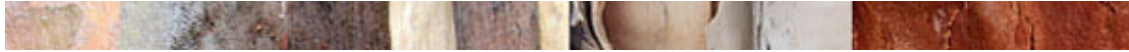


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# Oxford Word of the Month – June: kangatarian

*noun*: a person who eats kangaroo meat but avoids eating other meat. Also as *adj.*

## THE STORY BEHIND THE WORD OF THE MONTH

In early 2010 a number of news organisations, both in Australia and internationally, reported on a new diet trend happening in Australia:

*There's a new semi-vegetarian wave emerging in Australia: people who exclude all meat except kangaroo on environmental, ecological and humanitarian grounds. They call themselves **kangatarians** and are slowly growing in numbers. (Sydney Morning Herald, 9 February)*

A number of these reports referred to a group of university students who were actively promoting this new diet:

*Then, about 12 months ago, one group in Sydney decided to begin spreading the word about the benefits of kangaroo meat. 'They coined the phrase **kangatarians**, it was a bit of a joke initially', said Peter Ampt, a lecturer at the University of Sydney and a kangaroo meat advocate. (Calgary Herald, 13 February)*

The evidence suggests the term is linked to these stories from early 2010.

**Kangatarian** is modelled on the word *vegetarian*. The *-arian* suffix means 'having a concern or belief in a specified thing'. *Vegetarian* is also the model for other recent neologisms such as *pescatarian* 'a person who eats fish but avoids eating meat', and the jocular *meatarian* 'a person who eats meat as a significant part of their diet'. The *kanga-* element in **kangatarian** of course comes from *kangaroo*, a name for any of the larger marsupials of the Macropodidae family, with kangaroo entering English via the Guugu Yimithirr language of north-eastern Queensland.

Some of the appeal of eating kangaroo meat in preference to other meat is because it is thought to be healthier (it is a naturally lean meat), but **kangatarians** chiefly find the diet appealing on environmental grounds, because it does not rely on large-scale husbandry practices as other meat production does. Attempts to encourage a reluctant Australian public to eat more kangaroo meat, however, would probably entail the adoption of some of these practices.

*Achieving the objectives of the review, then, would require the kangaroo industry to shift to farming techniques, but this would be in breach of **kangatarian** values. And a CSIRO report has dismissed kangaroo husbandry as a tedious and costly endeavour, on account of the animals' nomadic habits, their low reproduction and slow growth rate, and behaviour patterns that generally prevent herding. (Crikey, 2 May 2012)*

The reference to '**kangatarian** values' illustrates that the term does not simply denote a dietary behaviour but, like vegetarianism, is often based on a set of ethical choices. Indeed, the word **kangatarianism** is also making its way into the Australian lexicon:

City newspapers and foodie magazines are swooning over the new wave of semi-vegetarianism that is emerging in Australia—**Kangatarianism**—excluding all meat except kangaroo on environmental, ecological and humanitarian grounds. (Alice Springs Centralian Advocate, 12 February 2010)

**Kangatarian** (and **kangatarianism**) will be considered for inclusion in the next edition of the *Australian National Dictionary*.

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