

# BAY BUZZ

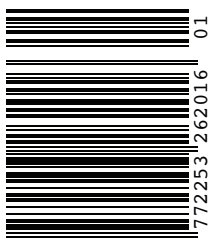
Nº56 • JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2021 • HAWKE'S BAY UP CLOSE, IN DEPTH

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THE  
**Food**  
ISSUE

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DID WHAT WAS  
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56

## BayBuzz January/February 2021

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What can we say? This edition is all about FOOD! Visions of future HB prosperity - the quest for the premium customer. Our readers' food habits & preferences. What and who is hot. Key companies you've not heard of. Food challenges: from malnourishment and labour constraints to packaging and depleted fishing ... even resistance to red meat! Food whimsy.

Cover: Laura Crespi from Sazio. Photo: Florence Charvin. This page: Hawke's Bay summer platter. Photo: Florence Charvin.



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**Featured Contributor**



**Mark Sweet, writer**

Mark Sweet was born in Napier, and has lived in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Scotland. After careers in the property sector and restaurants, he now devotes his time to writing.

His first novel, *Zhu Mao*, was published in 2011. He wrote *Wine: Stories from Hawke's Bay* commissioned by Baybuzz in 2015. His latest novel *The History Speech* was shortlisted for the 2020 NZ Book Awards, and on the Neilson top ten for seven months. He has short stories published in collections from the Pikihuia Awards and in *Stories on the Four Winds: Ngā Hau e Whā*.

Photo: Florence Charvin





Above: Ethnic origins – The PAK team.  
Left: Food fashionistas. Photos: Florence Charvin



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**FROM THE EDITOR**  
**TOM BELFORD**

As you can already tell, FOOD has been on our minds as the *BayBuzz* team prepared this edition.

We've tried to cover food as both a business and a pleasure at the core of Hawke's Bay ... from farm to plate, as they say.

On the business side, there appears to be unanimity amongst the visionaries that food production is - and will continue to be - the economic driver of our region.

But that said, our agricultural sector faces major challenges ahead, most visibly regarding our labour (in)capacity to actually harvest and bring to market the food we grow. And possibly then ship it as disruptions to international shipping ripple through the supply chain.

The insiders *BayBuzz's* writers have talked to optimistically project that technology adoption will eventually enable the region to meet its potential, creating new and more rewarding employment opportunities. You'll find this theme in several articles.

Growth in our food sector almost always is cast in terms of exports. And the HB food marketers most attuned to our overseas opportunities see that potential entirely in terms of exporting premium products to the most discerning up-market consumers in the world.

Our future is in the few, not the many.

And those customers demand food products labeled 'natural', 'authentic', 'pure', 'green' and so on - no chemicals, no animal welfare issues, no excess packaging, carbon neutral. And they want superior taste and nutritional value, with all of these features wrapped in a 'provenance' story supported by full transparency ... right back to the originating pasture, animal, vineyard or plot.

That's a high bar to meet, and few

Hawke's Bay food producers meet it today, although more and more are striving in that direction.

The first step for many is to re-examine their farming and growing practices. The in-vogue term these days is 'regenerative' farming, which is essentially a package of practices that rest upon enhancing soil biology, working with nature, minimizing synthetic chemical use and soil disturbance, and integrating animals, diverse cover plantings and trees into a mutually reinforcing, water-retaining system.

Hard to object. As a member of the Hawke's Bay Future Farming Trust, I'm excited to see strong, growing interest in this approach.

However, as they embrace better practices behind the farm gate, our farmers, orchardists and winemakers do face the broader challenges of climate change, consumer attitudes resistant to red meat (or core product, along with red apples) and GMOs, and - given the Covid pandemic - the impulse of markets (and their protective governments) to look inward in terms of optimising self-sufficiency when it comes to critical needs like food.

Trade constraints, mitigating carbon footprints (including the transport of food), severe weather events, and temperature-induced changes in what we can grow where ... and the pests and diseases that might compromise it - all of these are issues outside the control of individual farmers and growers, yet with huge future impact on their viability.

And indeed, some here in Hawke's Bay would argue that these larger forces will ultimately overwhelm tiny, distant New Zealand and we'd be better off preparing for a future where our own food needs are paramount and better met for all.

Unfortunately, there is in fact unacceptable food poverty in Hawke's Bay, as we report.

That said, most of us this summer will enjoy the glorious end-fruits offered by our Hawke's Bay food producers and purveyors. Our latest *BayBuzz* Food Survey, reported herein, confirms our 'Foodie' credentials as consumers.

And so this edition - debate over future visions aside - also celebrates the people, companies and venues that establish Hawke's Bay as a special food place. Some are consumer-facing and highly visible ... appearing often on your credit card. Others represent an army of enablers - from irrigation companies to software and engineering firms to processors - that most of us are not aware of.

Hopefully, as you digest the various courses we offer in this edition, you'll more fully appreciate the full menu of effort and enterprise that make Hawke's Bay the food capital that it is.

Enjoy!

**Tom Belford**  
**tom@baybuzz.co.nz**

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Tom has been a two-term HB Regional Councillor. His past includes the Carter White House, building Ted Turner's first philanthropic organisation, doing heaps of marketing consulting for major non-profits and corporates.



BLACK BARN  
VINEYARDS

# WE DO SUMMER WELL

WEDNESDAY ~ SUNDAY The Bistro flings open its doors to the Summer courtyard for lunch under the vines or drinks at the bar. Dinner Thursday to Saturday nights.

7 DAYS The Black Barn Kitchen for packing a picnic, filling the fridge or wedding gifts.

SATURDAY DECEMBER 5 The Black Barn Growers' Market opens 9 ~ noon every Saturday of Summer

SATURDAY DECEMBER 12 Drax Project, Aacacia and Neil Macleod ~ *Amphitheatre*

SATURDAY DECEMBER 19 Dave Dobbyn & The Beths ~ *Amphitheatre*

DECEMBER 27 ~ 30 Black Barn Openair Cinema ~ *Amphitheatre*  
JANUARY 2 ~ 6

THURSDAY JANUARY 7 Trinty Roots with Tiny Ruins (Solo) ~ *Amphitheatre*

SATURDAY JANUARY 9 Nest Fest ~ *Amphitheatre*

SATURDAY JANUARY 23 Six60, Shapeshifter, Kings, Maimoa, Nouri ~ *Tomoana Showgrounds, Hastings*

SUNDAY JANUARY 31 Neptuno ~ *Bistro*

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 20 Sol3 Mio ~ *Amphitheatre*

THURSDAY MARCH 4 The Kiwi 7 ~ Jason Kerrison | Annie Crummer | Che Fu  
The Lady Killers | Nathan King | Andy Lynch | Rodney Fisher ~ *Amphitheatre*

FRIDAY MARCH 5 Neptuno ~ *Bistro*

SUNDAY MARCH 7 Jon Stevens ~ The Noiseworks and INXS collection +  
Automatic 80's ~ *Amphitheatre*

Plus Cellar Door 7 days ~ Outstanding accommodation always  
BLACKBARN.COM FOR ALL BOOKINGS AND MORE INFO

There are hundreds – maybe thousands – of Hawke’s Bay summer food heroes, both people and foods themselves. Fresh cherries! The stallholders at the market! Ice cream! Food truck operators at the summer concerts! Juicy lamb off those bony summer hills.

But food is best based on the people you eat with and the environment you do it in. So how’s this for a Hawke’s Bay Summer Food Hero: Dining Al Fresco.

Picnics at the beach, BBQs by the river, platters and wines on the deck – surround yourself with the ones you love and the freshest food we’re blessed to have here in the Bay, then relax and savour under our beating sun and big skies. Cheers! ◆



# THERE'S NOTHING LIKE OUR HAWKE'S BAY SUMMER

# MAKE SUMMER UNSTOPPABLE



Unite  
against  
COVID-19

New Zealand Government

## Cold or flu symptoms? Get tested for COVID-19.

Ring one of these numbers to immediately book a test, or ring your doctor. You don't need to be a resident of Hawke's Bay.

**Napier** | 06 650 4000  
Open 9am-5pm Monday-Sunday

**Hastings** | 06 281 2644  
Open 8am-8pm Monday-Sunday

**Wairoa** | 06 838 8333  
Open 8.30am-5pm Monday-Friday

**Central Hawke's Bay**  
Ring your doctor or call Healthline 0800 358 5453



February 6: Waitangi Day Celebrations, Mitre 10 Park Hawke's Bay

## Can't just eat 24/7!

Had enough of the gastronomic delights and oenological adventures? Check out event impresario Kevin Murphy's 'Top 10' picks for more active Hawke's Bay events and attractions this summer.

### January 9

#### **Nest Fest Black Barn**

Back for instalment number 3, Nest Fest is a boutique independent music festival which offers a terrific party in the Havelock Hills, while also promoting and celebrating sustainability and global love. Just the ticket for the post-New Year period. This year's line-up includes Silicon, MELODOWNZ, Wax Mustang, King Sweeties and loads more.  
[nestfest.co.nz](http://nestfest.co.nz)



January 14-16: NZ Stockcar Champs, Meeanee Speedway

### January 14

#### **Botanic Beats Napier Botanical Gardens**

Picnic party! Napier's very chilled out and family-friendly free summer concert in the Botanical Gardens is a tonic. Project Prima Volta headline, and there's food and coffee available for purchase throughout.  
[eventfinda.co.nz](http://eventfinda.co.nz)

### January 14 -16

#### **NZ Stockcar Champs Meeanee Speedway**

Gather the family and head to Meeanee for some noisy, action-packed fun. On the Saturday evening 30 competitors over three heats will race for the 2020/21 New Zealand Stockcar Title.  
[meeaneespeedway.co.nz](http://meeaneespeedway.co.nz)

### January 23

#### **Six60 Hawke's Bay Showgrounds**

NZ's biggest band is back on tour. This summer they're bringing more top Aotearoa talent with them, with different line-ups for each concert. Here in Hastings they'll be joined by Shapeshifter, Kings, Maimoa and Nouri. Bound to sell out, so get in quick!  
[ticketmaster.co.nz](http://ticketmaster.co.nz)

### February 6

#### **Waitangi Day Celebrations Mitre 10 Park Hawke's Bay**

Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Inc host a fun-filled day of family activities to mark the signing of Te Tiriti in 1840. Music, kapa haka, sport, a marketplace and rides – something for everyone!  
[sportspark.co.nz](http://sportspark.co.nz)



March 9-14: Horse of the Year, Hawke's Bay Showgrounds



February 20: Napier Port Ocean Swim

### February 17 – 21

#### **Napier Art Deco Festival**

Around 300 events, and all with costumes! The Art Deco period isn't known for its food ... so it's totally acceptable to tailor your festival schedule towards the fashion, film and art angles, plus throw in a walking tour, a railcar ride and the famous Soap Box Derby, capped off with some oohing and aahhhing over the cars, you're sorted! And don't forget to look to the skies on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday for the memorial flying displays.  
[artdecofestival.co.nz](http://artdecofestival.co.nz)



March 6 & 7: Crowded House at Church Road Winery

### February 20

#### **Napier Port Ocean Swim Perfume Point Reserve**

There are race distances for all ages and abilities at this classic HB summer event. The longest is the 2500m blue seventy and T&G Global course. Swim as an individual or find a couple of mates and make a team of three.  
[eventfinda.co.nz](http://eventfinda.co.nz)

### March 5 – 7

#### **NZ Track and Field Champs Mitre 10 Park Hawke's Bay**

Head for the Sportspark to give some vocal support to New Zealand's top athletic competitors.  
[athletics.org.nz](http://athletics.org.nz)

### March 6 & 7

#### **Crowded House Church Road Winery**

Ticket availability won't last much longer, so get cracking to see the iconic NZ band on their *To The Island* tour. The tour features founding members Neil Finn and Nick Seymour along with producer and keyboardist Mitchell Froom, guitarist and singer Liam Finn and drummer Elroy Finn.  
[ticketmaster.co.nz](http://ticketmaster.co.nz)

### March 9 – 14

#### **Horse of the Year Hawke's Bay Showgrounds**

HOY is one of the Southern Hemisphere's biggest sporting events, bringing in 2,600 horses, 1,800 riders and 400 volunteers into the 28 arenas at the showgrounds. Plus there's 8,000 square metres of shopping, and some seriously exciting competition to take in over the six-day event.  
[eventfinda.co.nz](http://eventfinda.co.nz)

# Did You Know? Food Factoids



9



3



8



2

1

The global food system still produces enough to feed a growing world population, but with poor management and distribution the global number of undernourished people is projected to increase to more than 840 million in 2030. Waste is an important issue.

For example, New Zealanders send 571,000 tonnes of food to landfill annually.

2

Longer term, the yield potential of maize, winter wheat, soybean, and rice has been declining for many countries as crop growing seasons shorten thanks to the changing climate. For maize, large areas of South Africa, the USA, and Europe are having reduced crop growing seasons of more than 20 days—a contraction of more than 14% from previous decades.

3

Around 20% of New Zealand's vegetable exports are squash, totalling almost \$60 million per year.

4

Highlights from Consumer NZ's recently-announced Bad Taste Food Awards:

**Nestle Milo Protein Clusters:**

The packaging claims these are full of whole grains, fibre, 8 vitamins and minerals, giving kids “sustained, low GI energy to keep them going for longer”. But wow – they're also 26.5% sugar.

**Edmonds 97% Fat Free Vanilla Cake:**

Great, “97% fat free” cake mix, containing “no artificial colours, flavours or preservatives”. But this 97% fat free cake mix is also 55% sugar. There is more sugar than flour in the cake.

**Beehive Shaved Champagne Ham:**

The front of the pack declares Beehive's ham is “97% fat free” as well as “gluten free”, “soy free” and “MSG free”. The sodium info is on the back – 1200mg per 100g!

5

A recent NIWA report prepared for HBRC projects many effects (mostly negative) on our region's agriculture sector from climate change. Among them: water limitations, higher wildfire risk, more soil erosion and waterway flooding (due to extreme weather events), heat stress for animals, coastal flooding (sea rise), increased pests and disease (from higher temperatures & humidity and prolonged seasons). Other sources cite diminished evening cooling (diurnal temperature change), disrupting flowering/ripening cycles of our precious fruits.

6

New Zealand exports more than \$100 million of avocados annually, with around 80% shipped to Australia.

7

The Covid Kai Survey, which canvassed 3028 people from April 24 to May 13 (those heady days of Level 3 and 4) has reported that two-thirds of us increased our score on an unhealthy diet measure, with 40% eating more sweet snacks and 33% eating more salty snacks. One-third of respondents increased alcohol intake and 20% more sugary drinks.

8

In this year's cash-strapped, challenging winter, KidsCan distributed a record 211 tonnes of food to 787 schools and 57 early childhood centres during term three, an increase of 40% on term two.

9



4



13



7



15



9

Local organic chicken business Bostock Brothers took out the Good Food Award at the 2020 Sustainable Business Awards in December for "transforming the food system to create a positive impact on people and/or the environment" with their home compostable packaging.

10

13.7 million hectares of land in New Zealand is farmed, 63% of that is sheep and beef (i.e., red meat). Beef+Lamb New Zealand has been looking carefully at on-farm carbon sequestration and recently released research indicating that woody vegetation on NZ sheep and beef farms is offsetting between 63% to 118% of their on-farm agricultural emissions, with the average farm offsetting about 90%.

11

In Hawke's Bay, over the 10 years to 2018, agriculture accounted for 65.5% of our GHG emissions, while methane accounted for 61.9% of our total emissions. So, our challenge is ruminant animals, but at least these farm emissions have decreased slightly. And before we blame it all on the cows, note that household emissions in Hawke's Bay rose 9.4% over this period. That's us humans!

12

There are over 3,000 varieties of pear in the world and 7,500 apple varieties.

13

Watermelon are believed to be native to the Kalahari Desert in Africa. A watermelon harvest was depicted in Egyptian hieroglyphics from 5000 years ago.

14

Strawberries are the only fruit or vegetable to wear their seeds on the outside.

15

Over 1.5 million people around the world are employed by McDonald's.

# BayBuzz Summer Offer



**Subscribe, extend or gift BayBuzz by 28 February** to get a \$10 gift voucher and be in the draw to win the Black Barn Ultimate Experience

## WIN

### **Black Barn Ultimate Experience**

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## Here's more on the Black Barn Ultimate Experience draw

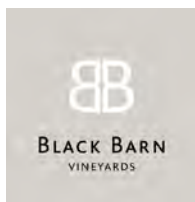
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**Plus** lunch for two couples at the Black Barn Bistro to the value of \$150.\*

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(\*Dates subject to availability)



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Phyllis Tichinin, Steve Smith,  
Jason Ross & Paul Paynter



Photo: Florence Charvin



# Future of food in Hawke's Bay

Introduction  
Tom Belford

**Back in July, BayBuzz asked a variety of Bay 'thinkers' how our region might best learn from and survive our pandemic experience.**



Photo: Florence Charvin

## Marketing guru Kim Thorp responded:

“What’s the one fundamental thing above all others that could help us prosper if we embraced it or devastate us if we destroyed it?”

I would suggest it is our ability to grow and produce food ... What if we were genuinely and famously one of the world’s most authentic and exciting growers, sellers, preparers, cooks, educators and orators of world class food and wine?”

“If we started with the bedrock of our reset being our ability to grow, export, prepare and present high quality, world respected, sustainable food, it would not only keep us real and faithful to our past, it would help guide and clarify some very big decisions for our future.”

Kim’s remarks offer a superb prelude to this edition of *BayBuzz* - all about food - and particularly to this article, where we asked a few other HB thought leaders to speculate about the future of Hawke’s Bay’s food economy.

Steve Smith MW, co-founder of Craggy Range, former chancellor of Lincoln University and more recently, as a member of the Primary Sector Council, was a key architect of the ‘Fit for a Better World’ vision and strategy, now embraced by Government.

Steve leads off with a ‘50,000 foot’ view of the ‘discerning consumer’ and what will be required of our region’s food producers - and their surrounding environmental context and ethos - if they are to succeed in the future marketplace. He refers to “our tribe of consumers” ... “the world’s most discerning consumer who has the means to spend what they really want to on their food, clothes, shoes, homewares and drinks.”

As Steve sees it, “Hawke’s Bay Food Inc” must deliver a consistent ‘food experience’ genuinely grounded in sustainable, health-oriented values.

Then, Jason Ross, co-founder and CEO of premium meat producer and marketer, First Light, carries this point further, discussing “Brand Hawke’s Bay”.

Referring to those same values, he urges, “Let’s engage and attract those people who share our moral compass.” And he warns, “...if one part of Brand Hawke’s Bay is inconsistent, it will tarnish the whole ... We don’t need to be perfect - we just need to be on a pathway to making things better, not worse.”

Yummy Fruit general manager Paul Paynter takes a pragmatic, on-the-ground approach in his essay. He writes, “...there is no revolution happening. Improvements in farming reflect hundreds of small refinements that will make us dramatically more efficient and sustainable.”

He points to Hawke’s Bay’s labour shortfall and costs at all levels - issues addressed elsewhere in this edition - as a serious ongoing challenge to HB’s horticulture and viticulture viability. But on the other hand, he enthusiastically describes technology advances that will improve productivity, concluding, “The big challenge for our industry is to achieve technology-driven productivity gains that trump higher wage costs.”

And finally, True Health soil advisor Phyllis Tichinin takes us right to the foundation of HB’s agrarian economy ... the soil. Before we can lay claim to ‘top of the pyramid’ food consumers, we must ensure the superior nutritional health and safety of our food products. And that begins with biologically healthier soils.

She says, “...natural farming systems produce at least as much, of better quality, at lower cost while improving the environment. This

perspective is no longer fringe, it’s front and centre for our consumers.” She refers to “nutrition per hectare” as the ultimate measure. Steve Smith also emphasises soil health and Jason Ross comments approvingly on “regenerative agriculture”.

And each of our HB commentators is very clearly consumer-focused ... and reading a particular consumer expectation and dynamic at the high end of the market. Is it an accurate read? And should it drive Hawke’s Bay’s food future?

Well, it’s increasingly the vision of the planet’s food giants - take for example Nestlé, world’s largest food merchant, and General Mills, a US\$17.6 billion food marketer.

### From Nestle:

Nestle is “working with over 500,000 farmers and 150,000 suppliers to support them in implementing regenerative agriculture practices. Such practices improve soil health and maintain and restore diverse ecosystems. In return, Nestlé is offering to reward farmers by purchasing their goods at a premium, buying bigger quantities and co-investing in necessary capital expenditures. Nestlé expects to source over 14 million tons of its ingredients through regenerative agriculture by 2030.”

### From General Mills:

“We began to discover the incredible power of improved soil health to do so many of the things we were trying to accomplish with our sustainability initiatives - improve water stewardship, reduce climate impact, create stronger supply chain resiliency, increase biodiversity, all while improving farmer profitability.

“We believe soil health is the cornerstone of regenerative agriculture, which is a number of key principles, that when stacked together, really unlock and unleash some incredible power. Simply put, regenerative agriculture is about seeing the farm as more of an ecosystem and viewing common issues like pests, weeds, disease, and nutrient deficiency not just as problems to be patched with a synthetic input, but instead as a symptom of an unhealthy ecosystem ... We see regenerative agriculture as a lasting solution to a healthier ecosystem.”

This is the page Hawke’s Bay farming need to be on. Read on and see if you agree.

We need to be clear. Delicious, distinctive, nutrient dense, good for you and good for the planet food, natural fibres and beverage is the proposition in that order. Our consumer is the world's most discerning consumer who has the means to spend what they really want to on their food, clothes, shoes, home-ware and drinks.

Let me take you through it.

A consumer's first motivation is to satisfy their own, some may say, selfish emotional and physical needs before anything else. Food and drinks for these people need to taste great; fashion, carpet and upholstery needs to be comfortable and make them look and feel good, nutraceuticals that don't deliver genuine wellbeing will just occupy a moment in time. In nearly every case the aesthetics and quality of the experience will have to meet their emotional and rational needs.

Discerning consumers will never be a long term lover of a product/brand if these needs aren't satisfied every time they experience it. The great brands and products do this every time, Apple iPhone, Allbirds, Mercedes, Dom Perigon Champagne ...

So if we are a Hawke's Bay farmer, grower, fisher, maker or crafter we must satisfy these needs first. Saying we are regenerative ... organic ... sustainable ... GM free means diddly squat in the long term if we don't satisfy the consumers desire for personal fulfilment first.

We are well placed to do the quality and integrity of product bit ... the quality of aesthetics and either purchase or consumer experience needs a lot of work.

And here is where the big opportunity comes in.

First. Assume we honour what I said above, then imagine if everything we produce can be good for our tribe of consumers - healthy, nutrient-dense food, drinks and nutraceuticals.

What does that mean? Well, we have to prove they are actually good for them by using great science. And, as well in my view, there is no question they will need to be free of anything

**“The days of green washing, or hiding behind social issues are over; the world is totally connected. The opportunity lies in becoming ultra-transparent in identifying what our good-for-the-planet initiatives are, and how we are solving them.”**

people think may be bad for them - such as synthetic industrialised additives and pesticides.

Second. Care for the planet must be genuine, transparent and supported by real measurement.

The days of green washing, or hiding behind social issues are over; the world is totally connected. The opportunity lies in becoming ultra-transparent in identifying what our good-for-the-planet initiatives are, and how we are solving them.

What do our consumers care about in this space?

It's carbon, water, biodiversity and people. Our production systems, designed by a unique combination of natural wisdom and science, must become carbon sinks, not carbon polluters, measured biologically, not using a flawed political or taxation basis. Healthy soil is a key.

Our colour is blue, we are a country of water. Discerning consumers will expect us to have the healthiest water systems in the world. Monocultures will not be supported; biologically diverse ecosystems that protect species diversity and resilience will. The wellbeing of our communities must be a responsibility for all of us, particularly in our industry ensuring they have access to healthy nutritious food. We shouldn't try to feed the world if we can't feed our own.

Finally, there is no other country that has the natural capital available to realise this opportunity. Our island nature, temperate climate, beautiful soil, energetic sunlight, available natural rainfall, and great farmers is the reason why we can produce this healthy, distinctive food, fibres and drinks. Hawke's Bay has New Zealand's most comprehensive food, fibres and drinks proposition and should be the leader, it's as simple as that.

And we should stop giving money away to others in the value chain that don't add value, we need to take more charge of our own destiny and ensure more value comes back to our communities. No one said it was going to be easy, but it will be worth it.

### **What about genetic modification?** Steve Smith

There is no doubt that the world's discerning consumer has a distaste for genetically modified food. However a lot of research has shown that they don't understand what in fact it is they don't like.

Let's get real here. Humans have been genetically modifying plants and animals since agriculture became real after the last Ice Age 10,000 years ago. We started selecting the best from nature's pool - the Ambrosia apple being an example of this. We also started using a whole lot of scientific breeding techniques to select desirable genes in both plants and animals - the Fuji apple being an example of this - creating huge benefits for all in the agricultural value chain.

We have been modifying the genetics of our plants and animals forever, and everyone has benefited.

However consumers hate the idea of genetic modification when breeders play with the gene pool of separate genus that normally wouldn't breed in nature, and force them together. And so they should see this as distasteful. If it can't happen in nature, then it shouldn't happen in my view.

But what if these scientific techniques could simply allow what could actually happen to our plants and animals in nature by chance, to happen much more quickly and in a more precise, outcome-based approach? Disease resistant, drought tolerant, awesome taste as examples.

My guess is that most discerning consumers would have no problem with that, yet the world still seems to be putting these gene-editing technologies in the same bucket as the 'day of the triffids', 'frog gene in my tomato' genetic technologies.

As is nearly always the case, it is perception and communication that is the issue, not necessarily the technology.

## Brands for consumers who share our moral compass

Jason Ross

We decided to domicile First Light in Hawke's Bay back in 2003 because we saw opportunity. Opportunity looked like a beautiful place, with an established agricultural base, good infrastructure and capable people.

It wasn't long before we realised we weren't the only people who saw Hawke's Bay as a desirable location in which to live and bring up children, as we were doing. In those early days we received the odd resume from outside the region, and we occasionally saw a new face in the bars and restaurants that were popping up.

Slowly but surely the word got out and the people started to come - good people, with ideas, creativity and the motivation to make Hawke's Bay their home. Today Hawke's Bay is a vibrant, diverse, interesting place to live and the world is starting to catch on.

We invented 100% grass-fed Wagyu for the Californian consumer who wanted to eat healthier beef, but had grown used to the mild flavour of a grain-fed product. We chose California because it made sense to go fishing where the fish are. First Light created a product to meet an unfulfilled need for a very specific consumer group - people who understood and saw value in our proposition. Once we knew them better, we refined our products to meet their needs.

We believe that is the lens through which Hawke's Bay needs to view and then shape its future - let's engage and attract those people who share our moral compass.

An agricultural strategy must be a component part in the overall Hawke's Bay strategy. If we are to attract the right people - those who want to live here, or visit here, or buy Hawke's Bay brands - Hawke's Bay needs to deliver on all fronts. People are smart and intuitive - if one part of Brand Hawke's Bay is inconsistent, it will tarnish the whole. But people are also pragmatic and forgiving. We don't need to be perfect - we just need to be on a pathway to making things better, not worse.

Brands play a critical role in defining the perception of a place.



It wasn't the German government that made Germany synonymous with engineering - it was Mercedes and BMW. Nor was it the French government that made France the home of fashion and luxury consumables. That was Louis Vuitton, Hermes and Moët & Chandon.

As well-organised and capable as our councils, economic development agencies and regional tourism organisations are, they can only do so much. Hawke's Bay needs products and stories we can all promote. We need exemplars and success stories. The more we have, the louder our voice will be, and we'll be appealing to exactly those people we wish to attract.

So, a key role agriculture will play in the betterment of the Hawke's Bay brand is to build brands people love. And it's helpful if the brands we build are loved by people around the world. Kiwis have a funny attitude to success - we value world domination more than we do achievement at home. So, global success brings with it the twin benefits of broadening our reach internationally and soliciting the support of people within Hawke's Bay and New Zealand.

Increasingly, agriculture is being asked to prove its role as part of the Hawke's Bay ecosystem. Along with many other producers, First Light is sharpening up its knowledge around the principles of regenerative

agriculture, a movement gaining momentum internationally. Here's the good news: the majority of New Zealand sheep, deer and beef farming operations already sit within the broad definition of regenerative farming. A number of improvements may need to be made with time and knowledge, however we're not entering this race from a standing start.

It's beholden upon those businesses who are playing a role in defining Brand Hawke's Bay to tell the stories of all the good things we are doing on-farm. In our experience, we have a receptive audience internationally, and our success overseas will play a role in winning support at home.

First Light believes Hawke's Bay has the potential to take its place alongside the iconic food and wine destinations of the world. We see value in Hawke's Bay being a destination for foodies who want priceless experiences - people who will come here, spend their money and leave as brand ambassadors.

For that to occur we need Brand Hawke's Bay. It's already happening, slowly, as small brands become bigger and bigger brands learn how to better tell their stories. But as the agriculture sector, we can and need to do better.

The greater our success globally, the better it is for Brand Hawke's Bay. And that's how we'll win support at home.



## Our food production success hinges on technology

Paul Paynter

The media love stories of pace and precocity; the 18 year-old that just bought their first home or the technological breakthrough that will quickly revolutionise the world. It makes for a decent read, but things actually happen slowly.

The fundamentals of producing sheep, wheat or apples hasn't changed too much over time. Technology is changing things, but slowly.

With that caveat, here are two trends I see affecting Hawke's Bay food production.

### Sensing technology

The most important technological change in farming is in the field of remote sensing. At one end of the

## The fundamentals of producing sheep, wheat or apples hasn't changed too much over time. Technology is changing things, but slowly.

spectrum are satellite or aerial photography. The resolution of these images has improved dramatically and is infinitely more useful. The newer domain is that of drone-based data capture.

While buzzing airborne drones are what people think of, ground-based drones are also developing quickly and have proved infinitely more durable. The data they capture isn't just based on photographic images; they can use microwave, laser and magnetic techniques to gather electromagnetic information or to use fluorescent, infrared or any other light-based techniques.

One drone operator I spoke to had used 13 different types of sensors on his drone, capturing all manner of data. I asked him what it was for and

he replied, with no sense of irony, "We don't know yet." They're capturing all the data and then correlating it with the data from the actual crop and location. Hopefully from all this they can work out what information is helpful and what is not.

In the field, remote sensing allows for precision management of crops. You can predict and observe the performance of different soil types and monitor water stress, pockets of disease, yield and biomass differences. With this information you can potentially start managing a crop down to the plant level, rather than as a whole field. The impacts of this will be dramatic. It will allow farmers to irrigate, spray and fertilise only those plants

that need it. It will also allow them to identify pockets of poor soil, pests or diseases that present reoccurring problems. They'll be able to adjust the planting density or management inputs of that specific area to achieve more consistent yields.

At the other end of production, fruit and vegetable packing lines are now using optical, infra-red, NIR, fluorescence response and other techniques to evaluate quality and eliminate substandard items. Some of this technology is focused only on the surface of the fruit or vegetable, but others use transmittance to pass light through the specimen, scouring its internal attributes. All of us have cut a potato or apple, only to find it is brown in the middle and this technology will go a long way to screening the proverbial 'bad' one.

Most of these techniques have been around for two generations or more, but the algorithms are so vast that the computers of the day could not process the data at a rate of hundreds of units a minute. Now we can do on two computers what used to take five. Refinement of these technologies has the potential to deliver more reliable quality to consumers across the globe and to justify the premiums we will need to ask for.

### Labour costs

The other trend having a significant impact is the cost of labour. The minimum wage has gone up about 30% in the past three years which is putting the squeeze on margins for many in the rural sector. In the apple industry, our key seasonal competitors are Chile and South Africa, who have much cheaper land and labour than we do.

The truth is, the wage range in the fruit industry has never been greater. You need talented people to manage all of the emerging technology and 'new money' investors like Rokit and Craigmere are perfectly happy to pay a premium to secure existing industry talent. Both the demand and competition for talent are very strong. Wages are growing much faster than inflation.

Rising wages are a good sign, but also a double-edged sword. The more you pay people, the more you expect of them and there is a renewed focus on labour productivity.

Right through our sector there is the steady arrival of robots and unmanned vehicles. It is unnerving to see a tractor driving itself in the field, but that will be happening in Hawke's Bay somewhere today. There is also a trend toward elevated platforms to replace ladders and even robotic harvesting of fruit.

**Rising wages are a good sign, but also a double-edged sword. The more you pay people, the more you expect of them and there is a renewed focus on labour productivity.**

Prototype sprayers can map each bud on every tree and spray an orchard to the bud level. It might be a decade or more before many of these technologies are sufficiently reliable and cheap enough to become ubiquitous. Moreover, the technology developers are now requesting we change out tree architecture to make orchards more 'robot ready'. Given we expect an apple orchard to have a life of greater than 30 years, this could take a while.

I doubt any futurist will write about what is going on because there is no revolution happening. Improvements in farming reflect hundreds of small refinements that will make us dramatically more efficient and sustainable.

The big challenge for our industry is to achieve technology-driven productivity gains that trump higher wage costs.

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## Biology, not chemistry, must fuel our food future

Phyllis Tichinin

What with Covid-wonky markets and labour shortages, we need the highest premium possible for our Hawke's Bay agricultural produce.

We've been saying for decades that we produce the best in the world and in large part we do, but the quality goal posts are shifting. We can no longer rest on our branding or our supply chain tracking laurels. Consumer phone-based food quality testing is around the corner and then there will be no place to hide.

If we get on with farming innovations smartly, we won't need to hide. We could justifiably brag from the global rooftops that we produce the most flavourful, healthiest, longest-storing food in the cleanest environment ... Hawke's Bay meeting its true potential for paradise. We have a choice now to get out in front or get left behind. Here's how we get out in front, on all fronts.

### Principles

**A diverse farm ecosystem is a more productive one**, so plant multi-species understories in orchards and vineyards. Intercrop and rotate. Plant 20+ species hedgerow strips inside the orchard windbreaks and around cropping paddocks for beneficial insect habitat. Diversity is key.

**Keep soils covered at all times** with diverse living plants or with covercrop residue. Have something green growing and feeding soil microbes throughout the year - NO bare soil ever!

**Microbes rule, so keep them healthy and well fed**. First, do no harm to your soil's engineers, which means back off the pesticides and herbicides. The sooner you get rid of the chemicals, the faster your microbes will recover to feed and protect your plants for maximum flavour and yield. As a bonus, microbe-rich soils hold more water and can help recharge and cleanse our aquifers.

Less chemical and tillage disruption means more healthy microbes working to provide minerals to plants so they can create more flavour molecules with better tissue integrity that resists pests. If we continue to apply chemicals and leave soil bare, then we'll continue to fight an expensive losing battle with diseases and storage rot, while



yielding only modest flavour. Don't sweat the weeds - they provide ground cover and diversity.

### Where to?

Growers are embracing some of these principles. I see more vineyards with grass directly under the vines and with flowers between the rows.

High-end consumers are happy to pay more for verifiable nutrient density and no chemicals based on reliable measurements they can take themselves before they buy.

The Felix F-750 developed by Queensland Central University is already in use in New Zealand, measuring produce dry matter, brix, acid and colour related to harvest readiness. Several international initiatives are closing in on creating hand-held devices that measure food mineral and antioxidants levels as well. Measurements of chemical residues are close behind.

The BioNutrient Association based in the USA is working on its third version of a smaller device that measures mineral levels - keyed to a grower/consumer testing app - to identify the management practices that produce the highest quality crops. They are finding that crop mineral content can vary by up to 200 times depending on how the crop is grown. We will soon be called on to justify our production in terms of Nutrition per Hectare.

Innovation is the basis of better farming and living, but what we were taught about farming isn't the full story. Cutting edge science supports a biology view of food production, not a chemistry one. Biologically diverse, humus-forming soils grow high brix, nutrient dense crops that don't attract

insects and diseases.

Concerns about pesticide spraying and food residues is not paranoia. Ag chemicals are a major factor in our worsening human and ecosystem health. Ignoring the objective science on this is dangerous to our branding, our pocketbooks and our lives.

We're understandably uncomfortable admitting that. We battle with our own mindset and actions in farming over the last 80 years. The science not paid for by chemical suppliers documents that natural farming systems produce at least as much, of better quality, at lower cost while improving the environment. This perspective is no longer fringe, it's front and centre for our consumers.

A shift in farm aesthetics is recommended. Think of weeds and 'messy' borders as appealing diversity. Use tillage only to incorporate weeds and residues. Spraying becomes a method for applying nutrition not toxins. Farm personnel and neighbour satisfaction increases along with profits.

Farming needn't degrade the ecosystem we are part of. Farming can restore its health, our health and the health of our customers. Can we be responsive and responsible? Innovative and science-based? Can we be brave and caring? ●



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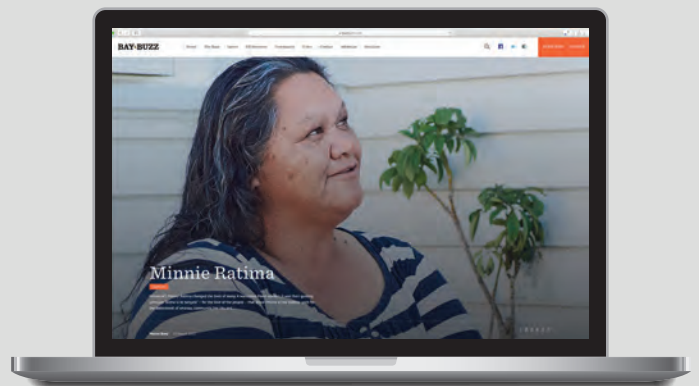
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Alessandro Buttazzoni

# Ethnic Origins

Hawke's Bay has gained a media reputation for restaurant excellence, notably from wineries, and family-operated establishments in Napier.

*Cuisine* magazine's 2019 Top New Zealand Restaurants gave Pacifica three hats (one of five in the country) and Bistronomy was awarded two hats, as were Craggy Range and Elephant Hill. David and Pru Barton's Mr D completed Hawke's Bay's top five.

The cuisine of these restaurants can be loosely described as international fusion – combining world-wide culinary traditions, with an emphasis on European. Their standard is up with the best.

Jeremy Rameka, at Pacifica, our most celebrated chef, is French-cuisine trained, and employs that tradition's emphasis on precision and delicacy when combining various influences – like Lemonfish ceviche (South American) marinated in coconut cream (Thai) with cucumber mousse (French) and wasabi roe (Japanese).

*Cuisine* said of Pacifica, "The food is modern New Zealand cuisine at its best and Rameka is truly at the forefront of redefining our national food identity."

Aotearoa New Zealand in 2021 is a *mélange* of ethnicities, and our top chefs are shaping their menus in recognition of the diversity of cuisines we have in our communities.

Hawke's Bay is peppered with restaurants and cafes offering ethnic fare, some as true to tradition as they can achieve, others blending with the cuisines of others.

**Story by Mark Sweet**  
**Photos by Florence Charvin**



## Italy Alessandro's

The South African lilt to Alessandro Buttazzoni's accent is because that's where he learned to speak English as a teenager, after his father took a job with an engineering company.

His family are from the rural town of San Daniele in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region of North East Italy.

Aged nineteen, Alessandro returned to complete compulsory military service, after which he took up a baker's apprenticeship in Naples, "learning the traditional wood-fired, brick oven, bread-making craft". Those skills "gave me the opportunity to travel and work throughout Italy and other European countries."

Looking to broaden his knowledge and skills, Alessandro undertook a formal culinary degree in Colorado, which led to a partnership in an Italian restaurant in Vail.

Travel and work next took him to Melbourne, where he met his New Zealand partner. They moved to Hawke's Bay in 2016, and Alessandro went back to his roots, opening a small pizza bar on Havelock Road.

"My passion is the oven, working with raw fire and the dough."

The pizza oven in Alessandro's new restaurant on Joll Road is custom made, imported from Naples. "The Acunto family have been making these ovens for four generations. They are the Ferrari of ovens."

Perfection is the attitude he brings to the making of pizza and breads.

The pizzas are Neapolitan style. The highly-refined 00 flour is imported from Naples, because "only the finest flour can take the heat of the oven at 485 degrees Celsius."

Alessandro says dough making is "very simple". His ingredients are: 00 flour, pure water, sea salt, and his own sour dough yeast starter, fed daily with flour and water.

Perhaps simple, but it is with care and precision. He pre-ferments, mixes and kneads, and allows the dough to rest for three to five days, making Alessandro's "the best pizza in the country" according to media celebrity, Jesse Mulligan.



## Turkey Kilim



Born in Istanbul, Yusuf Dogru had just finished his higher education in Bosnia-Herzegovina, when in 2007 he and his father visited an old friend, owner of Kilim restaurant in Petone. Yusuf was twenty-one years old.

At first, he waited tables. “I always loved food and cooking but I didn’t think it would be my profession.”

In 2009 Yusuf helped set up Kilim in Napier, and in 2017 he bought the restaurant with business partner, Michael.

With freedom to create their own menu and style, Kilim draws on the ancient roots of Turkish heritage.

“Turkey is a bridge between Asia and Europe,” says Yusuf. “And Istanbul

was the economic and political capital of different empires for centuries.” Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman. “From China to England, they all came together in Istanbul, because of the silk and spice roads.”

Yusuf points out that the Ottoman Empire endured over four centuries, and stretched from North Africa to Austria, and from Greece to the Middle East.

He understands Turkish cuisine as “a big mosaic of different cultures”, and his menu reflects that scope.

“We have pljeskavica (Serbian), which are lamb patties prepared Eastern European style.”

Kilim’s tangine - lamb, chicken, beef, clay baked with fruits, nuts, and spices

- is North African.

Guvech is a stew with vegetables from western Turkey, as are iskender kebabs. Falafal is an Arabic word, and mezza is Greek.

Perhaps the most striking example of Yusuf’s “cuisine cultural mosaic” is baklava, a sweet dessert, originating in an Ottoman Sultan’s kitchen in Istanbul, yet now found in the cuisines of Egypt, the Middle East, the Balkans, and Central Asia.

Yusuf Dogru has a deep knowledge of the origins of Turkish cuisine and says, “I have always wanted to be a bridge between cultures.”

He has found the perfect vehicle in Kilim.



## France Poivre et Sel



In 2011, Samuel and Severin Goslin sold their possessions, packed their bags, and with two young children, moved to New Zealand.

They were living in Grasse, “perfume capital of the world”, in the Cote-d’Azur region on the French Riviera, running a bar and restaurant. “In France it is very difficult running a small business, with high taxes and operating costs. Much more than here,” says Samuel.

The Goslins found work at Oreti Village Resort in Pukawa, over looking Lake Taupō. Samuel in the kitchen, and Severin was housekeeper and waitress.

After two years they moved to Whitianga and established their own

restaurant, Poivre et Sel (Pepper and Salt), but in 2018 a change of landlord and rent increase encouraged them to look elsewhere.

For sale was Little India, located in one of the Six Sisters on Marine Parade, the latest in a string of establishments in the space, that have included Mint and Take Five. “The climate here is similar to the Mediterranean and Hawke’s Bay has great produce from growers like Epicurian, Matangi beef, and many more.”

At Poivre et Sel every dish is made from scratch, including breads, ice cream and sorbet.

The menu offers a classic three-course dinner with optional matching

French wines. There are three choices for each course.

“When you make everything, it is very labour intensive,” says Samuel.

“We offer haute cuisine in an informal atmosphere,” says Severin, who, with her two teenage children, Morgane and Mathis, wait tables.

Haute cuisine is characterised as meticulous preparation and careful presentation, and is the high end of French cuisine, contributing to France having the most Michelin-star restaurants of any country in the world.

The Goslins have brought that standard to Hawke’s Bay. “Hearty fare,” says Samuel. “With subtle flavours,” adds Severin.



## Thailand Sai Eatery



The only South East Asian country not colonised, Thailand doesn't have European culinary influences like Philippines (Spanish) or Vietnam and Laos (French).

Thai cuisine employs unique ingredient combinations, centred around galangal, kaffir lime, lemongrass, lime, chilli, coconut and coriander.

At Sai Eatery, on Emerson Street in Napier, sisters Sasi (manager) and Siriya (chef) offer authentic Thai dishes. "People told me Kiwis don't like real Thai food, but I didn't accept that, because it's not sincere to our traditions."

Sasi Limapibal was born in Songkhla and has a master's degree in literature.

She was working as a researcher, when another sister living in Sydney announced she wanted to sell her restaurant.

Sasi said, "Sell to me," and she emigrated to Australia, taking over a big restaurant in Chatswood. Later, she and her partner, yearning for a more peaceful life, left the big city for a small seaside town three hundred kilometres away, where they established a restaurant.

Sai Thai Table and Tea in Old Bar was so successful, Sasi's dream of a quieter life did not happen. "We were so busy. Local people and tourists loved our food, and would say, so, this is real Thai food."

When her sister, Siriya, said she wanted to move to New Zealand, Sasi decided to come too, and in 2017 they established Sai Eatery in Napier.

Sasi says the key to their cuisine is "achieving a balance of tastes: hot, sour, sweet, and salty".

On the menu is Meang kana, made from "an ancient recipe, very complicated and time consuming", and served in a shot glass. Hot is expressed by chilli, sour by lime juice, sweet by palm sugar, salty by fish sauce.

Other Thai classics, like Tom Yum Goong, Pad Thai, and Larb, are all made "the same way we make them in Thailand", says Sasi.



## Japan Piku



Hawke's Bay is flush with sushi and the standard is high. Two family-run, authentic sushi bars, Tu Muke Don in Napier and Everyday Sushi Day in Taradale, are favourites, and people are raving about Aozora in Ahuriri.

Ben Harper, owner of Piku, is an exception to other eateries featured, whose operators are from the ethnicity of their cuisine.

Ben is Hawke's Bay born and bred. Harper Road in Waimarama is named after one of his tipuna.

He acquired his knowledge and appreciation working in a Japanese restaurant in Chelsea, London, where he rose through the ranks to be general manager.

Returning to New Zealand, Ben went out on his own, establishing Piku, "with a pop-up tent serving events like Horse of the Year, and a few months later I bought a food trailer. Then in November 2017 I set up in Red Barrel Winery."

Piku was popular from the outset, and eighteen months later, Ben was approached about setting up in Jonathan McHardy's new hospitality sector development in Joll Road.

"Piku means peak," says Ben, "and our logo is the Rising Sun and Te Mata."

The logo matches the style of Piku cuisine, which is strongly Japanese influenced, "with twists". While in

Japan for the Rugby World Cup, Ben traveled out of town to a restaurant specialising in Karaage: marinated meats and fish, coated in flour, deep fried in oil, and usually served with rice and shredded cabbage.

"A twist to fit the taste of our clientele" is Piku Chicken Karaage, which is coated in tempura and served with kimchi mayo.

Ben imported two robotayaki grills from Japan, and credits head chef, Brent Cameron, with perfecting the Yakatori section of the menu: char grilled skewers of meats and fish.

Piku has hit a chord in bringing Japanese inspired cuisine to Hawke's Bay.



## Philippines PAK



PAK is an anagram for Philippine Asian Kitchen and is sited at the Westshore Beach Inn, tucked into a corner of Jeremy Bayliss's award-winning establishment of bars, bistro, accommodation, and beer brewing.

The restaurant was established in 2015 by Sanny Palima.

Current chef, Anton Bande, worked with Sanny in Shangri-La Resort in Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu, in 2007. Nine years later, after studying cooking at EIT, Anton applied for a job advertised by PAK. Unbeknownst to him, Sanny Palima was the chef.

"We keep to his philosophy of maximising the opportunity to source fresh ingredients from local producers," says

PAK manger, Dawn Veridiano-Mason, whose hometown is Cavite in Luzon. She started in 2016, "after Anton texted me about a managerial vacancy". They had met at EIT.

"Sadly, we lost Sanny," says Anton, "he died of heart failure two years ago on holiday in the Philippines." Anton and Dawn honour Sanny Palima by continuing the style he established, and there's a photo of him on the menu.

Enduring are two Filipino 'national dishes' with Spanish names: Adobo and Lechon, although they were part of indigenous cuisine before Spain's colonisation (1521-1898).

Adobo translates as 'marinade', and Anton explains: "Before refrigeration

meats were preserved in vinegar, herbs and spices." PAK's version is marinated NZ pork belly and Bostock chicken, "with a difference". The dish is finished with crispy shallots and quail eggs.

Innovation in blending traditional Filipino fare with other, mostly Asian, influences is PAK's style.

And with humour, a hat tip to forty years of American colonisation is Dawn's favourite. "Triple Joy Fried Chicken is named after Chickenjoy from a KFC-style food chain in the Philippines called Jollibee."

PAK are a close-knit family of mostly Filipino workers, and Dawn credits Jeremy and Carol Bailey "for looking after us and caring about our welfare".



## India Rasoi



Rasoi, Hindi for kitchen, is aptly named, because owner Kamlesh Prasad says, “The kitchen is the heart of our restaurant.”

In a large charcoal-fired tandoori oven, strips of prior-marinated chicken slowly roast, and on the stove a pot of dahl simmers. Spices are roasted and hand ground.

From Dehradun, capital of Uttarakhand province, near the Himalayan foothills, Kamlesh studied hospitality in Delhi for three years before working in five-star hotels in India’s capital.

In 2005 he took the opportunity to travel to New Zealand to work in a friend’s restaurant in Invercargill. “You can imagine,” says Kamlesh, “I come from metro city Delhi and I felt, where am I, this is so small.”

But he says, “I fell in love with New Zealand,” and since moving to Hawke’s Bay twenty years ago, he is now well settled with a family and appreciates “the wonderful environment, and people are especially nice here.”

Having worked as head chef in other restaurants, in 2017 Kamlesh and his wife Mamta decided to go out on their own. “When you work for someone else, you are limited. Food is my passion. Now, I can create my own menu without restriction.”

Kamlesh describes his menu as ‘pan-Indian’, drawing from the many cuisine traditions of his homeland.

From the far north there’s Kashmiri Rogan Josh: lamb, goat, venison. Bengal is represented by Chicken Rezalla, an aromatic muslim influenced curry. From Mangalore in the south there’s a mango chicken curry; and Anjeer Aur Paneer Kofta, cheese dumplings with fruits and nuts, is a Punjabi dish.

Rasoi sources meats “from Gourmeats in Havelock North, fish is Takatimu, and vegetables are all from local suppliers”.

In his approach to cooking Kamlesh Prasad is mindful of the ‘Ayurvedic traditions’, which advocates use of whole fresh foods for prana and recognises

food should be handled with care and treated with respect.

### Recovery

All these food impresarios praised the support they have had post Covid-19 lockdown. Some adapted to delivering take-aways, others weren’t able, but as soon as their restaurants reopened, business has been brisk.

“Yes, very busy, with strong bookings ahead.”

“Our regular customers have been wonderfully supportive.”

“We did deliveries during lockdown and ever since we reopened we’ve been hammered every night.”

“We’re as busy since lockdown as we’ve ever been thanks to our loyal customers.”

“Kiwis come together in a crises, and they know if they don’t support the restaurants and cafes, we’ll go out of business.”

“We are really grateful.”

Keep it up, Hawke’s Bay foodies! 🍷

# What's new?!

## A round-up of our favourite new foodies & foodie news

Lizzie Russell



### Hands Down

Brad Minton, Will Innes and Henry Lyons are the trio behind FOLKL, a multi-disciplinary research consultancy based in Napier, and along with John Chisolm up in Auckland, they've cooked up Hands Down – an authentic corn tortilla factory tucked in behind Mr D and Monica Loves in central Napier.

The tortillas are delicious for a start, and they're made traditionally, with a Mesoamerican technique known as nixtamalization. Basically, the corn kernels (in this case, from up the road in Gisborne, and as close to certified organic as you can find in NZ right now) are soaked in limewater and this makes the corn super digestible and nutritional. The slate lime used comes locally from Websters Lime and the small Hands Down team do the rest.

You'll find the tortillas at Hermana and Vagabond Jack foodtrucks, up at Hot Water Beach in the Coromandel, and hyper-locally at Hapi, Hunger Monger and Monica Loves.

It was Brad's tortilla obsession, having lived in the States that kicked this off. He experienced the revitalisation of craft tortillas in Mexico and the US and is keen to see the humble staple become an everyday food here in Aotearoa. Brad's current favourite: a hot tortilla dressed with an egg from his own chooks, a splash of olive oil and a sprinkle of chilli flakes – what a breakfast!

### Mary's

The latest addition to the Joll Road precinct in Havelock North (joining Alessandro's and Piku) is Mary's. Named for Mary Peabody of Craggy Range, the new eatery is a neighbourhood restaurant serving chef Casey McDonald's fun, creative fare and Craggy Range's wines right in the village. The locals will be delighted that Mary's is open seven days! From midday till late.

### Brewers move

Coming next to the village is a new set-up for **Giant Brewing Co.** They'll be moving from Donnelly Street and taking up residence in Treacher Lane (what was Subway), offering their beloved beers plus top nosh from early in 2021.

**Brave Brewing Co** have made the big move into the Tribune precinct in Hastings, marking phase one of the new development. The new taproom/eatery is beautiful! And the "Fancy" Southern Fried Chicken (with Kewpie and caviar) so, so good. They're open seven days too!

Keep an eye out for OMG Bread, joining the Tribune in phase two.



### Bradshaws

Meander out of Havelock on Te Mata Road and you'll find Wayne and Judy Bradshaw's new artisan venture. Bradshaws offers coffee, plus a delicious and healthy range of real fruit and coconut-based ice blocks and also fruit juices sourced from orchards behind the shop. All products are reduced sugar, gluten-free and dairy free.

### Waipawa Butchery

At three years-old Waipawa Butchery is not a baby, but it has been growing. The addition of a Havelock North butchery after the flagship store in CHB is making those amazing sausages, steaks and meaty treats more easily available to the village people.

The beef and lamb - from Duncan and Annabel Smith's Patangata Station – is remarkable for its quality *and* the short distances it travels to market – just 15km to the Waipawa outlet and 35km to Havelock North. The ultimate star of the ultimate Hawke's Bay BBQ this summer.



**Brad Minton**  
Hands Down





## Hohepa Hawke's Bay Glass milk bottles

### The Limery

Wairoa is offering up the sour goods. Just at the mouth of the Wairoa River, The Limery sits on four hectares growing 4,000 lime trees, supplying the zesty little treasures (and juice) to bars, restaurants and supermarkets. The Limery boasts full traceability, no pesticides and just the stuff for your summer Ceviche!

### Pintxo Charcuterie

Francis de Jager is a stalwart of the Hawke's Bay hospo scene, having run the events and cellar door show at Black Barn for many years. He and his Basque wife Eneritz are now bringing some of the magic of her homeland to New Zealand with Pintxo Charcuterie.

Francis says it takes salt, meat, love and time to make good chorizo,

so they keep it simple and traditional, offering cured chorizo, cured saucisson (a nod to the French), fresh chorizo meatballs and burgers, all handcrafted and just containing 100% Certified Free-Range New Zealand Pork, sea salt, Marlborough garlic and freshly ground spices.

Pintxo products find their way to Auckland and Wellington, and locally you can find them at Ya Bon, Black Barn, Gourmet Direct, Chantal and Hohepa. Speaking of ...



### Hohepa Hawke's Bay

They've brought back a classic! Glass bottles are now the go, with all milk at their farmers market stall or the Clive-based store now sold in one-litre glass bottles. They're looking at the packaging for the rest of their products next, but in the meantime, we all get to enjoy the old school charm of the glass bottles, which somehow make the milk taste better. Return your empty bottles, and they'll be sterilised and put back into circulation.





**Francis &  
Eneritz de Jager**  
Pintxo Charcuterie





## Bagel Merchants Blueberry bagels

Benny Fernandez

Keep your eyes and ears out for pop-up offerings coming over summer to Benny's two coffee locations. **Miyuki from Asian Diner** will be offering her tantalising treats at **Sparrows** in Onekawa from time to time. In town, **Georgia on Tennyson** plays occasional host to Bodega Cats – subs and sorbets!

Ash and Connor – the talents behind **Bodega Cats** – are also popping-up about the place with **Restaurant Ruth**. Chase them up on Instagram to hear where, when and what.

### Best Burger

Is on its way! A collab between James from Bistronomy, Vinci from Vinci's, Jamie from F45 and Simon who used to run Burger Fuel, this set-up is going to teach us what a truly great burger is. Keep an eye out for the small but perfectly-formed menu, based on solid, local ingredients. You'll find Best Burger on that shopping part of Middle Road in Havelock North, near Gilmore's and Bay Espresso.

### Bagels

Are quietly taking over. **Bagel Merchants** have been making Sunday mornings better for a while now, offering weekly home deliveries – a highlight of the weekend! Their New York-style artisan bagels are dense and chewy, and the blueberry ones are perfect with lemon curd, just saying.

And now there is **Bayside Bagels** too! Keep an eye out for the lads working out of a container set-up in Common Room's spacious and sunny new garden bar area. And as with all things cool and bagel-ish, best bet is to follow them on Instagram.

### Hastings East

The Heretaunga East 200s just keep getting better and more fun. You need a night out exploring the block. The new garden at **Common Room** is perfect for easy afternoon brews, often with live music and lively locals. Then there's the sophisticated cool of **Hastings Distillers** on the corner, where gin is the thing. Pop over for some street-style food (think bao buns, dumplings, Peking chicken pancakes...) and seriously good cocktails at **Fun Buns**, or go all Italian at **Sazio**. The pasta is authentic and delicious and you leave almost ready to burst, but so, so tummy-happy.

Speaking of gin – have you noticed it's everywhere? And being taking pretty seriously too. Apart from the line-up at Hastings Distillers, we're also loving the collection now on offer at **Pipi Café** in Havelock North. Gin and Pizza, now that sounds like summer.

Know a new foodie spot we haven't heard of ... let *BayBuzz* know!

### And food stuff you can't eat

**FoodEAST**, the new \$18 million Food Innovation Hub will be ready for action in Hastings by 2022. Situated at the Tomoana Food Hub in Elwood Road, FoodEAST will offer Hawke's Bay food innovators access to expertise to help them commercialise new food, beverage and agri-tech products.

The **Food and Fibre Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE)** at EIT is one of a number of CoVEs being developed through the Government's Reform of Vocational Education (RoVE). Our CoVE will work closely with Workforce Development Councils, Regional Skills Leadership Groups, the new national institute Te Pūkenga - New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology and other CoVEs to develop the skilled workers required by HB's primary sector.

While the Food and Fibre CoVE is based at EIT, the initiative has been set up by an industry-led consortium, involving 54 organisations across the entire food and fibre sector including industry associations, tertiary education providers, Māori, employers, employees, and standard setting bodies. Dr Mark Paine has recently been appointed as new chair. He has a background in both horticulture and dairy, has held academic roles and was a member of the Primary Sector Council.

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“We can improve but we can't supply the world. We have to embrace the new plant-based meats and burgers made on the plate ... but they're expensive.”

Sarah Harper,  
Esk Valley Meats



# Hunger games: reinventing meat

How do you like your steak? Farm raised and medium rare ... reconstituted veges, pulses, nuts and seeds shaped to look like the real thing ... or fermentation factory replicas cultured in a giant petri dish?

Story by Keith Newman

Welcome to the protein revolution - mass-produced food from bio-labs for the protein poor, plant-based alternatives for vegans and voyeurs of variety or, for those who can still afford it, premium farm or ocean-raised the way nature intended.

The convergence of climate change, environmentalism, global poverty, generational resistance to meat farming and breakthroughs in bioscience and cellular technology have brought us to the brink of a second revolution in farming and food production.

Within a decade the traditional food chain will face mass disruption as micro-organisms are 'programmed', genetically synthesised and fermented in huge vats or 3D printed to emulate steak, mince, sausages, chicken, bacon and fish fillets.

Global investment in plant-based and laboratory generated protein has given rise to dire predictions that 'industrial' dairy is doomed and pork, chicken, lamb and fish consumption is heading for a rapid decline.

Independent researcher RethinkX claims "superior", more nutritious, healthier, better tasting, and "more convenient protein of unimaginable variety" will be five times cheaper than

existing animal protein by 2030, ten times more affordable by 2035 eventually "approaching the cost of sugar".

Dr Rosie Bosworth, a thought leader focused on future foods and new strategies for green agriculture, is taking the protein revolution seriously. "If we don't ... New Zealand will be in big trouble in the long term."

An important warning for a country with 81% of its agricultural land devoted to sheep & beef farming and dairying, carrying nearly 40 million livestock that generated \$7.9 million in meat export value and \$15.9 million in dairy product export value in 2019.

## McPlant momentum

Alongside the converging megatrends in bio-tech and "GenZ and Millennials... steering away from meats" there's the consumer marketing power of Burger King, creating vegan burgers, and the McPlant burger, co-created by McDonald's and Beyond Meat.

"That is the start of the commercial demand that will shift things away from the low-value cuts of meat a lot of farmers are supplying," says Bosworth.

Amplifying the trend is celebrity investment and endorsement including David Attenborough's recent call, urging

people to have less children and adopt a plant-based diet to save the planet.

There's a predictable backlash from Kiwi meat producers and marketers who believe New Zealand can hold its own with high quality, natural, farm-grown produce.

Would Esk Valley Meats sales and marketing manager Sarah Harper consider lab grown sausages or plant-based patties? "No way ... I want them made like they have been forever."

Esk Valley Meats was one of three Hawke's Bay meat producers who took out top positions in the 2020 Great New Zealand Sausage and Burger Pattie Competition from 605 entries.

Having evolved from "back yard butchery" to supplying supermarkets from 2005, the company won two gold medals for its brisket burger pattie and beef brisket sausages and a silver medal for their pork, leek and fennel sausages.

Harper believes most New Zealanders prefer their meat grown out in the field and there will always be a market for premium product if farmers can be sustainable and add value.

"We can improve but we can't supply the world. We have to embrace the new plant-based meats and burgers made on the plate ... but they're expensive."

Amplifying the trend is celebrity investment and endorsement including David Attenborough's recent call, urging people to have less children and adopt a plant-based diet to save the planet.





“We could lead the world growing all sorts of materials from proteins to fats, and beyond agriculture into cosmetics.”

Dr Rosie Bosworth

Harper has worked in export on both sides of the game and has UK retail experience where technology can trace Aberdeen Angus meat, for example, all the way back to the sire.

“We’ve got a long way to go in terms of traceability so there’ll be huge changes and requirements and it’s going to get really tough.”

### Value not volume

Brendan O’Connell, acting CEO of Agritech New Zealand, says global growth in alternative protein production should emphasise what’s good about our food production and long track record of innovation.

Rather than adding more dairy cows, chasing volume or allowing meat alternatives to spell doom and gloom he believes our farming systems should be more diverse and our portfolio more focused on higher value products.

However, having studied the investment shift to cheaper alternative food production systems, he agrees we’re in for a major upset.

He’s personally aware of changing ‘flexitarian’ consumer habits as represented in his own family - “one vegetarian, one part-time vegetarian and three that will eat whatever is put in front of them”.

He recently tried yellow pea-based ‘baconless bacon’ from New Zealand producer Sunfed Meats, but won’t be including it in his diet. “I didn’t really enjoy it.”

In the *BayBuzz* Food Survey reported in this edition, fully 70% of

respondents say they are “reducing their red meat consumption for health or environmental reasons”. A trend not to be taken lightly in a region where 90% of farm land is devoted to sheep, beef and dairy, with roughly 450,000 beef cattle and 78,000 dairy cows on about 1,800 farms.

Supermarkets and speciality stores already stock a growing range of plant-based sausages, mince, burgers, chicken strips, luncheon and other products including Kiwi offerings from Sunfed, Amino Mantra, Veggie Delights, Alt Meat Co, Grater Goods and Bean Supreme.

There’s vegan cheese and ‘non-dairy dairy’ including milk and ice cream and a growing number of Kiwi start-ups operating in this space, with groups like Plant & Food and even Fonterra exploring the options.

While the NZ Primary Industry Council, the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) and others are working under the ‘fit for a better world’ banner to rethink our competitive advantage, O’Connell says more detail is needed.

### Protein innovators wanted

Palmerston North-based FoodHQ is trying to identify international collaborative opportunities for New Zealand companies and through Emerging Proteins NZ wants to support those working with protein sources including plant, fungi, insect, bacterial and cell-culture.

Locally it’s working through BusinessHB and Hawke’s Bay’s Food

Innovation Network.

There seems to be an openness to plant-based options but eyebrows tilt at the seeming contradiction of introducing so-called ‘Frankinfoods’ into our diets after years of resisting genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

The first cell-cultured hamburgers from live cow muscle stem cells were produced by a UK company in 2013. Since then scores of businesses have invested billions of dollars to produce a range of meat and seafood alternatives.

Bill Gates, Richard Branson and a wave of Silicon Valley ‘cellular agriculture’ and meat industry giants are cautiously grooming consumers for meat-like inventions grown from animal cells with large-scale production proposed within three to five years.

Brendan O’Connell, married to Miranda (nee Cassidy) from a Hawke’s Bay farming family, says we need to have a wider conversation about the whole continuum of genetic modification and what’s known and unknown.

“We’ve been doing genetic modification in New Zealand forever, just doing it slowly through herd selection, cropping improvements and good science that’s well understood.”

O’Connell believes many consumers will be sceptical of highly processed alternative proteins, particularly “unknown levels of modification” that impinge on what might be considered natural food.

“Most people will eat what they recognise as food because they know where it comes from and what’s gone into it.”



“There’s two types of food, one for calories and sustenance and one for special occasions. If New Zealand is to grow food profitably we need to be focused on people who want to eat rather than those who need to eat.”

Sam Robinson

### Value chain dominos

RethinkX says the protein revolution is moving faster than traditional business planners, forecasters, trend watchers, policymakers and investors can imagine.

Its report - *Rethinking Food and Agriculture 2020-2030* - predicts the collapse of large-scale meat farming worldwide within 15 years, with domino effects impacting the entire value chain including feed cropping, transport and energy.

“We are on the cusp of the deepest, fastest, most consequential disruption in food and agricultural production since the first domestication of plants and animals ten thousand years ago. This is primarily a protein disruption driven by economics.”

The *2020 Future of Food & the Primary Sector* study from Victoria University, with input from industry experts including our chief scientist, sounds a similar warning about impacts on our economy and way of life and the need for a major revamp of the food sector.

We need to plan now to adapt, invest and innovate ahead of “dramatic changes in food consumption patterns”.

The report challenges our short-term thinking, lack of focused R&D, the “splintered nature and misplaced incentives” of our scientific community, and the need to bring agriculture and food production into a more interconnected system.

A more strategic approach is needed across the terrestrial and aquatic sectors. “The common assertion that our

food production is a mature industry is wrong.”

### Coping with change

It suggests many smaller producers are struggling with the increased use of sensors, big data and artificial intelligence (AI), let alone “huge breakthroughs in the life sciences” such as gene editing and the rapid emergence of “non-animal-based foods” replacing meat and milk.

We need to decide which technologies will sustain the sector as new food-processing systems such as 3D printing and sustainable packaging are developed in response to consumer preferences.

The report, based on conversations with industry leaders, scientists and stakeholders, affirms our status as “a leading producer of elite primary products” that can lead the way for post-Covid economic renewal.

Sam Robinson former chair of AgResearch and board member of Silver Fern Farms, New Zealand’s largest livestock processing and marketing company, quotes Bill Gates proposing big US protein factories as the larder for the world and New Zealand as the delicatessen.

Robinson says the big impact for farming and consumers will be at the commodity level. “There’s two types of food, one for calories and sustenance and one for special occasions.”

If New Zealand is to grow food profitably “we need to be focused on people who want to eat rather than those who need to eat”.

While the big investors will own the supply of calories, “the majority of our meat is not going to compete head-to-head with artificial protein,” says Robinson.

### Special occasion steak

Even if meat becomes an occasional treat for those preferring a vegetarian diet, it won’t be artificial, “it’ll be the best wagyu, grass-fed, naturally and ethically raised, hormone and antibiotic free” steak which is the Silver Fern Farms market.

He says our reputation as smart farmers - staving off Covid-19, getting TB out of our herds and progressively eradicating *Mycoplasma bovis* (M.bovis) from our cattle - stands us in good stead as a safe, reliable food producer.

While the US, Europe and the Middle East want New Zealand meat, he says Asia and China in particular are our natural market. “They have gone beyond needing to eat ... they love their food and banquets ... artificial protein is only for the worker’s canteens.”

Robinson agrees the meat industry must become more collectively and cooperatively organised like the apple industry, which develops new plant variety rights for the Asian palate. “The pastoral industry needs to invest more in R&D.”

RethinkX says the dairy industry will be the first to feel “the full force of modern food’s disruptive power” triggered by rapid advances in “precision biology” and huge strides in “precision fermentation”.

Scientists will be able to “program micro-organisms to produce almost any complex organic molecule” which, combined with a new ‘Food-as-Software’ production, will usher in a new era of food manufacture.

### Protein programming

Programmed molecules will be uploaded to databases so food engineers can design molecular cookbooks enabling constant and rapid improvement of ‘food products’ undermining the cost-value equation of animal-based food sources.

Agritech’s Brendan O’Connell doesn’t see New Zealand emerging as a big player in protein fermentation or bio-farms, logistically and logically he says that needs to be done closer to the large consumer markets.

“The really big farming systems in the US and other parts of the world are going to be decimated,” and we’ll end up importing much of our lab protein because “the cheapest option will drive a lot of consumer choices”.

He believes the pre-emptive death notice for larger meat producing nations doesn’t apply to New Zealand in the same way, but it should provide a wake-up call for our existing food creation, producing and distribution sectors.

What we deliver, he says is “a rare thing” with “massive potential” if we continue to leverage our natural, sustainably produced food, become more coordinated and focus on our core strengths like regenerative farming systems.

Agritech, the recently converged body of hi-tech groups across the agri-business sector, is seeing strong investment in local innovation to enhance natural food production.

Our exports, alongside prime meat, should include intellectual property (IP) from new protein sources, new cultivars, pasture species, management practices and technology breakthroughs.

O’Connell cites the aspirational goals of KPMG’s Agribusiness reports claiming Kiwi innovation could result in “five million people being able to feed 40 million people and potentially 5% of the diet of 800 million people”.

### Specialised cropping

Dr Rosie Bosworth doesn’t see New Zealand figuring large in fermented or lab-grown meats, but potentially shining by repurposing dairying land to grow protein-rich crops.

Rather than being a “race to the bottom” swapping out one commodity sector for another, she says we need novel ways of growing, manufacturing, processing, extracting or extruding plant protein to give us a competitive edge.

There’s “huge opportunity” for fermentation technology because almost any molecular structure can be produced using equipment familiar to micro-brewers. “We could lead the world growing all sorts of materials from proteins to fats, and beyond agriculture into cosmetics”.

Bosworth wonders whether we’re having “loud enough or open enough discussions” around the possibilities as too much is uncoordinated and happening in silos and needs to be more connected. While entrepreneurs see the market opportunity there needs to be “a bit more transparency around what MBIE and the Government are looking at doing to create more forward momentum”.

Once the logistics of scaling up fermented protein and cell-based meats are sorted, “it will become a no-brainer and eventually overtake the incumbent pricing structure,” says Bosworth.

And she warns natural producers that staying in the premium end for a long time could result in the cost of meat becoming prohibitive.

### Business as unusual

Sam Robinson insists farmers and meat producers are already spending more time trying to comply with every possible obstacle to their reputation than they are worrying about competition from artificial protein.

He doesn’t like the term ‘industrial’ in relation to New Zealand as it implies feedlots and is employed by Fish and Game, Forest & Bird and Greenpeace when they’re “trying to crucify the New Zealand dairy industry”.

There are a few loose ends to be tidied up; guaranteed multilateral free trade access “for our sophisticated product” and improved marketing so “people stop sniping at us for dirty dairy”.

Generally, he’s “more confident” about the meat industry than he has been for a long time, although the composition of our 4.5 million cow dairy herd needs to be reconsidered.

Robinson says our greatest vulnerability may be “manufacturing meat” – our cows and bulls could be “taken out” by artificial protein hamburger blends...“after all it’s just a mish mash between a bun with a bit of gherkin and salad”.

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Despite the talk of New Zealand becoming the delicatessen for the world, food production remains uncoordinated. Simply tinkering around with an old model just won't cut it.

Typically, a Friesian dairy cow needs to calve annually to keep milk production flowing but only about 25% of those calves need to be female to maintain herd levels.

The result is that a high number of bobby calves get “tapped on the head” after four days or reared to become bulls, and exported alongside end-of-life dairy cows then ground into hamburger steaks to supplement fatty trimmings from US feedlot cattle.

He suggests mating them with meatier Angus beef cattle so they're more suited for the table rather than hamburger grind or petfood.

### Innovation incomplete

While many of our farmers and producers lead the world in tracking, tracing, monitoring and managing everything from soil and water quality and pasture growth to the life, health and growth of animals, some are late to 'gate to plate' thinking.

Agritech New Zealand's *Aotearoa Agritech Unleashed* says the main obstacles to agritech adoption are lack of

useful data, data analytics and decision support tools, connectivity, trust and legal barriers, and convincing business cases that show return on investment.

Some farmers are reluctant to invest in new practices, unaware of how they might be adopted or the advantages and benefits compared to existing practices.

While the Kiwi agritech sector is relatively small by global standards with export revenue relatively flat at around \$1.2 billion for the last five years, “significant opportunity as global demand grows” could take that to \$17 billion.

Discerning consumers want to know about food quality and production, the “credence attributes” or points of value - where it comes from, is it environmentally friendly with low carbon footprint and sustainable?

As the *Future of Food & the Primary Sector* report says, export markets demand detailed reporting and measuring frameworks for all inputs as “a more circular food system emerges”.

Agriculture, horticulture, aquaculture, fisheries - and the associated production, distribution, marketing, sales, consumption and disposal - can no longer be considered in isolation from our environmental, cultural, social and economic futures.

### Business as unusual

The report wants more adaptable, sustainable pastoral farming systems and increased investment “in long-term and strategic research to support an increasingly technologically-based sector facing rapid change”.

That includes removal of barriers to exploring advanced life science technologies to assist our food system.

“Business-as-usual, incremental approaches will not lead to the

necessary transformation,” says the Victoria University report, which urges New Zealand to become a global thought leader in devising a “compelling and authentic new narrative”.

Despite the talk of New Zealand becoming the delicatessen for the world, food production remains uncoordinated. Simply tinkering around with an old model just won't cut it.

The momentum away from meat is not only being driven by vegetarians and animal rights considerations, but cattle contributing to carbon emissions and leaching nitrogen into land, rivers and streams, and perhaps the desire to clear more pasture for trees.

The Netherlands plans to reduce animal protein consumption from 62% to 50% by 2025. Otago University's *Environmental Health Perspectives* study claims reducing consumption of animal-based foods in New Zealand (including farming, production and waste) could save billions of dollars and cut related emissions by around 60%, the equivalent of our cars and vans.

Consider the far reaching impacts, if for example our government sets targets to reduce our traditional meat consumption in favour of the new 'engineered' food as part of our journey to carbon zero?

Kiwis are already paying relatively high prices for premium cuts of meat and the real 'protein transition' has only just begun. As the mass market is urged toward 'more ethical' and eventually more affordable, imported, low cost lab-manufactured protein we may end up paying even more.

If we don't meet the needs of both those who want to eat and those who need to eat we could end up losers in both hunger games. ●



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# Who speaks for the fish?



Story by Bridget Freeman-Rock





Hāpuka/groper

Photos: National Aquarium of New Zealand

The dizzying statistics of biodiversity loss offer a parable. Ninety percent of the world's seabirds (including those in New Zealand) are threatened with extinction – creatures that have existed on our planet for 100 million years, in the most exquisitely evolved, finely balanced mastery between ocean, air and land.

With the latest technologies and tracking devices, we are only just beginning to realise the genius and capacity of these birds, and the ways in which they contribute to the turning of our planet and our own existence, at the very point in which it's also becoming clear we are destroying them.

The latest science indicates fish, too, are more sophisticated than we could possibly imagine, but we're 'losing' them in greater swathes than we can categorise. And cutting-edge technology (like sonar trackers) is being weaponised to hunt them down and kill them on an industrial scale that is barbarically gruesome, cruel and distressingly wasteful, as, simultaneously, we expand our horizon of understanding.

It's hard to register the repercussions of fish 'harvested' in measures of a tonne (a 100 million tonnes, globally, per year, a quarter of that 'bycatch' - seabirds, dolphins, unwanted fishes), when we know still so little about our complex ocean systems and the rich biodiversity they hold.

This much though is certain: fish don't exist as 'stocks' to be extracted, but integrally within an interdependent network of relationships and interactions, in an environment that is under siege from ocean acidification, plastic pollution, sea warming, land-based runoff, as well as overfishing. The decimation of one species portends the collapse of so much more.

#### **Including fish within our moral circle of care**

Eating tuna is like eating tigers, I'm told - apex predators that are critically endangered.

But we don't think of fishes as animals, as kin. Too often, we fail to even see them for what they are: individual, sentient beings, who have consciousness and feel pain, living their lives within their own *Umwelten* (differently experienced worlds), in untold diversity. As fish ethologist Jonathan Balcombe points out, the word 'fish' encompasses "60% of all species on Earth with a backbone".

In New Zealand, we have a Bird of the Year but no Fish of the Year, because we don't eat endangered birds.

Independent Ahuriri fisher Karl Warr posed the question "who speaks for the fish?" in a TV interview with John Campbell as he discussed his reasons for voluntarily equipping his fishing boat with a 24/7 livestreaming webcam ([betterfish.co](http://betterfish.co)). He spoke of the need for accountability (consumers increasingly demand it) and the ethical, humane treatment of fish.

And it's a question I've spent weeks pivoting around.

#### **So we shouldn't eat fish, then?**

We've been fishing since time immemorial, long before we farmed animals, so the idea that we should all stop eating fish is too simplistic. Seeing locals surfcasting off the shore at sunset, it seems such a natural impulse, a relationship with the ocean and ourselves; the so-called Kiwi way of life.

Recreational fishers in Aotearoa catch some 11,000 tonnes of fish per year



**Gurnard**/kumukumu

- sounds a lot, but that accounts for only 3% of what's caught in NZ waters. And recreational fishers are some of our most vocal advocates for fish.

But if you're not going to catch (respectfully) a fish yourself, how can

you ensure you're not complicit in the worst of fishing's excesses?

The government's quota management system was supposed to do that for us, but it's outdated, flawed, and more infuriating even than our

over-heated, inequitable property market in the way its original intentions have ultimately played out (read my 2019 article 'Saving Our Fisheries', baybuzz.co.nz for more on this, or watch the recent, excellent TV3 documentary

# Swim thru Summer

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TE KAUNHERA Ā-ROHE O TE MATAU-A-MĀUI



“One of the dilemmas of approaching extinction is that, as you become rarer, you become more precious, which in turn makes you more valuable as a commodity. Today one bluefin tuna can sell for over a million dollars [US]. Ounce for ounce, that’s twice the price of silver.”

JONATHAN BALCOMBE, *WHAT A FISH KNOWS*, 2016

*The Price of Fish*, also shared on YouTube).

Our government certainly doesn’t speak for fish, the fishing industry as a whole even less.

I download Forest & Bird’s Best Fish guide app, but its traffic light coding is a bit blunt, based on the MPI’s scale of fisheries (eg, the east coast of the North Island, from Waikanae to East Cape) that doesn’t account for regional variances. And while farmed salmon from the South Island, for instance, is seen as a sustainable choice, I’m conflicted about the ethics of, essentially, battery-farmed fish who are denied expression of their natural inclinations.

To really know what’s on your plate, you need the nuance of the local. And as with all best food choices, it comes down to provenance - knowing where your fish is from, who caught it and how, and at what cost. And in Hawke’s Bay, choosing locally caught inshore fish (preferably, directly from the fisher) is your best option (see side bar, page 52).

The seven commercial fishers on the

Hawke Bay inshore fishery are working together with LegaSea to manage the fisheries more sustainably, both through more innovative fishing methods and voluntary agreements, such as closing the ‘Springbox area’ near Cape Kidnappers to commercial fishing over summer. Wayne Bricknell (LegaSea) and Rick Burch (commercial) both say fishing has definitely improved as a result over the last five years, so the trajectory is in the right direction.

#### **A mana whenua perspective**

Along the Central Hawke’s Bay coast around Pōrangahau, Jim Hutcheson is infamous in his passion for the sea. The Ngāti Kere kaumatua and tangata kaitiaki is one of the last in the area to have grown up with the old ways, knowing “a time of abundance” before the first commercial fishing boats in the 1960s, when you could surfcast for snapper from the beach, collect fat pipi from Tautane (there’s none there now) or hand-pot sacksful of crayfish in a night.

And he’s staunch in protecting

what’s left.

He once threatened to sink any commercial fishing boat that came within “touching distance” of the clam reef in the Ngāti Kere taiāpure (locally managed customary sea area) and he’s been known to “chase them off” when a blunt phone call alone doesn’t do the trick. But it requires an unrelenting vigilance (“they’ll drift in with their nets”), AIS tracking, and fielding calls from locals who ring in with suspicious sightings.

Back in the day, there was certainly trading - flounder and herring from the Pōrangahau river mouth were sold up at the pub, for example, Jim tells me, when I sit down to talk with him, and with appointed kaitiaki Diane Kernan (née Wakefield, Ngāti Kere) and her husband Justin, in the two-storey ranger’s house overlooking Te Angi Angi marine reserve.

“But our people would only go fishing if the moon was right, if the season and the species of fish was right.” There was tikanga, karakia, the mara-mataka (Māori lunar calendar). They observed what the environment was telling them (when the pōhutakawa flowers the kina are ripe, for instance), they respected fish nurseries and spawning areas, and they didn’t fish 365 days of the year.

“For us, it’s not about catching fish for fish, it’s a means of sustenance. It’s what we’ve lived on all our lives. It’s what’s fed our people for the 500 years they’ve lived here on this coast. It’s what identifies us.”

Pōrangahau is renowned for its kaimoana and its hospitality. When visitors come to the marae, “they expect us to put on the table crayfish, or paua or kina,” says Jim, “that’s part of our tradition, our mana.” But it’s getting harder to do and there’s growing pressure from other regions too, where coastal cupboards are increasingly bare. “We get calls from hāpu on the west coast for our crayfish - it’s unbelievable.”

Everything changed with the introduction of the quota management system in the 1980s, Jim and Diane note, which is when commercial fishing (crayfish) in Pōrangahau took off in a big way. Some of the hāpu got quota because they could prove they’d been catching and selling enough fish to qualify, but subsistence fishers were locked out. Māori were effectively disenfranchised from their rohe moana, in violation of the Treaty.

Jim believes one of the biggest

“But our people would only go fishing if the moon was right, if the season and the species of fish was right.” There was tikanga, karakia, the maramataka (Māori moon calander). They observed what the environment was telling them (when the pohutakawa flowers the kina are ripe, for instance), they respected fish nurseries and spawning areas, and they didn’t fish 365 days of the year.

JIM HUTCHESON, NGĀTI KERE KAUMATUA

stumbling blocks for sustainable fishery management, has been the Crown’s subsequent ‘Maori solution’ in 1992 to grant coastal hāpu a customary right to fish for food - “which was our right in the first place!” - while allocating iwi the quota for commercial catch (20%) under a Pākehā system of law.

This separated trade from tikanga, commerce from custom, when both had always gone hand-in-hand before. And took away not only the ‘trading piece’ but a voice at the fisheries table from those who know the fishery most intimately: “We’d like to think that we have a say in this moana that we’re kai-tiaki of. But we don’t get a say”

To this end, the Coastal Hāpu Collective (from Mahia down to Wairarapa; Jim is chair) was formed to negotiate with Ngāti Kahungunu (NKII) a more workable, collaborative, kaupapa Māori way forward. And in 2008 they came up together with the *Ki uta, ki te tai* (KUKT) agreement, a marine and freshwater strategy, which includes contracting hāpu (who have the relationship) to catch some of the iwi’s quota. Jim believes this would be “monumental”, if only it would actually be enacted.

Of one thing Jim’s certain, “If we keep going as we are, under a Pākehā rule of money, there’ll be no more fish left to catch. And if there’s no more fish left, what will happen to us?”

### Marine conservation

Marine reserves, or conservation areas, are seen by scientists as a key way to temper the abuse of our oceans and give marine wildlife and ecosystems a chance to recover. And we need them to, for our own survival as a species, in ways we still don’t yet fully understand.

Currently 2-3% of the world’s oceans are under protection; the science says in order for our oceans to have a chance - and time is running out - that figure needs to jump to 30%. In New Zealand, which has one of the largest exclusive

economic zones (EEZ) of any, we protect just 0.04%, while a third of our land, in contrast, is legally protected (to some degree or another) for conservation.

David Parker, new minister for Oceans and Fisheries (the first time oceans have had a dedicated portfolio), has re-opened the process for finalising the proposed Kermadec Ocean Sanctuary, an area that encompasses 16% of our EEZ, and that stalled under the Key Government for want of genuine Māori consultation.

The idea that people and the environment are somehow separate is antithetical to most indigenous cultures, including Māori, and any conservation plan in this space, particularly in customary areas, will need to ensure it’s not just an imposition of a Western solution but partners respectfully with indigenous wisdoms.

As Dr Bob Richmond, a marine conservation scientist in Hawaii, points out, the Pacific is where the action is in terms of global marine reserves; it’s the Pacific Islands, with their indigenous view of intergenerational stewardship, that are showing both leadership and where the future lies in ocean care.

In 1997, Ngāti Kere gave a 446-hectare area of their taiāpure over to DOC in good faith to establish the coastal Te Angi Angi Reserve, with the partnership agreement to be reviewed in 25 years’ time (2023), allowing the next generation to make a decision, says Jim Hutcheson. The static, hands-off, ‘no touch’ reserve is a Crown notion of conservation, however, and he’s not convinced it’s the way forward. He’s baffled there have been no DOC studies of the reserve since 2005, and monitoring records have been lost - so what’s happened in that time?

The Māori interpretation of conservation (rāhui), he explains, is a much more dynamic approach that requires actively identifying fish nurseries and spawning areas (not just on the coast but out at sea), for instance, placing



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a rāhui there for a period of time (say 5-10 years), and then extending or shifting it elsewhere in response to closely observed and monitored need.

### It's also what we do on land

Hawke's Bay Regional Council can't tell me much about fish in our sea; it's only recently they've begun monitoring fish in the estuaries.

Though a third of HBRC's area of oversight is under water, as with NZ as a whole, "we know less about our coasts and oceans than any other environment." (*Our Marine Environment Report 2019*). There are too many knowledge gaps (though HBRC scientists are working on it) and their legal responsibility is not the wildlife per se, but "the effects the things we are able to influence" have on the ecosystem.

Things like the staggering flow of sediment from farms and forestry blocks into estuaries and the coastal marine area, and physical disturbances to the benthic floor by trawl fishing,

dredging, etc, which are two key stressors for our kaimoana species.

HBRC is trialling an ecosystem-based management approach to these stressors (as part of a Sustainable Seas challenge), trying to work out through a comprehensive systems-mapping process, the "mix of ways that would be most efficient, have the most bang for buck, and have the least unintended consequences."

But ultimately, it's also about understanding better the complex dynamic and function of our coastal ecosystems, and our role within them, so we can respond and adapt more readily to challenges like climate change, and the unforeseen, like new contaminants we don't yet know about.

For their part, the fishers I speak with are worried about the effect of chemicals from the sewage outfall at Awatoto on our fisheries, about urban stormwater pollution in our estuaries and toxic land-runoff, and about the introduction of invasive pests, like the Japanese

starfish, brought in through the Port on ship hulls and in ballast water.

There's historical precedent for what seems to some a painstakingly thorough and glacial approach to deciding action on obvious issues. By straightening Hawke's Bay's rivers in neat, stop-banked channels to prevent flooding, we shifted more meandering waterways to short, 'flashy' rivers that flush sediment from the hills directly into the sea, for instance. And by draining 98% of our wetlands to create 'useful' land, we took out our landscape's most effective filtering systems.

We have a record of failing to see the repercussions of our solutions beyond the immediate fix.

I'll be unpacking ecosystem-based management and our marine and coastal ecology in our March/April issue. In the meantime, you can read my exchange with HBRC marine scientist Anna Madaraz-Smith, 'We need a socio-ecological shift in managing our marine environment', on the *BayBuzz* website. ●

## A brief guide to Hawke's Bay fish

**Gurnard/kumukumu** – One of HB's most plentiful, popular, inshore fish. They're fast-growing, highly fecund, so a sustainable consumer choice. Live on muddy, sandy floor off small crustaceans (crabs, shrimp), worms and small fish like juvenile flounder. Have both 'wings' and six spiny 'legs', and unusually solid skulls.

**Hāpuka/groper** – Long-lived, slow-growing (mature at 10-13 years), big fish (mature at 10-13 years, live to 65), highly sought after but threatened by overfishing – we shouldn't be eating them, but we do. Used to be found abundantly in shallow coastal waters but now only found in the deeps. Have never been studied, but it's recognised locally that they're in trouble on the East Coast and HB fishers have agreed to voluntarily drop their bag limits this summer.

**Kahawai** – also called 'sea salmon', good fishing, seem to be ok (probably because they're not as commercially valuable). Found mainly in coastal seas, harbours, estuaries, but are also pelagic (feed in open seas); school together in large groups; thought to spawn offshore on the seabed.

**Koura** (crayfish), **paua** and **kina** – key species of importance for local Māori. Hāpu at Waimarama want a 2-year rāhui (ban) on paua takes. Crayfish around the coast are becoming less plentiful and smaller in size.

**Kuku (mussel) beds** – Mussels are filter-feeders and play a huge role in filtering water. Each mussel can filter up to 350 litres of sea water a day. So they're not only a key food source, but ecologically important. In the Firth of Thames, for example, in the first half of the 20th century, the mussel beds there used to filter the entire bay within 24 hours. They've now been depleted so much that the remaining mussel beds take 2 years to filter the same volume of water. We had significant mussel beds too here in Hawke Bay, largely wrecked through trawl fishing and dredging, and adversely affected by sedimentation.

**Patiki/flounder** (NZ sole or turbot) – fast-growing, short-lived, fecund flatfish, abundant in parts of HB and one of the most sustainable table options.

**Rig shark** – also called lemon fish and spotted dogfish. Small sharks found in coastal waters and around estuaries, commonly used in fish n' chips. Have high levels of mercury in them because they feed mainly on creatures like crabs,

which are bottom feeders. Important commercial species but we don't know much about them so difficult to 'manage' sustainably – we don't even know where they breed and how, although scientists suspect in estuaries.

**Snapper/tāmure** – very popular but chronically overfished. These pretty coppery-pink and white fish with small blue dots on their sides release numerous batches of eggs through spring and summer. They're versatile in their habitat range and can live for 60+ years.

**Tarakihi** – silvery fish with a black band, take about 5 years to mature, live up to 30-40 years. The East Coast tarakihi population has been pillaged to a critically low level (less than 16%), according to MPI's own stock assessments; but Ahuriri fishers who've been making collective efforts to fish more sustainably, say tarakihi numbers appear stable in HB. Tarakihi sold in chip shops here is locally caught (bottom trawling).

**Yellow-eyed mullet/aua** – the most common fish by far in our HB estuaries. Form large schools of fish. Often used as bait, but can be eaten too – though considering Napier's stormwater and sewage overflow goes through the Ahuriri estuary, perhaps not!



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**Hungry**

**Amidst**

**Abundance**

Known for our huge range of delicious, fresh foods, Hawke's Bay is the envy of the country in summer, when the region's abundant berries, stone fruit, and a multitude of other crops burst into season.

Yet behind this abundance lies a dark truth — a growing number of local children and their families are going hungry. We explore why so many in our community are struggling to put food on the table, the organisations supporting them and those making a difference for future generations.

Story by Abby Beswick

One in every five New Zealand children doesn't know where their next meal is coming from, according to national statistics. This means 235,400 children live in homes that cannot afford to buy items most of us would consider essential, such as fresh fruit and vegetables. Māori and Pacific children are disproportionately represented.

'Food insecurity' is defined as a limited or uncertain availability of foods that are nutritional, safe and meet cultural needs. Children living this reality not only go hungry, they are also more likely to be overweight or obese, and to have developmental and behavioural difficulties. Their parents are more likely to have poor health, stress and psychological issues, according to a Ministry of Health report.

However, food insecurity is about much more than simply being able to afford the basics. Studies show it is a complex issue incorporating several aspects, such as food environments for children and their families, time, housing stability and cooking facilities available. It is also just one aspect of material hardship.

### Here in Hawke's Bay

Widely known as 'The Fruit Bowl of NZ', our region's rich, plentiful supply of year-round produce, locally raised

meat and artisan products is a source of pride. Sadly, when it comes to the nourishment of our population, we sit well below national statistics.

Just one third of Hawke's Bay adults and children meet the recommended guidelines for daily fruit and vegetable intake - three or more servings of vegetables and two or more of fruit - compared to a national figure of 50%. It's a trend that's worsened over the past three years, according to the latest Hawke's Bay DHB Health Equity Report. The study shows adults living in deprived areas consume less fruit and vegetables than those in more affluent areas.

Added to this is a growing number of school-aged children who don't eat breakfast at home. The DHB report found for children aged 10-14 years who are living in food-insecure households, one-in-four doesn't eat breakfast at home, five or more days a week.

Community representatives, school principals, and local organisations involved in supporting those in need tell me an increasing number of people in our region are going hungry. They talk about children going to school without lunch or who stay at home because parents don't want to send them empty-handed, families unable to provide the basics, and food support

organisations meeting a growing need.

There are other heartbreaking stories - a school holding a barbecue each Friday, knowing many of their children wouldn't eat again until Monday. Parents overjoyed to receive flour, milk and eggs in their food parcel so they could make pancakes as a special treat for their children on Christmas Day. Families visiting food support organisations up to five times a week, so their children don't go hungry.

There is no hard data on what has happened since Covid, but child poverty across all measures including food insecurity, is expected to have increased. Between April and June 2020, the Salvation Army gave out 780 food parcels from its Napier, Hastings and Flaxmere centres - more than twice the number of parcels in the previous quarter.

While numbers have since dropped back to close to pre-lockdown levels, the organisation is now giving out larger food parcels, so the volume of food being distributed is significantly greater. This extra food is funded by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) and donors. The Salvation Army has also seen an increase in new clients using their service - making up 70% of clients in the March to June quarter of 2020.



Left to right: Nourished for Nil regulars Kate and John Sime; Janka McBeth with her daughters collect healthy supplies from Nourished for Nil; Siale Folau & Aliszaey West Taane Jones at Te Kura O Kimi Ora.

As part of their hardship assistance, MSD provides a special needs grant for food to families and individuals who require urgent support. In April 2020 the number of grants for Hawke's Bay skyrocketed to 13,294 (compared to 4,817 the previous month). Numbers of grants provided in the region have since returned to usual levels.

### Effects of poor nutrition

While food security has decreased, our obesity levels continue to increase. Linked to poor nutrition, childhood obesity remains more common in our most low-deprived communities, with Māori and Pacific children most at risk. Latest B4 school check data shows while childhood obesity at age four was starting to decline nationally, in Napier it is increasing by an alarming 2.5% per year – the second highest rate in the country. Adult obesity rates have also increased across all ethnic groups over the last three years, the DHB Health Equity Report found. More than a third (37.5%) of Hawke's Bay adults are obese, compared with just under a third (30.5%) nationally.

The Bay's concerning statistics and lack of nutrition interventions prompted Nourishing Hawke's Bay, a collaborative project between EIT and the University of Auckland, which aims to improve food environments for children in the region. EIT's project coordinator Pippa McKelvie-Sebileau says the 18-month study, due to be completed in June 2021, looks at the link between nutrition and

overall wellbeing, including children's mental, physical and oral health. Part of the National Science Challenge, A Better Start, the project is one of 11 challenges funded by MBIE to tackle the biggest issues facing New Zealand.

The project will look at the underlying causes of poor nutrition, at the wider values around food and eating, and engage with parents and children through a series of workshops. "We are hoping to see changes in outcomes for children in the participating schools as well as a flow-on effect for the region over the coming years," says McKelvie-Sebileau, who is a PhD candidate at the School of Population Health, University of Auckland.

### Feeding families, reshaping our future

In addition to long-serving organisations such as the Salvation Army and food banks, Hawke's Bay has seen a growing number of new initiatives providing food support. One of these is food rescue mission Nourished for Nil, which opened in 2017 and now has centres in Napier, Hastings and Flaxmere. A team of volunteers rescues high quality food that would otherwise end up in landfill and redistributes it to the community.

Fueled by a personal passion to reduce waste and a childhood spent growing up on a farm where she learned the value of food, founder Christina McBeth wanted to step in and make a difference. Since opening,

the philosophy of the non-profit hasn't changed – "We're about nourishing communities, not the landfill," she says. In the year to 31 August 2020, the organisation rescued 657 tonnes of food, ranging from produce and pantry staples to frozen foods, drinks and baked goods.

Everyone is welcome to come and fill a bag with food during collection times, there's no means testing or stigma attached. The team works hard to make it a fun, vibrant atmosphere, says McBeth. She's seen a slow, noticeable increase in demand over the years, with Covid having a significant impact. In the six weeks before lockdown, they had 13,000 visitors across their centres, which climbed to 19,000 during the six weeks after. Many of those were people who had lost their jobs due to the pandemic, and seasonal work also had an effect.

Increased government funding for food banks and the launch of the healthy school lunches programme are helping reduce food insecurity in areas facing the highest socioeconomic barriers. Currently 8,000 students nationally have lunches provided at school each day, which will grow to 200,000 by the end of Term 3 2021 thanks to increased funding. In Hawke's Bay 21 schools are already part of the programme, and another 44 signed up.

In Flaxmere, the principal of decile one primary school Te Kura O Kimi Ora, Matt O'Dowda, has made good nutrition and physical exercise a major



Nourished for Nil Napier branch volunteers at work

focus. When he started at the school five years ago, he was shocked by the level of wellbeing among students. “When you walked in the gate, 80% of the kids were obese and that was just horrific ...There was just no goodness in anything they were eating and every hour or so they were just topping up on sugar.” In the classroom, students had poor energy levels, mood swings and were struggling to concentrate.

O’Dowda decided it was the school’s job to take a leading role in their students’ health. “We can keep blaming parents, but our community is really hard up. Food is a real issue.” Telling staff they would be a “no excuses school”, they implemented significant changes. Every morning students and staff participate in half an hour of fitness, choosing from a range of activities such as zumba, skipping and crossfit, and all students are provided with breakfast, morning tea and lunch at school.

Breakfast, supplied by KidsCan, is served on kai trolleys to each classroom, so kids can help themselves. In-house cooks prepare nutritious morning teas that are full of fresh produce. Lunches are provided through the Government’s healthy school lunches programme. Students also learn valuable life skills through planting and harvesting food from the school garden, budgeting and preparing meals. Physiology and nutrition are taught throughout the school to give students the knowledge to be able to



## Case study: Feeding a family

Local initiatives have been a lifeline for Janette McAuliffe and her family after she and her partner suddenly lost their jobs due to Covid.

The couple had recently bought their home in Maraenui and were paying off two cars, so they could both travel to and from work, when the country went into lockdown and everything changed. The family of five were plunged into a financial hole that left them with \$75 a week after bills, to cover food, petrol, clothes and any other costs. Struggling to provide the basics for their children aged 5, 8 and 13, the couple turned to Nourished for Nil during “a really terrible time”.

“If it wasn’t for them, I don’t know how we would have got through,” she says. It was a difficult step for the couple who have worked since they were teenagers and never asked for help before.

Putting pride aside, McAuliffe visited Nourished for Nil every week to keep her family fed, so they could save their \$75 for other necessities. Supplies ranged from bread, cereals and canned goods to produce, and occasionally treats like pizza and biscuits.

“They were so helpful. We always had fruit and there were always vegetables. We got things that we could never buy in the shop like manuka honey because we couldn’t afford it – all the things that you want for your children.”

In October her partner Grant Isaac secured a full-time logging job and the couple are slowly getting back on their feet. McAuliffe has started a course to improve her employment opportunities.

She still visits Nourished for Nil, though less often, to ensure her kids eat well. It’s not something McAuliffe takes for granted, or the impact it’s had on her family. “I’d love to give back once we’re both working again because they got us through the hardest time of our life.”

Photo: Tom Allan



# LIVE HERE GIVE HERE



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## RE-SOURCE: A RESOURCEFUL SOLUTION IMPROVING LIVES IN HAWKE'S BAY

Re-Source Hawke's Bay founder Nadine Gaunt is a lady on a mission.

A mission to distribute donated goods to people most in need in our community, while keeping the useful items from the landfill.

It all started a decade ago when Nadine had good quality clothes her daughter had outgrown. She didn't want to sell them, but rather give them to someone who would have otherwise gone without. A call to Family Start, managed by Te Taiwhenua o Heretaunga, and the clothes were quickly passed on to a grateful family.

Nadine continued to save her used clothes and household items for the same purpose – giving them to people most in need – and when her friends and family got wind of what she was doing, they came onboard too.

"My home became a collection point for donated goods, and it was becoming so full that I had to either fully commit or stop," Nadine says.

"Thankfully, we now have the use of a storage facility provided by Hastings District Council, so we have space to collect, sort and distribute quickly and efficiently."

With the help of Kate McDonald, Cressida Hickman and 11 dedicated volunteers, Nadine and her team turn over 4,000 items per month as a result of receiving donations from the public, and filling orders placed



The Re-Source team. Photo: Florence Charvin

**"Transport is unaffordable or impractical for the people we provide goods to – for example, taking furniture on public transport is unrealistic – so delivering goods to their door is a vital part of our service."**

by social workers for the most vulnerable people in our community.

"The social and community workers are uniquely positioned to connect people in high need with the services we provide."

Re-Source recently received a \$4,000 grant from Hawke's Bay Foundation to help purchase a vehicle to make deliveries easier and protect the goods from weather damage. Nadine currently uses her own vehicle and a borrowed trailer, which she admits, is rather awkward at times – especially when it's raining.

"Transport is unaffordable or impractical for the people we provide goods to – for example, taking furniture on public transport is unrealistic – so delivering goods to their door is a vital part of our service.

A fit-for-purpose delivery van will enable more people to have access to our service." One of the social service organisations that Re-Source assists is Te Taiwhenua o Heretaunga. Their Family Start service equips families with the skills to stay together and build a strong family unit.

Family Start Manager, Raewyn

Keil, says the team at Re-Source always go over and above to meet the needs of families.

"The amount of resources they provide, ranging from whiteware and household furniture to clothing and necessities to families, who would otherwise struggle financially to buy, is admirable.

Everything is presented neatly and is of a good standard. They make our job so much easier to support families."

"One of our families moved into a rental property that was meant to have a fridge/freezer but when the family moved in there was nothing. A phone call to Nadine was all it took. She rallied around and soon enough she had sourced a fridge/freezer.

"There are so many wonderful stories that have come from this wonderful service. We have seen many families' lives improved thanks to Re-Source," Raewyn says.

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Hawke's Bay Foundation provides a simple way to support your local community for generations to come. We receive gifts and bequests from individuals, families and businesses – these are pooled and invested forever, with the income being used to support local charities like Re-Source, making a positive difference in our community.

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## Behind the counter

Hawke's Bay's food sector is massive. From orchards, farms and vineyards, to processors and packhouses, to markets (in our neighbourhoods and overseas), to restaurants, cafes and bars ... and through to the Port. 'Farm to plate' is the shorthand term.

Much of this activity takes place ‘behind the counter’, involving an army of players with an incredible range of world-class skills and roles, mostly invisible to Hawke’s Bay consumers. Their company names are not typically seen on our menus, shop fronts, or store shelves.

Here is a sampling of the ‘lesser known’ members of the team that delivers the food and beverages that Hawke’s Bay’s consumers and our overseas customers delight in consuming.

## Story by Andrew Frame

### WineWorks

WineWorks Hawke’s Bay was started in 1995 by local Tim Nowell-Usticke, who is still passionate about enabling the local wine industry to add value to the primary product of grapes and turning them into high-value branded product that sits on restaurant tables, shelves and cellars throughout the world.

Since founding the Hawke’s Bay bottling plant, two more facilities have been started in Marlborough and their newest facility in Auckland.

“Hawkes Bay’s wineries trust WineWorks to do the final step in the chain of winemaking, working hard to package, store and distribute our clients’ wine” says WineWorks’ Steve White.

“After all, the winemakers have lovingly crafted the vineyard’s terroir from which the grapes grow into wine for the world to enjoy. Therefore, WineWorks need to have people and industrial processes available that can be trusted to bottle this precious product.”

WineWorks’ Hawke’s Bay operation can fill up to 850 dozen bottles



Steve White, WineWorks

per hour and will bottle about 1.5 million dozen in the coming season. Combining all three plants’ output they expect to fill 11.5 million dozen, with total capacity for even more ... That’s a lot of wine!

### Bay Irrigation

The diverse range of crops grown commercially on the fertile plains around Hastings, Napier, Waipawa and Waipukurau includes apples, pears, peaches, plums, apricots, nectarines, grapes, strawberries, raspberries, boysenberries, carrots, onions, potatoes, tomatoes, sweet corn, maize, barley, wheat, peas, beans, beetroot ... and the list goes on.

Although the crops are diverse, the characteristics of the Hawke’s Bay plains that allow them all to grow well are the same: fertile well-drained soil, sunshine hours and water.

Of course, the water doesn’t always come in the volume that crops need and during the life-cycle stages when it is critical. Enter companies like Bay Irrigation, WaterForce, Irrigation Services HB and ThinkWater. Pumps and irrigation equipment are in use the length and breadth of Hawke’s Bay applying the water where and when it is needed and in precise applications to avoid waste.

“Keeping the irrigation plant and equipment going through summer is essential as only a few lost days at a crucial time can mean the difference between a profitable crop or a loss. Horticulture and agriculture are a major engine of the Hawke’s Bay economy but, without water, on time, in the right place and in the right quantity, that engine is at risk” says Bay Irrigation’s director Paul Singer.



## Future Products Group (FPG)

The letters 'FPG' are perhaps known to thousands of Napier commuters driving along Prebensen Drive past the company's Onekawa headquarters every day. But many will be unaware what the letters stand for, or what they do.

Future Products Group builds premium temperature-controlled food and drink display cabinets - the type you see in supermarkets, fast-food outlets and cafes.

"Retailers and service providers trust FPG to help them deliver a great food experience to their customers and consumers. Three of our key differentiators are to deliver solutions that hold food safely at compliant temperatures, to offer the best lifetime value, and to stand by everything we sell for its lifetime," says Susan White, FPG's global marketing director.

More than 90% of FPG's cabinets are exported to Australia, Asia, Middle East, the UK and Europe. 'Isoform' is their latest cabinet innovation - sleek black cabinet frames with bright lighting to present food and drinks exceptionally well.

Above: Robert Darroch CEO | managing director, Future Products Group. Below: FPG's new Isoform Grab&Go food and drink display cabinets.



## DSK Engineering

Hawke's Bay grows more produce than any human could possibly manually process at once.

Fortunately DSK Engineering has been designing, manufacturing and maintaining food plant and equipment in Hawke's Bay for nearly 30 years.

In that time they have worked on hundreds of processing lines and built strong relationships with their clients by working with them to provide reliable, efficient solutions.

Whether it's massive multi-nationals like McCain and Kraft Heinz (Wattie's), or small 'local' operations, DSK helps keep production rolling. From stainless steel wine storage tanks to meat processing, automated canned food lines, to robotic pallet packers.

"The Bay is a small place and you are only as good as your last job, so quality is important if we want to be here in another 30 years," DSK Engineering's owner/managing director Shane Kerrisk says.

"The Bay is a small place and you are only as good as your last job, so quality is important if we want to be here in another 30 years."

SHANE KERRISK  
DSK ENGINEERING

## Weatherstation

None of Hawke's Bay's fantastic food production could occur without the region's gorgeous climate. But the weather can be a blessing and a curse for HB growers.

Frosts, rain and hail can damage produce and disrupt planting or harvesting. And weather conditions need to be just right for other operations like spraying, so growers' eyes are constantly on the skies, the weather maps and the forecasts.

With over 20 years' experience in the New Zealand weather industry, James Morrison started Weatherstation seven years ago with only four Hawke's Bay clients.

Now he provides reports, services and forecasts, including frost alerts, to wineries and growers via emails and text messages for growers from Gisborne to Otago.

"We are transitioning over to a web-based system over the next few months. I take lots of phone calls, though. Personal interaction is really important," James says.

"Our core business is frost forecasting during spring and autumn, however we also provide forecasts that cover rain/high humidity weather events and wind coverage for spraying."

Weatherstation collects data from its stations around Hawke's Bay and uses a range of criteria to pick the nights where frost risk is highest. Their stations collect temperature, wind and humidity data at vine/tree height but also at 10-12 metres. The higher observations allow them to analyze temperature layers above the vineyards and orchards under certain conditions, providing valuable accuracy to growers.





WilliamsWarn managing director, Sam Wood

## WilliamsWarn

Thirsty? You're in luck. Already world-renowned for its produce and wines for some time, Hawke's Bay is becoming a producer of quality beers, too!

WilliamsWarn have established themselves as producers of world-class brewing equipment and ingredients since they launched their first of its kind Brewmaster all-in-one nano-brewery in 2014, with their BrewKeg range following two years later.

Their main warehouse in Hastings is where all their products are assembled and dispatched and they are currently supplying distributors in France, India, Denmark, the United Kingdom and United States.

Their 10 litre BrewKeg allows for both home brewer use as well as commercial application, with scalable options all the way through to a 150 litre size, which is specifically designed for small batch commercial brewing.

WilliamsWarn have also developed a Keg Washer for cleaning standard D-Type pub kegs, so rather than investing thousands of dollars into an automated keg washer, breweries and hospitality clients can quickly and easily



clean and sterilise kegs ready for the next brew.

A recent focus on sustainability has seen a new venture pop up with the possibility of re-usable kegs to be used in bars and cafes for a number of products currently supplied in plastic bottles.

## Waipak

Waipak NZ Ltd manufactures plastic packaging such as PET & HDPE bottles.

"We created Waipak NZ Ltd to help innovative bottle fillers in NZ and Australia. We manufacture all products either from raw resin or recycled chip form. With a large range of preform weights and sizes to choose from, you can choose a bottle shape of your own to create your unique stamp in the market. This opens up amazing flexibility to produce custom bottle designs with a lower capital cost for our customers" says Dan Crawshaw, Waipak's general manager.

**"Our ambition is to create a world where all recycled plastic items can be turned into a saleable product and plastic waste is a valuable resource."**

DAN CRAWSHAW,  
WAIPAK'S GENERAL  
MANAGER

"Our ambition is to create a world where all recycled plastic items can be turned into a saleable product and plastic waste is a valuable resource. Since August 2019 we made the commitment to internally recycle 100% of our internal plastic waste and have since started taking waste from other recycle streams."

Some of Waipak's developments see the recycled life of plastic bottles extend out across other industries, including old milk bottles reground and reused for yellow safety caps and old juice containers and PET bottles shredded and re-molded into supports for reinforcing bars on construction sites.



“Due to the capacity of the plant, over 95% of the products we produce goes for export.”

AUSTEN CHITTOCK,  
DIRECTOR OF FREEZE  
DRIED FOODS



Chris Kay, Marketing & Business  
Development, NZ Frost Fans

## Freeze Dried Foods

Once just the food of astronauts and trampers, freeze-dried food has grown in popularity, scale and options.

Hastings-based Freeze Dried Foods designs and builds its own unique continuous freeze driers that they use in their Hastings factory to process a large range of products for customers.

They freeze dry vegetables like green peas, sweet corn, green beans; fruit such as apples and kiwifruit; and meat and dairy products from lamb, beef and venison to fish and yoghurt.

FDF are the largest freeze-drying company in the southern hemisphere and their technology allows them to freeze dry products at scale and at globally competitive pricing. They employ 85 people and the company operates 24/7, 360 days a year.

“Due to the capacity of the plant, over 95% of the products we produce goes for export,” says Austen Chittock, director of Freeze Dried Foods

While using a method of production considered at the top end of preservation techniques and historically expensive, Freeze Dried Foods is getting some equally top end results: “We are experiencing significant growth in the demand for freeze dried products world-wide, with growth of 30% plus per year,” Austen says.

## Snap Software

From growing, through post-harvest to export, produce software specialist Snap offers modern solutions to help meet the increasing traceability and compliance demands of global markets.

‘snapGrowing’ provides tools from financial forecasting to orchard mapping, compliance record keeping and staff management to assist growers to meet their GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) commitments.

‘snapPacking’ continues traceability from the orchard through packing and storage to ensure fruit is fit for its destination - evaluating over 1,290 requirements for each apple with current volumes exceeding 6.5 million carton equivalents per year.

‘snapSales’ enables exporters to distribute over \$150 million in sales back to New Zealand growers each year. Additionally, Snap software has been working at an industry level for over 20 years and supporting NZ Apples and Pears Incorporated with a range of tools used by all operators in the pip-fruit industry.

## New Zealand Frost Fans

When frosts are forecast many horticulturalists use frost fans (the wind-mill-looking towers you will often see) to keep the air moving over their orchards and fields, preventing the icy air from settling on and damaging their crops.

New Zealand Frost Fans CEO Steve Haslett turned the previously small, cottage industry he purchased in 2007 into the rapidly growing, successful exporter it is today, whilst retaining its New Zealand manufacturing base.

Steve surrounded himself with smart people to design, manufacture and market their FrostBoss range of Frost Fans. Significant input from a former Team New Zealand America’s Cup Research Engineer, Richard Karn, saw the launch of the FrostBoss C49 (4-blade) Frost Fan in 2009, which has grown in popularity to become the best-selling Frost Fan in New Zealand and Australia.

“Think global, act local” is Steve’s motto. “Hawke’s Bay still makes sense for us. We have a fantastic workforce and the Bay is a great place to live. Many Omaha Road neighbours supply inputs, such as machining, engineering, laser cutting and electrical components. The wider Hawke’s Bay region supplies specialty services like galvanizing and fabrication of tanks and engine cabinets. For exports, we ship the machines in 40-foot containers through the nearby Port of Napier.”

## Test your food IQ

So, as you can see, there is a lot that goes on ‘behind the Counter’ to get Hawke’s Bay’s quality food and drink from our producers to your family’s plates.

Here are a few more names to test your Hawke’s Bay food IQ. Can you identify what these companies do: GreenMountFood, Haden & Custance, Cedenco, Star Food Service, TFE, Epicurean, Apollo, Fern Ridge, StockX, Stevenson & Taylor.

And we’ve just scratched the surface here.

Whether directly or indirectly, the region’s food industry encompasses thousands of individuals and hundreds of companies, all with the same goal in mind: to bring you the best of Hawke’s Bay! ●

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# The empty fruit bowl?

The labour shortage in Hawke's Bay's primary sector has been well documented. It's a conversation that has generated hundreds of column inches lately, and rightly so.

At the time of writing, industry leaders, while welcoming the government's announcement that 2,000 RSE workers will be allowed into the country in early 2021, are mindful that the number is a mere drop in the bucket, with more than 10,000 workers needed for the forthcoming harvest.

The situation is further compounded by the fact that those 2,000 workers will be spread across New Zealand in the apple, kiwifruit, summerfruit and wine sectors, and how many Hawke's Bay secures remains to be seen.

That's why when you drive around the region you might see fruit well past its picking date still hanging on laden trees. On orchards and fields, many late-ripening crops have been pulled out or not tended to as business owners try to manage their production schedules faced with a lack of harvest labour. The same scenario is also playing out inside many processing facilities where machines lay idle through a workforce shortage.

Known for decades as New Zealand's 'fruit bowl', Hawke's Bay still possesses the climate, the availability of productive cropping land and enough water to claim the food capital title. We boast that 'great things grow here'; the patchwork of fields testament to our production prowess and our commitment to all things agrarian.

On its website, Hawke's Bay Tourism writes "We know a country where the food is bountiful and the wine is beautiful. This country is Hawke's Bay, New Zealand's Food and Wine Country." It's a lyrical description.

But is our reputation as the fruit (and vegetable) bowl of New Zealand

under threat? Can we maintain our contribution to the country's economy and more than billion-dollar export earnings without a dependable labour market?

Food production is the engine of Hawke's Bay's economy and while the region stands to lose precious GDP if this season's fruit and vegetables aren't processed, what are the longer-term impacts of a half-picked harvest?

### **Billion-dollar problem**

The apple, pear and wine sectors are vital to Hawke's Bay's economy, contributing more than \$1 billion directly to the region's GDP. The apple and pear sector alone contributes almost \$700 million of this, directly supporting around 2,580 permanent local workers and indirectly, through the supply chain, another 5,751 permanent local workers.

Throughout the year, the sectors support around 4,000 non-RSE seasonal jobs and around 13,733 seasonal roles. At its peak, apples and pears need 8,302 people for picking and packing. Including other industries, the seasonal peak for Hawke's Bay occurs in March, when 10,550 workers are needed. As at December, we needed around 10,000 to prune and pick \$1 billion worth of fruit across Hawke's Bay alone.

"We have an immediate problem that needs solving," says New Zealand Apples and Pears Inc CEO Alan Pollard. "The fruit needs to be picked at its optimum time and can't be delayed. If there's no way to get fruit off the trees or vegetables out of the ground, there are serious long-term implications.

"Our export customers buy from us because of the New Zealand Inc brand; our reputation around food security, integrity and quality. If New Zealand growers can't supply global customers they'll go elsewhere. And for a billion-dollar export industry, that's serious," says Pollard.

Cost pressure and capacity restraints along the export supply chain exacerbated by Covid, particularly for air-freight, has seen costs to markets vary from two to four times the normal per kilogram rate, all of which will be borne by growers.

A paper submitted by industry to government in November says, "The international marketplace, whilst currently strong, is looking increasingly unsettled as businesses fold, jobs are lost, and disposable household incomes fall. These are the costs and risks already evident to growers, packers and exporters.

"The risk that no one expects to take, especially in an economy reliant on primary industry-led economic



**“Our factory doesn’t employ RSEs like the orchards, but we do rely heavily on backpacker and other seasonal workers. Only small numbers in that labour pool are available, comprising the handful remaining in our region when borders were closed earlier this year.”**

Bruce Mackay, Heinz Wattie’s agricultural manager

recovery, is the inability to harvest the crop: to invest fully in production but only realise a part of the economic opportunity at the end. That risk is increasingly in danger of being realised as identified by the projected shortfalls in labour at harvest.”

The effect of not being able to harvest a proportion of the crop will be felt in reduced profits, and together with some losses, will have an exponential effect on the ability to secure capital to rejuvenate plantings, replace equipment, and retain permanent staff.

Business Hawke’s Bay CEO Carolyn Neville says the lack of seasonal workers is a real threat to the region’s economy.

“Hawke’s Bay must find a way to get the staffing it needs with a strong focus on ‘local first’ and then through the RSE scheme and introducing quarantine measures or through some other mechanism in order to maximise seasonal returns,” she says.

Labour pressure is also being felt here in the processing sector.

Heinz Watties is a sizable operation and important to the region. Using more than 75,000 tonnes of vegetables and 8,000 tonnes of fruit grown in Hawke’s Bay and 75,000 tonnes of other products, pet food, jams, sauces, soups, the legendary baked beans and spaghetti are produced year round at

its two Hastings factories. At the height of the harvesting season, 1,400 tonnes of raw seasonal produce are processed every day.

Bruce Mackay, Heinz Wattie’s agricultural manager, says the company is facing the same labour supply issues as other businesses in the region, mainly in its summerfruit and pipfruit operations.

“Thinning is well underway in both the summerfruit and pipfruit industries. The shortage of workers to thin and then harvest the crops will impact the supply chain and processing. The good news is that arable cropping is not facing as much pressure as a lot of the operation is mechanised,” says Mackay.

“Right across the country the primary sector is scrambling to find people,” adds Pollard. “The whole economy is struggling but in terms of unemployment, Hawke’s Bay is actually doing better post-Covid than expected and hasn’t hit projected jobless numbers.”

Latest figures from Infometrics’ *2019 Hawke’s Bay Food and Beverage Cultivation and Processing Sector Profile* shows employment in the sector sitting at around 7,823 - accounting for just over 11% of the national figure. Forecasts in the report show there will be more than 3,000 job openings in

the sector between 2020 and 2025, of those, more than 700 will be new roles.

While the RSE worker shortage in Hawke’s Bay’s horticulture industry has dominated the headlines, other food industries and producers have also set off alarm bells, warning of serious implications to continuity of supply. And with scarcity comes price hikes.

Mackay says Heinz Watties has been strategising to mitigate the effect on the lack of seasonal labour available to harvest and process the orchard crops.

“Our factory doesn’t employ RSEs like the orchards, but we do rely heavily on backpacker and other seasonal workers. Only small numbers in that labour pool are available, comprising the handful remaining in our region when borders were closed earlier this year. An enquiry at any of the backpacker accommodation facilities in Hawke’s Bay seeking workers will likely come up empty these days. We need around 600 people in the factory at our peak and our recruitment agency is doing everything they can to recruit staff for the upcoming processing season.”

While Mackay agrees that Hawke’s Bay can rightly claim the food capital title, he says the importance of the processing industry is often under-appreciated in the region.

“Processing is an incredibly



important part of the food chain. Growers appreciate that, and those with a mixed cropping enterprise acknowledge its importance. The processing industry provides cash flow and certainty plus allows the flexibility for growers to look for premium returns by diversifying their portfolio of crops. It also puts food on the supermarket shelves for the 10 months of the year that it's not in season."

### Shift in labour

Pollard believes "absolutely" Hawke's Bay can retain its food capital label and that it's not a title necessarily linked to labour.

"The labour supply of the future will be very different to the current labour supply," he says. "There will be shift from reliance of manual labour to more technical skills, which, with the right training, a broader range of people will be able to do. As technology improves it will definitely change our labour needs," he says.

While technology might impact labour requirements over the next decade, there are other factors at play that threaten our primary sector paradise. Factors such as wages, the high cost of production and increasing land prices.

Mackay says Heinz Watties did a lot of "naval gazing" when the Ruataniwha dam was being proposed.

"With the cost of land in Central Hawke's Bay being much less than the Heretaunga Plains, the economic return equation is obviously more realistic on fully irrigated land at \$40,000 per hectare in CHB than it is on \$100,000 per hectare land in the



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Heretaunga Plains.”

Having those choices provided options for primary producers and would have possibly seen a change in land use in both the Heretaunga and Ruataniwha Plains.

Mackay states simply “we don’t create change to make things worse, we do it to make things better”, and today ‘better’ takes account of all of society’s values, not just improved financial returns, which may have been the driver of generations past.

“We still see opportunities in the Heretaunga Plains, but the biggest constraint is resource management. If upcoming Regional Council plan changes are managed well, then that will be positive. There are some really good forward-looking opportunities for the primary sector in Hawke’s Bay.”

Yummy Fruit Company’s Paul Paynter is remaining positive, but says while many think getting RSE workers back will solve Hawke’s Bay’s harvest problems, the region will still be missing the backpackers. “The food story out of Hawke’s Bay still looks amazing and with a few bold tweaks to government policy, there will be no stopping us.”

### Right ingredients

Pollard makes the point that the mantle of being New Zealand’s ‘fruit bowl’ is dependent on future innovation in the food industry.

“Innovative solutions around food security, sustainability and waste minimisation will also elevate Hawke’s Bay as a food capital. We have food innovators coming into the region. It’s not just about growing fruit and vegetables.”

In late February, the final decision on the fate of ‘Foodeast’ will be known. Formerly known as the region’s ‘Food Innovation Hub’, and located within the Tomoana Food Hub in Elwood Road, the project is estimated to cost \$18 million. Funding of \$12 million has been committed by the government from its Provincial Growth Fund, based on a feasibility study provided by the Sapere Research Group.

Foodeast will be one of five Food Innovation Network (FIN) hubs in NZ, made up of facilities supporting the food and beverage industry to develop and commercialise new products and scale up their businesses.

According to Hastings District Council project manager Lee Neville, the feasibility study for the centre forecasts that it will add \$100 million to Hawke’s Bay’s GDP over the next 15 years and bring 500 new full-time jobs

to the region.

HDC says the study was prepared after “consulting with 70 local stakeholders within the industry and indicated demand from firms for rental space in an innovation centre and access to skilled services”. Should the facility get the green light, “it will be available to companies directly linked to food and beverage industries and technology companies that support those industries”.

How Foodeast will actually contribute \$100 million to GDP and play out in reality is unknown and information is scant. Companies who have signed an Expression of Interest in the project are unable to be named and the feasibility study wasn’t available to read, so we’ll have to wait until the project is given the go-ahead (or not) in February.

Neville says Hawke’s Bay has “all the ingredients” that a food business needs, whether it is a start up or is in growth mode.

“We have innovative companies, strong infrastructure, a good labour force pool, good logistics via Napier Port and a supportive business environment. The completion of Foodeast will make Hawke’s Bay an even more attractive and more competitive destination for food businesses,” she says.

Also sitting at the food innovation table is CoVE, a New Zealand Food and Fibre Centre of Vocational Excellence for the primary sector, soon to be housed at EIT in Taradale.

A key component of the government’s reform of vocational education, CoVE will “drive innovation and excellence” in the primary sector by strengthening links between industry, vocational training sector, researchers and communities to produce well-trained and work-ready graduates; and provide better upskilling and re-skilling opportunities.

Having CoVE in Hawke’s Bay is recognition of the region’s strengths and a major step forward for the industry.

“CoVE gives us a chance to influence the future,” says Pollard. “As the industry and technology advances and as we shift to more technical solutions, we will be having a very different workforce conversation.”

Innovation in the sector is already happening, with investment in 2D orchard structures and robotic systems becoming more evident. It’s something Pollard witnessed on a supersized scale during a recent trip to Japan.

“I visited a huge pack house - to put it in context it was twice the size of the

**“Look at our soil, our climate and our growing conditions. We’re one of the best places to grow high export value food. We should aspire to be the country’s leading growing region regardless of labour.”**

Alan Pollard

Delegats building on the Hawke’s Bay expressway - and it was run entirely from a computer console. Large pack houses in Hawke’s Bay already have automated systems but the post-harvest technology is still developing.

“We simply can’t continue to rely on labour alone, wherever it is sourced, locally or internationally, to produce our crops. There has already been significant investment in simple things like picking platforms that allow a wider pool of people to be employed, including older people,” he says.

### Longer term

While Hawke’s Bay grapples with the labour shortage and increasing labour costs that are occurring in parallel, crop volumes have increased and will continue to do so.

There’s been significant investment in land, about 4% annual growth, which is the equivalent of around 400 to 500 more hectares every year. And land use is changing. As technology and systems improve and become more efficient, land is becoming more productive.

In the apple industry, many orchard owners are pulling out older varieties and planting new ones in their place - varieties that hold more export value and better returns for the grower.

What the Hawke’s Bay food industry’s labour needs are right now and what they will be in the next decade will certainly look different. Diversification, innovation and rapidly developing technology will all impact the food industry in the years to come, and labour may not be the deal breaker for the industry that it is today. ●

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# From volume to value – the future of food

The strength of our primary sector has (so far) insulated us from the worst effects of Covid-19. For most of our food and beverage producers, except perhaps those supplying the international food service sector, business is going very well, thank you, even during a global pandemic.

People still have to eat, and that basic primal need underpins the success of our local food and beverage sector. New Zealand’s food and beverage export earnings, continue to climb. Trucks continue to thunder past the Hawke’s Bay Business Hub in Ahuriri, and the predominantly export driven Napier Port, is doing so well, it repaid the \$2 million Covid-19 wage subsidy it received, with CEO Todd Dawson citing improved confidence in the Port’s future, and the company paying a five cents per share final dividend.

According to a late 2019 report by Coriolos\*, the outlook for New Zealand’s food and beverage sector was pretty good. The sector accounts for almost half of total exports, and those exports achieve a large trade surplus. What’s more, food and beverage exports are growing strongly. New Zealand has the highest “revealed comparative advantage” in food and beverage of any major exporting country.

It all sounds rather good, until you dig a little deeper and discover that our food and beverage exports are currently over-weighted to low value-added, unprocessed ingredients.

Much of our produce is exported with little or no processing, or is sold as ingredients to become part of someone else’s brand. As a result we miss out on food manufacturing jobs, the ability to command a premium price, and the opportunity to tell a compelling brand story that consumers can connect with,

**Subscription models that connect suppliers directly to customers and those that use rich data (like Amazon) to predict customer demand, are the business models of the future.**

resulting in brand loyalists.

Just over two years ago, Business Hawke’s Bay hosted the very well attended Future Foods conference, with the global future of food and innovation and opportunities for New Zealand and Hawke’s Bay food producers as the key topics.

What came through loud and clear was that we must drive greater value for Hawke’s Bay produce. That involves developing a deeper understanding of what global consumers want, connecting with them, and making products they are prepared to pay for.

We’re already ahead of the game in some of the recent and emerging consumer-driven trends – such as grass-fed, organic, ethical, traceable and sustainable – but we’re not fully realising its value.

One of our conference speakers, Natasha Telles D’Costa from business consultants Frost & Sullivan, describes our challenge really well. It’s all about taking a product from Hawke’s Bay and giving it a story that makes consumers half way around the world feel connected to it, and make it their own. That’s where we can generate real value.

The people that are consuming our produce are the ones we need to communicate with, whether it’s an end product or an ingredient that’s being sold. We must tell our New Zealand story more effectively and to the right customers.

Another speaker, futurist Melissa Clark-Reynolds, quoting Clayton Christensen, reminded the audience that there are no disruptive technologies, only disruptive business models, and cited examples such as Blockbuster Video and Netflix, and Borders and Amazon and Kindle.

Clark-Reynolds says our producers need to understand that the business models under which people buy and consume food today will not be the same business models that they’ll use in the future. Subscription models that connect suppliers directly to customers and those that use rich data (like Amazon) to predict customer demand, are the business models of the future.

Clark-Reynolds says that the commodity business model that New Zealand uses will soon be broken, and that New Zealand needs to move from volume to value. In the future, the non-physical attributes of food, the way that customers think about food and the story of that food, will be where the real value of the food industry will come from.

But what does innovation in food production look like?

Currently, in Hawke’s Bay it takes many forms. We have crop diversification; introducing hemp, hops and berries alongside traditional pipfruit and grapes. In pipfruit, growers are developing their own IP-protected varieties, and

many hectares of traditional varieties have been replaced with upright, heavier croppers. Rockit miniature apples, many years in the making, are now sold in 28 countries and setting new records for growth, despite the pandemic.

Then there's the new money for old rope approach, adopted by Apple Press, that repurposes fruit not fit for export, and therefore value-less, into a high-value varietal beverage. We're seeing increasing use of robotics, sensors and artificial intelligence to pick and sort produce, as well as innovations in processing such as Freeze Dried Foods' continuous freeze drying system. We're also seeing product extension such as the Damson Collection's move into alcoholic beverages, collecting international awards along the way.

And then there's subscription models such as First Light's Steak Club that connects directly with customers, bypassing the middle man, and Yvonne Lorkin's WineFriend, a personalised wine delivery service.

On the packaging front, businesses can use packaging as a differentiator and source of competitive advantage, and there is a lot of interest locally in

packaging innovation. However, there are many complexities including understanding consumer expectations and willingness to pay a premium for ethical packaging, to trade offs on freight costs, shelf life considerations and food safety perceptions, and the often prohibitive price of compostable alternatives. Still, we are seeing innovation in this sector, with a good example being Bostock Organics' compostable packaging for its free range chicken.

But the biggest opportunity for innovation and increased earnings lies with how we tell our New Zealand story to the world.

The authors of the *Future of Food and the Primary Sector: the journey to sustainability\*\**, say that New Zealand's Covid-free status has given our reputation a boost, with opportunity to leverage the mounting international interest in our unique national values and attributes and our status as a leading producer of elite primary products. Farmers and producers are already shifting to position themselves for a future based on the values of sustainability, resilience and kaitiakitanga.

In the context of uncertainty created by the pandemic, discussion

around sustainable and safe food systems is taking greater prominence, and the *Future of Food* authors say New Zealand has "the opportunity to become a global thought leader in sustainability across the entire food system. Taking a proactive approach to emphasising the qualities of sustainable, low carbon dairy production, agriculture, horticulture, fisheries and aquaculture would be highly valuable to New Zealand."

And that, perhaps, is Covid-19's great contribution to New Zealand. ●

\* Is this the beginning of the end or the end of the beginning? Finding the future of the New Zealand food and beverage industry, 2019.

\*\* The future of food and the primary sector: the journey to sustainability by Anne Bardsley, Bridget Coates, Stephen Goldson, Peter Gluckman and Matthias Kaiser, 2020.

Carolyn Neville is CEO of Business Hawke's Bay, the region's economic development agency, delivering tangible outcomes for business growth and attraction.

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# Food & Beverage Factoids



1

# \$603 million

GDP FROM FOOD & BEVERAGE CULTIVATION AND PROCESSING 2019

2

# 7.8%

FOOD & BEVERAGE GDP AS A % OF REGIONAL GDP

3

# 975

NUMBER OF BUSINESS UNITS

4

# 7,823

NUMBER OF FOOD & BEVERAGE JOBS

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

(sole trader) 0	<b>52%</b>
1-9	<b>22%</b>
6-9	<b>8%</b>
10-19	<b>7%</b>
20-49	<b>4.5%</b>
50-99	<b>2%</b>
100+	<b>3%</b>

6

# \$82,666

GDP PER FULL TIME EMPLOYEE

5

# 9.4%

FOOD & BEVERAGE JOBS AS PERCENT OF ALL REGIONAL JOBS

7

# 3,027

PROJECTED JOB GROWTH  
BETWEEN NOW AND 2025



8

TOP 5 OCCUPATIONS

- 1 **Fruit or Nut Farm Worker**
- 2 **Fruit or Nut Grower**
- 3 **Labourer**
- 4 **Container Filler**
- 5 **Mixed Crop & Livestock Farm Worker**

31.5% OF TOTAL FOOD AND BEVERAGE JOBS IN HB REGION

9

# 576

SELF-EMPLOYED WORKERS IN THE FOOD AND BEVERAGE CULTIVATION AND PROCESSING

10

# 10,000 workers

- Are required to thin, pick, package and process the year's crop between November and April.
- Total RSE allocation for NZ is 14,400 for 2020/21.
- As of May 7, 2020 4174 RSE workers were in Hawke's Bay, according to Immigration NZ

11

HAWKE'S BAY FOOD & BEVERAGE EXPORTS

Meat products	<b>\$793m</b>
Fruit + nuts	<b>\$177m</b>
Prepared vege + pulses	<b>\$59m</b>
Other animal products	<b>\$83m</b>
Other food products	<b>\$76m</b>
Wine	<b>\$32m</b>



# Food and the internet

The first time I ordered food online was in 2001.

I was living in London and I placed an order on the brand-new Tesco supermarket website from my PC at work. When the order arrived they had given me two of everything for no extra charge, and I was especially pleased to see that there were two six-packs of Red Stripe lager instead of one. Clearly their systems had a few teething problems.

Since those days, online food delivery has become extremely big business. The global online food delivery services market was worth \$107.44 billion in 2019 and is expected to reach \$154.34 billion in 2023. [https://www.researchandmarkets.com/]

Smartphone usage has played a major role in this, with 1.5 billion people using their devices to order food and this is expected to grow 25% per year for the next five years.

In cities all over the world, streets are filled with food delivery drivers, cyclists, and motorbikes, delivering everything from old classics like pizza to sushi, and new trendy options like Buddha bowls and kombucha. Flamingo Foods, an electric scooter company, even offers food delivery by scooter.

As in many online sectors, we are seeing a few familiar themes play out: what starts out as exciting, innovative 'disruption' becomes the norm. The market matures, a small number of dominant platforms emerge and then converge, offering the same features as their rivals.

And as their market power grows they are invariably forced to defend themselves from accusations of price-gouging, exploitation, and negative externalities. For example, Uber Eats, the food delivery arm of Uber, takes a delivery commission of up to 30% on the menu price of restaurant food. The pressure of Covid lockdown

saw the hospitality industry push back hard on Uber Eats with a boycott campaign. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was even moved to exhort Kiwis to support local businesses that did their own deliveries.

One of the most interesting categories in online food delivery is 'meal kit' home delivery services. Companies like Woop!, My Food Bag, and Hello Fresh bridge the gap between grocery delivery and meals. They deliver a box of raw ingredients once a week to people who like to cook, but don't like (or don't have time to) plan their meals for the week. The message is usually something like 'we take the hassle out of cooking meals'.

**As a digital marketer, I love a good succinct value proposition and On Your Plate's is simple: "It's like My Food Bag but with local ingredients".**

These companies have rapidly become household names, although in Hello Fresh's case, not all the publicity has been good. In 2018 Inc.com labelled Hello Fresh "the world's most ruthless food startup" and at the time of writing, the German company was in the news after it sent messages to its New Zealand customers warning them not to eat its "coconut fish and makrut lime sauce with jasmine rice and crispy shallots" after more than 20 people reported food poisoning!

So what is happening in Hawke's Bay and who are the good guys in this story? Despite this huge global growth, it doesn't appear that the average BayBuzz reader has latched onto the food delivery trend. In the most recent BayBuzz reader survey,

only 8% said that they order food online once a week or more, and 70% have never ordered food online. Since the Covid lockdown, about half of online food buyers say they now purchase online somewhat more.

In 2016 I interviewed a fledgling meal kit delivery business called On Your Plate, when the company was only 12 weeks old. Started by caterer Kate Lester and butcher Paul Greaney, the company has now been in business for four years, it has moved from Havelock North to the industrial heartland of Napier, Onekawa, and it has weathered the competition. As a digital marketer, I love a good succinct value proposition and On Your Plate's is simple: "It's like My Food Bag but with local ingredients".

Whereas My Food Bag and Hello Fresh deliver overnight from Auckland, On Your Plate source their produce locally and deliver locally. The rationale for this is simple: produce is fresher when it is sourced locally, and portions are bigger because local seasonal vegetables are cheaper. A substantial proportion of people like to support local providers to support the local economy, and minimising food miles is an important consideration for sustainability.

Since its inception, On Your Plate has followed a story arc familiar to many small business owners. Rapid growth, experimentation, the emergence of competitors - both local and international, expansion of staff numbers ... then Covid-19.

Paul and Kate found out the hard way that the delivery food business is unforgiving. If you miss out one ingredient, the meal is ruined and the customer will be annoyed, so the founders keep tight control over the day-to-day running of the business. They offer four options, including a family box and a weekend barbecue



On Your Plate co-owner, Kate Lester. Photo: Tom Allan

meat pack for up to ten people, which is delivered on Friday night.

Paul admits that the entry of Hello Fresh into the market in 2018 had a big impact on their business, but they have seen that many of their customers who tried Hello Fresh have since returned. Unlike Hello Fresh, On Your Plate does not offer fish. The fish business is unpredictable and it's too hard to guarantee freshness. On Your Plate also does not offer vegetarian meals. They have tried a vegetarian menu twice but the demand simply has not been there. Hawke's Bay is largely a traditional market with traditional tastes, i.e. meat and lots of it, even for the early adopters of services like this.

Couples aged 40 to 60 are their most important customers. In future, they think young people will become a more important demographic for these

offerings, especially as they go flatting or go to university and their parents buy them delivery meal kits instead of giving them money that they might spend on alcohol and carousing.

Social media, in particular Facebook, is a very important part of the marketing mix. They use Facebook to keep their community of customers updated with their latest menus and recipes, as well as spotlight 'local heroes'.

Their website uses a Canadian system called Snipcart which enables anybody to start selling online within minutes. Payment is by credit card via Stripe, a global payment gateway. Both of these modern e-commerce platforms are very accessible, and need almost no technical prowess to set up. Both Stripe and Snipcart charge no setup fees and take a small commission on each purchase

(around 2%). It's a far cry from the days of spending upwards of five figures and months of wrangling developers to start selling online.

The tech stack also extends to the delivery of the meals.

This is probably the most high-tech part of the business. Finding the shortest route between a large number of addresses sounds simple, but it is one of the most difficult problems in computer science. The so-called 'travelling salesman' problem has been studied intensively for so long that it has become famous. Let's say your driver has 50 meal boxes to deliver all over Hawke's Bay; how do you plan a route that takes the least amount of time and burns the least amount of fuel? You could get a genius like Good Will Hunting to work it out for you on a blackboard, but fortunately there is an app called Road Warrior that Paul uses to optimise the delivery routes.

Despite the questionable behaviour of some of its practitioners, the future of online food delivery seems assured. Unlike its corporate rivals, On Your Plate has a healthy limit to its ambition. Kate and Paul remain focused on servicing the Hawke's Bay market. They have demonstrated that there is a need for regional local food delivery businesses, but they don't have an appetite to set up a nationwide network at this stage.

Finally, here are some top tips for ordering hot food deliveries, courtesy of *Consumer* magazine's Haydn Green. He says curries are the best to order, because they are easy to reheat if they arrive late. Rice and noodle dishes are next best. The worst are burgers and fish and chips. And fried dumplings are a definite no-no. Once these get cold and soggy, they are almost impossible to revive. ●



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**Matt Miller co-owns web company Mogul Limited, based in Havelock North, but serving clients around the world. His beat for BayBuzz is digital trends and cool businesses.**



# Unpacking the food packaging dilemma

The food packaging industry is under increasing pressure to become more sustainable, but change will come at a substantial cost to businesses and consumers, and poor choices could have unintended negative consequences.

Therefore, it's important that decisions are made with a holistic, evidence-led approach, not as a knee-jerk reaction to public pressure. It's challenging, but those who fail to act will pay the price in consumer backlash and loss of sales.

The desire by consumers to see the end of plastic packaging is the most obvious issue.

Moving to other options such as paper or compostable packaging may seem to solve the immediate issue, but has potential drawbacks such as increased greenhouse gas emissions, threats to food safety and greater pressure on natural resources.

Plastic packaging has devastating, long-term effects on the environment when littered, but has a far lower emissions footprint and draw on resources than some other packaging types, particularly if it is recovered and recycled or reused.

## What's holding us back?

There's no doubt there is a strong appetite for change in New Zealand, but there are roadblocks to be overcome.

## Standardisation

Kerbside recycling collections are available to the vast majority of New Zealanders, but they are not uniform throughout the country in terms of what is collected for recycling. While the current system diverts a considerable amount of material from landfill, the variation from district to district causes confusion for manufacturers as to what constitutes 'more sustainable packaging', and for the consumer trying to make good choices.

**While a 'past-its-best' cucumber is unlikely to make you ill, for many products, such as dairy, meat and fish, packaging is vital for food safety.**

Accentuating the issue for Kiwis is the lack of a standardised packaging labelling system. You might be aware of, and possibly even understand, the different 'recycling' symbols on plastic items (the recycling triangle with a number in it), but these are merely resin codes. They aren't intended to tell you if an item is accepted for recycling in your area. Specific labelling standards, like those used in Australia, are required.

The standardisation of kerbside recycling and labelling go hand in hand. They are critical for guiding producers and retailers wanting to package food in material which can be recycled nationwide, and for improving recovery rates and reducing recycling contamination.

## Fit for purpose

Food packaging essentially serves two purposes - to market the item and to protect the contents and the consumer. The second function is where the greatest risk lies.

Packaging, particularly plastic packaging, is critical to food safety and longevity. In my last article, for example, I mentioned how the much-maligned plastic sleeve on a cucumber increases its shelf life three-fold.

While a 'past-its-best' cucumber is unlikely to make you ill, for many products, such as dairy, meat and fish, packaging is vital for food safety. Producers or retailers whose products make consumers sick can suffer irreparable brand damage and loss of business, not to mention the danger

or inconvenience to customers. New packaging must be thoroughly tested before it can be rolled out, all of which takes time.

## Lifecycle effects

With the climate crisis an ever-growing threat, it would be remiss not to consider carbon emissions from packaging.

Reducing food waste is high on the list of emissions reduction priorities worldwide, to avoid the release of the potent greenhouse gas methane - produced when food decomposes in landfills. We are seeing more organic waste collections and home composting as councils and consumers tackle this. And while there are many factors in reducing food waste, effective packaging certainly plays its part.

At the retail end, unsold or damaged food means a loss of revenue and higher cost to consumers and wasted emissions in the production of that food. The World Resources Institute states, "Around one-quarter of the calories the world produces are thrown away; they're spoiled or spilled in supply chains; or are wasted by retailers, restaurants and consumers."

Earlier this year Countdown trialed plastic-free produce aisles at three stores, which resulted in greater food waste and loss of revenue. Countdown's general manager of corporate affairs Kiri Hannifin says customers appeared to still want a plastic barrier for some fresh produce. With a goal of zero food waste to landfill from its stores by 2025, Kiri says, the company would look to improve the system and try again.

## Innovation is happening

Despite the roadblocks, there is an increasing level of innovation taking place. One Hawke's Bay company, Bostock NZ, has developed a home-compostable bag for their

**The life-cycle of Bostock chicken packaging**



chicken. It also recognises not everyone has a compost heap at home and offers to take the packaging back for free. The bags are used to fertilise the food grown to feed the chickens – an example of product stewardship and the circular economy in action.

In Christchurch, Meadow Mushrooms is developing mushroom punnets made from the stalk waste. The aim is for the packaging to be superior both in terms of keeping the mushrooms fresh for longer and be home compostable.

**Growth in reusables**

Our throw-away, convenience-led culture is a central issue around sustainable packaging, but change is slowly happening.

The rise of reusable or shared coffee cups, refilleries, and food retailers allowing customers to supply their own container are all steps in the right direction. They also represent business opportunities.

Coffee cup lending company Again Again has seen rapid uptake with 160 cafes around the country using its sys-

tem since the company launched in November 2018. It recently embarked on a successful crowdfunding drive to raise up to \$750,000 in order to broaden its offerings to other food and beverage packaging. Over \$330,000 had been raised at the time of going to print.

And then there's the old-fashioned glass bottle. Hohepa recently switched its 400 litres of milk per day production from plastic to returnable bottles. And Origin Earth offers both its Milk Bottle Refill Service and glass bottle delivery.

**Higher-value recycling**

Innovation around recycling plastic packaging is critical to providing manufacturers with more options. Northland-based plastic fence post manufacturer Future Post is an example of a Kiwi business turning a plastic type (such as freezer food bags) which previously had no recycling pathway, into a valuable product.

This conversion of products into higher value products after being recycled is essential if New Zealand is

to become more sustainable. Recent government moves to increase the waste levy and invest in recycling infrastructure should improve capacity in this sector.

**Where to from here?**

While there are certainly some exciting innovations, both in terms of the material packaging is made of, and how we use it, it's important to keep in mind that truly effective changes take time. It must be holistic, with the long-term impacts in mind.

With a standardised kerbside recycling collection system, labelling, further innovation and continued change in consumer behavior, I am confident we are headed in the right direction ●

Dominic works on sustainable solutions at 3R Group. 3R design, implement and manage product stewardship schemes for individual businesses or industry-wide groups. They also help businesses take a fresh look at their waste to first minimise and then recover what would otherwise be wasted.



# Nature supports agriculture

I dream of a nature-rich Hawke's Bay.

Some have told me that we have that already ... well, they are wrong.

Here in Hawke's Bay, the nature most see on a daily basis is a steady stream of exotic birds and plants. While mynahs, starlings, palm trees and oak trees have a certain charm, they are not substitutes for the indigenous species that evolved and adapted here for millions of years.

This year's pandemic led to a forced isolation of much of the world's population. The effect on the earth was positive. We saw polluted cities become brighter and clearer, wildlife re-emerge in villages and towns, and streams, rivers and canals become less murky. The dramatic cut in air travel saw fewer planes in the sky, emitting less carbon dioxide. Mount Everest could be seen from Kathmandu because the skies cleared as pollution diminished.

Here, and around the world, people asked if the birds were louder – the answer was no, we could just hear them!

It was good to see the temporary changes in the world and especially here in Hawke's Bay, but it is not enough. The problem is much deeper.

Sure, we live in a wonderful landscape with bountiful produce and spectacular scenery, but we have serious ecological issues that won't just disappear. They will not improve without our help.

About 85-90% of the region's indigenous ecosystems have disappeared, largely because of agriculture. Dozens of species found only in Aotearoa are extinct. A thousand years ago, moa thrived in Hawke's Bay, and they are now long absent. Levels of extinction here are as high as anywhere in the country.

Don't misunderstand – I am not against agriculture. I like to eat, and enjoy good wine. Like all residents, I

benefit from the prosperity of Hawke's Bay. I understand that progress is important, and Hawke's Bay can be justifiably proud of being the Fruit Bowl of New Zealand.

But we need to acknowledge that agriculture has been a problem. Agriculture supports Hawke's Bay, but nature supports agriculture. Nature provides the ecosystem services that ensure sustainability for both agriculture and human societies.

**For individuals, nature starts in our garden or even the lonely pot plant in the corner of a noisy restaurant or shop.**

Clean air, clean water, healthy stable soils, raw materials, energy, medicines, carbon sequestration, climate regulation, waste decomposition, and disease control are only a few of the services that sustain us.

Yes, even the pandemic can be traced back to the loss of disease control in a highly modified ecosystem in China. It happens here too – think of bovine tuberculosis transmitted by possums, toxoplasmosis transmitted by cats, and *Mycoplasma bovis* that threatens our cattle industry. All are exotic species, brought here and brought together by humans.

Farmers bear no more responsibility for the destruction of our ecosystems than the rest of society. Removal of native bush, pollution of rivers, introduction of more than 25,000 exotic species of plants – all of these were driven by demand from all New Zealanders and often by government subsidies.

Is it too late to restore sustainable habitats rich in indigenous species? The task can seem overwhelming,

but as the saying goes, 'A 1000-mile journey begins with one step'.

Each of us can play our role as custodians, kaitiaki, of Hawke's Bay and its future. To do that, it's useful to consider what and where nature is.

For individuals, nature starts in our garden or even the lonely pot plant in the corner of a noisy restaurant or shop. Every day I see examples of individuals caring for the plants or the patch of earth outside the back door. Every little ecosystem can contribute to the larger ecosystem of Hawke's Bay.

Individual action is critical, but we need more than that. We need the buy-in and inclusion of key stakeholders in our communities. For me, the two groups central to restoring our landscape to its natural order are farmers and Māori.

Farmers too often get a bad rap in protecting our environment, but many are actively leading the transition to more sustainable farming practices, practices that can begin to heal nature.

Hawke's Bay farmer Bruce Wills has been a high-profile flag bearer for better practice through leadership roles at Federated Farmers, Apiculture NZ, and now the QEII National Trust. Hawke's Bay regional councillor Will Foley is exploring new farming modes from a perspective of benefits to human health and well-being.

Equally importantly, we must all acknowledge the central role of Māori, who deeply feel their connections to nature. Even the term 'tangata whenua' refers to this link. Māori understand that the journey to recovery will be long, and they embrace their role as kaitiaki for the long-term. We need them on this journey.

Guidance from a Māori perspective comes from the Whanganui River Settlement Act (2017). The Act confers "legal personality" on the entire catch-



Photo: Florence Charvin

ment. The catchment is recognised as a 'living whole' that 'supports and sustains ... the health and well-being' of the people of the entire catchment.

This is equally relevant in Hawke's Bay. I think every square metre of New Zealand deserves the same respect as the Whanganui catchment. Most of our land is vested in the farming community, who thus have the burden of leadership to repair damaged land and take us to a sustainable future. By ensuring the long-term health of the land, the farming community will also provide higher-value products for the international economy – environmental restoration is thus the key to our future wealth and well-being.

As humans we cannot take any credit for the respite Earth was given, as we did not change our lifestyles out

**Equally importantly, we must all acknowledge the central role of Māori, who deeply feel their connections to nature. Even the term 'tangata whenua' refers to this link. Māori understand that the journey to recovery will be long, and they embrace their role as kaitiaki for the long-term.**

of choice. Covid-19 forced it upon us. But the pandemic lockdown reminded us that nature can recover if we give it a chance.

So, I hold to my dream of a nature-rich, sustainable future for

Hawke's Bay. We each need to step up and play our part as individuals. We can support those leaders and groups who are showing the way.

And we need to understand that this is a long journey. Biodiversity recovery is a long-term commitment and not simply the tagline for every three-year election cycle. Success in this endeavour will make our lives and futures better. ●

*Charles Daugherty is Emeritus Professor of Ecology, Victoria University. Awarded an ONZM for his work on tuatara ecology and management. A former trustee of Zealandia, he's involved with Biodiversity Hawke's Bay since retiring to Hawke's Bay, serving as chair of the trust board, but writing in his personal capacity.*

# Culture



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Photo: Florence Charvin

# Food fashionistas

The idea that we have an authentic national 'cuisine', for want of a better word, is delusional.

Those that hold to the delusion are the sorts that also contend that we are more ingenious than other peoples. What nonsense!

Both ingenuity and national culinary dishes are born from the same mother - absence of alternatives. In today's Aotearoa there is no such absence. Our self-proclaimed ingenuity is stuff of history and the idea of a national cuisine is not even that.

Hailing, as we do, from various tribes, whether tangata whenua or tau iwi, our food culture doesn't reflect a vibrant meshing together of cooking histories. We don't have the Creole or Cajun pots that fuse multi-cultural influences into a new-generation cuisine.

Instead our food in large part can whakapapa back to cooking styles that embrace excessive boiling, steaming, and roasting of a combination of vegetables and meat, often with the inclusion of salt, which was one of the two spices available at that time. Imagine the delight when the herbs arrived! Followed by exotic and fashionable fruits, spices, and vegetables from across the world.

The Luddites remain of course, stoically refusing plates of pasta or rice, and the evil coriander. The vast majority of us love these developments and are always eager for the next instalment.

We are food fashionistas ... authentically adaptable.

Our food culture is all about the now. It reflects food fashion rather than food tradition. Eateries of the early 2000s have been replaced by the next hot, young vibe. We are the early adopters and the masters of adaptation. We see an idea and we take it. A little adjustment to the Kiwi palate is often required; then, Hey Presto, an authentic dining experience hits the high street, holding its spot for ten years or so.

It's fluid, fun and vibrant, but are we throwing the baby out with the bath water? Yes we are. Fashion following can be so cruel!

I came to New Zealand as an immigrant in 1992. I have two strong food memories from that time.

Firstly a ten centimetre thick, yeasty-smelling pizza base, topped with tinned spaghetti and cheese. Secondly a perfectly cooked lamb rump with a basil sauce, which was accompanied by excellent service and good wine.

Predictably the first establishment, a take-away joint, is still in business and the second, Vidal, is not.

Crap food on the run will always be a big part of our food scene, but alas, fine dining is not in vogue. Like a pair of flared, high-waist pants and platform shoes, toppled by the bearded, tattoo-wielding, leather-aproned offerings of long tables and sharing plates.

Today's fashion most regularly comes in a bun. The Bao-dog-burger triumvirate holds sway.

Popping-up is on trend, as is a regular park-up. Food-Trucks are all go. 'Smashing' is all the rage, whether it's a burger or an avocado or just generally smashing out the food in the customer's direction. Fusion cooking is massive. That's actually who we are; fusers of other people's ideas, but don't utter the word! The word 'fusion' - capri pants.

So where to next? What morsels will be commanding the cat-walk next year? What's missing? Who's leaving?

I can see the Mexican wave of restaurants losing ground to the dumplings. Veganic offerings are on the rise, starting from a low base but will reach a creditable 15% in 2021. Jerk has been hovering for a few years; maybe next year we'll see the Jamaican BBQ giant hit the front? It's hard to see it competing against the current darling of the BBQ, the low-and-slow brisket and ribs.

Food halls and combination eateries will make

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**Who could write-off the pizza? Thankfully the experiment with tinned spaghetti and under-cooked dough didn't gain traction, but the pizza market is huge and growing.**

---

an appearance despite the go-it-alone national small business psyche. The roast, like the wool cardigan, will hold its ground.

Sandwiches, the unfashionable solution to eating with one hand, will fill a gap in both high street and food truck alley. Fresh or toasted, Reuben and the gang are set to make a comeback. The filled roll won't hold its own against the bench-mark of the best thing.

What about South America? Why have we seen so little of the feijoada and asado in particular?

Fashion of course! Mainstream fashion is where we're at with a strong western culture backbone.

Who could write-off the pizza? Thankfully the experiment with tinned spaghetti and under-cooked dough didn't gain traction, but the pizza market is huge and growing. Kiwis love cheese-on-toast and all of its Italian sub-genres. I think we'll see a pizza joint in Hastings soon.

We have a strong food culture based on our welcoming, accepting attitude.

It's important to note that food culture is not the same as food tradition. Our tradition is over-cooking cabbage and kūmara, either above or below ground, whilst our culture is embracing the delights that the world has to offer. The spice route to our shores was only opened very recently. We seize ideas and, like an airport eatery, do a rough approximation of the original. Judging by the number of options and the hoards that dine out, this is what works.

Our culture is about sharing a meal rather than trying to duplicate great-grandmother's recipe for ratatouille. We are not confined by old world traditionalism. I'm eager to see what's next ... and which poor baby will disappear with the dishwater. ●



Culture

## Food Photography

Story by Kay Bazzard. Photos by  
Lee Warren and Florence Charvin





# Lee Warren



“I do what I do,” says Lee Warren. And that is food that speaks for itself in a photograph - natural, homely, wholesome family food, using the colours and props to tell a story.

Lee has a visual language that conveys all this and more. He loves food and all that means - nourishment, taste, socialising, conveying love and it's reflected in his photography with deceptively simple images. He adores his home and family, their productive garden and the kind of slow-developing relationships he has with clients as he comes to know them well as food producers and friends.

His business is Fotoshoot - Commercial Studio Photography. Their primary work is branding and commercial photography, applying long experience in the craft of food photography to the client's marketing priorities. The controlled light in the studio setting ensures consistency of colour and tone across seasons, a high priority for clients such as wine producers and branding generally.

There is a natural crossover between home values and Lee's photographic techniques and if someone wants something other than this then

they would need to choose another photographer, he says.

Clients include most of the region's wine producers, apple and fruit growers, and meat producers of Hawke's Bay and some local restaurants. The client brings the produce to his house; the food is prepped and cooked in the kitchen, most often to a recipe Lee's partner Heather Smith has devised, and then photographed immediately.

Heather is the cook, unless it is a restaurant job, when the chef cooks. The kitchen is well-equipped, but is a home kitchen. The larder must be the best stocked in the Bay, there are shelves and shelves of recipe books, chopping boards, butchery knives/choppers, pewter platters, plates, wineglasses. Home is their workplace, super-comfortable furniture including rustic wooden table, leather sofas, high ceilings; nothing is perfect, but everything speaks of an emotionally rich but modestly self-sufficient life - and the possibility of being a prop for the next job.

Similarly, the garden is set up with rows of grape vines, full and floppy peonies, old roses, heritage tomatoes, herbs, vegetables, everything put to

use to enhance the photography while also supplying the family kitchen.

The studio seems almost secondary, but is not of course. It is set up with every brand and capability of camera, Profoto lighting studio flash, controlled lighting, light reflectors, screens, white umbrellas, moveable white walls, use of shadow and reflected light, computerised tech and yet more props.

Most important to Lee Warren is to be part of a team of people who like his kind of work. He has worked with Jason Ross at First Light for 12-13 years, describing the team as 'incredible' to be involved with. "These guys are my perfect client, so innovative," he says. "They have a unique New Zealand product and are taking it to the world."

The same applies for other clients including Bostock NZ and Yummyfruit producer Paul Paynter. He finds delight in being involved with their successes, as revealed in their full-page ads (all his own work) in the Air New Zealand inflight magazine. "It's enormously satisfying," he says.

[www.fotoshoot.co.nz](http://www.fotoshoot.co.nz)

# Florence Charvin



By contrast with studio food photographer Lee Warren, Florence Charvin prefers to photograph in natural light, providing a photography and food styling service working with clients in their kitchens and homes.

Working closely with the chef, she gets to understand their food ethos, the type of business they are in, position in the market and the lifestyle or theme to be conveyed through the photographic story.

With an eye for composition, she describes her images of food as “inviting” to the viewer, with beautiful freshly-prepared food, visual linkages of colour and texture, natural light and with sympathetic props such as pottery, simple herbs and flowers.

With her artist’s eye and using visual allusions, angles and variations in focus to intensify the image, she describes herself as “a visual person”. Her images tend to have an ‘X’ factor that tends towards the “romantic” - but that also depends on the brief from the client. Her photography is used for websites, brochures or promotional collateral or sometimes only styling the food for local videographer, Indelible.

The nature of the brief varies quite

radically between clients. Last year, Napier Central Primary School produced a recipe book, the project revealing a strong community focus and lifestyle element that resulted in images of the cooked recipes, alongside young children and families cooking and eating.

The website photography assignment for MYLK, a prepared meals provider, needed to suggest ideas on how the meal could be served - beautiful table settings including flowers, herbs and leaves. She really enjoyed working with owner, Kristy Isaacson, who cooked in her own home kitchen while Florence had free reign with props and styling, to “see” the right angle or composition and take the shot.

Bistronomy in Napier has featured in her work in recent times with a bar food shoot for *Cuisine* magazine and a photo-shoot of their 2020 menu. It required little styling, just taking images of the meal on the plate as presented by the chef, but with Florence’s creative input lending a sense of place by incorporating their padded seating and table edge into the frame.

Florence comes from a village in the French Alps called Courchevel, 1,800 metres above sea level, that is

now a ski resort. “So my grandparents and parents had to grow their own food and make everything themselves because they couldn’t buy goods. They had very large vegetable gardens, cows and goats for milk and meat, hunted for food, they made cider from apples, preserved the vegetables, made jams, and cured the meat,” says Florence. This was her life growing up and it provided a wealth of visual memories that influences her today.

“When I was young, we all helped with harvesting the potatoes (me, my cousin, aunts and uncles and my grandma). We went mushroom harvesting every weekend in autumn and snail picking and foraged for special plants for salads, berries, wild strawberries. We used to walk all the way to the top of the mountains to pick a flower that we used to make an alcohol called G n pi.

“At home, I helped harvest veggies and shell the peas, make jam, and today, I still do this. I love making jam, bread, I have a vegetable garden and fruit trees. My garden was bare when I bought my house last year but I’ve planted lots of edibles.”

[www.florencecharvin.com](http://www.florencecharvin.com)

# Lee Warren





# Florence Charvin







# How 'foodie' are we?

**By Tom Belford**

To see how BayBuzz readers and followers fit into the Hawke's Bay 'Foodie' scene, we conducted our online 'How We Eat' survey, to which nearly 250 folks responded.

**Here's what 'you' look like.**

**First, in a nutshell:**

Quite fastidious about the quality and healthiness of the food you eat.

Like to cook, but not gung ho.

Most confess to eating fast food.

Favourite take-outs are Asian and Indian.

Avoiding sugar.

Looking to eat less or no red meat.

Drink alcohol with dinner.

Spend on average \$99 per person weekly on food budget.

And another \$33 per person for food/drink consumed outside of your home.



## Are you a 'foodie'?

We asked three questions aimed at placing readers on the 'Foodie' scale, in each case asking respondents to indicate their place on a 7-point scale ... the higher the score, the more 'Foodie' the respondent.

**A: Describe your basic attitude toward food & eating, where '1' represents 'Food is basically fuel for my boiler' and '7' means 'I'm very fastidious about the quality & healthiness of the food I eat'.**

**B: How health conscious are you in purchasing and consuming food? On the scale, '1' means 'Not at all' and '7' means 'I'm a health zealot when it comes to my eating habits'.**

**C: Do you like to cook? On this scale, '1' means 'No way!' and '7' means 'I dream I'm a master chef'.**

	1-3	4-5	6-7	Average
<b>A: Basic attitude</b>	4%	45%	52%	5.49
<b>B: Health conscious</b>	6%	51%	43%	5.24
<b>C: Like to cook</b>	15%	49%	36%	4.90

## Healthy food

As you see, most are quite serious about their approach to food. So we looked a bit more closely at health aspects of eating habits. First, at following any special diets. Here respondents could simply check any that they were following:

<b>Low sugar</b>	<b>55%</b>
<b>Mediterranean</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>Low fat</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>Low carb</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Vegetarian</b>	<b>23%</b>
<b>GMO free</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Gluten free</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>High protein</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Lactose/dairy free</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>Paleo</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Vegan</b>	<b>4%</b>

About a third of respondents passed on this question (or commented), with our takeaway being that in most cases they are not following any particular diets.

Note that about 25% are following meat-free diets. We did ask specifically about red meat, a product 'near and dear' to Hawke's Bay pastoral farmers:

## "Are you reducing your red meat consumption for health or environmental reasons?"

- Only 31% responded 'No'.

### The others:

- Yes, but it's not a big deal: 43%
- Yes, it's a real dietary priority for me: 13%
- I already eat no red meat: 12%

Check out Keith Newman's article – *Hunger games ... reinventing meat* – for more on the future of red meat.

And by the way, 26% of our respondents say they (or a family member) work in the 'food business' – farmer/grower, cook/chef/wait staff, food processing, food marketing & exporting, catering, fast-food/take-out, food/farm machinery & services, irrigation, whatever!

We also asked a couple of other questions associated with consumers' 'healthy food' consciousness. First, regarding preference for organic foods:

## Are you inclined to purchase and consume organic foods? In this case, '1' means 'Not really' and '5' means 'strongly prefer'.

1	2	3	4	5
17%	17%	26%	23%	18%

Four-in-ten seem fairly serious about organic foods. We also asked about what some might regard as the opposite – fast food. One-third claim they never touch it!

## "In an average month, counting all meals and snacks, how often would you eat 'fast food'?"

<b>Never</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>Once/twice in month</b>	<b>47%</b>
<b>Once a week</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>More often</b>	<b>3%</b>



## How do we get our food?

For some, convenience is a factor. For example, asked how often they purchased 'take out' meals for dinner, 50% said once or twice per month, 12% said once a week or more, and 38% said never. Of those who do 'order out', top honours is a dead heat: 31% list Asian as their 'Favourite', with Indian at 30%. Similarly, pizza and fish & chips tie at 14% 'Favourite'.

Pre-packaged 'cook it yourself' meals – like MYLK and On Your Plate – have been getting a heap of publicity, but surprisingly few of our respondents seem impressed: 72% said 'Not for me', 19% have tried 'Occasionally', and 9% say 'A Favourite'.

All in all, respondents report spending on average \$99 per person per week on food prepared at home.

When it comes to shopping for food, we found some surprises. We asked about some factors consumers might find important as they purchased food in a store.

	Not important			Very important		Average
	1	2	3	4	5	
<b>Price</b>	3%	15%	36%	36%	10%	3.4
<b>Convenience:</b> easy to make	23%	23%	32%	20%	2%	2.5
<b>Brand familiarity</b>	10%	18%	42%	25%	5%	3.0
<b>Special values:</b> how produced, less packaging, 'natural'	4%	8%	26%	39%	24%	3.7

The 'standards' have always been price, convenience and brand. But here we see signs that food consumers are becoming a bit more demanding and discerning with respect to other attributes of the foods they want to purchase. And that discernment reflects a global trend in more economically well-off countries ... the ones we tend to export to.

Another purchasing habit we asked about was online food buying – an option that got a heap of attention over our peak lockdown periods.

We asked:

**“In the past month, have you ordered or purchased meals or food products (meat, veggies, fruit, other) online?”**

And were surprised that so few have:

<b>Never</b>	<b>69%</b>
<b>Occasionally</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>Once a week or more</b>	<b>7%</b>

Of those who purchase food online, half say they are doing this more often post-Covid.

Of course, our readers *do* occasionally eat *outside* the home, individually normally spending on average \$33 per week for food/drink consumed.





## Special occasions

And regarding that 'special occasion' we asked: "In a typical month, how often would you go out for an 'expensive' dinner, spending - say - \$50 per person or more for food and drink?"

Although half responded 'Never', 45% said 'Once or twice', and 5% said 'Three or more'. This indicates why our higher-end establishments depend considerably on the visitor trade.

And then:

**"Which 'dining out' experience will best suit your needs on your next Saturday night out?"**

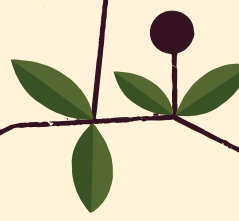
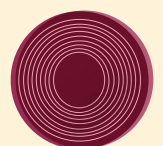
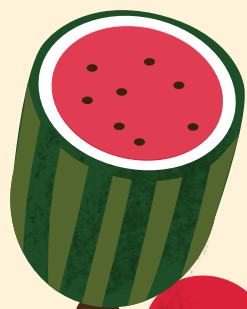
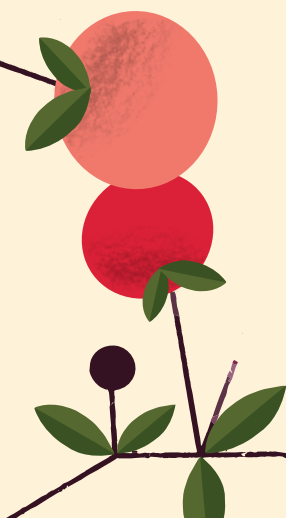
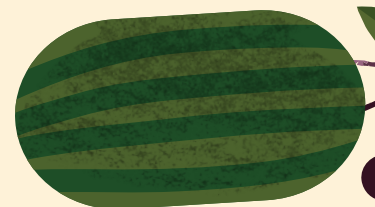
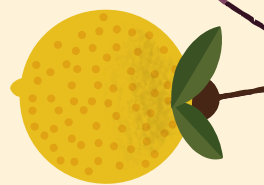
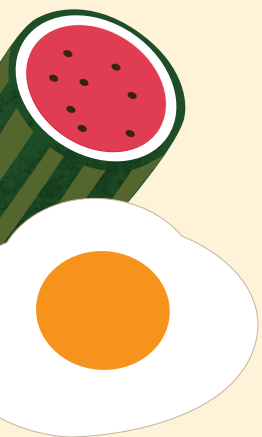
<b>A family-friendly place with heaps of menu choices</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>A gourmet or winery restaurant</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b>An ethnic restaurant</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>Well-prepared Kiwi standards, moderately priced</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>A fast-food emporium</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>A pub</b>	<b>6%</b>

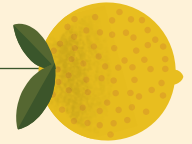
Speaking of the visitor trade, we asked an open-ended question: "What HB 'food experience' do you recommend most to visitors?"

Far and away were HB's winery and gourmet restaurants. The 'category' as a whole swamped everything else, with every 'name' establishment getting plenty of nods – but most mentioned in this survey, Craggy Range.

The other standout would be the Hastings Farmers' Market. Then plenty of 'bits and pieces', with smaller establishments like Hunger Monger, Hapi, Pipi, Birdwoods and Rasoi leading the pack. And finally, a frequent nod to HB's 'fresh produce', like Kirsten's cherries.

Don't see your favourite? You probably didn't respond to the survey!





Finally, we left room for our readers and followers to 'free form' a bit, asking:

**“Are there any ‘food offerings’ that are missing in Hawke’s Bay - e.g., a type of food or restaurant, a food experience - that you would like to see?”**

### Here’s the ‘wish list’.

In terms of cuisines, the most-in-demand would be Japanese and Italian, followed by vegetarian, with occasional mentions of Greek, Middle Eastern, Chinese, Malaysian, Moroccan, Korean and seafood ... “including quality shellfish” emphasised one.

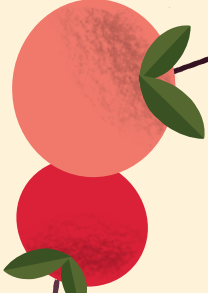
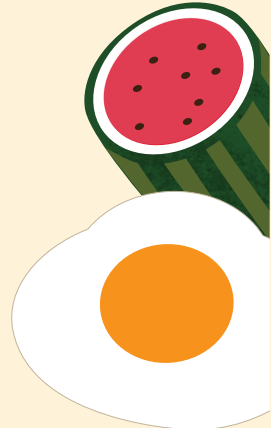
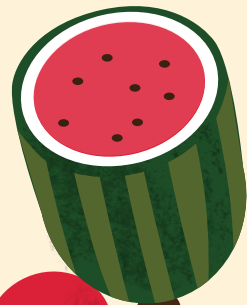
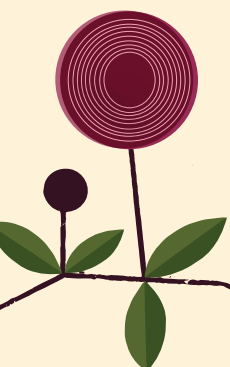
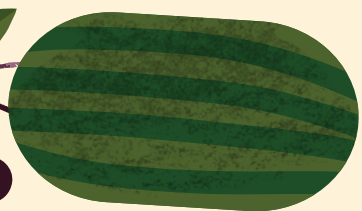
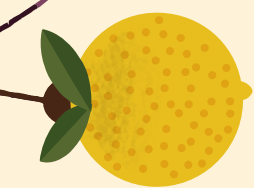
What’s noteworthy is that in very many cases, the choice is prefaced by the word ‘real’, as in *real* Japanese, *real* Italian, *real* Chinese. HBers seem to have enjoyed ‘the real thing’ in their world travels and find something a bit lacking here at home – we leave it to our current slate of ethnic restaurateurs to fight that one out. And check out former restaurateur Mark Sweet’s article, *Ethnic Origins*.

On the food experience side, one respondent takes ethnic a step further, pining for the likes of Little Italy, Little India, Little Vietnam and Chinatown as enjoyed in Melbourne and New York.

Additional experiences called for: a beer festival, more food trucks, seaweed gathering, a Moore Wilson type store, and dining with live music.

I should note that the most common response to that ‘what’s missing’ question – expressed one way or the other – was ... None, we have it all! Taking just one of many similar responses: “No. HB is just about the best place in NZ to live for wonderful selection of foods.”

So, the bottom line, we are a discerning band of foodies here in provincial Hawke’s Bay – we do more than just ‘eat’ and we’re proud of what our region produces and puts on our plates, but we do miss some of the food experiences we’ve enjoyed in the ‘big city’ or overseas. Whether it’s regional produce or ethnic diversions, the sought-after quality that comes to mind is ‘authentic’. ◆



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# A Visitor's Tour de Feast



Kate Galloway and Paul Paynter at Hastings Distillers. Photo: Florence Charvin

Story by Jess Soutar Barron  
[Accompanied by Paul Paynter]

*“Rhubarb, lemon balm, valerian, pineapple sage, licorice, lady's bedstraw, thyme, tarragon, more sages” ... I'm reading off my phone an email outlining the contents of the biodynamic 'gin garden' we're standing in ... “In the quarter with the pink rosehip is wormwood, by the woodshed angelica and dandelion, by the raspberries: meadowsweet and a bit of bergamot”.*



Yes, gin garden.

I wanted to begin our roadtrip here to show my companion, Yummyfruit boss Paul Paynter, something he might not have seen before. A tricky thing to offer up to a man who is a fifth-generation orchardist and encyclopaedic in his knowledge of growing food to eat.

We're scouting the ultimate 'visitor tour' of favourite foodie must-dos: a quick whip around the flavours of the Bay that would leave out-of-towners with a picture of who we are as a growing region. I'm practising my patter on Paul, waxing lyrical about the bounty before us and how it gets distilled into the perfect glass of Yum.

Paul is talking about dirt. “This is magnificent soil,” he's all oohs and ahhs. “Things don't stop growing though, they just explode, there's too much growth. It's not defined by the season, here it'll grow all year round if you keep the frost off.”

It's one of those write-home-about-it days in the Bay. Cloudless blue, everything blooming, bees doing their biz. Paul has moved from earth to greenery and is examining each herb up close.

I bring him back to what they go into. Essentially a cider man, he's also dabbled in distilling. “Gin is a reflection of time and place, and it moves with the season,” he explains. If that's

the case, gin from this garden will be bright, abundant and memorable. We could plant ourselves here for the day, lay out a picnic, talk flowers, but we've still a long way to go and I've promised him a gin at the end of it.

We head off, discussing who we'd be hosting if NZ was open to overseas visitors, and we weren't stuck with just each other.

In a 'normal' year, Paul gets visited by growers from all over the world. Then he looks them up when he's in Europe. Giving them a good time here pays rich reward. Growers love meeting other growers, artisan makers, clever creators of all things edible. When he's overseas Paul gets inspired by new crops, fired up by new harvests, “I come away so refreshed, and want to repay that when people visit here.”

“I love this sort of thing,” Paul says, as we pull into The Figgery. “The 'why' is always very interesting. I get romantic about it, talking to makers.”

Paul's impressed by how far you can stretch a fig. “A little bit of the maker's soul gets put into the products. The genius, the craft, the inspiration.”

Murray, the maker himself, appears from the workshop. We're drinking 'coffig' on the veranda.

A master of making the most of his crop - Figgery Rocky Road, fig and hemp

pesto, fig protein powder - he's also erudite on the subject of future-proofing horticulture here.

“Niche crops that fit small blocks,” is the answer, he says “but it needs coordination.” Paul agrees. We could be growing vanilla here, saffron, walnuts, chestnuts, jackfruit. Some of these have been tried, but without coordination it's difficult to get supply chains humming. Murray and Paul also discuss rubbish, or by-product as it's called in hort.

“Waste stream is an important part of the puzzle,” says Murray as he explains The Figgery's 'superfood' fig powder is made from what's left over from the fig-molasses-making process.

Much of this tiki tour is about seeing what people do with the stuff they grow, but we travel through some of our finest growing areas, and there's much talk about climate and soil, the history of the place, and its future. It's been a good season for many crops: the warmer the better, up to a point. “The hotter Hawke's Bay gets the happier I am!” says Murray as we leave him.

On the drive to Te Mata we travel through idyllic fields with rusted sheds, walls of neatly stacked apple wood ready for winter fires, stands of apple trees, a reminder of this land's heritage.



ABOVE FROM TOP: Paul and Jess in the biodynamic garden that supplies Hastings Distillers with botanicals; Paul chats with Wayne at Bradshaws; Paul has a coffig with Murray Douglas at The Figgery; wine tasting and good times in the Heretaunga Studio at Smith and Sheth. Photos: Giselle Reid

Paul points out a copse of hefty Louise Bonne of Jersey pears standing alone in a field like a circle of druids. They're on land his family has owned for over a hundred years. "They were planted in 1908 - or 1910 - depending on who you ask". By this time next year most of the land around here will be peppered with subdivisions. The pear trees bearing witness to the constant change.

We pass road-side fruit stalls, offering lemons, stone fruit, cherries and berries. We dive into the mushroomery and on to the honey shop. Away across the fields we spy a citrus grove in neat rows and meander our way there - not exactly like bees - but with as much focused intention. Our destination: iceblocks.

Paul is excited about iceblock making and it's not long before he's hinting at combining multiple passions. "Pop a splash of gin in the iceblocks," he cojoles Judy the Glacier. She's sticking to her favourites though: Lemon, Lemon and Raspberry, Chocolate and Coconut. There are six flavours on offer at Bradshaws, newly opened just in time for the summer season, with more coming. Paul is poking in the freezer and nosing in the machinery.

"I can't tell you my secret recipes, Paul!" Judy joshes. Paul, being a Renaissance man, has an iceblock set-up at home. His secret recipe isn't very secret: a splash of gin.

Out the back of Bradshaws is the citrus grove responsible for providing the juice that goes into the iceblocks, as well as a raft of other products from preserved lemons to hand sanitiser. We sit outside eating iceblocks and looking across the flight path of the honey bee to the back of Arataki. We discuss whether we're lickens or biters. "Depends on my mood," surmises Paul.

Like Murray the Fig Man and Paul himself, the Bradshaws have travelled extensively, perusing the full gamut of uses - traditional and contemporary - for their produce. They're growing oranges, key lime, blood oranges, kawakawa limes, meyer lemons, and pomegranate. And making as many products as possible from the results. They're also keeping a sharp eye on the climate and adjusting as they go, keeping things small, future-focused.

"We took the grapes out and planted citrus," explains Wayne, "It's the nature of climate change: the nature of crops change, the markets change. Nature is always the dictator."

Wayne echoes Murray's call to have



Smith and Sheth sommelier, Sonja Eberly. Photo: Florence Charvin

niche crops on small blocks. "We need to think: what upper end fruit can we grow in Hawke's Bay on three or four hectares, things you can grow on that which are economical."

Paul and Wayne survey the grounds like a couple of bucolic country estate overseers, Paul observing, "I love these projects, it takes a masterplan, it takes a vision, and it takes time."

Time is in short supply now that it's early afternoon. The iceblock was nice but wine is better.

By way of the bounty at both Black Barn and Bellatino's - our most prized purchase Nieuwenhuis Marinated Cloud Goats Cheese, handmade just south of here in Te Hauke and available wherever you're lucky enough to find it - we arrive at Smith and Sheth, a boutique wine tasting lounge in Havelock's Porter Hotel.

In some ways it's the antithesis of the grass-roots of fig jam and home-made iceblocks; in others it's their perfect match. Here we show off the other end of the same spectrum of innovation, inspiration and bravery.

Smith and Sheth don't grow grapes. They're an oft-misunderstood part of

the wine-making process: negotiants. They select parcels of grapes to make fine wines of an exceptional quality under the label Cru. Paul probes Sonja the Sommelier for details of her favourite wine. "I've learned to love many grapes, but there's a deep place in my heart for German Riesling," she tells him as she pours the bubbles.

"We'll start with a splash of this, for creative inspiration," she says, then "Egészségedre!" saluting Paul's link to Hungary, and her own to the Czech republic. I'm anyone's after half a glass of sparkling. I drift off into the soft surrounds as Paul and Sonja discuss extended time on the lees and malolactic fermentation. "This isn't as oxygenated as Bolly," I hear someone say. "Biscuity, tangerine, ginger, marmalade ..."

I'm just trying to work out how to get a refill without my companions noticing.

Sonja reads the signs and moves us off into the inner sanctums of the oenothèque. As we enter, any misgivings our resident iconoclast may have brought with him dissipate. We sink into chichi leather luxury; take in the selection of hand-blown glasses.



The platter. Photo: Florence Charvin

In Sonja, Paul has met his match. I lean back and enjoy the show. They are a collective fount of knowledge that includes wine history and heritage, people, varietals and - the all-important - terroir, revealed in a majestic wide-screen short film. Cru, says Sonja, is like an art gallery: "It's then the job of the curator - in this case Steve Smith - to give an intimate feeling of the style of that artist." Paul talks about those growers from Europe he'd like to show Hawke's Bay off to. "This is the place," he announces. "This is real quid pro quo, they'd love this. The theatre of coming into this den of iniquity, it makes an impression."

Sonja and Paul discuss the benefits of being in the new world, while I drink the results. Wine is not static, they agree. "We have the ability to explore and be experimental, we're not held by laws that mean we have to make a certain wine in a certain way."

This is the perfect place for people to geek out over vino, spark conversations, ask questions, satiate oenological curiosity. Paul and Sonja swap the high-class version of drinking yarns: regions they've visited, harvests they've worked, vintages they've known. The stories come back to climate change. Sonja picks up the earlier thread and links it to wine making.

"Shifting climates are changing varieties, but that's the beauty of being in

the new world, trying new things. It's good to be confused by it because it's innovation and it's moving the art form forward," concludes Sonja.

Paul's buzzing by the time we leave. "That totally got me!" he gushes. "It's been amazing, walking in and not knowing what you're going to get. This doesn't exist anywhere else!" He's left breathless ... and upset we're leaving.

But, despite looping through prime growing areas and chatting artisan food offerings, we haven't eaten and I've promised him a gin to end on.

Past PYO for a punnet and the flower barrow for peonies we arrive at Hastings Distillery on the bo-ho East 200 block of Heretaunga St. Here, the herbal and floral delights of the gin garden where we began our tour star in one of three gins - Albertine, Blossom Parade and East Block 200.

Putting down roots in Hastings is a deliberate move. "Ruris et Urbis Concordia," says Kate the Distiller, quoting Hastings' official motto. "This is a service town for all the primary produce" so it's fitting to have artisan makers using that produce for products that showcase what the region can do.

With their gin, Kate and partner David, both winemakers, pull everything back to winemaking terms. They're just as obsessed with terroir as Sonja the Sommelier. Paul and Kate taste and discuss flavour profiles in

terms of olfactory libraries, cool climates, freshness, herbal notes, perfume, "rooty and floral", "savoury and citrus", "cassia and rose".

I arrange the bounty we've collected, hungry for our late lunch. Hugo the Mixologist concocts a cocktail from Paul's own Paynter's Cider, Kate's gin, and the orange bitters they make onsite.

"We want to paint a picture of this district with one gin, this country with another," explains Kate. "The things we grow here are so vibrant, people coming here from Europe are blown away."

Kate's interest is alchemy as much as alcohol. She's as taken with the medicinal properties of the organic, biodynamic, foraged botanicals she uses as with the taste. True to type Paul knows something of this too and agrees that alcohol is the Trojan Horse of delivery systems. They discuss mucosal responses and tinctures. I contemplate whether strawberries *and* cherries on the platter is overkill.

Once we do settle down to eat, cocktail in one hand, stacked slice of pan de higo in the other, Paul sums up the tour as a wonderful rollick through the food and drink of the region.

"Authentic, local, reflective of time, place and season," he takes a sip. "That's what people want to experience: local people, local produce, local products. It's hard to pinpoint what we do really well, because there's so much."



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# Food for thought

If ever a person had the ability to make tenuous links, it would be me. There are so many books about food: What to eat? How to eat it? Is it right for your blood type? Will it give you a condition hitherto unknown to medicine?

In the era of over thinking I've decided not to overthink it and will concentrate on the weird and wonderful books that pop into my head when I think about food.



I'd better start with an actual cookbook. The one I use most, from before Alexandra Tylee wrote *Egg & Spoon* and made food fun and easy again, is *Thug Kitchen*. It's swearily irreverent and funny and includes pictures of dogs doing a bit of skulking, begging and sniffing. The food is all vegan before vegan was cool and its philosophy is

that it would be a good idea to feed our bodies delicious things that are good for it and quick to make instead of take-away food that actually hates us.

The vibe is spicy and colourful and flicking through my copy I see that the most stained pages are the Pumpkin Chili (the pureed pumpkin makes this taste like it has a litre of cream swished through it) and the Mango Curry in which one of the instructions is to *huff in that goddamn delicious smell* just as you add garlic, ginger and red curry paste to your veggies. Excellent advice as it turns out.

An interesting point of note is that the brains behind the TK brand are taking a bit of a look at themselves, their website stating that they originally wanted their name to "signal their brand's grit in the otherwise polished and elitist food scene". They're re-evaluating the term *thug* in the wake of the recent Black Lives Matter protests.



Now for my next dish. I'll hide this one away in the middle because, although it's *completely* about food it's kind of ... unusual. *Hangman* is the first in a series of novels by Australian author Jack Heath in which we meet Timothy Blake, an FBI consultant with a societally unacceptable palate.

Timothy is brilliant at finding lost children and connecting clues and has a marvellously pointy moral compass, but he secretly indulges a deviant behaviour that turns the strongest of stomachs. This deviancy (you're worried now, aren't you) is rooted in his own childhood trauma and has led him to crave things for dinner that he finds difficult to acquire. A deal is



Illustration from Bad Manners website (aka Thug Kitchen)

struck with the bloke in charge of his FBI department; Timmy will use his considerable deductive powers for the good of America in return for...um...snacks. He doesn't have to commit any crimes in order to feed himself, but things start to get a bit complicated.

*Hangman* - and its sequels *Hunter and Hideout* - present us with a dilemma. How can we like Timothy so much - he's kind, funny and self-deprecating - when society deems him a monster? These are tasty crime novels, bits of which you gleefully read with your hand over one eye.



*The Chilling Effect* could be about refrigerated food, right? It's not, but it's a great story.

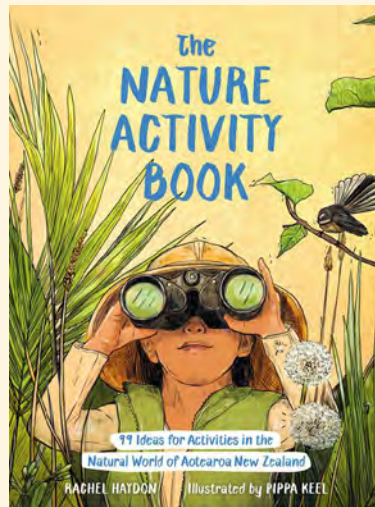
This novel, by Valerie Valdes, is a comic space opera with a lot of action and some fabulously edgy humour. Think *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* without all the standing about waiting for the disaster to be over.

In this novel, Captain Eva Innocent is the disaster. She's got herself a great ship, she loves her crew to bits and she's going on the straight and narrow after getting up to some pretty dodgy stuff. She's in denial about her feelings for her engineer and her biggest problem is that the psychic cats she's trying to deliver to the next planet keep hypnotising the crew and escaping. Then, disaster strikes! Eva's sister is kidnapped and in order to get her back she must offer up her skills on some deadly and not too legal missions.

The food bit in this novel, which is actually quite a minor part but one I thought quite cool, is that the ship has one of those brilliant machines like in the old TV series *Red Dwarf*, where you can ask it to make you any meal and it just will.

*NB - there's a fabulous Aotearoa NZ novel in which the hero ends up pulling*

*a large fridge around Wellington with her - it's called The Ice Shelf and it's by Anne Kennedy. It's marvellously mad-cap and I very much wanted it to win the Ockham NZ Book Awards prize for fiction, but it didn't.*

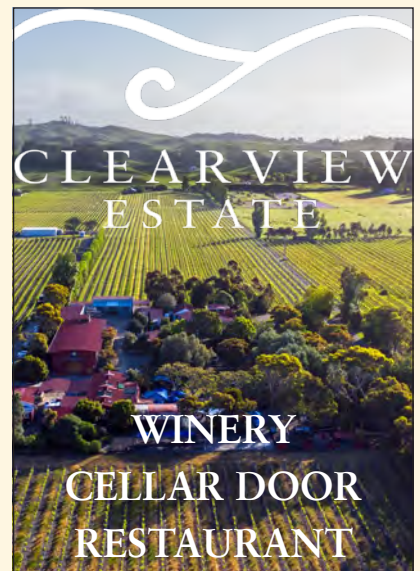


*The Nature Activity Book* by Rachel Haydon is genius and has a whole list of 'food items' at the front that you might need whilst getting busy. Wonderfully illustrated throughout by Pippa Keel, it makes you want to go outside and be a wae wae kai kapua - an adventurer!

It's a book that has had a great deal of thought put into it and is specific to the landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand and the flora and fauna that is uniquely ours. There's a whole section where we can use food for all sorts of things, including dyeing fabric (turmeric, beetroot, mint, red cabbage) and to see how polluted water gets into our food. There's a bit about what birds eat with their differently shaped beaks and how we can attract them to our gardens with ... you guessed it ... food. Seasonal eating, Maramataka (the Māori lunar calendar), plant-based eating, egg carton seedlings - it's all here.

There's a beautiful activity about sensing nature where you have to sit still and name things you can see, touch, smell, hear and taste. It's technically a book for children, but we could all use a bit of this mindfulness, this (re)connection to nature, this sense of kaitiakitanga.

It's amazing how everything is connected to food. Whether you want to create a bug hotel, improve your experiential vocabulary whilst cooking dinner, or discover more than you ever wanted to know about anthropophagy, it's all sandwiched between the pages of richly sauced tomes. What a wordy feast. ●



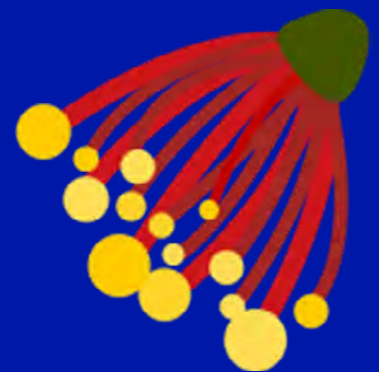
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# Food versus supplements?



Are we able to get everything we need from the food we eat, or do we need to supplement on a daily basis?

In the ideal world we should be eating nutrient-dense foods that provide us with all the goodness that we need. If the gut is working well, we should be able to digest our food and absorb the nutrients that food provides. There are numerous studies that suggest most nutrients are better absorbed and used by the body when eaten as a food, rather than when taking supplements.

Does this mean that you should never take supplements?

That would be too black and white. There are many factors to consider. I believe that supplements do have their place when used appropriately and that they can be beneficial for many of us.

Some people may need to use them short term and others for longer periods of time depending on their circumstances. Times when you might need supplements are when you have a health condition, have nutritional deficiencies, have long-term gut issues, are stressed or are at higher risk of disease because of poor lifestyle choices or a genetic disposition.

I would like to digress for a moment because I believe this is something you should know and consider within your own lives.

I often hear, it's in my DNA. Remember, you may inherit your genes, but you can still change them. Just because you have a tendency for diabetes, it doesn't mean that those genes are going to express. You have a say in this! Choosing the same lifestyle and bad habits as your forebears means that it is likely that you are going to end up in the same boat. What I find fascinating is that we can prevent our 'bad' genes from switching on. We do this through making good lifestyle choices.

Regarding supplements, one must understand that not all supplements are created equal.

It's important to consider where products are sourced from and whether they are of good quality and are going to be well absorbed. Some supplements have been found to be contaminated by heavy metals, others haven't contained the full dosage of the ingredient indicated on their packaging. Some companies opt for the cheapest ingredients and include unnecessary additives.

We also need to be aware of the marketing hype out there. Like any industry, supplement and drug manufacturers are there to support people's health but also to make money. Companies have good marketing departments and tap into our desire to be healthy and to find the 'silver bullet' for health and longevity.

Clever marketing can make us believe that a particular supplement or food is needed and is good for us. This isn't necessarily always true. Many drug companies now sell supplements too.

Recently I reviewed a drug company's multivitamin brand that is marketed as the leading multivitamin in the world. This type of marketing may prompt you to purchase it.

What I found is that it contains the mineral zinc oxide, which is one of the cheapest forms of zinc and has been shown to be minimally absorbed by some individuals. Other ingredients included were maltodextrin, a cheap filler that is made from genetically modified (GMO) corn. Talc and yellow colourant were also included, both are currently deemed to be safe but have question marks around long-term use.

I'm not a fan of long-term multivitamin usage, unless a person is nutritionally depleted or is not eating a well-balanced diet. Our liver has to

process supplements the same way it would medications.

Another well-known drug company brand markets a prenatal and pregnancy supplement, based on a 'Scientific Formula', with a high number of additives in it. Why is it so widely used? You guessed it, good marketing!

This is such an important time in a young woman's life. Ideally, she should be eating clean, making good lifestyle choices and having the least number of additives in her food or supplements. The supplement that I prefer for prenatal and pregnancy is one that is GMO free and doesn't contain artificial colours, flavours or preservatives. Wherever possible I avoid supplements with unnecessary additives, for my personal use and for my clients.

When it comes to the nutrient density of food, one needs to consider the quality of New Zealand's soils, which are declining along with those of the rest of the world. In conventional farming only nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus are put back into the soil. Many of the minerals we require for good health are not replenished back into the soil. If they aren't in our soil, we won't be getting them from our food.

This is somewhat of a conundrum, since ideally, we would want to get most of our nutrients from our food.

I encourage my clients to grow their own vegetables and choose organic where possible. It's also important to make good food choices to maximise nutrient intake. Many of us eat far too few vegetables and tend to eat poorly when we are unwell or stressed. This is the time when you need nutrient dense food the most.

It's also wise to not supplement unless you need it. Remember, supplements are meant to supplement, not replace nourishing foods.

Not all doctors are knowledgeable about dietary supplements. When

considering a supplement, do your research and get good advice from a registered nutritionist or other qualified healthcare practitioner who is knowledgeable in this area. They will be able to assess whether you have nutritional deficiencies or need support in other areas. They will be able to provide you with research-based products that have minimal additives and contain a full therapeutic dosage.

In my practice, I consider what medications my clients are taking, since researchers now better understand that high doses of certain drugs such as acid, cholesterol and glucose lowering medications can cause deficiencies because of how they impact the production and absorption of some nutrients.

Blood tests can be useful in determining other nutritional deficiencies, such as potassium, iron or B12. If you are on a proton pump inhibitor (PPI), B12 and magnesium testing may be warranted. PPIs reduce the amount of acid in the stomach, which decreases protein digestion and B12 release.

Other associated deficiencies are zinc, vitamin C, calcium, iron, and folic acid.

Another fact that you need to con-

**Clever marketing can make us believe that a particular supplement or food is needed and is good for us. This isn't necessarily always true. Many drug companies now sell supplements too.**

sider. People can have side effects from supplements. Too much vitamin A can cause liver toxicity. Too much calcium, vitamin D or vitamin C can cause kidney stones, and excess B6 can cause sensory peripheral neuropathy (weakness and numbness usually in the hands and feet). I too have been caught up in taking too many supplements to optimise my health and have experienced side effects. As such, I'm very careful about what supplements I would use or recommend.

In summary, food is always best, but it depends on what your health needs are. You may need to take a good quality supplement in the short or long-term to support your quality of life. I would encourage you to get pro-

fessional advice on what supplements would best suit you. This way you can also avoid GMO products, artificial colourants, preservatives, fillers and sweeteners where possible.

Try not to be caught up in 'silver bullet' solutions and all the good marketing out there.

Instead, choose to eat nourishing foods that are going to support your health now and in your twilight years. Go for that walk every day, increase your vegetable and fruit intake and maintain a healthy weight. Cut down on all those foods that you know deep down aren't your best friends. ●

Hazel Thomas is a registered clinical nutritionist with a special interest in gut health, food sensitivities and children's health.



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## Out to lunch

Today I ate my child's packed lunch for lunch and I realise now what a truly horrible parent I've been. It was disgusting. The soft sandwich loaf had hardened to cobble-stone. The butter was turning. The vegemite was so thick it burned the edges of my mouth, so the apple that followed, bruised and hot, made no impact on my severed tastebuds. I made the mistake of reading the ingredients off the muesli bar wrapper so left it in the Frozen lunch-box to melt in the afternoon swelter.

I have been packing lunches for two then three since 2008. After roughly 7,000 boxed lunches, I am a master of the art. But I'm in my golden years as a lunch maker, my lunches reflect Picasso in his final industry. They are "primitive".

Studying an analysis of Picasso's last works a writer suggests he: "abandoned his sense of color, mocked the culture of his palette, and demanded the coarsest articulation and position of his figures".

I have indeed abandoned all sense of taste, mocked the culture of cuisine and I now demand only the coarsest articulation of what a packed lunch should be: something sandwich shaped, something vaguely resembling nutrition, and a low-release sweet to boost energy.

I was not always this way.

I made muesli bars from scratch once, with three types of nuts, currants, and a liberal sprinkling of LSA. I sliced them up in regimented 2x8 strips and wrapped them in wax paper. They enjoyed their trip to school, and I ate them at four from the lunch boxes while making the tea.

I went through a phase of pottling up unsweetened Greek with frozen berries and sending that along. The lid came off in the box and the two-thirds that the tykes hadn't eaten marinated the Californian roll they

were returning home with.

I've done home-made guacamole (fail). Home-made hummus and crudité (fail). Home-made pesto with crackers (partly successful although the oil leaked all through the maths homework). I got up half an hour earlier each day for a term to cook chicken for wraps. I've done homemade wraps from an Annabel Langbein recipe. I've done pasta salad, and rice salad and salad salad. I've made pies from leftovers. I've dehydrated windfall. I've baked bread (well my mother did and I palmed it off as my own). I've balled up bliss balls.

But nothing much gets past the gates of the teenage gurn, lip sneered at both same-ol-same-ol and nouveau déjeuner du jour.

Part of the problem is me. My relationship with supermarkets is to blame. Literally nothing in the supermarket is okay. It's all bad for us. Or bad for our kids. Bad for the planet, for the workers, the animals, the plants, bad for the indigenous people who first ate quinoa and now farm it but can't eat it because it's too expensive. Bad for bees. Bad for almonds. Bad for fish. Recyclable packaging, sustainably raised, fair trade, free range, organic, spray free, gluten free, lactose lite, plant based, no added sugar just stevia, which is a gross substitute. These are the top ten things on my regular shopping list. It's an angst-riddled nightmare.

There is so much food porn at eye level too. Sanctimonious yummy mummies gloating over their home-made cous cous happily nom-nommed by six-year-olds. Nadia Lim and Chelsea Winter doing clever things with vegetables. MasterChef on the telly four nights a week...say no more. It's a high ideal to live up to when everything in the aisles is toxic.

So rather than work out how to

navigate all that, I run through the supermarket blindly and daily grabbing at whatever seems *almost* okay, like a desperate contestant on Supermarket Sweep. Then I payWave my way out of there as quick as I can and cry all the way home.

I keep my cringe to myself: I'm a phony foodie. A performative gourmand acting out the role of someone who knows their bulgur from their buckwheat. I fake my way through discussions on EVOO over avo oil. If I could, I'd eat only dandelions and snails - free-range of course - that I'd plucked from my garden.

The food landscape is a minefield - ingredients, recipes, consumption, digestion - when you have a disgruntled gut like I do it's all made much worse. Nothing refined, or with too many grains, nothing too complex and absolutely no foods that are white. Sign me up for Soylent, I'm done with grub. So as much as possible I don't talk about food. And I don't think about it either.

Except once a day, every weekday, when I am reminded of how my food phobia means all my kids get in their lunchboxes is a vegemite sandwich, an apple and a PAM brand muesli bar. They return home with their crusts and their cores and their wrappers, proof their lunch existed but is no more, like a shucked cicada husk. But they seem well and hearty and healthy enough with the odd spot and one or two fillings between them. And they tell me their lunch was just right, that it fuelled them. So maybe that's enough. ●

Photo opposite: Tom Allan

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I have been packing lunches for two then three since 2008. After roughly 7,000 boxed lunches, I am a master of the art. But I'm in my golden years as a lunch maker, my lunches reflect Picasso in his final industry. They are "primitive".



## The dairy

When the lockdown came and we retreated from viral risk into our homes and neighbourhoods we saw the rise of a new hero.

It had always been there, perched on the corner, a beacon of light and lollies. But in lockdown, the dairy rose up.

With no fruit shops, butcheries, bakeries, etc., allowed to open under Level 4, the only way to push back against the supermarket duopoly was to shop hyper-local at the dairy. And for many, the idea of lining up with every other worried or frustrated or worse – sneezing – person was too much, and the smallness and friendliness of the corner dairy was the perfect balm.

A hub of community, this is where people discussed the latest news, how tired Jacinda and Ashley were looking on the 1pm briefings, the glorious autumn weather, the distances observed at cul-de-sac footpath drinks

**There's something about watching that curl of scooped ice cream (rum and raisin, if you're asking) while you stand and wait, barefoot and sun-kissed on the dairy lino.**

---

the evening before.

Flour portioned out into little zip-lock bags, the newspapers with similar day-after-day headlines, birthday candles for those unfortunate souls who had to celebrate at home with bubble buddies only – the dairy took care of us in our time of need, often extending their hours. Thank you, dairy people.

Here we are in summer, and the dairy sits centre stage once more.

There's something about watching that curl of scooped ice cream (rum and raisin, if you're asking) while you stand and wait, barefoot and sun-kissed on the dairy lino. I've always loved the colour

and vibrancy of a dairy. Garish packaging, lit-up fridges, brightly-painted exterior cladding plastered with the mixture of multi-national advertising and handwritten signage. The dairy truly offers a feast for the senses!

But it's not just all scoops and dollar-mixes at the dairy.

While there's no chance of them keeping up with the supermarket pricing on general grocery items, the local dairy has evolved and adapted over the years to stay in the game. Dry-cleaning drop-offs and laundromat coupons, lottery tickets, phone credit and home baking. Spices and obscure baking ingredients, and I'm pretty sure a dairy is the only place you'll find a cherry or vanilla Coke these days.

Of all the lessons to come out of the lockdown and the strange, strange year that was 2020, the 'shop local, support local' point really seems to have hit home. Let's make sure we're doing this with our essentials too.

See you at the dairy. ●

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