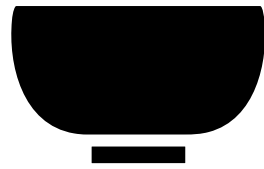


ANNUAL
REPORT
2024

THE KITCHEN PROJECT





Nine dishes, nine countries, one incredible table. A spectacular spread prepared by TKP entrepreneurs for the 2023 Lewisham Awards, showcasing the diversity and talent of our food whānau.

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01. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE KITCHEN PROJECT IS AUCKLAND COUNCIL'S FOOD INCUBATOR PROGRAMME, EMPOWERING EMERGING FOOD ENTREPRENEURS AND BUILDING COMMUNITY WEALTH ACROSS TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU.

Launched in 2018, Auckland Council's food business incubator, The Kitchen Project, continued its mission over the past year (1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024) to empower early-stage food and beverage entrepreneurs across Tāmaki Makaurau.

Our Core Programme places strong emphasis on diversity, cultural identity, healthy food, and sustainable practices, all underpinned by a commitment to community wealth building. To date, more than 70 businesses have participated in our programme, which includes a six-week Induction Module focused on building the foundations of a successful food business, followed by a 14-week Growth Module guided by volunteer industry experts.

In the past year, we delivered five Core Programme cohorts offering a comprehensive curriculum covering business planning, branding and storytelling, marketing, food safety, commercial compliance, sustainable food waste product development, and sales. Entrepreneurs benefit from mentoring and the support of a trusted network of partners, all helping to turn food ideas into sustainable, market-ready ventures. We provide access to fully equipped commercial kitchens at subsidised rates, enabling participants to prepare products in certified facilities. This year, we established our headquarters, Whare Kai, in central Auckland and expanded into Pukekohe, welcoming new entrepreneurs at 1 Roulston Street.

A Strategic and Operational Review in 2023 reshaped our direction, highlighting opportunities to grow the team, refine programme delivery, and adopt population-driven location strategies. These changes position us for sustainable growth and deeper community engagement. Beyond the commercial kitchen environment, The Kitchen Project helps entrepreneurs feed their own communities with healthy, culturally relevant food while retaining economic value and profit within those communities. Our work supports Auckland Council's wider goals for sustainable food systems, waste reduction, and local food access, aligned with Council's food action priorities, underpinned by the principles of Te Puāwaitanga o te Tātai, the kaupapa Māori values framework within *Te Tāruke-ā-Tāwhiri: Auckland's Climate Plan*.

In response to increasing requests, we have established an agency work stream to better support and deliver the many projects we are invited to contribute to. Our agency arm continues to expand, offering advisory support and meeting rising demand for localised kai mahi solutions. We are building strong partnerships with community groups, educational institutions, economic development agencies, and social enterprises to co-create initiatives that increase food access, improve wellbeing, and foster innovation in the food space. We remain committed to delivering impactful initiatives that empower emerging food businesses, foster innovation, and create meaningful social and economic outcomes across Tāmaki Makaurau.

6	Years operating The Kitchen Project
70	Businesses have gone through our Programme
34%	Māori / Pacific food businesses
85%	Indigenous or migrant food businesses
2	Commercial kitchen spaces
6	Businesses utilising our commercial kitchen
5	Businesses in their own premises
15	Businesses using their own kitchens
11	Markets across the motu

2. STRATEGIC & OPERATIONAL REVIEW

IN APRIL 2023, THE KITCHEN PROJECT UNDERTOOK A STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL REVIEW TO GUIDE THE NEXT STAGE OF GROWTH BY 2027.

At five years in, The Kitchen Project's programme had gained strong traction across Tāmaki Makaurau and developed a solid reputation for incubating food businesses rooted in culture, community, and sustainability. The review, held in April 2023, provided an opportunity to reflect on progress, respond to new challenges, and identify ways to strengthen the structure, scale the impact, and contribute to the future food economy.

Relocating to a New Home Base

Until recently, The Kitchen Project operated from Henderson and Manukau, supported through cross-council collaboration. In 2020, TKP shifted from Eke Panuku to Auckland Council's Community Wellbeing department, opening the door for TKP to move from a locally based mandate to accepting businesses from across Tāmaki Makaurau.

As a result, a decision was made to relocate the programme's base to the Caretaker's Cottage at Albert Park in the Auckland city centre. This move created a more accessible central hub to support participation from across the region. It also aligned with TKP's involvement in initiatives such as the Kai Korero backbone group, which is advancing a High Impact Kai Mahi Plan for the region.

The new home base has enabled a hybrid model, with the first six weeks of classroom-based learning delivered centrally, followed by neighbourhood-based support during the mentoring and Growth Module of the Core Programme.

Responding to a Changing Environment

The review took place during a period of rapid change and uncertainty in the food sector. Rising costs, extreme weather events, and disrupted supply chains placed added pressure on emerging food businesses. Between 2022 and 2023, the cost of groceries rose 14 percent, fruit and vegetables increased by more than 22 percent, and restaurant

prices jumped by nearly 10 percent. In response, TKP evolved its curriculum and partnerships to better support entrepreneurs, particularly Indigenous and migrant communities navigating these challenges.

Climate-conscious and low-waste practices were strengthened, and greater emphasis was placed on food security, healthy kai, local sourcing, and Auckland Council's wider kai sovereignty priorities. These priorities support communities to have greater control over their food systems. TKP also deepened its work with Māori and Pacific food businesses, connecting entrepreneurs to farmers markets, teaching gardens, and community-based social enterprise food distribution channels.

Building a Stronger Operating Model

As part of the review's outcomes, TKP was reimaged into three defined workstreams: Core Programme, Administration, and Agency.

Staffing requirements were reassessed and steps taken to increase capacity across the team. The move to the city centre also allowed The Kitchen Project to streamline operations and the programme delivery, leverage Council's Central Hub assets, offer consultancy services for special projects, and provide greater engagement and opportunities for alumni from a central base.

At the same time, TKP continued to broaden how success is defined in the food sector. For many of our entrepreneurs, particularly migrant families and those for whom English is a second language, thriving in markets, community food events, or small-scale food enterprises is a meaningful and culturally grounded form of success.

Internationally, food markets are vibrant, sustainable pathways for family businesses, and this model resonates strongly with our cohort. By recognising markets as a legitimate and successful business



platform, the programme supports entrepreneurs to define success on their own terms, rather than through traditional corporate or SME benchmarks.

Looking ahead

The Strategic and Operational Review and its resulting actions laid the groundwork for the next stage of The Kitchen Project's journey. With a new home, a refined model, and strengthened

partnerships, The Kitchen Project is well placed to build on its impact and help shape a broader business-scape and a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient food system for Auckland.

Strengthening relationships with the Learning Quarter and contributing to the Central Hub Community Strategy will further anchor TKP within the city centre and expand opportunities for collaboration.



3. NEW OPERATING STRUCTURE

BUILT FOR PURPOSE, DESIGNED FOR IMPACT.

To support our strategic direction and streamline delivery, The Kitchen Project is now organised by three workstreams: the **Core Programme**, **Administration**, and **Agency**.

The **Core Programme** delivers hands-on training and practical resources to support early-stage food entrepreneurs through a six-month experience, beginning with a six-week Induction Module. This includes expert-led training in business planning, branding and marketing, storytelling, accounting and finance, food control plans and legislation, sustainability, and healthy food practices.

Entrepreneurs then move into a 14-week Growth Development Module, which offers one-on-one mentoring and access to subsidised commercial

kitchen space. Upon completing the Programme, participants join our Alumni Network, gaining ongoing opportunities for connection, support, and engagement.

Our **Administration** underpins the smooth and efficient running of the organisation, ensuring systems, communications, and operations work seamlessly.

The **Agency** focuses on special projects, strategic collaborations, and partnerships that extend our impact across the wider food and beverage sector. It also responds to a growing number of external requests for kai mahi advice and meaningful collaboration coming from within Auckland Council and other organisations.



THE KITCHEN PROJECT WORKSTREAMS

4. CORE PROGRAMME

THE KITCHEN PROJECT OFFERS A COMPREHENSIVE 20-WEEK PROGRAMME THAT NURTURES EMERGING FOOD ENTREPRENEURS, HELPING THEM TRANSITION FROM AMATEUR PASSION TO PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE.

Induction Module - 6 Weeks

Entrepreneurs kickstart their journey with an intensive six-week Induction Module which includes three in-person classes each week.

The topics addressed include:

- Marketing strategies, branding and storytelling
- Accounting, finance, and fund sourcing
- Comprehensive business planning, food costing and profitability
- Understanding food control plans and food legislation
- Prioritising sustainability and healthy food options.



This Induction Module is enriched with volunteer guest sessions from established food business owners and business experts. They share insights into the challenges they faced, their experiences, and lessons learned in setting up their enterprises. Each session is led by local volunteer experts. By the end of this Module, participants will have drafted a robust business plan and deepened their understanding of food regulations. They will also gain familiarity with commercial kitchen operations

and host a tasting session with invited guests to receive feedback on their food. Participants will also have developed a roadmap of tasks to complete to further their business.

Growth Development Module - 14 Weeks

After laying a strong foundation, entrepreneurs move to the 14-week Growth Development Module to work on their roadmap to become a legitimate business. With a blend of one-on-one mentoring and group catch-ups every fortnight, this Module emphasises peer support and collective growth. Industry experts and mentors provide valuable insights. By the Programme's end, participants have built a network with industry professionals, established solid distribution lines, reached their target market, and set their food businesses on a trajectory for success.

Entrepreneurs are expected to commit nine hours weekly during the Induction Module and two to three hours every fortnight during the Growth Development Module, in addition to the time required to set up their business. Recognising the importance of affordable commercial kitchen space for growing food businesses, TKP offers subsidised commercial kitchen bookings in Manukau at Due Drop Events Centre and Te Manawa in the West.

TKP's commitment doesn't end with the Core Programme. As entrepreneurs venture into the food industry, they continue receiving support, ensuring their business sustainability and success.

With more than half a decade of shaping successful food entrepreneurs, TKP is now channelling efforts towards developing an alumni strategy, ensuring long-term community building and continued success, and provides agency support for special projects aligned with community and wealth building food priorities for Auckland.





5. OUR COHORTS

CELEBRATING THE 2023–2024 ENTREPRENEURS BEHIND THE APRON

Over the past 12 months, The Kitchen Project has supported five cohorts of food entrepreneurs across Tāmaki Makaurau — from Henderson to Manukau, the central city to Pukekohe. These cohorts represent the heart of our kaupapa: passionate people bringing their food dreams to life while honouring culture, community, and local flavour.

Each cohort has contributed its own character to the programme, from innovative health-focused products to dishes rooted in family tradition and regional identity. Whether preparing Goan delicacies, Dutch street food, or vibrant Malaysian dishes, these entrepreneurs shared a common goal: to build businesses that nourish and uplift the communities they serve, whilst also supporting their families financially.

This year also marked a special milestone with the launch of our first Pukekohe-based cohort at 1 Roulston Street. The site, located in Aotearoa's food bowl, reinforces our commitment to place-based delivery and increasing access to food entrepreneurship pathways across the region.

“The Kitchen Project is about more than just launching food businesses. It’s about creating spaces where cultural identity is celebrated, where entrepreneurs are supported to take bold steps, and where economic value is retained in the communities we work with.”

Connie Clarkson, Programme Manager, The Kitchen Project

Below are the entrepreneurs who joined us in 2023/2024:

Henderson Cohort 12

Phillipa Malpas – *Little Pips*
Edwina Stowers – *Fresh off the Boat*
Mary Cox – *Brassicas and Beats*
Sofia Furtado – *Sofie’s Goan Delicacies*

Manukau Cohort 13

Adam Jackson – *Smoother Operator*
Valerie Teraitua – *Papatuanuku Kokiri Marae*

Mohammed Babakhani – *Ariana Foods*
Celine Tairea – *Aunty Cel’s*

Central Cohort 14

Sharlini Thevishri Subramaniam – *Irene Dragon*
Julie Vu – *Phở Yến*
Esperanza Reyes – *Mushroomate*
Emme Stols – *Lekker Padkos*

Central Cohort 15

Harry and Huong Bern Breuer – *Hanoi Kitchen*
Fabiola Acosta – *Tacolicious*
Nadia Mika – *Luca’s Yum Yum*

Pukekohe Cohort 16

Niamh and Rachel O’Dwyer – *Cinnamon God*
Nikki Sullivan – *Story Box*
Brooke Valkenburg – *Sjaans Dutch Food*







6. TKP ALUMNI: CARMEL DAVIDOVITCH

OWNER OF BY CARMEL, ISRAELI STREET FOOD.

In Auckland's Eden Terrace, the tempting aromas of Israeli street food radiate from By Carmel. This culinary gem is not just a testament to Carmel Davidovitch's passion but is also a shining example of the success stories emerging from The Kitchen Project.

Born in Aotearoa and raised in Israel, Carmel yearned to bring the authentic flavours of her childhood to New Zealand. United with her partner Tomer, they began with a food gazebo in 2017 and started selling via local markets to inspire Aucklanders with the 'real' Israeli street food experience.



Carmel joined our first cohort in 2018 to deepen her knowledge and build a solid business foundation. The programme gave her access to expert training, commercial kitchen space, and the confidence to grow her venture.

“When I started The Kitchen Project, I only had an idea,” she reflects. “Getting to this stage would never have been possible without The Kitchen Project – it was my biggest support system in making all my first steps and holding me accountable during my progress.”

At the heart of Carmel's creations is an authentic experience. Her fluffy Yemenite pita breads, filled with mouth-watering ingredients like crispy falafel and marinated chicken, are both a feast for the eyes and a treat for the palate. The Rugelach croissants, with a tantalising mix of ube (purple yam) and white chocolate, and the Nutella brioche, invite those with a sweet craving for more. Their journey hasn't been without its challenges. Set to inaugurate their brick-and-mortar eatery just as New Zealand entered a Level 4 lockdown, Carmel and Tomer had to pivot quickly. Instead of welcoming guests into their carefully curated space, they transitioned to online orders and deliveries, adapting to the evolving landscape.

Despite these hurdles, the dedication to quality and authenticity made By Carmel a local sensation. Thursday to Saturday, lines formed outside their establishment as eager patrons awaited their mouth-watering creations, from falafel-stuffed pitas to cheesecake danishes. In 2022, By Carmel was awarded in the Iconic Auckland Top 100 list and continued to feature for the next two years, in 2023 and 2024. The business has also been profiled in *Metro NZ*, *NZ Herald*, and the *Sunday Star Times*.

Carmel's advice to TKP cohorts, drawn from her lived experience, is to be brave and believe in what you're doing. She believes success hinges on dedication and a serious approach to your business as well as proactive learning and commitment alongside the programme.

Today, she has not only served delighted customers at Eden Terrace but the business has 12 staff to help with production and is also popular for its catering services, including weddings, corporate events and private functions, spreading the authentic flavours of Israel throughout Auckland.

Carmel's ascent from a passionate entrepreneur in our inaugural programme intake to a celebrated Auckland eatery owner is a journey of dedication, hard work, and cultural pride. Through every dish, she shares a piece of her history, her culture, and her unwavering spirit.





7. TKP ALUMNI: MAYA HANDLEY

TKP GRADUATE AND OWNER OF FLORETS BAKERY.

From a career in advertising across America to establishing what *Viva* hailed as 'New Zealand's Best Bread', Maya Handley of Florets Bakery embarked on her entrepreneurial journey with The Kitchen Project in 2019.



Originally from Auckland, Maya pursued marketing at Victoria University and delved into an advertising career before her move to the vibrant cities of Los Angeles and New York. Over a span of 13 years, she transitioned to photography, capturing moments in fashion and architecture.

Towards the end of her American sojourn, a newfound interest emerged – sourdough bread. Inspired by its health benefits, Maya attended a workshop by renowned American baker, Sarah Owens. This was a pivotal moment, igniting a passion she hadn't known before.

Studying Artisan Bread Making at the International Culinary Centre in New York, she graduated with honours in 2018. Upon returning to Auckland, the idea of Florets Bakery began to ferment. The vision was clear: to deliver nourishing sourdough loaves, baked using traditional methods and whole grains, to the families of Auckland.

Maya's association with The Kitchen Project was instrumental. The initiative provided her with business support, insights into Auckland's food landscape, and connections with fellow food entrepreneurs. This foundation, combined with her dedication, led to the establishment of her business. She shares,

"It was great to work within a supported framework, being held accountable for achieving my goals."

By December 2021, Maya realised the opening of her bricks and mortar Florets Bakery in Grey Lynn. This space, more than just a bakery, offers a tantalising range of breakfast and lunch dishes, accompanied by freshly brewed coffee. The essence of her business remains the sourdough loaves, a testament to the traditional slow fermentation process and organic Canterbury-grown grain.



Maya's commitment to health and well-being shines through in her products. Today, Aucklanders enjoy her creations by ordering online, visiting the Grey Lynn bakery, or finding her at local markets. She emphasises the beauty of bread that not only tastes incredible but also nourishes the body.

8. OUR AGENCY

SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS TO DELIVER PLACE-BASED, WEALTH BUILDING COMMUNITY-LED FOOD SOLUTIONS.

Expanding Our Impact Through Collaboration

In 2023, The Kitchen Project launched its Agency services in response to growing demand for kai mahi expertise from communities and organisations across Tāmaki Makaurau. This new offering reflects a natural evolution of our work and a strategic expansion of our impact beyond programme delivery. The Agency enables TKP to provide hands-on support and expert guidance to a wide range of partners. From local government departments and tertiary institutions to community organisations, we offer tailored services that help others plan, test, and deliver food-based initiatives that reflect local values and respond to community needs.

Activating Spaces for Community Wealth

This year, the Agency played a pivotal role in establishing our Pukekohe satellite site at 1 Roulston Street. In partnership with Eke Panuku and The Franklin Local Board, we cleaned up the hall and put a kai-based programme in place to shine a light on Franklin's food bowl. This created a flexible environment for food entrepreneurship in one of Aotearoa's most important food-producing regions. This partnership also enabled us to deliver our first Pukekohe cohort, providing local access to business support and mentoring.

We also collaborated with Perfectly Imperfect to pilot a community food store at Whare Kai in the city centre. The pop-up was designed to improve access to affordable fresh produce, reduce food waste, and showcase rescued ingredients. Our Agency team supported the delivery of this initiative, drawing on our expertise in operational planning, community engagement, and culturally grounded food education.

In early 2024, we extended this model by working with the University of Auckland to deliver cooking workshops using rescued produce from Perfectly Imperfect. This initiative aimed to support student

wellbeing and healthy eating habits, while fostering a deeper connection between learners and local food systems.

Building Stronger Connections

Through our Agency work, we are also strengthening relationships with our Council teams who are exploring how food can contribute to community wellbeing, resilience, and identity. Increasingly, we are called on to advise on local food strategies and co-design activations that centre community voice. These opportunities allow us to share the lessons and systems we have developed over the past six years, while learning from others across the sector. As part of our commitment to ongoing support, our team also coordinates alumni engagement and networking events. These gatherings strengthen our community of food entrepreneurs and create valuable spaces for shared learning, collaboration, and visibility.

Through this work, TKP has become a trusted connector across Tāmaki Makaurau's food landscape. For organisations looking to represent local stories, reflect cultural diversity, or deliver something fresh and memorable, our network of entrepreneurs offers authentic, high-quality food experiences. Whether it's catering for events, running pop-ups, or curating kai with community meaning, we can match skilled entrepreneurs with the right opportunity — creating value for our partners and meaningful work for our alumni.

Looking Ahead

We see the Agency as a key lever for systems change. By supporting other organisations to embed local food culture, equitable access, and circular economy principles into their work, we help build a more connected and resilient food future for Tāmaki Makaurau. With deep roots in the communities we serve, The Kitchen Project is uniquely positioned to walk alongside partners and deliver food solutions that are grounded, inclusive, and impactful.





**Perfectly
Imperfect**

9. WHARE KAI POP-UP STORE PILOT

A PARTNERSHIP DELIVERING AFFORDABLE KAI, REDUCING WASTE, AND SUPPORTING STUDENT WELLBEING.

A New Activation at Whare Kai

In October 2023, The Kitchen Project launched a pilot initiative that combined food access, community wellbeing, and sustainable business. The result was the Whare Kai Pop-up Store. Delivered in partnership with Perfectly Imperfect and supported by the University of Auckland, the store ran for two weeks from The Kitchen Project's new headquarters, Whare Kai, located at the Albert Park Caretaker's Cottage in central Auckland.

A Response to Student Food Insecurity

The idea began with a conversation with Dr Anthonia Uzoigwe, a University of Auckland researcher focused on food insecurity among students. Her findings showed nearly half of all students surveyed were food insecure. Three out of four were skipping fruit and vegetables due to cost and limited access, especially during exams. The Kitchen Project saw this as a clear call to action.

Collaboration in Action

In response, our team partnered with Perfectly Imperfect. The social enterprise works to reduce food waste and improve access to fresh produce. Together, we created a welcoming store that offered affordable, seasonal, and rescued fruit and vegetables to students and the wider public. Customers could purchase mystery boxes for \$15 or \$26, filled with a rotating selection of fresh, nutritious produce. The response was immediate. Queues formed out the door during peak hours with volunteers running the store.

A Model for Community Food Resilience

The pop-up store offered more than affordable produce. It raised awareness about food waste and supported local growers. It also showed how a community-based model can make a meaningful and impactful difference. For many students, it was a rare chance to eat well during a stressful time.

For The Kitchen Project, it was a meaningful way to activate Whare Kai through social enterprise, education, and connection.

Building on the Momentum

Following the success of the pilot, the Whare Kai Pop-up Store has been extended for another 12 months. This allows The Kitchen Project and its partners to continue offering affordable kai while refining the model for future use. As part of our work in the Learning Quarter in early 2024, TKP and the University of Auckland launched a cooking class series using rescued produce. The Kitchen Project team led hands-on classes with students, helping them build practical cooking skills and confidence in the kitchen. These workshops encouraged healthy eating habits and made the most of seasonal ingredients provided through the pop-up, with the University purchasing and donating boxes of produce to support the classes.



The Whare Kai Pop-up Store is a clear example of how TKP's Agency can deliver creative, local solutions that reflect the needs of the community. It also helps build long-term food resilience for the next generation.

10. KAI FRANKLIN CHEF'S TABLE

A CELEBRATION OF LOCAL FLAVOUR, PLACE-MAKING, AND CONNECTION.

Introducing Kai Franklin

In April 2024, The Kitchen Project launched Kai Franklin Chef's Table, the first in a new series of place-based events designed to activate our presence in South Auckland and connect food entrepreneurs to Franklin's proud agricultural identity.

Held at our Pukekohe base at 1 Roulston Street, the ticketed dining experience brought together local chefs, growers and producers, and 100 guests for an evening of kai and community.

Activating a Local Space

The event was developed in partnership with Eke Panuku Development Auckland, Pukekohe Business Association, Pukekohe High School and The Franklin Local Board.

Together, we set out to reimagine a tired town-centre venue as a vibrant food and cultural destination. The response was immediate.



The event sold out in just four days, and feedback from guests and stakeholders who attended was overwhelmingly positive, described as “exactly what this town needed,” “12 out of 10,” and “the best night we’ve had in Pukekohe.”

Celebrating Local Producers

At the heart of the event was a four-course farm-to-table menu prepared by four of Pukekohe's most loved eateries — The Daily Goods, SuMei, Blue Ox Babe, Seddon64 Eatery and Bar — with drinks provided by Franklin's Bar and Eatery.

Each dish celebrated the region's growers and producers, featuring ingredients from The Fresh Grower, Curious Croppers, Clevedon Buffalo, Black Pond Farm, Wild Fermentary, and more. The producers were profiled through table displays, menus, chef storytelling, posters, and a coordinated media campaign.

Special guest Chef Ben Bayly, from hit TVNZ series *NZ Food Story*, joined the evening for a live Q&A with the chefs. His conversation helped draw out the inspiration behind each course and gave guests a deeper connection to the people and produce behind the menu. This helped reinforce Franklin's identity as Aotearoa's food bowl and gave visibility to the people behind the produce.

Creating Opportunities for Young People

Chef's Table also created meaningful opportunities for young people. Eighteen students from Pukekohe High School's Work Ready Programme were selected to participate in a hospitality workshop and supported service on the night.

For many, it was their first professional food event. Students worked alongside chefs, gained new skills, and grew in confidence. The school's jazz band, joined by professional musicians, elevated the atmosphere with live music.

Sharing the Story

The reach and visibility of the event extended well beyond the room. Kai Franklin Chef's Table received a live cross on TVNZ's *Breakfast*, front-page coverage in *Franklin County News*, features in *Rural Living* and *OurAuckland*, and was shared widely across stakeholder channels and social



media. Combined, the social media campaign reached over 110,000 people, putting both The Kitchen Project and Franklin's food community firmly in the spotlight.

Lasting Impact

Most importantly, Chef's Table helped establish our identity in South Auckland. It brought people together around long tables to share kai, stories, and pride in their place. The event also delivered tangible economic benefits by directing revenue into

participating eateries early in the week, giving them guaranteed income at a traditionally quiet time. Local AV suppliers, wine producers, and hospitality partners were engaged as well, ensuring that every aspect of the event — food, drink, and production — reinvested directly into the community that hosted it.

For TKP, it was a powerful introduction which built trust, created memories, and set the stage for future collaborations, training, and community events in Franklin.





11. TKP HIGHLIGHTS

A SNAPSHOT OF THE PEOPLE, PLACES, AND MOMENTS THAT MADE THE YEAR MEMORABLE.

2023

JUNE



Cohort 12 completes six-week Induction



Alumni cater the 2023 The Lewisham Awards



Celebrating alumni Sweet & Me's 5 year food journey from markets to own shop

JULY



Three alumni showcased at 2023 Auckland Food Show

AUGUST



Little Pips artisan syrups hit shelves of Farro stores



Cohort 14 commences, ready to turn recipes into real businesses

SEPTEMBER



The Kitchen Project HQ established at Albert Park Caretaker's Cottage in city



Cohort 14 hosts tasting of home-inspired dishes

OCTOBER



Perfectly Imperfect community pop-up food store pilot @ Whare Kai, Caretakers Cottage



Mid Town Street Party on Queen Street catered by alumni



Students learn to cook Whare Kai food boxes @ University of Auckland

DECEMBER



Thank you boxes full of alumni products to our wonderful volunteer advisors

2024

FEBRUARY



Chinese New Year dumpling demo and tasting with sister team @ Ellen Melville Centre



Photoshoot and food styling for Cohort 14



Irene Dragon Authentic Malaysian Food on their first outing at Freyburg Square market



Padkos South African Food serves up bobotie and bunny chow in Albany

MARCH



Alumni Gathering with guest speaker Keith Clark who shared his Lewis Road journey



Cohort 15 present food tasting to 25 invited guests at Auckland Central Library



Dumpling Class @ University of Auckland hall of residence



The Kitchen Project on tour... teaching cooking classes @ University of Auckland

APRIL



A fresh start in Aotearoa's food bowl. Cohort 16 held at 1 Roulston Street in Pukekohe, our first on-site



TKP host Kai Franklin Chef's Table ticketed event held in Pukekohe



Chef Ben Bayly and Eugene Hamilton teach guests dumplings during Kai Franklin Chef's Table event

MAY



Foodie Jesse Mulligan on RNZ Afternoons tries our talented entrepreneur's kai




GOURMET
Kabuté
Seasoning Blend
ORIGINAL
Net 100g


GOURMET
Kabuté
Seasoning Blend Refill
ORIGINAL
Net 100g

12. OUR EXPERTS & VOLUNTEER MENTORS

The Kitchen Project engages with seasoned professionals who offer a wealth of knowledge and insights to our emerging entrepreneurs to help grow their ventures. They don't just impart foundational knowledge, but also weave the threads of local

connections, making it a point to offer location-specific guidance. This not only instills a deep understanding of the Auckland food business landscape but also helps our participants expand their local networks.

Mentors / Other Helpers

Sean Armstrong
Owner, Loaf

Martin Smith
Owner, The Great Catering Company

Chris Cullen
Owner, Culley's

Brent Martin
Executive Chef, Park Hyatt

Elizabeth Yu
Xero

Shane Hopgood
Assure Audits

Alasdair Baxter
The Food Bowl

Dave Sauvage
Sauvage Design

Millie Dolan
Business Owner

Ashton MacDonald
Crave, Photography

Food Businesses

Peter Gordon
Homeland

Max Washer
The White Lady

Line Hart
Line's Goodness

Hamish Macpherson
IsoCream

Alice Shopland
Angelfoods

Jessabel Granada
Nanam Eatery

Genevieve Knights
Genevieve's Cuisines

Sophie Gilmour
Bird on a Wire

Natasha Aumua
Lei Cafe

Mike Jury
Gluten Free Store

Morgan Maw
Bonnie Foods

Business Experts

Lisa Franklin
Eke Panuku

Toss Grumley
Wolf and Fox, Business planning

Andrew Scott
UHY Haines Norton, Accounting

Nick Thompson
BNZ, Finance

Emily King
Spira, Sustainability

John Evans
Blend Group, Operations & costing

Jo Patterson
Goodsense, Marketing

Carmel Davidovitch
By Carmel

Bertrand Jang
Sweet & Me

Dave Saunders
Aro Advisers, Business Planning

13. OUR TEAM

MEET THE DEDICATED TEAM BEHIND TKP: PASSIONATE PROFESSIONALS COMMITTED TO FOSTERING FOOD ENTREPRENEURS, COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND WELLNESS.

Operations Team



Connie Clarkson
Manager

As the Manager of The Kitchen Project, Connie is responsible for programme design and partner engagement, and oversees the operational delivery of the programme, supporting entrepreneurs as they turn their food business ideas into realities. She leads the team responsible for the day-to-day coordination across TKP's sites.

Connie's extensive operational experience spans hospitality, engagement, placemaking, property management, marketing, public relations, food and beverage, venue and event management, project management, and professional training.

Connie's hands-on leadership ensures the smooth running of the Core Programme and its wider activities, strengthening relationships with community partners, suppliers, and industry stakeholders.



Esperanza Reyes
Technical Specialist

In her role as the Technical Specialist for The Kitchen Project, Esperanza adeptly manages the programme's regulatory requirements and coordination. As a programme participant herself, she brings firsthand entrepreneurial experience as the master grower behind Mushroomate, her business specialising in oyster mushrooms, flavour-rich pastes, and salts.

Esperanza's extensive background as a food technologist in food regulation and compliance equips her to offer invaluable guidance to our entrepreneurs. With over a decade of experience in roles like Regional Regulatory Services Specialist at Foodstuffs North Island and Quality Assurance Manager at Pitango, Esperanza's expertise in food safety and quality management is a cornerstone of her contribution to the programme.



Hayden Stewart
Core Programme Coordinator

Hayden Stewart, as the Core Programme Coordinator for The Kitchen Project, oversees the coordination of our cohorts, kitchen operations, and logistics. Bringing over 20 years of culinary expertise as a chef, Hayden is also a proud graduate of The Kitchen Project.

Hayden's entrepreneurial journey led him to establish The Flying Rib, a business born out of his passion for nose-to-tail cooking and offering unique food experiences. Beyond his culinary endeavours, Hayden is deeply committed to uplifting the community, having also worked with Tuakana Teina (East, West & Central Auckland) at the Generator.

Steering Group



Connie Clarkson

Manager, The Kitchen Project

Connie is the originator and strategic lead of The Kitchen Project, with over 30 years' experience in placemaking, hospitality, and local economic development. A passionate advocate for food, community wealth building, and inclusive entrepreneurship, she guided the programme from concept to an influential incubator supporting Māori, Pacific, Indigenous, migrant, and women-led ventures. In 2023, she was recognised by *Cuisine* as one of the 50 most influential women in food and drink in New Zealand. Connie also judges the Outstanding NZ Food Producer Awards and NZ Ice Cream Awards. Her leadership has shaped major urban regeneration projects across Tāmaki Makaurau, including North Wharf, Queens Wharf, and The Cloud. She also serves on the Lewisham Foundation executive committee, championing excellence in Auckland's hospitality sector.



Echo Janman

Manager, Community Hub Central City, Auckland Council

As the Manager of Community Hub Central City and part of TKP's leadership team, Echo oversees teams across the Auckland Central City Library, Ellen Melville Centre, and Albert Park Caretaker's Cottage. With over two decades of experience in arts and community work, she is a strong advocate for innovation, creativity, and social change. Echo led the integration of digital tools for community engagement, developed social innovation strategies, and fostered value-driven partnerships that enrich Auckland's community life. Echo's background in project development, creative placemaking, and cross-sector collaboration directly informs her contribution to TKP's kaupapa. TKP benefits from her deep understanding of culturally grounded programming and long-standing commitment to social equity.



Jacqui Yip

Principal Advisor - Engagement & Innovation, Public Health Agency

Jacqui has been involved with TKP since 2019, delivering Health and Food System sessions, mentoring entrepreneurs, and supporting programme strategy. Born in Hong Kong and raised in Aotearoa, she brings experience as a public health dietitian and food systems innovator, along with a commitment to strengthening local food systems to support community wellbeing. Jacqui currently works at the Ministry of Health in a role focused on elevating community voice through engagement and innovation.



Ben Maw

Programme Manager Development Response, Auckland Council

Ben brings extensive food industry and urban regeneration experience to TKP's leadership team, with his career spanning public and private sector roles. He has managed waterfront operations at Eke Panuku, led healthy food system initiatives in South Auckland, and managed major food and catering teams at Auckland Zoo and Auckland Council. He later served as Healthy Families Council Lead for Food Systems at The Southern Initiative. At TKP, Ben shapes programme direction, aligning it with food sovereignty, urban regeneration, and equitable development. His understanding of food systems and supply chains supports sustainable business models and strengthens links to Council's priorities. Ben's approach positions food entrepreneurship as a driver of wellbeing, cultural expression, and local resilience.

14. 2024 AND BEYOND

EXPANDING REACH, ACTIVATING SPACES, AND DEEPENING IMPACT.

The upcoming year promises exciting new projects and developments. Planned initiatives will further The Kitchen Project's impact and reach across Tāmaki Makaurau, strengthening our commitment to community-driven food entrepreneurship and wellness.

Growing Our Footprint in South Auckland

In 2024, we will continue to grow our presence at 1 Roulston Street in Pukekohe, located in the heart of Aotearoa's food bowl. This satellite venue will host at least two cohorts each year, offering aspiring entrepreneurs in South Auckland local access to our programme, commercial kitchen space, and a place to grow. Our team will also oversee the day-to-day activation of the 1 Roulston Street, ensuring it continues to serve as a hub for food enterprise and community connection as a venue.

Kai Franklin Returns

Following the success of the first Kai Franklin Chef's Table event, plans are underway to deliver a new season of events. These will continue to celebrate the region's rich food identity, connect with local growers and producers, and create platforms for youth development through hands-on hospitality experiences.

Extending the Whare Kai Pop-up Store

Our partnership with Perfectly Imperfect will also continue to flourish. In 2024, the Whare Kai Pop-up Store at the Caretaker's Cottage will be extended until the end of the year, providing affordable rescued produce to students and city workers. We are also exploring how the model might expand to Pukekohe, further embedding food accessibility and circular economy thinking into our place-based work.

Cooking Classes with University of Auckland

Alongside the store, we are delivering a cooking school series in collaboration with the University of Auckland. These workshops, held at student

accommodation sites, use rescued produce to teach healthy eating habits and build cooking confidence among tertiary students.

Strengthening the Alumni Network

Our alumni engagement strategy is also gaining momentum. In early 2024, we launched the first of several gatherings bringing past participants, mentors, and partners together to connect, share experiences, and spark new collaborations.

These events will be a key feature of our ongoing support model, reinforcing The Kitchen Project's role as a connector and champion for diverse food entrepreneurs.

Showcasing TKP Talent at the Auckland Food Show

Looking ahead, we are also excited to showcase our programme and graduates at the Auckland Food Show 2024. Five TKP alumni will exhibit their products and represent our kaupapa to a wider public and industry audience.

Staying True to Our Purpose

Every weekend across Tāmaki Makaurau, you'll find Kitchen Project alumni serving their kai at markets, festivals, and events. These spaces are vital stepping stones, giving entrepreneurs real-time customer feedback, growing their confidence, and building loyal followings.

In the year ahead, we will continue to support alumni on this journey, offering access to stall opportunities, storytelling support, and practical tools that help them thrive in the city's dynamic food scene.

As we move forward, The Kitchen Project will continue to deliver hands-on support. We will build powerful partnerships and activate spaces across the region. Everything we do will remain grounded in our commitment to community wealth, cultural identity, and a thriving local food system.



Franklin food given tasty promotion boost

Home-grown produce topped the tables recently at the Kai Franklin Chef's Table where local restaurateurs showcased culinary skills. HELEN PERRY was among the guests in attendance at the former Youth Centre on Rouleston Street.

For those doubting that the best food in New Zealand is right here in Franklin then the Franklin Chef's Table, held in the heart of Pukekohe, confirmed what most locals know – that the best produce comes from the best soil.

The four-to-table event, hosted by acclaimed Auckland chef and restaurateur Ben Blyth, was a credit to those local restaurateurs whose chefs trained a discerning, top-of-class menu showcasing produce from Franklin growers and producers.

After tasting mouth-watering courses by The Daily Goods, delicious duck dumplings from Salski, and Salski Girl's amazing dessert, as well as the smoked beef cheek with green



Te Pūhaki Franklin County News

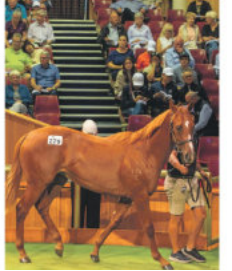
#BREAKING BITE

For the most part, news cannot be served in bite-sized pieces. How to serve readers a balanced diet of news (is there any such thing?) the following matter-of-fact morsels to chew over.

OLD NEWS, FRESH PLANS

The fate of the Pukekohe Youth Centre building is on the line. However, Auckland Council developer Ben Panuku has confirmed the property's sale could be years away and Franklin growers can expect to reap benefits in the meantime.

"This space provided an opportunity to really celebrate Franklin's importance as one of New Zealand's major food producers," says Connie Clarkson from food incubator programme, The Kitchen Project. "We are looking forward to shining a light on exceptional growers and hospitality providers that form the backbone of



Rural Living

What's for dinner? Franklin on a plate

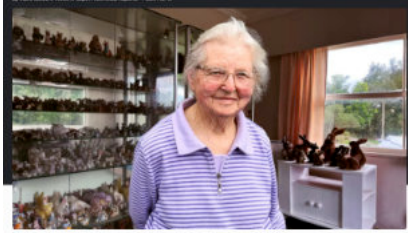
Publish Date: 15 Mar 2024
COMMUNITY CULTURAL FOOD / DRINK MARKETS / TRADE SUSTAINABILITY FRANKLIN



The best kai Franklin as to offer will be on a plate when the Kitchen Project's special dinner on 8 April.

OUR Auckland
TO YOUR TASTE. NATURALLY.

'Mrs Easter' is almost 90 and still providing top chefs with first-class fare



To some she's 'Mrs Easter' to others she's 'the rabbit lady'. Either way it seemed the perfect time of year to share a cup of tea with this unstoppable 89-year-old of Pukekohe.

By Andrea Stewart

New Zealand's top chefs know her as 'Mrs Easter' while to the locals in Pukekohe she's 'the rabbit lady'. Eighty-nine year old Elizabeth Easter, 'grandmother Easter', continues to supply about one million rabbits to New Zealand's food industry over the past

11 news

Taste of Franklin food gala sells out

Publish Date: 10 Apr 2024
COMMUNITY CULTURAL EDUCATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT
FOOD / DRINK MARKETS / TRADE TECHNOLOGY / INNOVATION



A trio of canapes from The Daily Goods - Black Pond beef croquettes with mustard mayo, Pukekohe potato rosti with Wild Fermentary sauerkraut and house smoked salmon, and a Curious Cropper tomato medley with Clevedon Buffalo bocconcini, basil salt and freeze-dried balsamic.

OUR Auckland
TO YOUR TASTE. NATURALLY.

Franklin County News



Students serve up special dining event

Four food incubators combined to provide a special dining event for students at the Pukekohe Youth Centre. The event was a success, with students enjoying a variety of dishes prepared by local chefs and food incubators.

The event was supported by a host of sponsors, including the Pukekohe Youth Centre, the Pukekohe Food Incubator, and the Pukekohe Community Centre. The event was a great success, with students enjoying a variety of dishes prepared by local chefs and food incubators.

Te Pūhaki Franklin County News

SPECIAL DINNER CELEBRATING PUKEKOHE COMMUNITY

breakfast JURY • SOLAR ECLIPSE TO REACH U.S TOMORROW • FOR MORE GO TO NEL 18° 8:56

11 breakfast

Taste of success at inaugural



A grand dinner function to celebrate Franklin's food incubators was held at the Pukekohe Youth Centre. The event was a success, with guests enjoying a variety of dishes prepared by local chefs and food incubators.

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Te Pūhaki Franklin County News

RURAL ROOTS feed future

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After tasting mouth-watering courses by The Daily Goods, delicious duck dumplings from Salski, and Salski Girl's amazing dessert, as well as the smoked beef cheek with green

Featuring culinary skills and talents, while assisting budding local food and beverage businesses. The Kitchen Project has plans to host train-the-trainer in Pukekohe. Visit www.thekitchenproject.co.nz for additional information.

Rural Living

Fiji goods take priority at 'Sweet and Me Language Week'

Bertrand Jang is on a mission to bring a taste of Fiji to the people of Aotearoa.

Published: 01 October 2023 - By James Page

Located in the vibrant suburb of Dreghinga, Auckland, 'Sweet and Me' is not just another bakery; it's a tribute to the rich establishment has been winning the hearts and palates of locals and visitors with its array of traditional Fijian bakes. Owned by a Fijian baker, Sweet and Me is on a mission to bring a taste of Fiji to the people of Aotearoa.

TE AO MAORI NEWS

Kitchen Project helping fledgling food businesses thrive

From *Affairs*, 135 pm on 31 May 2024

The Kitchen Project is an Auckland Council initiative that's been running since 2018. It aims to help food entrepreneurs build successful, sustainable businesses. It does this by providing them with access to education, resources and industry mentors. Coosie Clarkson – the founder & project manager, she speaks to Jeme.

RNZ

15. MEDIA & PUBLIC PRESENCE

THE KITCHEN PROJECT AND OUR PARTICIPANTS HAVE FEATURED IN A VARIETY OF MEDIA CHANNELS AND BLOGS.

Highlights include:

- **Franklin County News: Franklin food given tasty promotion boost**
<https://www.neighbourly.co.nz/e-edition/franklin-county-news/51210>
- **Rural Living: #Breaking Bites - Old News, Fresh Plans**
<https://www.ruralliving.co.nz/>
- **OurAuckland: What's for dinner? Franklin on a plate**
<https://ourauckland.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/news/2024/03/kai-franklin/>
- **1News: 'Mrs Easter' is almost 90 and still providing top chefs with first-class fare**
<https://www.1news.co.nz/2024/03/31/mrs-easter-is-almost-90-and-still-providing-top-chefs-with-first-class-fare/>
- **OurAuckland: Taste of Franklin food gala sells out**
<https://ourauckland.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/news/2024/04/franklin-dinner/>
- **Franklin County News: Students serve up special dining event**
<https://www.neighbourly.co.nz/e-edition/franklin-county-news/51402>
- **Franklin County News: Taste of success at inaugural dinner**
<https://www.neighbourly.co.nz/e-edition/franklin-county-news/51632>
- **TVNZ Breakfast: Savour the Flavour at Special Dinner Celebrating Franklin**
<https://www.thekitchenproject.co.nz/savour-the-flavour-at-special-dinner-celebrating-franklin/>
- **Rural Living (P14): Rural Roots Feed Future**
https://issuu.com/times_e-editions/docs/rl_april-may24
- **Te Ao Māori News: Fiji goods take priority at 'Sweet and Me' for Fijian Language Week**
<https://www.teaonews.co.nz/2023/10/13/fiji-goods-take-priority-at-sweet-and-me-for-fijian-language-week/>
- **Radio New Zealand: Kitchen Project helping fledgling food businesses thrive**
<https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/afternoons/audio/2018940824/kitchen-project-helping-fledgling-food-businesses-thrive>
- **Outstanding Food Producer Awards 2024:**
Bronze Medal
– Little Pips for Strawberry & Rhubarb Soda Syrup
Bronze Medal
– Little Pips for Lemon Soda Syrup
<https://www.outstandingfoodproducer.co.nz/drink-medal-winners-2024>
- **Iconic 100 Auckland Eats:**
2022, 2023, 2024
– ByCarmel for Crispy Falafel Pita
<https://www.aucklandnz.com/explore/carmel-israeli-streetfood>
2022, 2023, 2024
– Sweet & Me for Pineapple Pie Cake
<https://www.aucklandnz.com/explore/sweet-and-me>

16. THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS EMBEDS TKP IN AUCKLAND'S FOODSCAPE.

Powered by Collaboration

The Kitchen Project thrives because of the dedicated support of our partners. Beginning with our founding relationship with Eke Panuku and strengthened later by moving to Auckland Council, to our growing network across the city and region, each collaboration helps embed The Kitchen Project more deeply into the heart of Tāmaki Makaurau's food landscape.

Our success is built on shared vision, one that sees food as a vehicle for economic opportunity, cultural expression, and community resilience. Whether it's providing funding, sharing expertise, or helping activate spaces, our partners are critical to the work we do every day. These relationships shape our ability to respond to emerging needs and unlock new opportunities for entrepreneurs across the motu.

Growing Regional Impact

Together, we are nurturing entrepreneurs, strengthening regional food systems, and building a model for inclusive economic growth. These relationships not only enhance our ability to deliver impact now, but also position us to scale our work across Auckland, from Whare Kai's food resilience initiatives to deeper engagement with Franklin's food economy and beyond.

With Gratitude

We are deeply grateful to the funders, community groups, public agencies, educational institutions, food industry and business leaders, and mentors, who walk alongside us. Your support makes this work possible. Thank you.

Community Wealth Building Stakeholders



Sustainability & Healthy Food Access



Franklin's Food Trade & Producers





PHO YEN
GIA TRUYEN



thekitchenproject.co.nz