

Seeds-to-Feeds Local Food Festival in Houghton Valley



Seeds to Feeds is a grass-roots food festival that brings people together around local, sustainably produced food. The festival activates and supports local teams (each consisting of growers, hosts and cooks) to put on a dinner in their community where locally grown produce is the star of the show. The first festival ran from September 2019 to April 2020.

Year 1 :: 2019 - 2020

Houghton Valley Community Garden put in an application thinking they'd like some seeds for edible flowers and found out they needed to organise a community dinner! It was a steep learning curve organising vegetable growing, planning a menu for 65 people and cooking it, promoting the event in the community and planning the evening at the community hall, including making decorations and ensuring we had enough plates, cups and cutlery.

Vegetable growing happened at the Community Gardens, Te Kawakawa Commons and Houghton Bay Farm in Hungerford Road, as well as a few private gardens. Foraged greens were also planned to be part of the meal. Extra vegetables and food items were donated by a local market garden and from a Commonsense Organics voucher.

The event was named the **Haewai Feast-ival**, and we even had our own



Fringe Feast-ival including knitting your own dishcloths at Te Kawakawa Commons and a foraging tour and lunch on Te Raekaihau.

The vegan food for the evening created by chef Sukie, Ange of Seeds-to-Feeds and other helpers included:

- Haewai carrot and Ginger soup and Te Raekaihau creamy beet and garlic soup to reflect our spectacular sunsets;
- Princess Bay buckwheat bread and wholemeal wheat bread to reflect our sandy shore;
- Wild greens, locally grown salad greens, edible flower garnishes and salad dressing to reflect the greenery all around us.

Ticket sales faltered due to the looming Covid crisis and In a quick turnaround the March 22nd dinner became a prototype of the “click-and-collect” system developed after lockdown. The twenty odd ticket holders who had already bought tickets were happy to come and take away their soup, salad and bread, all in biodegradable containers. Jacob from Haewai Meadery played the guitar to provide some ambiance.



As some ingredients had already been ordered, there was enough to provide a few meals and spare veggies to people in the community that needed a little love. The organisers had a sit down meal and debrief afterwards. The event made \$391.75 towards community projects, after giving a koha to various helpers.



Year 2 :: 2020 - 2021

Being much more aware of what was involved in the Seeds-to-Feeds Festival, the local team happily signed up again. This time we got to go to the launch at Mojo in Taranaki Street on September 21, which set a great vibe for the festival and kick-started our planning.



To take some of the pressure out of the organising we appointed a co-ordinator, Sylvia, who we were able to give a koha to out of the proceeds from the final event. Sylvia more than earned her money keeping tabs on everything!

The team wanted to encourage local food production and helped a back-yard gardener or two to set up their garden for the summer season. At the same time a group of locals were exploring the possibility of setting up an urban farm on one of the landfill fields based on the Kaicycle model, with lots of good community discussion.

At the plant stall at the School Fair we promoted vegetable growing with vegetable growing boxes, seeds and an instruction Zine. However, the children were a bit over-it

**As the plants grow,
keep the soil moist.**

Don't over water!! 11

due to the recent New World Little Garden campaign. We also posted tips and growing timelines in the newsletter.

The vegetable growing happened at the Community Gardens, Houghton Bay Farm, and a few private gardens, and local greens and weeds were foraged in the morning. Again, extra vegetables and food items were donated by a local market garden and from a Commonsense Organics voucher.

**Make sure it is
your final spot.**

A soggy box could fall apart if you move it! 5

The date was set for February 28th, but once again Covid hampered the event. With an overnight change to Level 2 just before our event, we decided to go ahead with the takeaway version of the meals but with a twist. Ticket holders could collect their meal and decide whether to sit in the hall at appropriate socially distanced spacing, or take their meal home, to the park or to the beach. About 40 guests felt comfortable staying so the hall was buzzing for a few hours. Jacob again played the guitar and we made a small impromptu children's art corner, vowing to do better next time.



The theme for the event was ***Koe wai koe?*** and the explanation unfolded as the evening progressed. The phrase translates as *Who are you?*, something we were wanting people to share with the people around them, but Level 2 did limit the amount of mingling we could do. But *Ko wai koe?* literally means *Whose waters are you?* and we wanted people to think about the river or stream that they could identify with from where they were born. We also wanted them to identify with the waters that come with the place they live in now, and for many of us that is the buried creek in Houghton Valley, that many locals are working towards recreating on the surface of the landfill.



The vegan comfort-food for the evening was created by chef Sukie, Ange of Seeds-to-Feeds and other helpers at a commercial kitchen. The menu included:

- Pasta with bolognese and/or “cheese” sauce;
- A foraged salad with greens, edible flowers and native berries;
- Wild blackberry and apple crumble;
- Spring water from Haewai Meadery.

Year 3 :: 2021 - 2022

With our chef moving to the South Island we didn't think we would manage another year, but new local volunteer Leone said she would take on the cooking side of things as that is what she loved. So we were on again, starting with another launch in September at the Functions Room at the Basin Reserve. Leone got straight into drafting up an awesome vegetarian and vegan menu.

We planned a late afternoon / early evening dinner for Sunday, March 6th, and decided to have it at the school and donate the proceeds to the school, as they had not been able to have a full Fair due to Covid restrictions.

We planned a couple of events in the early summer, including a Community Gardens Working Bee in November to plant some vegetables for the meal, and a fruit tree walking bee in December, where we went on a tour of a few of Houghton Valley's wild fruit trees and helped give them a bit of TLC with weed clearing and seaweed mulching, which we collected beforehand.



Planning for the meal was a bit provisional due to the uncertainty around overall Covid case numbers. We were going for a relaxed a Covid safe community meal that could be enjoyed in the Houghton Valley School courtyard or taken away to enjoy as a picnic or at home. The time was earlier than before so that children could come and still have an early night.



There were good numbers of people ordering food, probably as we were tapping into the school community network. Some sat at the tables outside, but many chose the option of going elsewhere. Ange from Seeds-to-Feeds as DJ D'Ange provided the background music, and she and Sarah brought heaps of extra bits, including some Shelly Bay bread left over from another event, to help things run smoothly. The food was awesome, though we very nearly ran short. Leone vowed that wouldn't happen again!

Having the meal outside was good for Covid, but it didn't have the cosiness that only our community hall could bring, so we were looking forward to hopefully a year where we could finally make full use of what the hall had to offer.

Year 4 :: 2022 - 2023

The season started with a launch at the Sustainability Trust rooms. With Covid restrictions finally out of the way, we were so excited about being able to use the hall for a sit down meal (and use all the crockery optimistically collected over the last couple of years!) that we decided to have a spring lunch as well as a dinner in March.

The *Wild Spring Lunch* was on Sunday October 16, celebrating the fresh kai that was springing up wild in our gardens and on the hillsides. The delicious vegan meal included wild greens soup, local bread, homemade preserves, infused oils and of course our signature foraged salad. Faiza, a Seeds-to-Feeds volunteer, also brought some delicious spiced rice.

There were over 30 people there (including volunteers) and it was a lovely, relaxed occasion. We raised nearly \$300 which we dedicated for the hall roof repairs.

In November, we had a seed and seedling swap at koha Coffee, and some time in the spring we planted a bed of potatoes for the march meal. The hall was given a spruce up in February.

We decided to do an earlyish dinner on Sunday, March 12, with a theme of Haewai Harvest Festival. Leone's vegan, gluten-free menu included:

- Harvest vegetable flans;
- Spicy millet and vegetable stew;
- Our signature foraged salad;
- Homemade preserves;
- Quinoa and rhubarb crunch;
- Pumpkin bread pudding;
- Kawakawa tea
- Non-alcoholic beverages infused with elderberries, elderflowers and lemons.

Our hall came alive with gorgeous rugs, flax weaving, fairy lights, and our colourful banners, crockery and food. Children played and drew in the centre, while the adults feasted and chatted around them. DJ D'Ange from Seeds-to-Feeds provided the music and Sarah from Seeds-to-Feeds and all the volunteers made sure everything came together in time. We even got to meet two of our Rongotai Candidates: Fleur Fitzsimons (Labour) and Julie Anne Genter (Green). Great fun was had by all, even by the stalwart dishwashers. As Sarah commented afterwards:



“How do you best describe a meal that goes deeper than filling your belly? How do you explain the new connections sending buzzing around the room? How do you articulate the feeling of sharing Kai with old friends and new? The Haewai Harvest dinner was a true community feast. An incredible inclusive menu made by the wonderful Leone, featuring the now infamous foraged salad, vegetable tart and millet stew. The Kai showcased what this mighty area has to offer!”

Year 5 :: 2023 - 2024

This season the team was much more relaxed. We attended the launch at the Sustainability Trust more for the social time than for any serious planning. Leone brought along a friend who was prepared to help with the cooking side of things. We decided that last year’s event was so good we would do the same again and have an early evening meal in the hall. We were really starting to realise how special the hall can be and aimed to make improvements in the little details to make things ever more special.

The build up was low key, with a spring meeting in the garden to plant some seeds and do a bit of work in the community gardens, and as always, we helped with the plant stall at the school fair. The menu and general logistics were sorted in early January.



Foraged salad, bread and dips

Herbs, leafy plants and flowers harvested from Te Raekaihau and local gardens (VE, GF)

Bread, hummus and relishes (VE, GFO)

Salads and tarts featuring locally grown vegetables

Panzanella - Tomatoes, bread and herbs (VE, GF)

Vegetable tarts with pesto (VE, GF)

Roast vegetables with cashew and sesame dressing (VE, GF)

Cakes and desserts featuring local produce

Brazilian carrot cake (Bolo de cenoura) carob drizzle (VEO, GF)

Orange and walnut cake with white chocolate aquafaba mousse

Elderflower and almond cake

Almond puddings with rhubarb compote (VE, GF)

Drinks from the wild South Coast

Tea and coffee

Kawakawa tea

Elderflower and elderberry drinks

We wanted the funds raised to go towards establishing a food forest in Houghton Valley, but in the end we donated the money to Seeds-toFeeds as Sarah and Ange were doing the

whole of the March Festival with no pay as their funds had run out! The food forest will come some time.

Produce for the meal was planted in the community gardens and in gardens. The dry summer made it particularly difficult to keep things growing, but it was a bumper tomato season, and Leone's beginner efforts at growing tomatoes were well rewarded. Leone saved extra produce from her Wonky box, freezing, pickling and turning them into relishes. This year the meal had the greatest proportion of locally grown food so far.

We decided on Saturday 2nd March as our date, to avoid clashing with the Newtown Fair and in the hopes that the foraging was still good. The summer was so dry though, that there was very little to forage, and hand watered lettuces formed the basis of our big salad in the end. More tablecloths were made, more useful crockery bought, permanent fairy lights put up and the hall was ready for action!

Seeds-to-Feeds directed some volunteers to help us with preparation and invited Tina to do a Mihi Whakatau and Karakia. We had about 40 guests and volunteers, with a good proportion of locals, to enjoy the superb meal. Jacob played guitar again, setting a serene mood for the evening. The art table was set up for the children, except that none came this year, which was a shame, so some of the adults tried the colouring in instead. Seeds-to-Feeds also organised a photographer, Daniela, who took some beautiful photos of the event. To see more, go to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6e9j8N_-fYQ



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Looking forward to Year 6!!