



# Australian Artefact Fact Sheet

## Yandi Dish



**What?** Yandi dishes (sometimes called a Coolamon) are multi-purpose shallow vessels or dishes traditionally used by Aboriginal people to carry water, fruits, nuts, and other types of bush tucker. They were also used to winnow chaff from collected seeds. In addition to carrying things sometimes a yandi would be used for crushing grain to make food with. Yandi's generally range in size from 30 to 70 cm and are long and straight with rounded edges at the top and bottom. They were carried either on their head or under the arm when travelling.

**Who?** Traditionally these dishes were carried by Aboriginal women when gathering food for their group.

**Where?** Yandi's were used all over Australia to carry all sorts of items that were valuable to Aboriginal groups.

**When?** Because yandi's are made from tree bark and wood they do not preserve well and will often rot away and disappear before archaeologists get the chance to examine them. Luckily we are sometimes able to find the trees that the yandi bark or wood has been removed from. These are called scarred trees because we can actually see the scar left on the tree from where the bark has been removed, sometimes over 200 years ago!

**How?** Yandi's were most commonly made by cutting and separating the outer bark from a large tree with a stone artefact (see the scar on the tree in the pictures below). Depending on the area and what plants are around yandi's were most commonly made from the bark of white gum, mulga, river red gum or beanwood trees.

Once the piece of bark has been removed from the tree it is then moulded over the fire which gives it its curved edges. Once this process is finished the yandi needs to be propped up with a stick or piece of wood (holding it upright and open) to stand for a few days so it doesn't lose its new shape. To help preserve and protect the yandi they were regularly rubbed with animal fat (eg. emu) to keep the wood in good condition.

**Did you know?** Sometimes women even carried and cradled their babies in a yandi when out gathering food!

**Sources** During the 1940s Pilbara Aboriginal workers strike, Aboriginal women supported their families by using yandi's to separate tin, beryllium, wolfram and manganese from the soil.

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