

Kokako Café

Organic NZ talks with **Mike Murphy** of Kokako Café in Auckland's Grey Lynn.

How did your café start up?

Kokako was originally established as Auckland's first organic coffee company in 2001. The founders are both vegetarians and wanted to promote their organic coffee alongside good vegetarian food. They started with a café in Parnell and I purchased the business from them in May 2007. I renovated and continued with the strong vegetarian offering which became a hit with Aucklanders. I sold the café in 2010 and opened our new flagship Kokako Café in Grey Lynn in January 2012.

What do you specialise in?

Since our coffee and drinking chocolate is certified organic by BioGro we have always been compelled to try to source organic menu ingredients where the pricing and availability allows us to serve a good meal at a fair price. Not all our menu is 100% organic (this would be a major challenge for any café to make it viable), so we focus on sourcing organic root vegetables from Purefresh Organics and dry goods from organic wholesalers such as Ceres.

We also deal with a number of artisanal suppliers, and have watched many grow over the last seven years as we have. A good example is OOB, which started out as Omaha Organic Blueberries. We still use their blueberries in our organic spelt flour muffins. We were one of the first cafés in Auckland to use eggs that are certified organic and free-range, from FRENZ. Third party verification means a lot to us and our customers.

Above right: Head Chef Rohan Horner in Kokako Café's kitchen

Below: Team member Joe serves another loyal Kokako customer

Opposite page: A cup of Kokako's own brand coffee made with certified organic milk from Green Valley (Marphona Farms in the Waikato)





What else do you do sustainably?

We separate all waste streams in our café and coffee roastery and use separate collections for cardboard and other recyclables. We have very low food waste and any offcuts go into one of our 16 Hungry Bin worm farms, or get collected to be made into fertiliser.

We have twice won awards from the Sustainable Business Network as trailblazers in sustainability. We actively network with other business and hospitality owners and encourage them to be sustainable by showing how it can add value and help you innovate in business.

What sets your business apart from others?

We care equally about quality, sustainability, design and the customer experience. We regard these as essential in an increasingly competitive hospitality scene. We change our menu with the seasons. Download the latest menu from www.kokako.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Download-our-menu-here.pdf

How have you overcome any challenges?

I purchased Kokako heading straight into the recession in 2007. After expanding to offer a wholesale food distribution business, a café and a coffee roastery all from dedicated premises, I realised this could not be done alone with limited capital. I learnt lessons the hard way and have had to consolidate to keep the brand and the business going. We no longer run the wholesale food business and have streamlined to be a very quality focused specialty coffee roasting company, which is enhanced by our flagship café.

What have been the highlights?

I am proud of the strong team at Kokako. We have high staff retention and our café is run by our very competent and passionate manager Kim. Every year since we opened in Grey Lynn we have featured in Metro magazine's Top 10 Auckland Cafés.

We have been pioneering clean, healthy eating for many years and, although it is now very much 'on trend', we continue to grow and create greater customer loyalty through adapting and innovating.

Roast vegetable salad with feta and kale pesto

Recipe by Kokako head chef **Rohan Horner**

Kale pesto

100g	kale
2	garlic cloves
40g	grated Parmesan cheese
1	lemon: zest and juice
30g	toasted pine nuts
100 ml	olive oil

Blend with a stick blender and season.

Salad ingredients

2	parsnips, peeled
200g	Jerusalem artichokes, scrubbed
100g	baby purple carrots, cleaned and trimmed
100g	baby orange carrots, cleaned and trimmed
20g	garlic cloves, peeled
15g	rosemary
50 ml	olive oil
Salt and pepper	
¼	cauliflower cut into florettes
10	cherry tomatoes, cut in half
50g	good quality feta
Italian parsley (15 g or to taste)	

1. Clean and trim baby carrots and peel and quarter parsnips.
2. Cut root vegetables into similar sized pieces so they all roast the same. Reserve cauliflower and tomatoes.
3. Season well and roast at 200°C for 30 minutes until just tender and coloured.
4. Halfway through roasting, add cauliflower.
5. Arrange roasted vegetables nicely on the plate.
6. Top with cherry tomatoes and dollops of kale pesto.
7. Finish with Italian parsley leaves and crumbled feta.
8. Drizzle with a little extra olive oil and a good crack of pepper.

What are your future plans?

We work on the Japanese concept of kaizen: continuous improvement. In July we moved the roastery out of our café into a dedicated roasting facility across the road. This will allow us to create more seating and a retail coffee hub of excellence where customers can enjoy a great meal and get advice on our various coffee blends and single origins. Our staff can suggest brewing methods and grind coffee fresh to suit. This will be rolled out in November. ☺

Kokako Café

537 Great North Road, Grey Lynn, Auckland

Open Monday to Friday, 7 am – 3.30 pm

Saturday and Sunday, 7.30 am – 4 pm

kokako.co.nz, 09 379 2868