroo brains fried in batter. Pam Jam was a meal of kangaroo tails roasted in ashes, then fried with bacon, mushrooms, and capsicum. Wallaby was also a popular roasted meal. The settlers likened it to a roasted hare. Roasted echidna was said to taste like a suckling pig, and the flying fox was said to taste and look like roast pork.

Reptiles and insects were not usually considered food but were consumed if nothing else was available to eat. Snake was said to taste like pork and witchetty grubs like hazelnuts when roasted. In desperate times, dried grasshoppers and even moths were consumed.

As the years passed, the settlers increased their use of indigenous fungi and plants. Wild mushrooms and pigweed were used to make salads. Pigweed was said to taste like sorrel, a leafy vegetable widely used in English cooking. Maranong, an indigenous root vegetable, was often roasted or baked. It had a similar shape to a carrot with the flavour of turnip. Bush yams were also cooked this way and tasted similar to sweet potatoes.

Indigenous fruits were also prepared in traditional European ways – in jams, jellies, pies, and tarts.

Australian cookbooks and recipes from around the mid-1800s show that the settlers used indigenous animals and birds to make traditional English-style soups, pies, roasts, and curries that reminded them of home.

Written Activity One

We're Hungry

By 1790, two years after the First Fleet's arrival at Port Jackson on the 26th of January 1788, the new settlement faced the real possibility of starvation.

The European settlers were starving in an area where the local indigenous population had successfully fed themselves for thousands of years.

Captain Arthur Phillip's most important task was ensuring the settlement could establish a safe, secure, and sustainable food supply. It appears that in 1790 with the possibility of starvation very real, he had failed at that task.

Select one of the following tasks:

Imagine you are a **Captain** that arrived in Australia in the late 1700s to early 1800s.

Write a letter to send to your superiors in England, explaining the situation in Australia.

Include the following information in your letter:

- Actions you took to ensure the settlers had sufficient food when you first arrived in Australia.
- The plans you put into place since your arrival to ensure that all European settlers had enough to eat.
- Problems you encountered in establishing a secure and sustainable food supply when you first arrived in Australia.
- Reasons for the problems you encountered and the actions you took to overcome these issues.
- Your plans on how to improve the amount of food available.
- Your thoughts on whether you think you will be able to save the colony from starvation.

Imagine that you are a **convict** in Australia.

Write a letter to send to your family in England, explaining the situation in Australia.

Include the following information in your letter:

- The life of a convict in the new colony.
- Living conditions in the new colony.
- The type of food available to eat.
- The rations you receive.
- The problems you have encountered and the actions you took to overcome the issues.
- Your plans on how to improve the amount of food available.
- Your thoughts on whether you think you will be able to survive.

Imagine that you are an Indigenous Australian.

Write or record a story that tells future generations about what happened to your food supply when the Europeans arrived in Australia.

Include the following information in your letter:

- Living conditions that you were used to.
- The type of food available to eat.
- The problems you have encountered and the actions you took to overcome the issues.
- Your plans on how to improve the amount of food available.
- Your thoughts on whether you think you will be able to survive.

Written Activity Two

Australia – The Story of Us

Watch the documentary: Australia – The Story of Us, Worlds Collide (PG) 40 minutes

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/show/SCwKYxaXz8ALFNav-9WsHb-A?season=1&sbp=CgEx>

Link: <https://online.clickview.com.au/exchange/categories/294/history/videos/39399381/australia-the-story-of-us-worlds-collide>

Complete a SWOT analysis of the Indigenous Australians and Early Settlers featured in the film.

Indigenous Australians	
Strengths What things were they good at? What unique resources could they draw on?	Weaknesses What things were they bad at? What resources did they lack?
Opportunities What could they have done to improve their food supply?	Threats What factors prevented them from having an adequate food supply?
European Settlers	
Strengths What things were they good at? What unique resources could they draw on?	Weaknesses What resources did they lack?
Opportunities What could they have done to improve their food supply?	Threats What factors prevented them from having an adequate food supply?

Practical Activity One

Kangaroo Pie, Anyone?

British settlers needed to engage with the edible flora and fauna of the continent almost immediately upon arrival. The journals of First Fleet officers record not only their reliance on native food, but the relish with which they enjoyed it... Cooks – mainly women – relied on traditional British methods to transform these raw materials into something that they deemed culturally recognisable and appropriate.

Singley, B., 2017. *The Conversation*. [Online]

Available at: <https://theconversation.com/parrot-pie-and-possum-curry-how-colonial-australians-embraced-native-food-59977> [Accessed 19 October 2022].

Let's Design

Your task is to imagine it is 1791, and you are trying to make a traditional English-style pie using the ingredients available.

Click this link to read about the history of pies in Australia:

<https://australianfoodtimeline.com.au/great-australian-pie/>

In pairs, make a pie using the rations and pantry items listed below. You have been lucky to obtain some kangaroo meat and indigenous herbs.

Your teacher will advise you on the type of kangaroo cut and indigenous herbs you will have.

Weekly Rations

7 lb of flour	3 pints of split peas	1/2 lb rice
7 lb of dried pork or beef	6 oz of butter	

Pantry Items

Vinegar	Salt	Pepper	Allspice
Cinnamon Quills	Ground coriander	Bay leaves	Cloves
Caraway seeds	Fennel	Marjoram	Nutmeg
Dried parsley	Rosemary Leaves	Sage	Dried Tarragon

Design your Pie

You need to describe the meal and list the ingredients and techniques you would use to make your pie.

English-style Pie		
Ingredient	What will you use?	What preparation and cooking techniques will you use?
Cut of Meat		
Vegetables		
Indigenous Herbs		

Let's Plan

Create the recipe for your pie below.

You will be making your recipe in class. Include as much detail as you can. It is recommended you prepare and cook this recipe in 2 x 50 or 60-minute lessons.

You are encouraged to adapt the recipes below:

- Meat Pie, page 232, Cookery the Australian Way, by Shirley Cameron, Eighth Edition, 2011.
- Flaky Pastry, page 390, Cookery the Australian Way, by Shirley Cameron, Eighth Edition, 2011.
- Rough Puff Pastry, page 391, Cookery the Australian Way, by Shirley Cameron, Eighth Edition, 2011.

Recipe Name:	
Number of serves:	1 to 2 serves (you will only need to make enough for 1 or 2 people)
Ingredients and Quantities of Ingredients:	
Method:	

Let's Cook

Make your meal in class.

Your teacher will have some additional indigenous ingredients available for you to add to your meal.

You must add at least two indigenous ingredients to your meal.

If indigenous ingredients are unavailable, then use similar alternative ingredients instead. For example, native oregano could be replaced with conventional oregano.

Let's Evaluate

1. **Complete** the sensory evaluation below:

After making your meal, complete the sensory analysis of your below.

Sensory Characteristics	Words that describe the meal	Rating
Appearance		😊 😐 😞
Texture		😊 😐 😞
Aroma		😊 😐 😞
Taste		😊 😐 😞
Sound		😊 😐 😞

2. **Answer** the following questions:

Was this the type of meat that an early European settler would have made? Why? Why not?

3. Complete the Positive, Minus, and Interesting chart below.

Types of meals	Positive	Minus	Interesting
Planning a meal using only the rations listed			

Planning a meal using the rations listed and the indigenous ingredients provided (or similar indigenous food provided).			
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4. What kind of challenges would you have found living in this period concerning food?
Why would you have experienced these challenges?

Summary Activity

Answer the questions below:

What is the main idea about this key knowledge and key skills?

Write two or three sentences in your own words.

What were the main challenges that early European settlers in Australia faced?

What kinds of native plants and animals did early European settlers consume?

How did early European settlers use native plants and animals in their cooking?

What was the nutritional value of the early European settlers' diet like?

Why did European settlers initially have problems establishing a reliable food supply?

What did the government do to improve the new settlers' access to food?

Exam Preparation

Multiple-Choice Questions (5 marks)

Choose the response that is correct or that **best answers** the question.

Question 1

Despite Indigenous Australians living off the land for thousands of years, the new European settlers often went hungry. This was because they:

- a. Did not know how to cook native foods.
- b. Did not like the taste of native foods.
- c. Did not know what was edible and safe to eat.
- d. Were not allowed to collect native foods.

Question 2

The first crops planted around Sydney failed because:

- a. The land could not be cleared.
- b. The quality of the soil was better in other areas.
- c. Hungry convicts ate them before they were fully grown.
- d. Cattle trampled on them.

Question 3

New colonial settlers used native ingredients in their traditional British recipes because:

- a. It was what the new settlers were familiar with.
- b. The cooking methods used by indigenous Australians were unhealthy.
- c. British recipes were quicker to prepare.
- d. All of the above.

Question 4

Violence often broke out between the Indigenous Australians and the new settlers because:

- a. Indigenous Australians felt insulted that the new settlers did not like their foods.
- b. Indigenous Australians were no longer able to use their traditional cooking methods.
- c. New settlers used up natural resources such as land and food.
- d. None of the above.

Question 5

Rations that the new settlers were given were limited because:

- a. Food needed to be stored for times of drought.
- b. Men were the only ones eligible for rations.
- c. Not everyone could afford to pay money for the rations.
- d. The population was increasing.

Short Answer Questions (10 marks)

Question 1 (4 marks)

Provide two reasons why the new settlement faced starvation by 1790. (4 marks)

Question 2 (2 marks)

Convicts were given free time to plant and maintain vegetable gardens.

Suggest why this would be the case. (2 marks)

Question 3 (4 marks)

“New settlers did not accept native Indigenous foods.” State whether you agree with this statement and justify your opinion. (4 marks)

Exam Preparation

Multiple-Choice Questions (5 marks)

Choose the response that is correct or that **best answers** the question.

Question 1

Despite Indigenous Australians living off the land for thousands of years, the new European settlers often went hungry. This was because they:

- a. Did not know how to cook native foods.
- b. Did not like the taste of native foods.
- c. Did not know what was edible and safe to eat.
- d. Were not allowed to collect native foods.

The answer is not A. To some extent, this is true. However, there were considerable plant and animal food sources that were similar to what they had consumed in Britain. It was likely that the same preparation and cooking techniques could be applied.

The answer is not B. There is no evidence of this. There is a lot of evidence suggesting the new settlers enjoyed some native foods, such as oysters.

The answer is C. New settlers were unsure what foods were unsafe to eat and edible.

The answer is not D. There were no regulations prohibiting new settlers from collecting and consuming native foods.

Question 2

The first crops planted around Sydney failed because:

- a. The land could not be cleared.
- b. The quality of the soil was better in other areas.
- c. Hungry convicts ate them before they were fully grown.
- d. Cattle trampled on them.

The answer is not A. The land in and around Sydney could be cleared.

The answer is B. The quality of the soil in Parramatta and Parramatta River was more fertile.

The answer is not C. Convicts would have waited until the crops had grown before attempting to eat them.

The answer is not D. There were very few cattle in the area.

Question 3

New colonial settlers used native ingredients in their traditional British recipes because:

- a. It was what the new settlers were familiar with.
- b. The cooking methods used by indigenous Australians were unhealthy.
- c. British recipes were quicker to prepare.
- d. All of the above.

The answer is A. New settlers used their knowledge and available native ingredients to prepare traditional British recipes.

The answer is not B. The food and cooking methods used by Indigenous Australians were healthy.

The answer is not C. British recipes often required significant preparation and long cooking times.

The answer is not D.

Question 4

Violence often broke out between the Indigenous Australians and the new settlers because:

- a. Indigenous Australians felt insulted that the new settlers did not like their foods.
- b. Indigenous Australians were no longer able to use their traditional cooking methods.
- c. **New settlers used up natural resources such as land and food.**
- d. None of the above.

The answer is not A. We do not know if Indigenous Australians were offended if a new settler did not like their food.

The answer is not B. It is unlikely that Indigenous Australians could no longer use traditional cooking methods.

The answer is C. New settlers began to use the land Indigenous Australians relied on for farming. They also harvested and consumed a lot of their food sources.

The answer is not D.

Question 5

Rations that the new settlers were given were limited because:

- a. Food needed to be stored for times of drought.
- b. Men were the only ones eligible for rations.
- c. Not everyone could afford to pay money for the rations.
- d. **The population was increasing.**

The answer is not A. While there was a drought when the new settlers first arrived, rations were not stored.

The answer is not B. Men, women, and children were eligible for varying amounts of rations.

The answer is not C. The rations did not cost money.

The answer is D. More new settlers were arriving by ship. The ships were not bringing the amount of food supplies the new colony required.

Short Answer Questions (10 marks)**Question 1 (4 marks)**

Provide two reasons why the new settlement faced starvation by 1790. (4 marks)

Two of the following responses were accepted:

- Most convicts and free settlers had little to no agricultural experience. Therefore, they did not know how to plant and cultivate crops.
- The seeds the new settlers tried to plant were of British origin – most of which were unsuitable for Australian conditions. In addition, the seeds were planted at the height of the Australian summer, which was not a suitable time for planting.
- The ships that arrived did not bring enough food sources for the developing colony. Mice and rats often ate the food stores on the ships.
- The soil in and around Sydney lacked nutrients, and it wasn't easy to grow any crops in it. In addition, limited fertiliser was available for the land because only a few animals survived the long sea journey, and therefore little manure was available.
- Weather conditions such as droughts and thunderstorms threatened crops and farming infrastructure.
- Limited farming equipment was available to clear land, which was already challenging to clear.
- Animals escaped from a lack of farming infrastructure and wandered off into the bush.

Question 2 (2 marks)

Convicts were given free time to plant and maintain vegetable gardens.

Suggest why this would be the case. (2 marks)

One of the following responses was accepted:

- If convicts had their own gardens to tend to, this would increase the amount of food available to them to eat, which would make them healthier and better able to work on the tasks given to them by the militia.
- If convicts experienced success growing crops and raising animals, they could teach other convicts to do the same. This would make them less reliant on rations and result in more rations being available for others.

Question 3 (4 marks)

“New settlers did not accept native Indigenous foods.”

State whether you agree with this statement and justify your opinion. (4 marks)

The student needed to state whether they agreed with the statement. No mark was awarded for this.

The student needed to provide two reasons to justify their opinion.

- It is not accurate that new settlers did not accept native Indigenous foods. At times violence broke out between Indigenous Australians and the new settlers, as the new settlers gathered so much of the native food that there was none available for the Indigenous population.
- New settlers were quite accepting of Indigenous foods – if and when they could find them. Unfortunately, the new settlers didn't know what they were looking for. They found it difficult to determine if the food was safe to eat. They also did not have the knowledge and skills to hunt, gather and prepare indigenous food.