

The Camp Oven

Dear Aunt Daisy,

You were speaking about camp oven cookery. Here are a few of the hints I learned many years ago from a "Dinkum Aussie," whose cooking I sampled when doing a "horseback holiday" with three others out in the way-backs in Central Otago. The memories so impressed me that many years after I bought (after much seeking) a camp oven, and reread the hints of my instructor of 1906. Here they are: First, dig a hole at least 6 inches larger in diameter than the oven. The depth depends on the weather; if calm and the wood even-burning it need not be very deep, but if it is windy the hole should be deep enough to keep the lid below the ground level to avoid burning. Heap ashes on the embers not covered, to retard radiation; and provide a good break composed of bushes to windward of the fire. Heat the oven-lid, too, with small embers, which, like those under the oven, should be broken into small particles with the back of the shovel. For accessories add a curved piece of heavy wire, with a hook at each end for fitting into the lugs on the camp oven side, to lift it; also a hook to lift the lid; and a shovel. There are difficulties in camp oven cookery which only experience can cope with—such as the variable heating qualities of the different woods, finicky winds, and the situation of the camp, if cooking out of doors.

"Gran," Dunedin.

What Do You Think?

Dear Aunt Daisy,

Here is a recipe I have never seen in your page of *The Listener*. Take 1 lb. of huhus (say 30, about 3 inches long), newly caught, ex kahikatea or matai for flavour, add 2 oz. of macaroni (steeped), ½ teaspoon of mustard, pepper and salt to taste, white of 1 egg, 1 egg-cup of fresh cream. Stew slowly for not more than 15 minutes. Serve hot. Elijah's "locusts and wild honey" were not in it with this dish, neither is our chief delicacy whitebait, "heads, eyes, tails, scales and all." I have seen "bushies" take huhus by the handful, ex log, and toss them into their mouths. That I have never tried, even as I have never tried to eat a handful of raw whitebait, or raw shrimps. Of course, raw oysters is another matter! This morning I found a huhu in my firewood, the first I have seen for years. You can't cook one huhu, so I called the 3 cats. None would look at it. So I caught one up and put the huhu in its mouth. It spat the huhu out 3 times. Then I broke it on the back teeth of the cat. Hi presto! It was chewed with gusto! That cat is still following me for another huhu, 1.0 p.m.

"Old Bushie," Matakana.

Are you really serious, "Old Bushie"? The name "Otahuhu" is made up from the words "ota" (to eat) and "huhu" (a grub).

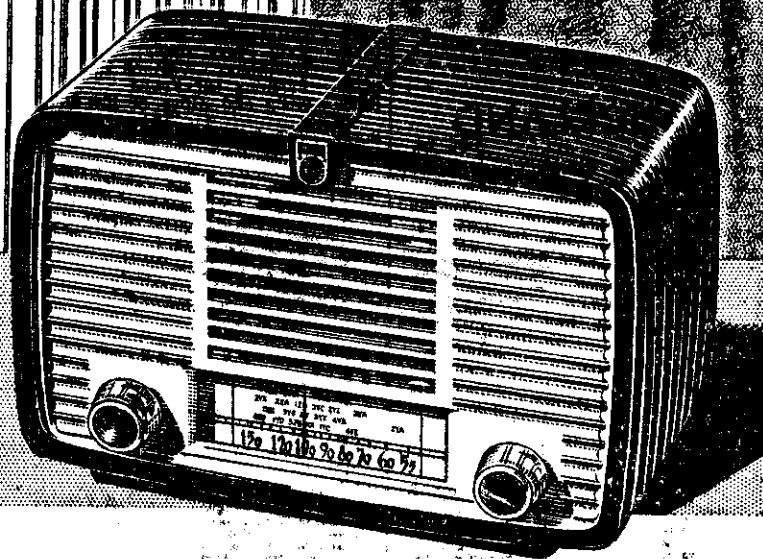
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