

# Taste Nature Eatery

*Organic NZ* talks to Mark and Rayna Dickson of Taste Nature organic shop in Dunedin about the eatery within the store.

## How/why did your cafe start up?

Taste Nature Eatery was a natural extension of the store. When we moved to our new location on High St in 2009 the customer interest in having a place to eat food on site grew – somewhere to sit down and enjoy the environment. So when the space next door became available in the old ARC café and gig site it was a natural step to take, even though it was definitely a bit before our time in terms of the evolution of the business.

## Why did you choose the organic path and what food do you specialise in?

Taste Nature has always been about organics – predominantly *certified* organic food. The store is now certified organic by BioGro and we are moving towards having the Taste Nature kitchen certified as well. One of our priorities in the store is providing a diverse range of certified organic produce. We source from a number of small growers with whom we have fostered long-term relationships over

many years. In the eatery we focus on simple food made fully from scratch in our kitchen. We aim to keep the menu seasonal using produce and ingredients from in store that people recognise and access for themselves. We cater for a range of dietary requirements and are well known for our salads, soups and breads.

## What else do you do sustainably in your business?

Our philosophy is based on strong principles of sustainability. And sustainability begins with preservation. We practice this throughout our whole operation in two main ways – firstly in terms of the quality of the relationships we build with producers and customers, and secondly by reducing consumption and reusing wherever possible.

We reuse jars for our preserves and encourage customers to bring their own containers to fill from the bulk stores and for takeaway food from the kitchen. We provide incentives of refunds



**Above:** A delicious range of baking from Taste Nature's kitchen



**Right:** Head cook Chrystal Armstrong, with some of the organic goodies at Taste Nature Eatery. On the far wall there are preserves made in the kitchen.

## Rice salad with roasted vegetables, lime and coriander

Serves 4 as a side

¼ cup red rice  
½ cup long-grain brown rice  
½ t sea salt  
1 t sunflower oil (for rice)  
1½ cups water  
300g kumara, peeled and diced  
300g butternut pumpkin, peeled and diced  
2 T sunflower oil (for roast vegetables)  
½ cup lightly packed, sliced spring onion greens  
½ cup lightly packed, chopped coriander leaves

1. Wash rice and soak in cold water for 30 minutes. Drain well.
2. Mix rice, oil and salt in a pot then add the water. Bring to a quick boil, reduce heat to medium-low. Cover and cook for 20 minutes, or until rice is tender and water has been absorbed.
3. Rest with lid on for 10 minutes then remove lid, fluff with a fork and set aside to cool.
4. Heat oven to 180°C.
5. Toss kumara and pumpkin in sunflower oil, roast for 25 minutes or until tender. Toss a few times while they cook so they colour evenly. Set aside to cool.

### Dressing

zest of 2 limes  
juice of 3 limes  
¼ cup sunflower oil  
1 T coriander seeds  
2 T cumin seeds  
¼ cup coconut chips



1. Combine the lime zest and juice in a bowl with the oil.
2. In a fry pan, dry toast the cumin and coriander seeds together until fragrant. Mix with the lime and oil while they are still hot.
3. In the same pan toast the coconut, stirring constantly until lightly coloured, mix into the lime, oil and seed mix, set aside to cool and for the flavours to infuse.

### To construct the salad

1. Put the rice in a large bowl. Pour the dressing over it and mix well to ensure the grains are well coated in dressing.
2. Add the roasted vegetables, spring onion and coriander, and mix gently.

and discounts to facilitate this. Our ethos is largely around building self-sufficiency and we encourage customers to know where their food comes from and to produce as much as they can for themselves.

### What sets your business apart from others?

We are often complimented upon the relaxed ambience we have created within the store and the eatery. We have an open kitchen and, based on the ethos of self-sufficiency mentioned above, the eatery is largely self-serve. Customers serve themselves plunger coffee, tea, cakes, slices, muffins and soup with bread, and order any meals directly from the kitchen. They clear their dishes to the trolley before paying as they leave the store. Sometimes we need to introduce new customers slowly to the morés of how Taste Nature works. We are more than willing to take the time to help.

### How have you overcome any challenges?

Running an eatery is quite a different matter from running a store. We have always employed home cooks and gardeners in the store but the eatery requires a different skill-set. We have taken some time to slowly build a fantastic team with complementary skills

that ensures a full lunch menu, a diverse range of baked breads and sweet treats, preserves and catering is consistently available.

### Tell us about the highlights, successes and future plans

The biggest highlight has been pulling it off! Now nearly two years down the track we are enjoying the kitchen and eatery ticking along as part of business as usual – as a natural and integrated extension of what Taste Nature has always done.

Future plans are bedding in all the developments of the past few years and making the business strong and robust – sustainable for the future. Enjoying what we all share! 🌱

**Taste Nature Eatery**  
131 High St, Dunedin  
Phone 03 474 0219  
Eatery open: Mon–Fri 10–4  
Store open: Mon–Fri 9–6, Sat 9–4, Sun 10–3  
[www.tastenature.co.nz](http://www.tastenature.co.nz)