

Killing kangaroos merely to reduce numbers, or to use as pet food, is a travesty

JOHN LETHLEAN

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By **JOHN LETHLEAN**, FOOD WRITER
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So, the folks who decide how and what our children are taught in school want us to eat more kangaroos. One physical education assignment under the new national curriculum requires students to examine “serving and eating food that has been prepared sustainably”. Great idea. “For example, using local ingredients to cut down on emissions using vegetables and/or meat that is more sustainable (vegetarian/vegan dishes or kangaroo) and not using single-use plastic for serving.”

Difficult to argue, although the cattle industry has itself in a knot over the suggestion that beef production is ruining the planet. But kangaroos? They’re wild. They’re overabundant. Killing them merely to reduce numbers, or just to use the carcasses for pet food, is a travesty.

And I wonder if the curriculum body will fall foul of the Australian Society for Kangaroos, which took The Australian (and me) to the Press Council back in 2014 over a story that advocated more consumption of roo meat based on first-hand experience with a professional shooter at Broken Hill. I put forth the opinion – based on what I saw with the shooter and at the processing plant in Adelaide, and after looking at the estimates of kangaroo numbers and the annual quotas set for culling – that it was a good idea to be harvesting and eating these animals rather than simply killing them and leaving ’em for the dingoes. Hardly radical.

Nothing’s changed this end. And it’s reassuring to learn the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority is on board.

Kangaroos are protected; they can only be shot by a professional, licensed shooter or a landholder with a permit. The good news is that even if you're not friendly with such a farmer, the meat is readily available in supermarkets, and quirky retailers often sell odd cuts. Like the tail. And I figured, what better example of nose-to-tail eating than that? (Actually, oxtail – the tail of beef or veal cattle – is a better example, because you'll probably eat more of the entire animal, and the tail itself is fabulous, but then cows aren't running round the country in plague proportions.)

Based loosely on a recipe for daube of beef shin from chef Mark Best's book *Best Kitchen Basics*, I set about making daube of roo tail. And it was pretty good. Brown the floured pieces of tail; sauté separately onion, carrot and celery; reduce a bottle of red to a syrup and then add it all to a casserole with orange zest, cinnamon, a bouquet garni of thyme and bay, a whole head of garlic and a litre of stock (your call on type; I used chicken the dog hadn't scoffed overnight). It's then simply a matter of putting it in a very low (120C) oven covered for five hours.

I hear people still wince at the idea of eating roo. Bizarre. Tell 'em it's veal ossobuco and drink it with good red. It's an education.

JOHN LETHLEAN, FOOD WRITER

John Lethlean is Australia's only national restaurant critic. A journalist by trade, food and wine lover by disposition, John has written full-time about restaurants, food and the people involved with this exci... [Read more](#)

