

The One with the Poo

Paul A worm can eat his entire body weight in food a day. Which is a pretty big effort. I'm sure all of you are hungry growing kids. I'm a hungry adult man. I can't anywhere near my own body weight in food a day. Because all worms do is sleep and eat. So if you've got a big worm farm you might have one or two kilos' of worms in there so they can eat two kilos of food scraps every day and this stuff is absolute magic for the garden. So whether it's scraps or whatever, as much variety as possible, like us as humans, the better variety of diet that we eat the healthier we are, same goes for worms.

If they just ate cardboard boxes all day, the worm castings wouldn't be as of a high quality as if they're eating a bowl like this that's got all kinds of interesting delicious things in it. They don't like eating things like onion, and they don't like eating things like citrus. But as you know, have you ever eaten a straight lemon? Just a raw lemon? And you go like awe, it's really tart, imagine a tiny little worm's mouth going there like that. Imagine eating straight lemons, it's like awe. Too much! Same with onion. So worms don't have eyes. So imagine if they eat raw onion, how would they cry. They wouldn't even be able to cry, they'd probably just explode.

Joseph What are worm's favourite vegetable?

Paul Sorry guys, that one is for you. Did you hear that? Joseph just asked, what are your favourite vegetables? Un-huh, really? Yeah now look, no, no, no, look I've told you no citrus. What's your favourite? Okay, so turns out, favourite things that worms like to eat are things like this. Leafy green vegetables, because it's very easy for them to go, yum, yum, yum, and eat through it, whereas something like an avocado pit, a bit hard. So if they can eat it nice and easily, then they really like eating it. So you want to make sure that if you do have a worm farm that this is how it looks.

You don't want it to be too wet, you don't want it to be too smelly or anything like that. And you know the great thing about worm farming is? You can say that you're a farmer and you've got 10,000 head of livestock in your backyard. That's a big farm. And you can just do it in a box.

Aunty Dale Remember most of their cooking is being done in the ashes and sometimes we would wrap it up in paper bark, you can use that to make a wrapping, so you would make it wet. So the meat would steam inside there or the vegetables would steam inside there.

Billy That's smart, like baking paper.

Aunty Dale You know it would char and smoke in the ashes and give those lovely flavours to the food as well.

Alice That's 60,000 years of technology.

Aunty Dale It is. And you know, when I said we used all of the kangaroo, we used all of the kangaroo, even the poo.

Billy What did that taste like?

Aunty Dale We weren't eating that.

Lucy Yeah, Billy.

Aunty Dale We were making glue with it. Kangaroo poo glue. I still make glue that way. I go to the grass trees, and I get the resin from the grass trees and I grind it all up and then I'll go to a fire, and I'll get the charcoal from the fire. And I'll grind it all up. And I'll get some kangaroo poo, not too fresh, let it dry a few days, not too old, just right and crush it up in my hands.

Kangaroos only eat grass and leaves, and then I end up with some fibre that reflects what they eat and then I'll mix all of those three things together, and I'll get my handle, and I'll warm it over the flame, and I'll roll it in the powder, and some will stick because of the resin reacting to the heat, or get sticky then back over the flame, back through the powder, until I get enough of the glue mix on my handle, and then I will coat it with the powder, nice and thickly so that I can shape it without burning myself because the glue mix is hot like toffee underneath there. Then I'll get my stone or stones, and I'll slide it into that glue mix and then I'll pull it over the cutting edges and then I'll melt that last bit of powder and stand it in the sand and let it cool and harden.

And if I've just used a single stone that's a kobj, an axe, and if I've got lots of little cutting edges in it, it's taap, or knife. Now the technology behind that glue is really interesting. Think about the ingredients that we've used. We've got some charcoal, we've got some resin, and we've got some kangaroo poo. Think about modern day fibreglass, it's resin with some fibre in it, to make it flexible and resilient.

Think about modern day plastics, resin with some carbon in it to make it hard. So the carbons from the charcoal, so we harden it, we make it flexible, we make an excellent glue to hold things together. So we can strike things with our axe, and the glue's not going to shatter. Because it's now flexible and hard.

Now everybody thinks that those two things, plastics and fibreglass are twentieth century inventions, but we've been making glue this way in the Swan Valley and WA, in Western Australia, for at least 6,000 years. And we can prove that because near where I live, there's a park called Walyunga and there's a scatter site there. A scatter site is called that because scattered around are all the leftover bits from making tools and weapons and if you are lucky enough, you can go through all the scatters and find a bit of chert, which is fossilised and fossilised chert was lost to the mainland when the sea levels rose more than 6,000 years ago. So it's no longer on the mainland, hasn't been there for 6,000 years.

Alice And how did you learn how to make kangaroo poo glue?

Aunty Dale From my elders. It's information and knowledge which is passed down from one generation to the next.