



## Cooking Pot (Kepa Tabeli)

**Date**  
19th to 20th Century

**Primary Maker**  
Buka Island

**Medium**  
Clay and red ochre

### Description

Beginning in the early to mid 20th Century, the production of pottery increased exponentially in the Eastern coastal region of Buka Island. The name tabeli applies to the entire pottery industry, regardless of form or function on Buka Island; although most often is used when describing a cooking pot. All tabeli are crafted by female potters and are primarily used only by men. The rounded base form distinguishes this bowl as a kepa vessel in which men would prepare menak. This was a ceremonial dish made by heating the cream from coconut flesh and mashed taro root over a flame until it thickens. It would be served only on monumental occasions such as the planting of a new taro garden, making and launching a new canoe, marriages and funerals, initiation rites as well as taboo raising rituals. More recently, however, the kepa has become a vessel used when cooking fish and rice dishes. In Buka, villages would monopolize the materials for pottery production which in turn offered a very limited foreign trading scope. The people of Buka primarily disseminated their pieces domestically across the island.

### Dimensions

9 3/8 × 10 3/4 × 10 3/4 in. (23.8 × 27.3 × 27.3 cm)