



# WAIRARAPA FOOD STORY

# MANAAKITANGA

*(n): hospitality, kindness, generosity, support - the process of showing respect, generosity and care for others.*

Manaakitanga is a concept that the people of Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa have been familiar with over many generations as tangata whenua in Wairarapa. As producers, farmers, growers, hunters, gatherers and providers for our whānau, our marae and the wider community, it is something we have expressed since the early days of our first contact with Europeans. Today, we continue to show manaakitanga to the many cultures that live within this region.

Kai (food) is an integral part of the expression of manaakitanga, be it pāua, kōura (crayfish), meat or dairy from our farms, or manuka honey.

Wairarapa Moana (Lake Wairarapa) has always been extremely significant to our people as a source of food for consumption and trading. Our traditions speak of the sheer size of the tuna (eels) and the once commonplace quantities that were harvested and used to feed the people of Wairarapa and to trade with tribes from near and far.

We have contributed to the Wairarapa economy since before the arrival of Captain Cook and some of the oldest artifacts and gardens on record can be found on our east coast. When Cook did arrive and before he had even set foot on Wairarapa soil, our ancestors took out supplies of kaimoana (seafood) to trade for the new goods the ship bore, such as nails and blankets.

This is but a starting point for the many food stories that tangata whenua of Wairarapa can share with our local people, the wider country and internationally. We look forward to adding further to the Wairarapa Food Story. Kia pai te kai!

*PJ Devonshire*

General Manager

Kahungunu ki Wairarapa

In 2008 the Te Ore Ore Marae in Masterton received a request for some kitchen items from Dr Huhana Smith, the Māori Curator at Te Papa National Museum. The items were to be added to a display of historical and contemporary Māori artifacts. The display was called E Tū Ake - Standing Strong, and was developed to tell the story of Māori self-determination.

The Te Ore Ore Marae was asked to contribute because of its deep-seated reputation for Manaakitanga, which has been recorded and recognised many times throughout history.

For example, in 1881 the following was written about the food that was presented at a hui attended by around 3,000 people.

“When the visitors arrived (at the Potangaroa hui, 1881) a hākari (feast) in the form of a giant pyramid was erected – the hākari was a solid mass of food, 150 feet long, 10 feet wide and 4 feet high. The bottom layer was made up of sacks of potatoes and kumara, the second layer, thousands of bags of flour, third layer, thousands of bags of sugar, then topped off with baskets of fish, flesh of fowls, truck loads of eels, wagon loads of shark and cartloads of shellfish.” And in May 2004, the foreshore and seabed march across New Zealand saw 1,000 hungry protesters arrive in Masterton; they were fed and sheltered by the tangata whenua.

These are just two illustrations of why Te Papa was keen to include kitchen items from Te Ore Ore for its exhibition.

Interestingly, the final display featured a small section where, amongst elaborate carvings and delicate tukutuku panels, sat a single dining room table set out with plates, knives and forks, cups and bowls.

This simple exhibit provided by Te Ore Ore Marae not only speaks volumes about manaakitanga but it also perfectly represents Rangitāne’s place in the Wairarapa Food Story.

*Mike Kawana*

Cultural Advisor

Rangitāne O Wairarapa



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# WELCOME

## *to the Wairarapa Food Story*

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This is an account of the people, places, passion and importantly, the potential, that forms the backbone of Wairarapa's food industry. Essentially it is an unfinished success story peppered with challenges and opportunities and fuelled by hard work, determination and adaptability along the way.

It is a tale that traces back to the raw beginnings of the region's foray into food - from the skilled horticultural hands of Wairarapa Māori and the early settlers' ambitions as agriculturists, through to our present day diversity - which spans across a mouth-watering spectrum of food sectors.

Yet, while we take a walk through the history of food production in Wairarapa, looking to our past and to our provenance to see how far we have come, we also have a firm eye on our future. For, it is the future of food that holds the key to the next chapter of this Wairarapa narrative.

Wairarapa has already earned a sound reputation for culinary excellence. Home to some of the country's finest producers and purveyors, our top chefs, restaurants, eateries and cooking schools strive to capture the essence of locally grown produce and turn it into 'exquisite taste'.

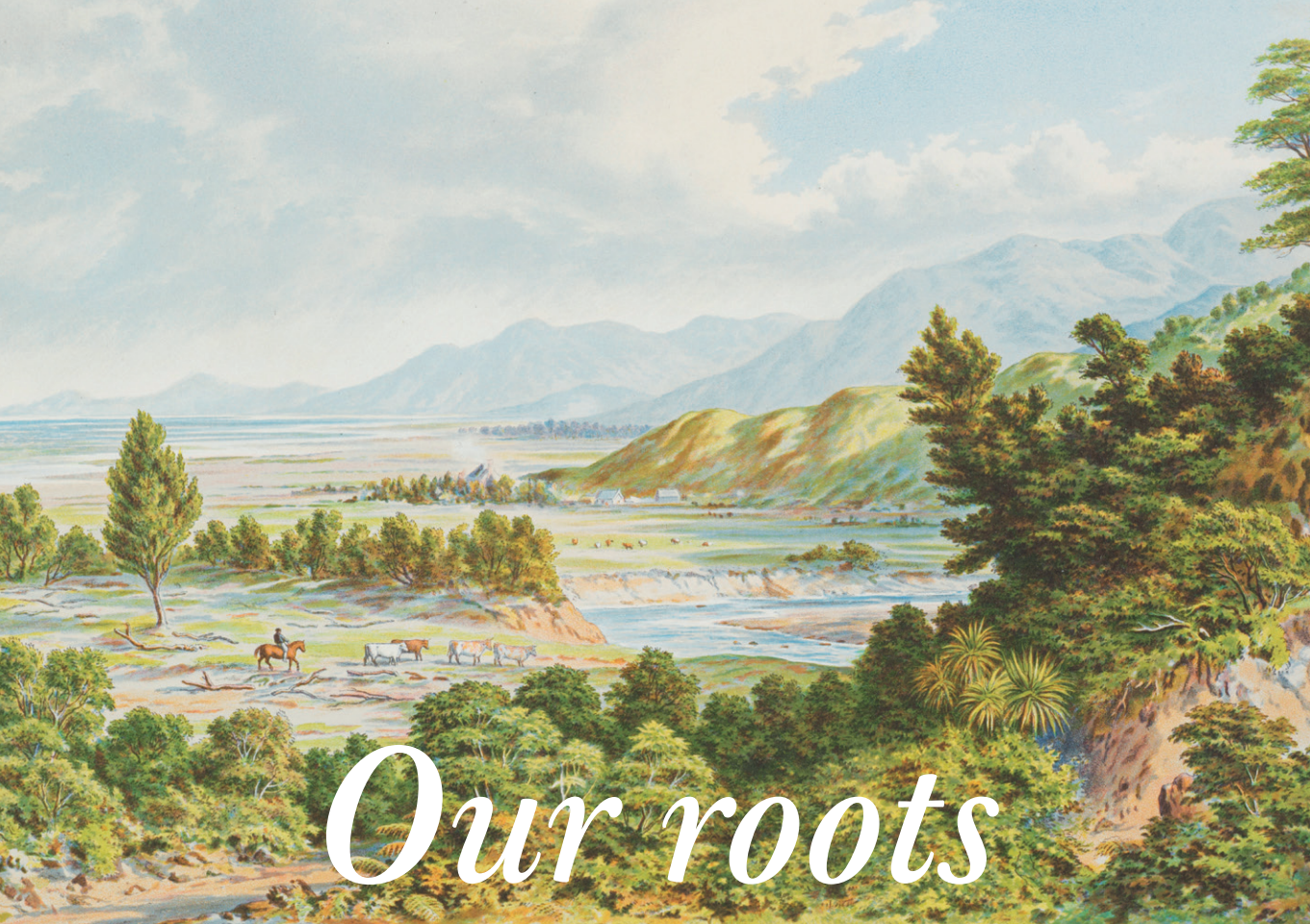
But Wairarapa is only half way through its food journey.

Wairarapa is ripe for the picking and the food industry here is on the cusp of further growth. Our passion for food production coupled with the land's topography, soil types and niche climates means we are set for the next phase of food innovation.

Our farmers, growers, and marketers too, are ready to explore new avenues and discover new recipe cards for the industry. Many are amongst life's innovators. With foresight and an openness to diversity, our people are keen to unfurl the untapped potential that will carry our food industry forward for generations to come.







# Our roots

The remnants of old stone walls and the faint outline of boundaries out along Wairarapa's eastern coast at Cape Palliser mark the sites of ancient, large-scale edible gardens, established by the Māori population.

For hundreds of years Wairarapa Māori grew crops, such as kumara and fern root (aruhe) to supplement their diet of whitebait and flounder from the ocean at Palliser Bay, alongside freshwater fish (kokopu), waterfowl and eels from Lake Wairarapa (Wairarapa Moana). When the lake's annual flood cycle, which coincided with the eels' migration season, swamped the surrounding land and blocked the outlet to the sea, Māori were able to catch the eels as they swam downstream. Some 20-30 tonnes were dried and preserved to provide food year-round.

As the early settlers moved their way around the coastline from Wellington in the early 1840s in search of pasture for livestock, it was the

glistening waters of Lake Wairarapa that first caught their eye. Their gaze quickly flicked to the bordering rich flats, on which they envisaged grazing for sheep and cattle, and an abundance of crop growing.

Sheep runs soon followed. In 1844 the first New Zealand sheep station on the plains of south Martinborough was established. Cattle rearing followed. Land was leased from Wairarapa Māori and the economy started to grow as sheep and beef farming (in the eastern drought-prone areas) and dairying (in the western areas of higher soil fertility and greater rainfall) became more extensive.

Land sales attracted more people to the region in search of affordable smallholdings, away from Wellington. This led to the formation of the Small Farms Association which went on to develop New Zealand's first planned inland towns of Greytown and Masterton in 1854.





# LEGACY

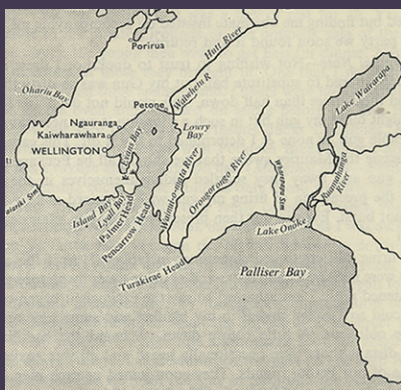
## *of the lake*

Wairarapa owes its name to the formidable basin of Lake Wairarapa - which, translated, means 'land of the glistening waters'. The third largest in the North Island - behind Lake Taupo and Lake Rotorua - Lake Wairarapa covers 78 square kilometres and together with neighbouring Lake Onoke the surrounding wetlands form the largest system of mudflats, lagoons, sand flats and marshland in the lower North Island covering 9,000 hectares. These wetlands are home to over 100 native and exotic bird species.



## THE EYE OF 'TE IKA A MAUI'

Māori folklore tells us that Wairarapa forms a part of the huge fish 'Te Ika a Maui' that Maui (the Polynesian hero and chief), caught when fishing with his brothers. Maui, fed up with his brothers' taunts that he was too small to venture out to sea, had secretly weaved a strong fishing line from flax and fashioned a mighty fish hook from his grandmother's jaw bone. Sneaking aboard his brothers' waka, he proved he was a great fisherman when he pulled an enormous fish from the waters. The fish is said to be the North Island with Palliser Bay being the fish's mouth and Lake Wairarapa (Wairarapa Moana) its eye.



## CHEESE CAPITAL

While Wairarapa saw hundreds of dairy factories spring up in the late 1800s and early 1900s, it was the establishment of the Featherston Dairy Company in 1895 that augmented Wairarapa's reputation as a major producer and exporter of quality cheese.

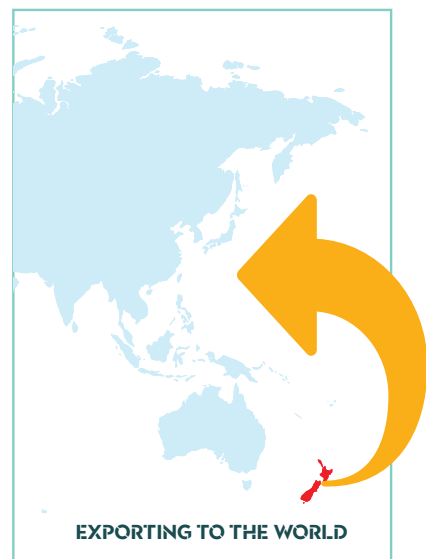
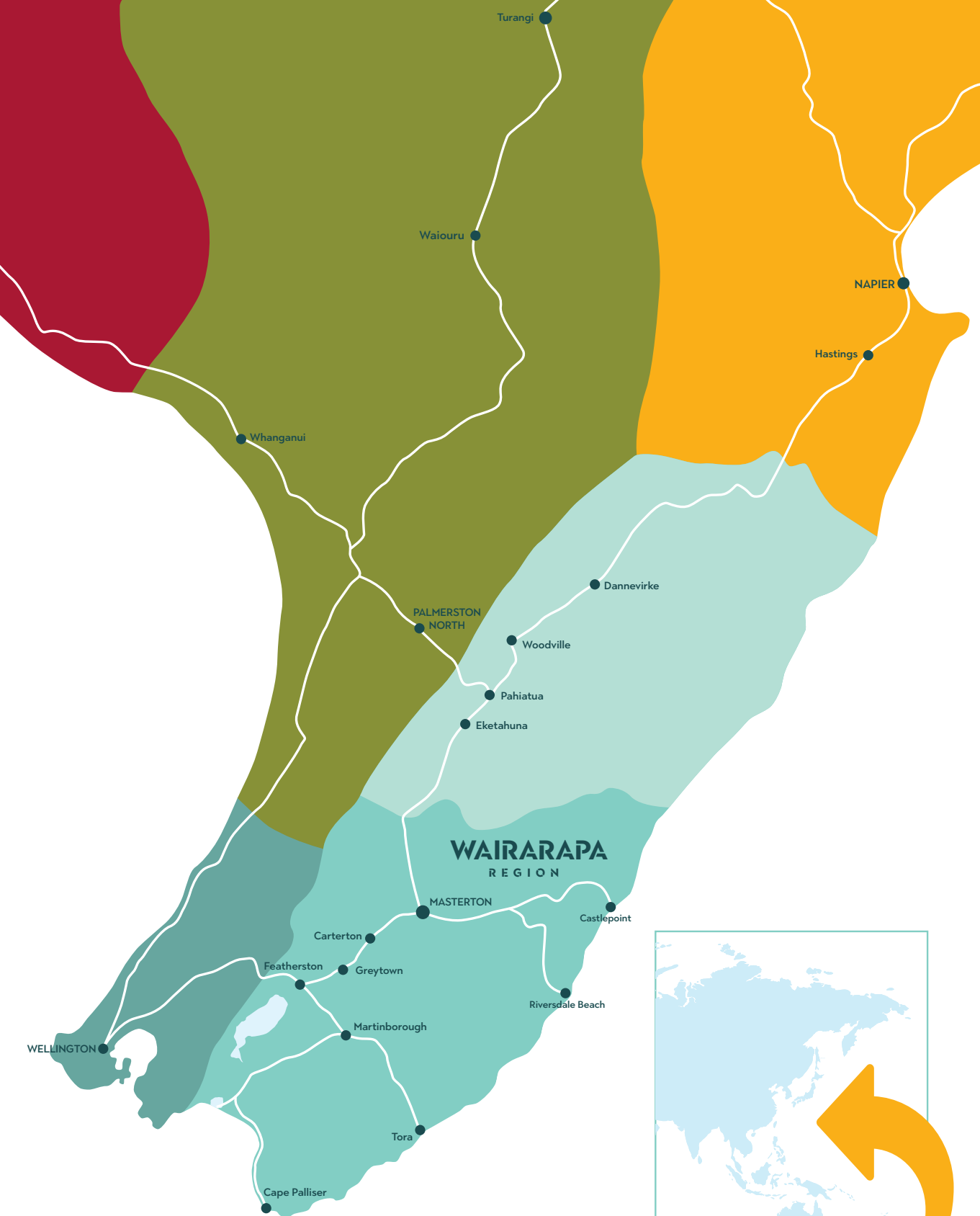
- 100 tonnes of cheese produced in its first year.
- First dairy factory in New Zealand to become fully mechanised.
- Equal first prize for cheese, with Greytown, at the 1909 London Show.
- Awarded 'best cheddar cheese' in the British Commonwealth - at the 1955 London Dairy Show.
- Annual production up to 2,165 tonnes of cheddar cheese and butter produced by 1956.
- Cheese and butter made from 72 suppliers of milk and 99 suppliers of cream.

## FOUNDED ON FORESIGHT

Wairarapa is one of the longest settled regions in New Zealand. While the early European settlers struck good fortune in finding affordable land here, their foresight in carefully planning and connecting up the townships is our bounty today. The thought and detail that went into town planning back then has helped create one of the country's most desirable regions to live, work and play.







## FAST FACTS

WAIRARAPA IS THE  
**WORLD'S  
LARGEST  
MĀNUKA HONEY  
PRODUCER**

**27.6%**  
OF WAIRARAPA'S  
**WORKFORCE**  
IS EMPLOYED IN FOOD OR  
FOOD-RELATED INDUSTRY



TOTAL CONTRIBUTION  
TO NZ'S GDP FROM  
WAIRARAPA IS  
**\$1.9 BILLION**

**22.2%**  
OF WAIRARAPA'S  
CONTRIBUTION TO  
**GDP**  
IS FROM FOOD OR  
FOOD-RELATED INDUSTRY



**30%**  
OF NEW ZEALAND'S  
**OLIVE OIL**  
COMES FROM WAIRARAPA

**57**  
**MILLION**  
KGS OF MILK SOLIDS PER ANNUM IS  
PRODUCED IN WAIRARAPA

## BRIMMING

*with local produce*

Food production is in our genes and there is no shortage of local products in Wairarapa. From market gardens and cottage industries producing fudge and health drinks, to large scale operations fulfilling local, national and international markets, the region is bursting with food enterprises. Choose from export grade pipfruit and optimum strawberries, to organic vegetables and nuts. Stock up on craft gin, home brewed beer and cider and artisan sheep and goats' cheese. Pick up free range poultry and quality grade eggs, fresh fish - whitebait and crayfish - caught around Cook Strait, pots of local honey and award-winning olive oil. Not forgetting the very best lamb, beef and pork complemented by world class wine.









# THE WAIRARAPA WAY

Comprising of seven main towns - Featherston, Martinborough, Greytown, Carterton, Masterton, Eketahuna and Pahiatua - Wairarapa prides itself on its connectedness and sense of community.

Wairarapa offers a rural lifestyle option within easy access of Wellington with good rail links into the capital for commuters and to Centreport (the port of Wellington) for freight. Road links to Palmerston North provide residents with another option for visiting a city and taking advantage of the retail offerings and other facilities there. Businesses too can benefit from Palmerston North's growing reputation as one of New Zealand's major distribution centres, en route from the Port of Napier. Follow the roads out of Palmerston North and the rest of the North Island starts to open up.

The breathtaking scenery, hot summer months and crisp winters are perfect for exploring the Wairarapa outdoors - whether its tramping in the Tararua forest, fishing on the east coast, swimming at Riversdale and Castlepoint beaches or cooling off in the region's

many waterholes, or cycling our growing number of scenic bike trails.

Nestled to the south-east of the North Island, the Wairarapa region stretches from the Tararua Range to the east coast and around to the southern tip of the island. The northern border touches the Manawātū Gorge and runs to Cape Turnagain. The province takes in forest covered mountains, central lowlands (created from former riverbeds), hilly uplands, big skies, rugged coastline and mighty rivers.

Its rural setting means the population ebbs and flows during the week as commuters travel to and from the country's capital for work. At weekends Wairarapa in turn welcomes visitors from Wellington, as well as further afield, as people come to enjoy the Wairarapa way of life - our fine eateries, our scenery and our easy access to awe-inspiring mountain walks and rugged coastland. Visitors also enjoy Wairarapa's varied terrain and varied climate - which tends to be dry and warmer to the east and wetter and cooler close to the Remutaka Hill and the western Tararua ranges.





## CROPS GO FULL CIRCLE

Records show that before the advent of sheep, cattle and dairy farming, the Wairarapa population fed on cultivated crops for around 800 years. Growing crops on any large scale took a back seat as Wairarapa became more adept at raising livestock and more successful at selling the meat and associated products commercially. Yet, today's growing demand created by the popular dietary trend of plant-based eating, and a concern that pastoral farming is degrading the soil, could be the catalysts for the region to revisit its vegetal beginnings and expand its arable industry beyond current root crops, seeds and grains. Wairarapa's range of soil types, its varied climate and contrasting topography, coupled with its abundance of arable land (and lack of urban sprawl), provides an opportunity for the region to diversify and try something new - with the added benefit that the intensive nature of crop farming could create more jobs.



“This is a good time to talk about what else Wairarapa can grow. Wairarapa has close proximity to markets, so we have the potential to be a food bowl for the rest of New Zealand. Currently being discussed are things like seed oils, hops for beer production, vegetables for juicing and ancient grains for cereals. The Wairarapa Cropping Strategy Group has already planted a small plot of trial crops to the east of Masterton. These have included sunflowers for oil, chickpeas and lentils, purple wheat, durum wheat and spelt. Hemp is also being considered. Of course, for Wairarapa to expand we would need to develop new markets, as well as ensure we have a reliable water supply and investment in better infrastructure - such as grain storage facilities.”

Karen Williams, Ahiaruhe Farm, Carterton.  
Founder of the Wairarapa Cropping Strategy Group.

## AHIARUHE FARM

### GROWS:

Ryegrass seed - 22 ha

Red clover seed - 18 ha

Wheat - 28 ha

Barley - 100 ha

### SUPPLIES:

Red clover and ryegrass seed - grown on contract for seed companies for domestic use.

Wheat - Sharpes Stock Feeds, Gladstone.

Wheat straw - Parkvale Mushrooms, Gladstone.

Barley & barley straw - feed for dairy industry, nationwide.

## WAIRARAPA CROPPING STRATEGY

Crop trials include:

- Bee feed crops
- Milling wheat
- Chickpeas
- Sunflower seeds
- Naked pumpkins (for seed)
- Linseed
- Lentils





# NET PROFIT

JR's pipfruit orchard in Greytown is now the only large-scale orchard left in the Greater Wellington region. Planted in 1989, in the middle of the golden days of apple growing and run as a corporate orchard by a local collective of professionals, it was sold to JR Van Vliet and Jamiee Burns in 2003.

Already experienced in orcharding, JR and Jamiee knew that the only way they could make the business viable was to 'go big'. "Small orchards were past their prime," says Jamiee. "Competition for both the domestic and the export market was too high and really only the biggest survived." She adds that being positioned just east of Greytown meant they knew that their route to export would be secured and efficient. "We are so close to the main road that our transport route is essentially a straight run over the Remutakas and into Wellington port."

With an eye on overseas markets, this meant the first job on the list was to build the infrastructure behind the business. "We put in irrigation and built cool stores. We built a pack-house, replanted and planted up more hectares with tens and tens of thousands of new trees."

But one of the best investments JR and Jamiee made was netting their

orchard. They started netting in 2007 and now nearly 100% of their orchard is covered. Front runners in this type of innovation, JR's now has the largest single netting structure for apples and pears in New Zealand. "The netting has enhanced the quality of our fruit, in both taste and finish, since it creates a micro-climate that is protected from birds, insects, wind and hail."

It has also enhanced returns to the tune of a 30% increase in production. This means an annual harvest of around 5,400 tonnes of apples and pears are picked, packed into cartons by 22 permanent staff and 130 seasonal workers before being trucked to CentrePort in Wellington for export.

"We export 100% of our fruit," says Jamiee. "With most going to the likes of Tesco, Sainsburys, Aldi and Marks & Spencer in the UK, Carrefour in France and then to other supermarkets (Lidl and Aldi) throughout Europe, Asia, the Middle East and the US."

Marketed under the brand name of Ecco, by JR and Jamiee themselves, their fruit now has a global reputation for quality, crispness and zero residue - due to their transition into introducing more natural elements to disrupt pests rather than relying on chemical sprays.







# FRUITBOWL

## *for the Wellington region*

Wairarapa's rich history of orcharding pipfruit - apples, pears and berries - was kick-started with James Hutton Kidd's arrival into Greytown in 1906. Hutton Kidd, the man who cultivated the world-famous Royal Gala, purchased a five acre



block and, taking advantage of the rich alluvial soils, introduced apple and berry fruit growing to the region. Over the next several decades orchardists flocked in quick pursuit. The industry enjoyed its heyday through the 50s, 60s and into the 70s, when there were over 20 berry growers and high numbers of orchardists in the area. Subtle changes in climate however, whereby sharp, cold winters were steadily replaced with milder temperatures, were enough to cause yields to drop from the once achievable 10 tonnes per hectare to just 1.5 tonnes. This, in turn, caused the demise of the berry growers during the 80s and 90s. The apples and pears sector, meanwhile, became saturated around this time too and this once 'lucrative for all' market started to disperse as the smaller orchards struggled to remain profitable - with many selling out to real estate.

Wairarapa is now home to a small group of successful orchardists who survive by targeting their markets and, importantly, implementing production enhancing systems that take into account climatic and environmental conditions.

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## RAINWATER HARVEST

For the dry side of the Wairarapa valley to reach its potential as a plant based growing hub, irrigation of its arable land is necessary for producing high yields - particularly with climate predictions forecasting that Wairarapa could mirror the Hawke's Bay climate by 2040. Wairarapa Water is proposing a large-scale water management scheme. This will:

- Harvest rainwater when it's most plentiful.
- Store the water in large reservoirs.
- Pipe water to farmers, growers and market gardeners.
- Irrigate an additional 30,000 hectares of the valley.





# *One horse town to* **INTERNATIONAL WINE COUNTRY**

In June 1980, a handful of investors stood in the middle of Martinborough, then a dusty and barren backwater, to ponder the future potential of the town. Originally established to service the outer-lying sheep farms stretching out to the coast, the township was fading away. Farming in the immediate area had never taken off due to the rough, stony ground and clay covered hills. Low rainfall, hot summers and dry winds prevented early settlers from cultivating the land, since cropping and grazing were impossible under the conditions.

Sitting off the beaten track with diminishing importance due to mechanisation and agricultural automation, which lessened reliance on the town's trade and services, Martinborough was struggling economically. However, the work of soil scientist Dr Derek Milne came to light. In a report, he stated that the Martinborough climate was similar to the Burgundy region in France and that there might be potential for viticulture. Grape-growing, it seemed, was the obvious answer to the town's demise, and the investors understood that

vines would grow well in the free-draining stony land. The first hectares were bought and planted out shortly afterwards.

Today, Martinborough, Gladstone and east Masterton boast over 30 vineyards. The area is compact yet each boutique vineyard offers variety - Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc and aromatics, Chardonnay, Syrah and dessert wines - alongside exceptional quality.



## **A FIRM NOD TO THE FUTURE**

Clive Paton, founder of Ata Rangi, one of the first vineyards in Martinborough, is looking ahead 200-250 years - the time it takes to regrow a forest. With the help of family and friends, he is shaping the outlook for the year 2250 by planting trees. Keen to put right the unknowing wrong-doings of the early settlers who cleared the land, Clive has so far planted over 65,000 saplings.

Clive was one of the modern-day pioneers who, in 1980, stood on the dry, stony paddocks at the northern edge of Martinborough. When he surveyed the barren land back then, he saw opportunity. Today, now having firmly established his vineyard, Clive sees a chance to focus on

planting forests (and controlling predators) to the south of Ata Rangi, on the periphery of the Aorangi Range.

"Our forefathers had no idea that all their logging and burning would change New Zealand's ecology so dramatically," he says. "They didn't know that the trees played such a vital role in providing food for our birdlife and they didn't think about renewing timber sources when they ramped up exports of kauri in the mid-1800s."

Clive believes that because we now know the harm deforestation has caused, combined with the introduction of predators, it is up to us to make amends. His own contribution is planting

out a 160 acre, DOC-covenanted bush block with a mixture of indigenous trees including rata, beech and totara. The main goal is to return a large part of the block to natural forest - a task that will take a minimum of 200-250 years.

In other parts of the property his focus is on planting 'trees for purpose' including a long-term, sustainable native timber forestry operation. He is also planting a range of eucalypt species selected for high quality building timber and ground durability. In time, Clive says the trees can be harvested for building, as well as for farm and vineyard posts. Naturally resistant to rot and relatively fast-growing, selected eucalypt timber species can provide a future alternative to the CCA (copper chromium arsenate) treatment of

posts that is currently in widespread use.

"There is no reason why Wairarapa couldn't be producing substantial volumes of organic, untreated eucalyptus fence and vineyards posts within the next 20 or so years," he says.

Clive is also well aware of climate change and says it makes sense for Wairarapa to understand that land use might change in the future. Importantly, he adds that we all need to think about how to maximise the outcomes.

"We need to project ourselves into the future and figure out what it is that we might need so we can get into action now. If it's water storage and water distribution systems to help balance a warmer climate, then we need to push forward in those areas so we can shape the future for ourselves."







# OLIVE OIL

## A REFINED INDUSTRY

Where grapes grow, olives will also do well - and there's speculation that just as Martinborough excited the world with its wine growing, the eastern side of Wairarapa has the scope to do the same with olive oil.

Both olives and grapes thrive in low to medium fertile soil that has good drainage and where the climate is cool and moist in winter, followed by a long dry summer. This perfectly describes the expansive plains that run the length from South

Wairarapa to the east of Masterton.

The olive oil industry in Wairarapa is already on its way. In 1991 Olivo planted the first commercial olive grove with 60 trees in Martinborough. Now the local industry boasts around 85 enterprises producing high quality oil - around 30% of New Zealand's olive oil. Wairarapa has four olive presses and the largest number of individual growers across the regions. And many believe this is just the beginning.



# PERFECT BLEND

Craig and Ruth Leaf-Wright of Leafyridge Olives were amongst the early birds to jump on the olive train. Keen for an olive grove as a hobby, they were careful to purchase land in the right area of Wairarapa where the climatic and soil types were conducive to olive trees.

Thirty-one acres of pasture land and much soil testing later, the couple planted nearly 4,000 trees over a three year period. “We knew you can’t plant olives just anywhere,” explains Craig. “Olives, like grapes, need a certain environment to survive. We found land in East Taratahi that fitted the bill.”

Leafyridge quickly went from hobby to full-time enterprise and is now the largest single estate olive grove in Wairarapa, producing 50 tonnes of fruit a year from eight different varieties - which translates into around 7,000 litres or 14,000 bottles of extra virgin olive oil.

“Growing different varieties means we have been able to branch out into flavoured olive oil and expand our product range,” says Craig. “Flavoured oils are a bit more work; for example we’ve had to learn the delicate art of blending, but consumer demand is huge.”

Like most other olive oil producers in New Zealand, Craig and Ruth’s market is domestic. With healthy demand locally, as well as up and down the country, Leafyridge products sell online, direct to around 10 restaurants and through Moore Wilson’s in Masterton and Wellington. “Consumers are becoming more olive oil savvy. Kiwis are becoming olive oil connoisseurs and they will go out of their way to buy a boutique, flavoursome extra virgin olive oil, for dressing, dipping and cooking.”

Craig says that while overseas markets are

desirable, export costs of boutique products are prohibitive. Then there’s the battle with global perception. “The world still believes the best olive oil comes from Italy and Spain and, unfortunately, while we make some of the world’s finest olive oil, New Zealand isn’t really on the radar, especially as we can’t yet compete on price.” But Craig is optimistic and thinks if the wine industry can do it, the olive oil industry may well just crack it too.

“New Zealand products already do really well in global competitions. We receive gold medals alongside other countries. Breaking into overseas retail may just need some clever marketing.”







## PURE LOCAL, PURE WAIRARAPA

Lisa Birrell understands the importance of capturing the essence of a region, packaging it up and then promoting it from a central plateau. She runs Pure Wairarapa - a marketing company that showcases Wairarapa's exceptional quality when it comes to local food and drink.

With a focus on 'ethical', 'natural' and 'fresh', Pure Wairarapa brings together food growers, producers, retailers, restaurants and consumers. It provides an interface between the farm gate and the conscientious product purchaser. It facilitates the relationship between grower and retailer and it pulls together a wide range of the region's products into hamper and gift packs for sale online and in local shops. The next step for the business is the development of farm tours.

Lisa says farm tourism in Wairarapa could be huge. "Consumers are becoming more food savvy and people increasingly want to know where their food comes from. They also want some kind of connection with what they are buying. They want the story and they want an introduction or an insight into who the farmer or grower is.

"In addition, they are thinking about the nutritional value of what they are eating and

drinking. Knowing where their food grew, how it grew and what processes it went through is becoming increasingly important to them. What better way than to offer them the opportunity of seeing for themselves where their lunch was grown - and meeting the person who grew it."

Lisa already runs tours through her olive and hazelnut orchard, Fantail Grove, for customers keen to look behind the scenes at how an organic operation works. "We are finding that people are really interested in 'how' we do things here. Our recent conversion to an organic operation is fascinating to many of our visitors and they really relish the opportunity of walking around the farm and being amongst the plants and the animals.

"They like to ask questions about our use of lime to improve soil health, and why we use liquid compost for fertiliser - and they are very taken with our flock of Romney sheep, which we use to trim the grass."

Lisa explains that the benefit for producers is that they, in turn, get to know their customers better. "It's first-hand market research where we can ask our buyers what they want, how they want it and what kind of price they are happy to pay."

# HONEY HOT SPOT

With a growing number of registered honey producers in the region, Wairarapa is fast becoming one of New Zealand's honey hot spots. Alongside honey producers turning out clover and meadow blends, and premium grade mānuka, new adjunct businesses have also sprung up in the region. Many are aligned to hive management and supplies for beekeeping and honey processing - and have brought a range of protective gear, machinery, extractors and storage tanks to producers in the region.

Our fudge makers, our bakers, beverage producers and our restaurateurs are all making the most of Wairarapa honey, creating new flavours and experimenting with different varieties to bring about yet another 'taste of Wairarapa'.

But it wasn't that long ago that mānuka trees were being stripped out in favour of reclaiming grazing land. With no market for mānuka honey, no-one wanted mānuka trees growing in their backyards. The honey it produced was thick and tricky to take off the comb and with no demand for it, no-one wanted to go to the trouble of harvesting it.

Around five years ago the world woke up to the health benefits of mānuka - and things started to change. While 'honey-diggers' started buying up prime farmland to plant out mānuka, the buzz popularised honey producing in general. Consumers too started using and eating more.



## HOME IS WHERE THE HONEY IS

Masterton is home to Watson & Son, one of the largest producers of mānuka honey in New Zealand. With more than 40,000 hives, the company specialises in producing a premium mono-floral mānuka honey (renowned for its health benefits), which it markets under its Black Label brand.

To ensure the bees aren't distracted by other flowers, Watson & Son hives are placed in carefully selected areas that are isolated and dense with mānuka. Many of the remote sites have no road access, often requiring hives to be helicoptered in to unspoilt, mānuka-rich areas.

With sites based all around New Zealand, from Northland to Canterbury, the organisation values its relationships with landowners in order to access and care for its hard-to-reach hives.

The company's beekeepers have to follow a strict hive management system to maintain the purity and premium quality of the honey harvested. And, each pot of honey can be traced right back to the hive site it came from.

A range of Watson & Son Molon Gold Standard (MGS) certified mānuka honey products, speciality blends, mānuka lozenges, and bee pollen capsules are distributed to over 300 New Zealand retailers. Internationally, the company is experiencing increasing demand from key markets including Australia, China, Hong Kong, Japan, the UK and Europe and the Middle East.



# OUTSTANDING IN NEW ZEALAND

Greytown Honey's Karly Polaschek confirms that the market is on a high - despite a lull in the 2016 harvest after a wet winter, and a downturn in production in 2017 following a dry summer.

Karly and husband Alex are fifth generation South Wairarapa beekeepers. They currently operate around 700 hives (having grown from just 20 hives seven years ago) and produce a range of award-winning honey blends.

"We now offer seven varieties - clover, wildflower, native, kamahi and three grades of mānuka - which we package using paper and traditional glass jars - no plastic," says Karly.

"These serve speciality markets where people are wanting to purchase something a little bit unique, as well as local to the area. Our retail outlets tend to be a mix of Wairarapa small shops and cafes and bigger stores like Moore Wilson's in both Masterton and Wellington. We also sell online and at lifestyle events, home and garden shows and food expos the length and breadth of the country."

Greytown Honey has a growing reputation and is used by top New Zealand chefs in

Auckland as well as closer to home.

"Mike at the Clareville Bakery uses our honey in his highly acclaimed honey and cinnamon cookies and in his hot cross buns as well as some of his breads."

Karly says being from a long-standing line of Wairarapa beekeepers means that the local connections are important to her personally, as well as the business.

"Knowing that the community is using our honey is an amazing feeling. It makes me proud to live and work amongst such a supportive area."

She ensures that the support is mutual by providing honey to the Wairarapa school breakfast clubs that aim to give children a good start to their day. She also provides assistance to local kindergartens and schools by sharing her knowledge around using beeswax food wraps instead of plastic wrap.

Greytown Honey recently scooped two silver awards for its Kamahi and Mānuka 100+ blends, and two highly commended awards for its Wildflower and Mānuka 200+ blends at the Outstanding NZ Food Producer Awards.



# CELEBRATING FINE FOOD

Food is an integral part of Wairarapa culture and lifestyle. With 'quality' the common denominator, Wairarapa is proud to showcase its local products at its weekly farmers' markets, across its boutique stores, rising number of speciality shops and delis, in its restaurants and cafes, as well as at regional events such as Wellington On a Plate and food fairs up and down the country.

Wairarapa edible goods also travel far and wide to food and beverage exhibitions around the globe - scooping top international awards as they go. Recent wins in some highly prestigious international competitions for olive oil and wine highlight the quality of food production

and the skills in producing food which is world-class.

In addition, as food tourism continues to grow in the region, growers and producers are finding that people are coming to them. They are experiencing more and more people visiting their farms and orchards to sample, first-hand, the origins of Wairarapa produce.

The strength of community spirit in Wairarapa means local products are well-supported day-to-day, year round. Encouraged by 'buy local' campaigns and driven by a sense of provincial pride, the local population is right behind Wairarapa producers and growers.

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## YEAR-ROUND FOOD FESTIVITIES

Every Saturday throughout the year, markets and stalls in Featherston and Masterton sell local, seasonal produce. Every Sunday morning the Carterton Farmers Market sets up, offering boutique products, fresh fruit and vegetables. The Fresh Fish truck is a familiar sight around the region as it sets up on different days of the week in the Wairarapa corridor towns of Masterton, Carterton and Greytown.

As spring starts up and rolls into summer, the fine days and warm evenings heighten the hunger for local products. November heralds the arrival of the famous Toast Martinborough event, when around 8,000 food and wine lovers travel from all over the country to Martinborough to taste local vintages and feast on local produce. Toast serves to whet appetites for a summer run of regular and 'one-off' local markets - the Wharekauhau Food Society markets at Te Kairanga Estate (Martinborough), the Greytown Country Markets and Wairarapa signature event - the Martinborough Fair.

When summer makes way for autumn,

focus shifts to harvesting local products with Gladstone's Wairarapa Wines Harvest Festival in March. In April, Wairarapa's historic racecourse hosts yet another opportunity for local producers at the Tauherenikau French Country Fair. May is then the month of cheese, kicked off with the Eketahuna Cheese Festival. And at the start of winter, the annual olive harvest takes place.





# CHANGING LANDSCAPE

## *for sheep and beef*

Wairarapa sheep and beef farming has been a mainstay for the region since sheep stations set up in the area over 180 years ago. Cattle were introduced soon after the first sheep started grazing and by 1851 records show there were some 20,000 sheep and 2,000 cattle - high numbers for an area then sparsely populated.

Wairarapa farmers faced many challenges, but breed selection, soil science, pasture growth and the advent of aerial topdressing meant livestock numbers continued to increase through to around 1990 - when demand dropped and production started to fall. Many in the sector

responded positively by implementing new technologies to increase lambing efficiency. Some introduced more intensive systems for cattle, while others converted to dairy.

By adapting to the circumstances, sheep and beef farming - along with dairying - continued to dominate pastoral farming in Wairarapa and by 2012 the region held 10% of New Zealand's sheep (3.1 million) and 3.6% of its dairy cattle (232,400).

The ability to cope with change is a trait that seems to whisper across the landscape - and one that many believe lies at the heart of Wairarapa's food industry success.



## FIRST CUT

Operating out of rural Gladstone, integrated meat processor and supplier, Cabernet Foods Ltd, delivers from its own farm gate 5,500 tonnes of Wairarapa beef, lamb and pork products to distributors, retailers and consumers throughout New Zealand.

# CRAFT BEEF

Adding value to the red meat sector has been preoccupying pure Angus breeder Willie Falloon for some time. He, like many others in the red meat industry, is keen to close the gap between producers and consumers, and reap better financial rewards for quality products at the farm gate. Willie says that New Zealand's reputation for genuine grass-fed animals, food safety and traceability can command price premiums at the producer's end - rather than leave the ultimate 'on the shelf' price tag in the hands of those at the other end of the chain.

But the 'how' part has been the sticking point until recently when Willie teamed up with Jim Wilkes to pioneer a nationwide initiative. They set up Triple Nine Farms - a collective of beef farmers who meet stringent 'Triple Nine' audit criteria - and see this as the way to break the traditional mould of marketing premium New Zealand grass-fed beef to high-end consumers.

Willie says the aim is to really push the story of how the beef is grown. "New Zealand has a unique story and it is on this that we can capitalise. For hundreds of years we have raised purebred Angus cattle on 100% pasture and this alone is hugely appealing to

consumers who really care about what they eat."

Jim has identified a change in consumer behaviour. He's calling it the craft beef revolution, where food and health conscious people are actively seeking out the story behind their food; the nutrient content and the exposure to unwanted chemicals. "These people will pay extra for a good quality steak that can be traced back to the animal, the paddock, the farm and the farmer."

Willie adds that the processing of these quality cuts is also part of the story. "The meat processor is also a main character in the supply chain and farmers joining Triple Nine are sure to write him in." So too is the retailer, who Willie says, can lend a further sense of exclusivity, especially if they are boutique sellers rather than main stores.

Triple Nine Farm products are already on sale to high-end restaurants locally and nationally, as well as to consumers who have got wind of the brand. Willie believes it won't be long before there is more consumer traction, particularly once the products are marketed.

"We are expecting to grow quickly in a very short space of time."







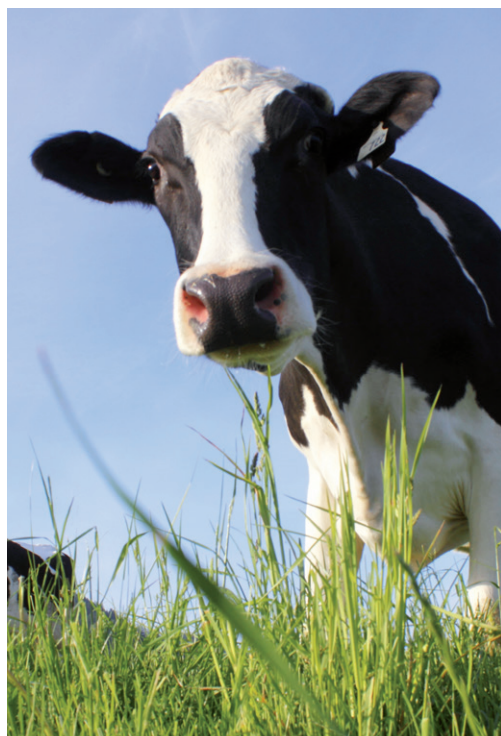
## *Quality of taste*

When Mike and Liz McCreary purchased Kumenga Farm on the shores of Lake Wairarapa, they knew they wanted to farm differently. Their aim was to deliver to consumers a promise that their sheep and beef would be raised in a natural and ethical way - so that the end product would be safe, traceable and of the highest quality.

This meant committing to new, sustainable ways of farming - putting animal welfare first, looking after the waterways, protecting natural land features, and understanding the importance of biodiversity. In short - creating the most optimum farm environment possible.

“We have fenced all the waterways, planted shelter belts, restored the water flow between the Ruamahanga River and Lake Wairarapa and have moved towards keeping stock in small ‘mobs’ that stay together from the day they arrive. “Keeping stock in smaller groups and in smaller paddocks for shorter periods of time means we can monitor exactly what they are eating. This information helps us ensure maximum nutrition, which in turn helps us increase production.

“Of course, the end goal is to provide the consumer with 100% grass-fed lamb that is best in quality - and best in taste.”



## DAIRY THEN

There has been a dairying presence in Wairarapa since the 19th century when farmers ran small herds of 20-25 cows. Unfortunately, growth was held back by the sector's small scale. And while many cheese-making initiatives sprang up in the 1880s, their efforts were hindered by irregular milk supplies. This resulted in some cheese factories starting to close down or form into dairy cooperatives, which did help to move their butter and cheese to ready markets.

When milk tankers were introduced from the 1930s, the industry was rationalised and many more factories closed. In 2006, only one factory, in Pahiatua, remained open.

Since the 1960s the trend has been towards fewer farms with bigger herds to maximise efficiency and production. In 1965 the average farm size was 70 hectares with an average herd of 83, and an average milk fat production per cow of 126 kgs. By comparison, by 2013/14, this had increased to 132 hectares, 366 cows and 206 kilograms respectively.

## *Dairy now*

- Currently in the Wellington-Wairarapa region there are around 443 herds with an average herd size of 363 cows - around 160,675 cows in total. This constitutes 4% of New Zealand's dairy herds.
- The largest dairying district is Tararua, followed by Carterton, South Wairarapa, and Masterton.
- The average farm size is 132 ha and there are 341 dairy owners/operators.
- 57 million kgs of milk solids are produced per annum.
- The value of milk production to the regional economy is 336 million NZD.
- Dairying provides on farm jobs for 1317 people. A further 327 are employed in processing and wholesaling.
- Total dairy employment in Wairarapa contributes 1% of total regional employment.
- Wairarapa dairy farmers track above national averages for testing their herds - New Zealand herd testing is at 64.3%, and Wairarapa tracks at 70.4%.
- In terms of milk solids, at 4.92% Wairarapa also tracks above the 4.77% average for New Zealand.
- The milk solids total for Wairarapa is 8.8%, compared to a country average of 8.64%.







## A Paddock to Plate Adventure

Janet and Miles King are known as the ‘go to’ people for anything and everything sheep-dairy related - from sheep nutrition, genetics, soil management and lamb rearing to milking and manufacturing sheep cheeses.

The couple have been involved in the sheep industry for 20 years. They started their sheep milking venture by purchasing 60 big-boned Coopworth ewes (a breed well regarded for its ability to lamb easily), which they inseminated with NZ East Friesian semen - resulting in a 80% conception rate and all ewes giving birth within 24 hours.

Janet says it was a crazy beginning but the couple soon learned to manage lambing as well as refine and develop the flock into one of New Zealand’s elite milking flocks.

“Also at the time Miles was teaching himself to make sheep’s cheese. With little information over this side of the world to draw on and haphazard internet connections, research was tricky. Our first attempts were very much trial and error and included a batch of green cheese as a result of mis-measuring the amount of dried herbs we needed to add.”

Next came the further development of the farm and the milking parlour, as well as

extending the cheese factory and adding cow’s milk cheeses to the range.

Today the award winning Kingsmeade brand is well-established and has become something of a household name.

“We love living and working in Wairarapa and our passion for the region is reflected throughout our business (our new sheep and cow milk suppliers are all locally based), and captured in our cheeses, which have local names - Wairarapa Jack, Tinui Blue, Mt Bruce Havarti and Ngawi Brie are some of our popular ones.”

### HOLY CHEDDAR

- Kingsmeade now makes 20,000kgs of cheese per annum.
- 14 different varieties ranged from aged hard to deliciously soft.
- Each batch is hand-made.
- Kingsmeade now has its own breed of sheep known as DairyMeade NZ with a sub-flock of black ones called the ‘Wool Blacks’.
- The company works as an industry partner with AgResearch and Massey University on a number of sheep milk projects.

# EGGS FACTOR

Commercial egg production in Wairarapa has been around since mid-last century and it seems the region is well suited to the industry. Henergy's Graeme Napier - who, in 1995, turned a run-down caged-egg farm on the outskirts of Masterton into a thriving cage-free operation (heralding the start of the cage-free movement in New Zealand) - says Wairarapa's agricultural landscape, location and 'sense of community' are all advantages.

"Wairarapa farms grow some beautiful grains and maize which form the basis of Henergy's hen feed. We now use more than 350 tonnes of feed a month. Being so close to high quality feed is hugely important to us since it reduces transport costs and helps boost the local economy by keeping business local."

It also means the company's nutritionist can work closely with Sharpes, the Gladstone-based, family-owned feedmill, on the 12 different diets it uses for each of its 100,000 hens. "The health and well-being of the hen is directly related to the quality of the eggs so everything we do revolves around putting the hen first. Then, of course, it is all about the egg."

The eggs go through rigorous quality control since Henergy has the most modern and high-tech egg grading system in New Zealand. The system includes each egg being photographed multiple times to check for cleanliness, acoustically tapped to check for cracks, and checked inside and outside using special lights and sensors. In addition, the egg shell is sanitised by ultraviolet light.

Graeme says Wairarapa is also well-situated for overnight delivery to domestic customers, using the road links out to Wellington and up to the north of the country. "We are also well placed to access export markets. Our 'Nature's Best' brand is exported to distributors and supermarkets in Singapore."

He adds that one reward of living and working in Wairarapa is being amongst friendly neighbours and a community that welcomes responsible businesses. "Our team is made up of good local people who, as long-term employees, care for each other, care for the hens and take pride in working for an ethical and welfare-oriented business."

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## *Through the barn door*



In flocks of under 5,000, hens are free to roam, scratch, fly, dart about and socialise. Conditions are stable for them. Away from the natural elements, the barns are kept at a temperate climate. This means the hens are not too hot nor too cold - and never wet, hungry, thirsty or stressed by predators.

The hens also have an in-barn 'hen-tertainment' system which includes music, perches set at different levels, natural wood and tree branches to play on, extra grit to peck, wood shavings to scratch through and sparkly toys and CDs on strings to keep the girls stimulated.

In 2011 Henergy was awarded the Good Egg Award from international organisation, Compassion in World Farming, for its commitment to cage-free eggs. Since 1999, the company has held the blue-tick of approval from the SPCA for its hen-friendly practices.



### Expansion boosts local economy

Intensive cage-egg farming is being progressively phased out and all old cages will be removed by 2022. In addition, New Zealand supermarkets have said they don't want colony cages either. For Henergy, this is an exciting opportunity for growth. "This is fabulous for the hens and great for consumers who want to eat quality eggs that have been laid in happy environments. On the back of this, Henergy will be looking to double production in the near future... and then likely double it again... alongside exploring export opportunities in Dubai, Hong Kong and China. This means more Wairarapa jobs and more money staying within the local economy."

### *Affordable superfood*

- Consumers are re-embracing eggs as a healthy and affordable superfood.
- Nutritional research shows eggs are a good source of protein and are an important component of a balanced diet.
- Eggs contain essential vitamins and can assist with weight control.
- Around 90 million dozen eggs are produced and sold per annum in New Zealand.
- The New Zealand egg market has grown 3% each year in the last five years.



# *Bread and butter*

As one of Masterton's largest employers with 110 staff, Breadcraft Wairarapa doesn't take its responsibility of feeding the population lightly - for the company it's not just like providing for the family - it is providing for the family. Especially as much of the workforce is made up of local husband and wife teams - and even parents and their grown up children.

At 75 years old, Breadcraft is the grandfather of the region's family-owned businesses. Founded by Scottish immigrant Harold Cockburn, it started life in the 1940s as an artisan bakery.

Today, the business has grown into an innovative manufacturer of bread and bread-related products. Under the leadership of co-owner John Cockburn - Harold's grandson - every week around 150,000 products are produced, packaged and delivered

around the country as well as overseas.

Tortillas, paninis, pita breads, Turkish and a variety of artisan breads are transported to New Zealand retailers, while Breadcraft's pudding range (labelled Cockburn's) is popular both in New Zealand and offshore.

Recently, the company developed bread with a shelf life of up to 10 years - which is currently being exported to armed forces overseas.

This kind of product innovation, as well as investment in the plant, have helped keep the company youthful and thriving. Investment too in the local community has cemented its role as 'provider'.

Breadcraft supports local events, donates to food banks, the Salvation Army and school breakfast clubs. Every week 500 loaves go to sausage sizzles at sporting and fundraising events.





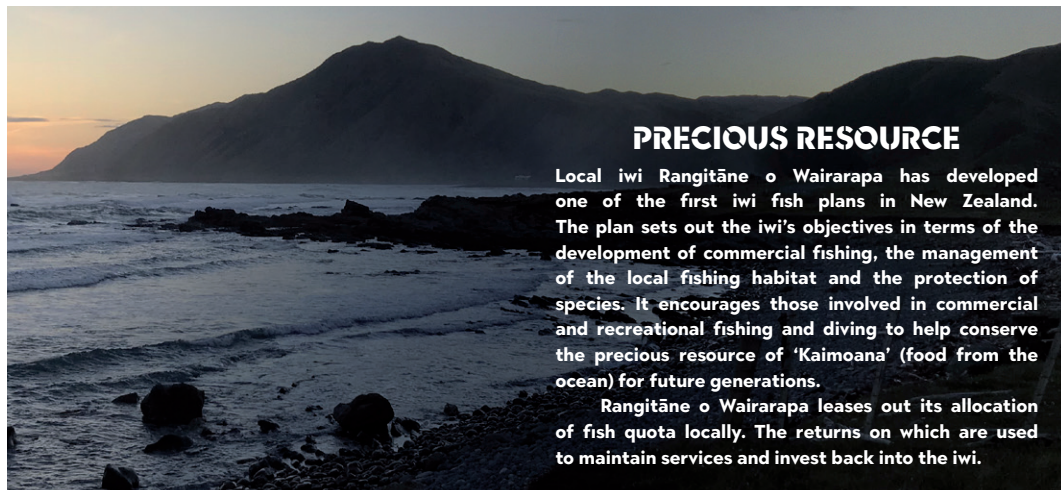
# SEAFOOD - A FAMILY AFFAIR

With crayfishing in the family blood, passed down from Mike Burkhart's father and his father before him, Mike and Donna came home to Wairarapa to keep the family livelihood going. Mike built his first boat and set out into the crisp waters off Flatpoint Beach every day to pull up the lobster pots. Three boats and a good career later, Mike and Donna have now handed the reins over to their two sons - Johnny and Luke.

"Fishing is part of our history; our heritage," says Donna. "It's a good life, being close to the Wairarapa shores and with the industry now monitored, crayfishing has a good future."

Demand for crayfish has always been strong but in recent years offshore demand, particularly from China, has grown significantly. Now 96% of New Zealand crayfish, which includes just over 300 tonnes annually from our area, goes to China. And while New Zealand competes with Western and South Australia and South America for market share, it holds the best reputation for taste.

"Our chilly waters are deemed to bring out the best tasting crayfish, compared to those fished out of other countries' waters. This means that New Zealand product is highly sought after."



## PRECIOUS RESOURCE

Local iwi Rangitāne o Wairarapa has developed one of the first iwi fish plans in New Zealand. The plan sets out the iwi's objectives in terms of the development of commercial fishing, the management of the local fishing habitat and the protection of species. It encourages those involved in commercial and recreational fishing and diving to help conserve the precious resource of 'Kaimoana' (food from the ocean) for future generations.

Rangitāne o Wairarapa leases out its allocation of fish quota locally. The returns on which are used to maintain services and invest back into the iwi.





# CHANGE - THE ONLY CONSTANT

## *A look to Wairarapa's foodie future*

Wairarapa is in a very strong position to ready itself for a future that involves many changes - changing weather patterns, changing environmental pressures, changing consumer demands, changing markets and ever-changing technology.

Innovation and adaptability have been the driving forces behind Wairarapa farmers and growers since the early Māori came here and lived off the bounty of the land. Throughout the generations Wairarapa people have tilled the soil, worked the land and navigated the shores. Undeterred by hard times, they braved the natural elements and worked through economic ups and downs to a point where Wairarapa is now thriving as a food producing region.

At every turn, our ancestors could see opportunity. This, coupled with a readiness to 'have a go' at something different and an acceptance that 'trial and error' is part of progress, meant they were on the front foot back then.

Today, Wairarapa's natural tendency to front foot will take the food industry to new heights. Our people already see the opportunities that lie ahead. They already know what might be required (investment in infrastructure and irrigation) to create an even more successful foodie future... and they understand that consumer demands will change.

Wairarapa is ready to embrace the next food industry phase.





## *The Wairarapa Food Story Group*

The Wairarapa Food Story Group comprises Wairarapa-based food businesses and organisations - who are passionate about furthering economic development within the region.

It is the Wairarapa Food Story Group's aim to help facilitate this. The group also hopes to ignite further interest in local food, and 'inspire food production' and currently includes: Steve Maharey, Bob Francis, David Hancock, Michael Jamieson, Pim Borren, Phoebe Chamberlain, Lucy Griffiths, Arthur Graves, Nick Wempe and Rob Steele.

Wairarapa produces a wealth and diversity of quality food which can be linked to its history, geography, natural features and the passion, energy, skill and innovation of the people who enjoy the Wairarapa way of life.

The region already produces many high-value food products but further growth, investment and development of the food production industry

(and the value-added products that bring sustainable and long-term growth to the region) is needed and wanted.

The Wairarapa Food Story Group calls for:

- Central, regional and local government to work cooperatively to ensure Wairarapa becomes a smart, innovative food region.
- A regional plan, that provides long-term economic direction, to be developed and put in place - ensuring that resources and skills are allocated to help implement that plan.
- Wairarapa food producers to support and involve themselves in activities that will accelerate development of the regional plan.
- Wairarapa people to see themselves as part of a unique food region which identifies and values these stories.

For more information about the Wairarapa Food Story, please contact: [info@wairarapafoodstory.nz](mailto:info@wairarapafoodstory.nz)





The Wairarapa Food Story Group would like to thank everyone for sharing their food stories, Masterton District Council for the strong support of the project, The Wairarapa Journal for developing and publishing this booklet, and The Screening Room for the venue for the launch. We also thank Henley Hutchings and Infometrics, the Wellington Regional Economic Development Agency (WREDA), and Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) for providing economic and employment data. The information shared in this booklet is intended to give an overview and commentary of the food industry in Wairarapa only. Opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Wairarapa Food Story Group nor the associated organisations that form this group. For further information please contact [info@wairarapafoodstory.nz](mailto:info@wairarapafoodstory.nz)