

Kia ora, gday and welcome to the History of Aotearoa New Zealand. Episode 69: Nice. This podcast is supported by our amazing Patrons. If you want to support HANZ go to patreon.com/historyaotearoa. Last time, we talked the origins of food with the god, what a hangi is and how it worked and a bunch of stuff on hākari, feasts. This time we are going to talk about hunting, in particular manu, birds, but also kiore and kurī, rats and dogs. We will also talk about how various fish and veges were cooked too.

Just like with fishing, observing the habits of birds and when those habits tended to happen, was key in knowing how to catch them. One of the more famous habits is of kererū who eat fermented berries, resulting in them getting a bit drunk and thus making them easier to catch. Eating miro berries in particular would make them quite thirsty, something that hunters could exploit by placing a waka manu or waka kereru nearby. These were wooden troughs that would be filled with water and would be left in the area for a few days to allow the birds to get used to drinking from them. This is basically what we do today when trying to catch rats, stoats or most other animals in a process called prefeeding. Once the kererū were used to the waka manu, snares would be set on it to catch them next time they went for a drink. Another slightly different method, called tutu, would involve the hunter sitting on a small platform in the branches of a fruit bearing tree. A perch would be attached to the platform and a snare placed on the perch. The hunter would hold the other end of the snare, which they would pull when a bird decided to take a bit of a rest on the perch. Apparently 200 birds could be caught using this method a day, so it was pretty effective! There were two main methods of using snares, tākiri and tāhei. Tākiri is what were talking about just before, a perch with a single snare with someone waiting to give it a tug. This method could be further broken down into the three types of snares that were used, mutu, tumu and pewa. Mutu snares were used on both the ground and in trees. The mutu itself would be made with a single piece of wood that would be in an upper case L or T shape, meaning there was a horizontal perch and vertical post. The snare would be looped and draped over the perch and then placed in position for a bird to come rest on it. Like before, when the bird sat on the perch, the snare was pulled and the bird caught. The bird could then be lowered, killed and the snare reset. Where mutu were a bit more man made, tumu were a bit more natural. A small branch would be cut in two lengthways and placed into a tree or bush to allow it to grow. This would result in two branches growing from the original forming a kinda oval shape, where the snare would be placed. Once again, the bird would land on the branch, the snare pulled and the bird pegged to the ground to keep it there while the hunter continued trapping. This method was quite popular, particularly with Ngāti Raukawa as it was easier to make than the mutu or pewa snares. Speaking of which, unlike the first two, the pewa used a lure of berries or nectar bearing flowers to attract the birds into their doom. Of course depending on what kind of lure you used depended on what you were trying to catch, for example if you wanted to catch tui you would use rātā flowers. Other than this, the method was roughly the same as the tumu method. The one thing that all of these snare types had was that the hunter had to be present to be able to spring the trap and catch the bird, which was time consuming and probably a bit boring at times. However, the tāhei method didn't require anyone to be holding the other end of the snare as it was able to work on its own and only needed to be checked twice a day. The way it worked was that some slip knotted snares were attached to a rope or branch that would allow them to be suspended between a couple of other branches. As normal the birds would land on the branch and get caught but unlike the other methods which had the birds get caught around the feet, this method has the birds stick their heads into the noose, which would tighten as they struggled to get out. Presumably this required some strategy when placing the snares to ensure the birds could put their heads through the nooses or somehow encourage them to do so. The only bird this method wasn't good for was

kākā who have very sharp beaks that they use to rip bark off trees. Or in this case, tear through the snares.

Along with snares, spears were also used to catch manu. The spears would have points made of bone, hardwood, pounamu or even the barbs of stingray. These spears were often pretty large, ranging from 6-11m long, meaning that they were dragged along the ground when they were being transported. The way they worked would be to lean them against a branch until a bird came near on a perch, at which point the spear would be thrust forward. Smaller spears about 3-4m long were also used but were for smaller scale hunting.

There were some methods that were specific to certain species too, given their size, shape and general behaviour. For instance, kererū were often caught in summer, partially because they were quite fat at that time but also because they would be a bit, well, inebriated from eating fermented berries, which would naturally make them much easier to catch. Because of this, the food that birds eat, in this case miro berries, was observed closely so that when they were ripe Māori knew that it was time to hunt kererū. A slightly more exciting method was that used to catch kākā, which would involve training one of them to be tame and call out to his friends, all while it was bound to a perch so that it couldn't escape. It would actually be bound with a bone ring around its leg attached to some rope. As the bird called out, it would attract other kākā as they were quite social animals. When the victim got close the hunter, who was hiding in a bush, would jump out and hit it with a stick, snare it with a noose or just grab it with his hands. Tui would be similarly caught in the winter. In early hours of the morning they would be too cold to let their feet open quickly when danger presented itself to let go of the branch they were perched on and fly away, that danger being a hunter running out and grabbing them with their hands. Alternately, the hunter would just shake the tree and the sleepy tui would just fall out, land on the ground in a panic and in that panic they could be scooped up. Tītī, muttonbird, is another interesting one, you actually heard a brief description of it if you listened to episode 66 in the story about Te Tahi-o-te-rangi and his abandonment on Whakaari/White Island. When the tītī were returning in the evening to their nests, a net would be strung up between two poles and a fire lit to attract them. The net would be laid on the ground until the birds got close, when the net would be lifted to catch them. Interestingly, if a bird hit the poles of the net it was considered a tohu that the hunt would be bad and it would often be called off from that point. As we have mentioned in the past, albatross, gulls and mollymawks would be caught using curved wooden hooks with bone barbs. One bird we haven't talked much about is the huia, which is now extinct. Unlike most other birds which were taken for their meat as well as bones and feathers, huia were pretty much exclusively taken for the feathers and beaks due to how tapu they were. Part of this is that the feathers were a symbol of being a rangatira, of chieftainship, and you will often find pictures of people of high rank wearing huia feathers in their hair. The beaks were used in earrings and necklaces and sometimes the skins would be worn in their entirety around the neck.

No hunter was complete without his faithful kurī though, or at least depending on what kind of bird they were trying to catch. Dogs were used to catch mostly ground dwelling birds, things like kiwi, weka, pūkeko and the like. Since none of these birds had to contend with mammals who use smell as a primary means of hunting, they didn't evolve to not have a smell, in fact the kākāpō is quite famously very smelly! Though in saying that, dogs weren't really used to sniff out birds, in the case of kiwi hunters would imitate the call and when the bird was close, the kurī would be released to catch it. For pūkeko, beaters were used to flush them out of the swamps they liked to live in, which would tire them out and allow the dogs to chase them down.

Manu weren't the only thing that Māori were hunting, we have mentioned a couple of times that kiore were caught and preserved as well. When Māori first arrived in Aotearoa they brought the Pacific rat with them unintentionally, so before Europeans arrived that was the only rat species here. However after Europeans turned up, the black or ships rat and the Norway rat managed to get here as well. I just want to clarify that when I say kiore, which can be used as a broad word for any species of rat or even mouse, I am specifically referring to the Pacific rat regardless of what period we are talking about. This is due to my conservation background where we often need to distinguish between different species and kiore has kinda just become the common name for the Pacific rat. Kiore were hunted by tracking them through the lines they left in the ground. They would often walk in single file along ridgelines, using the same path multiple times which would wear it down. These tracks were called ara kiore and would often be lined with tāwhiti kiore, rat traps. Specifically these would be spring traps and pit traps. Spring traps, of course, didn't contain modern springs but they did use springy materials to allow them to have a quick action, usually something like supplejack. Depending on the type of trap, the idea would be to make a little cone shape out of mānuka bark and put a little muka noose inside with some bait. The noose would be attached to a piece of bent supplejack that was kept under pressure so that when the rat chewed through a bit of lure covered string, it would snap up and tie the noose around the neck of the rat and strangle it. Usually the trap was baited with kūmara or berries, something sweet that the rats would like to eat. Pit traps were more or less what they said on the tin. A hole would be dug and some bait suspended above it so that when the rats tried to reach out for it or jump for it they would fall into the hole and be unable to get out. Once a rat was caught, it would be eaten fairly quickly usually by putting it over a fire or in a hangi, otherwise they were stored in gourds with their own fat to preserve them. Kiore huahua, preserved rat, was a delicacy that was often saved for important occasions. There aren't many kiore around today, they were mostly out competed by their much larger European cousins but there are some around, particularly on the Hen and Chicken Islands where they are a protected species.

That kinda leads into something we haven't talked much about, preserving food. Naturally this was very important for ensuring the longevity of food and ensuring that there would be something to eat during the months when food didn't grow or was still growing. Preserving could be as simple as storing the food in a particular way, such as kūmara in rua, otherwise it could be smoking or drying. For example, tuna (eels) and other fish would be cleaned, boned and put on a stick and leant over some embers to cook and smoke. Once done, it would be hung up to dry and placed in a pātaka, where they would be also hung up so that the airflow would stop them from getting damp and getting mouldy. When birds or fish were smoked it was usually done with mānuka wood as it has a pretty nice flavour and would be done over a large open fire if they were trying to smoke a lot of food. If it was only a small amount, the embers could be put into a small hole in the ground and the food hung over them with a damp mat covering the hole to keep all the smoke in. Smoking was quite useful in areas that were a bit colder and damper but if you lived somewhere warm, as many Māori did in the upper North Island, just hanging up to dry in the sun was a viable and low effort way to preserve food. And it wasn't just used for meat, berries, seaweed and vege could also be dried but depending on the size of the meat or vege you were trying to preserve, a combo of smoking and drying could be used. Similar to kiore, smaller birds would often be eaten fresh with larger ones being gutted and bone before being put into cold water and then dried and cooked. As the bird was cooked, the fat would be collected in a wooden trough which would then be used to preserve the bird in a gourd. One exception to this rule was tītī, muttonbird. They were cooked in their own fat and then stored in bags made of rimurapa, bull kelp which in turn were stored in harakeke kete. The kelp was sundried to preserve them as well before they were weaved into the bags, known as pōhā. Inside the kelp itself they have a honeycomb structure that traps air, which would help the tītī keep

for about three years or so. Pōhā could also be used to preserve seals, which were prepared in a similar manner to tītī but instead of being put in a kete, they were buried in the sand on a beach, where they would keep pretty much indefinitely. Other a bit more out there uses of rimurapa was to carry fresh water, move live shellfish from one place to another to allow them to propagate or used as a sort of wetsuit that would protect the body or sandals to protect feet while gathering shellfish or fishing.

The other type of preserving that we haven't mentioned much is fermentation. This was mostly used for things like crayfish to make kōura mara. This would be where the kōura would be soaked in a flowing stream for about three days if the water was warm, or five days if it was a bit colder. The gist of this was to make the flesh soft and have the shell come away easily. Most would proceed onto another step but some would just eat it raw as is, though this was rare as "the smell is worse than the taste." If they wanted to move onto the next step, the cray would be separated into three parts, the hiku, papa and tuke; legs, body and tail. These would be placed on a platform to dry for a day. After this the flesh would be beaten, dried again, beaten again, cooked in probably a hangi and then dried again, after which they would be placed in baskets to keep for up to a year. Usually the body was eaten first with the legs and tail saved for special occasions. Hiroa talks about how tasty kōura prepared in this way was, but that it made you rather thirsty while eating it. He talks about a story of an attack on a fort at Pakaurangi in Northland where the garrison were given a gift of preserved crayfish and not long after the fort was put under siege, cutting off the water supply. Apparently the soldiers went so insane with thirst that they broke through the siege lines and jumped into the water, covered in as many clothes as they could wear or carry. They would then run back and, assuming they weren't captured or killed along the way, would squeeze the water out of their clothes. Due to this phenomenon, Hiroa calls the battle Pūeru Mākū, the Battle of the Wet Garments.

Māori also used this stream method to ferment and preserve other species of fish, but interestingly so was corn when it was brought to Aotearoa. However, instead of leaving the corn, or sometimes maize, in the stream for a few days, it would be left in a kete for about six weeks. The kernels would then be taken off the cob and mashed together to make a paste that was kinda like hummus or porridge, which could be eaten hot or cold. This version was called kānga pirau, fermented corn, but there were other slight variations such as cooking with cleaned ash and then boiled, called kānga pungarehu, in which the swollen kernels would be eaten with sugar, cream or milk, again kinda like porridge is today. Modern versions of this use baking soda instead of the pungarehu, the ash. Another version was kānga waru which was grated corn mashed with kūmara or sugar and then wrapped in corn husks to be boiled or cooked in a hangi. This was apparently sweet and dessert like. No matter how the kānga was fermented though, much like the kōura, it had a strong pungent smell. So much so that in 1964 it was described as having "an unholy fragrance".

Next time, we talk about a variety of different plants and fungi that were eaten by Māori and how they were cooked, covering food from raupō to basket fungus!

If you want to send me feedback, ask a question, suggest a topic or just have a chinwag you can find my email and social media on historyaotearoa.com. You can also find helpful resources there like transcripts, sources and translations for some of the Te Reo Māori we have used. This podcast is a one man band, if you enjoy listening to me talk history, you can support us through Patreon, buy merch or give us a review, it means a lot and helps spread the story of Aotearoa New Zealand. As always, haere tū atu, hoki tū mai. See you next time!