

The fruit of the latter are oval-shaped and prickly; when baked or roasted, they are not unlike a good custard-pudding. Nature seems to have been particularly bountiful in her supply of this fruit, for the varieties, in season, follow each other throughout the year. March and April, however, are the months in which it is found in the greatest perfection; and it may be considered a fortunate circumstance, that many of the sorts ripen between the seasons of taro and yams. If the bread-fruit is to be preserved, it is prepared by scraping off the rind with a piece of bivalve shell; a hole is then dug in the ground about three feet deep, of the form of an inverted bell, the sides of which are lined with banana-leaves. This is filled with the fruit to within a few inches of the top, when the whole is thatched with banana-leaves, to preserve it from the rain; many stones are laid on the top to press it down, and keep the pigs from it. After a while it undergoes fermentation, and subsides into a mass, somewhat of the consistency of new cheese. These pits, when opened, emit a nauseous, fetid, and sour odour, and the colour of the contents is of a greenish yellow. In this state it is called mandrai-uta, or native bread, of which they distinguish several kinds, as mandrai n'dalo, mandrai y taro, mandrai sivisivi of the ivi, mandrai vundi of bananas, &c. It is said that it will keep several years, and is cooked with cocoa-nut milk, in which state it forms an agreeable and I should think nutritious food. To my taste, however, the bread-fruit is better baked when fresh, and I found it superior here to that of any of the other islands we visited.

There are other uses to which the bread-fruit tree is put; the green leaves are employed to serve their victuals on; they are also burnt, and form a black ashes, from which the natives draw a ley, which they use in washing their heads to destroy the vermin, which so much infest them.

The general height of the bread-fruit trees is fifty feet, and some of the leaves are two feet in length.

The banana is called by the natives vundi. This fruit is insipid, but the natives make a very nice pudding by forming a cavity in the fruit, which they fill with finely-grated cocoa-nut, and pour over it the milk; it is then tied up in the leaves and boiled. They have five or six varieties of this fruit. Of the plantain we found three varieties, cultivated to a great extent in Vanua-levu. The natives, instead of hanging up the fruit until it becomes mellow, bury it in the ground, which causes it to appear black on the outside, and destroys the flavour. The wild species of Tahiti and Samoa, called by the natives fae, was here found cultivated, displaying its rich orange-coloured fruit, densely set on large upright spikes, but not wild.