

Introduction

On 30th November 2020, 100 people from Waiheke Island and Tāmaki Makaurau came together at Piritahi Marae to discuss the food challenges facing our island in the face of climate change and a pandemic, and what we can do as individuals and a community.

The Waiheke Food Resilience hui was a full day gathering of foodies on the island from growers and farmers through to food makers, sellers, distributors, and those working on access to food in the community.

The day's programme consisted of:

- A powhiri welcome onto Piritahi Marae.
- A morning session with people sharing their perspectives and stories of Waiheke's unique circumstances. Kōrero focussed on how to grow food on the island, what our food story is, and how to feed people with rising food and transport costs.
- A long lunch for everyone to enjoy and to see sustainable food in action.
- An afternoon workshop to brainstorm challenges, solutions and project ideas.

Panel 1: Why are we here?

Panelists: Alice McSherry — Piritahi Māra Kai, Bianca Ranson — Piritahi Marae, Charlotte (Chardy) Parkes — Home Grown Waiheke, Kai Gardens WRT

WHAT'S DRIVING YOU?

- How do we bring local food production back into the hearts and hands of the people who are eating the food?
- Let's look at food sovereignty from a more community-based point of view.
- What we eat is deeply related to socio-economic status, access, conditions, knowledge, and an erosion of traditional food gathering practices.
- We have an abundance of resources that we need to look after, and the most amazing skill set that can work together — no one should go hungry on this motu.

- Food resilience on Waiheke and Aotearoa existed for hundreds of years, but look where we are now — we need to strive for sovereignty over what is grown, what soil is, how we eat, how it's distributed.
- The mentality around water needs to change — water belongs to papatuanuku, and we need to think about what we're taking from the whenua. Water should be used as a treasured resource, and we need to adopt horticulture and irrigation methods that have successfully grown food with minimal water.

WHAT DOES A FOOD RESILIENT WAIHEKE LOOK LIKE?

- An interwoven system of gardens in every home, small-scale market gardens such as Piritahi Marae's māra kai and Te Motu's crop garden, community gardens and commercial-scale food producing farms on the motu to feed our community.
- Everybody of all generations has literacy around what plants grow best locally, when to plant them, and who to take care of them.
- There is a vibrant food culture around what can be locally grown.
- Gardening is something that people can make a living from, and it is accessible.
- There are regular crop swaps.
- We have vastly increased food production on every level and have created a much larger quantity of fertile soil by processing all food scraps on-island.
- A long-term, ongoing mentoring programme, because it's not just setting them up with a garden and seedlings, it's about the whole cycle happening within those whanau homes.
- High quality education for our rangatahi, with support and resources to be able to provide that.

Panel 2: Realities of Waiheke's Foodscape

Panelists: Alex Mansell — Gulf Foods, Kathy Voyles — Kai Conscious Waiheke, Rory Dunleavy — General manager of family owned Te Motu Vineyard, Wendy Kendall — Waiheke Herbs

ISSUES FOOD BUSINESSES FACE ON WAIHEKE

- Massive freight costs to ship items from mainland Auckland, and it's similarly expensive to expand your business off-island, which means that products need to be priced up to make a living.

- There is a lack of availability of a wide range of local crops and food products — after olive oil, lemons, oysters, can grow herbs, honey — the bulk of what is needed to feed customers needs to be freighted in.
- If you go to big supply chain companies who will absorb the freight costs, then you're not dealing with small growers who have an ethos that aligns with the business.
- You can't commercially serve kai moana on Waiheke, which is a good thing as fish stocks to recover in Tikapa Moana/Hauraki Gulf.
- There is lots of farmland on Waiheke, but the compliance doesn't make it possible to develop.
- Similarly, food safety certifications for small businesses are expensive and time-consuming.

FOOD WASTE ON WAIHEKE

National Context: 1/3 of food is wasted in Aotearoa. Most food waste in NZ households comes from consumers and that's where we sit. There is also food loss at the farm gate, and right now due to COVID, we have a big issue of food rotting in the field.

- Because of the volumes that food distributors deal with, a lot of one product goes off at once, and it's hard to get rid of it all — there needs to be a systematic way to distribute it and notify a larger group of people.
- At the moment, if food is wasted, then it's not composted as it's still in packaging - and if it's meat, then it needs to be composted in large-scale bokashi as well.
- Food businesses find it risky to give away food past its use by/best by date as in their food plans, they are liable.
- Individuals believe what it says on packaging and throw products away — there needs to be education on using smell-tests and how to figure out if food is safe to eat.
- Cheap food is around, and food poverty is a huge issue, but with the amount of food that is already being produced, we shouldn't need to be using food "waste" to feed people.
- It's not about the financial impact of wasting food, it's the thought of the whole production line that's ended up nowhere; a waste of so many resources.

WHAT DOES WAIHEKE NEED TO BE MORE FOOD RESILIENT?

- Having our own sense of food story that goes beyond what we currently have (not just wine), to create a better sense of food identity for Waiheke.

- Removal of the critical point of the truck coming to the island. At the moment, if food doesn't arrive from the mainland, the food isn't there. It's not just about getting another truck, it's about getting another ferry company.
- Less refrigerated trucks unloading produce at restaurants — getting vineyards that have that potential and space to grow ingredients and rotate crops year-to-year.
- Collaboration, and growers communicating with each other — growing different things and sharing knowledge and crops.
- A proper food market, with food grown on Waiheke for Waiheke people, including food artisans.
- We need to subsidise small businesses and support them by purchasing their products.
- We need ongoing mentoring and education to develop our māra kai and look after our kai moana, setting systems back in balance.
- Wealthy landowners to put up their land for use for cattle, abattoir, beans, potatoes, kumara — we need vast lots of land and crop rotation with animals in the field after the food is harvested.

Community Input: Voices from the Floor

- While we can increase food resiliency, we can't be self-sufficient in terms of a good diet because Waiheke doesn't grow proteins (soy beans, peanuts, meat).
- We export the best protein and a lot of wine, apples, kiwi fruit etc, but we need to feed Aotearoa before exporting.
- We import a huge amount of carbohydrates — rice, grains, flour — and coffee: these are staples we depend upon and need to think about sourcing locally.
- Create nationwide sustainable and healthy dietary guidelines for nutritionists. By shaping them to support sustainable options, we can help grow healthy future generations.
- Should tie what is grown and when back to te ao Māori and Matariki.
- Increasing food resiliency and initiatives shouldn't be left to one individual, it should be the community investing as a whole.
- Create combined areas of food processing and shared resources (e.g. mulchers, an abattoir).
- Install composting toilets in Waiheke homes to save water and create circular systems.
- Use bokashi and compost initiatives to compost food scraps, paper etc and turn it into a resource to build up local clay soil and unlock its minerals for gardens.
- Call upon Countdown to deal with the waste it is producing.

- It doesn't matter what kind of system you're working in, at a certain scale, there will always be waste. But by connecting with each other and finding ways for one system's waste to be another's resource, we can minimise waste and create a mindshift that prioritises reuse, circular economy and collaboration.
- People need to learn to work together — learning social permaculture.
- Network for sharing knowledge, expertise and collaboration as growers connect and grow food, with mentorships to engage rangatahi.
- Talking about food resilience also means talking about water resilience. It takes thousands of litres of water to create 1kg of meat, which is a lot more water intensive than growing plants.
- An inclusive dialogue which acknowledges multiple perspectives and gives people choices is very important.

Project Ideas

- Revitalise existing community gardens as urban garden hubs.
- Establish a regular market to sell locally grown produce at reasonable prices.
- Create a database and map of local growers, producers, food rescuers and gardens to showcase what exists and connect people so they can collaborate.
- Support growers to establish thriving food farms with employed gardeners to sell produce to the community.
- Support locals, particularly rangitahi, in learning food growing skills & income generating market gardening e.g. apprenticeships, mentoring.
- Support food rescuers with adequate infrastructure, distribution points and funding to rescue and distribute food so no one goes hungry.
- Offer more regular, accessible workshops/training spaces to support our community to develop skills in food growing, preserving, composting, cooking, healthy food, waste minimisation etc.
- Create koha-based seasonal food-related events and educational workshops which rotate through neighbourhood hubs such as community halls.
- Create a grass-roots food festival to tell the story of Waiheke's food landscape and the food-future we want to bring about.
- Create a food brigade that connects all parts of Waiheke to ensure we are food ready in times of emergency or disaster.
- Ensure food businesses are supported in times of need on the island.
- Work with freight providers to ensure that our food is not taxed too high and potentially cap it so that food is exempt from rising freight costs.

Acknowledgements

We'd like to acknowledge the support for this hui from the Waiheke Local Board through their WLB grant, and the Ministry of Social Development through their Food Secure Communities grant.

Thanks to Bianca Ranson and Piritahi Marae for providing the hui's venue and for event coordination help.

Thanks to Emily King from Spira, for her help in organising the event and for facilitating the hui's discussions.

Thanks to WRT — Kathy Voyles, for coordinating the lunch and donations, Julie Crocker, for rescuing food that would otherwise be wasted, and Livné Ore, for successfully applying for the funding and helping to coordinate the event.

Thanks to all of our panelists, who have donated their time and have been willing to share their knowledge and talk about their mahi.

Thanks to our two chefs, Claudio Fuentes and Francisco Sabando, and our kitchen helpers: Rocio Perotti, Guadalupe Mora, Vitor Cruz and Lene Quin.

Thanks to our generous donors:

- Arcadia and Fenice for their koha to our two sous-chefs
- Locally grown microgreens from Nicki Green
- Waiheke Herb Spread from Wendy Kendall
- Chutney from Jenny's Tamarind Chutney
- Chilli sauce from Katy Soljak
- Tortillas from Tio Pablo
- Smoked fish from 10 Knots
- Fresh herbs and produce from Piritahi Marae Māra and WRT Kai Gardens
- Kina from te moana with the help of Kelp Gardeners and Piritahi Marae

Thanks to our volunteers, who are helping in various ways including setting up and bringing information and displays to share with everyone during our lunchtime Marketplace of Ideas.

Lastly, to everyone who turned up and gave the hui their time and attention. We appreciate you taking part in this community discussion.

Ngā mihi nui to you all.