

# The Dangerous Kitchen

Organic NZ talks with David Dwyer from The Dangerous Kitchen in Takaka, Golden Bay.

A Frank Zappa song was the inspiration for the name of The Dangerous Kitchen, which was originally set up in the smaller building next door to the current café in the main street of Takaka.

“Many years and a couple of owners later, Yvonne and I met each other at the café, where we worked together,” says current co-owner David Dwyer. “Years later Yvonne was contemplating buying into the business when we found out she was pregnant with our son Zachary. We ended up buying the whole business and having our baby boy in the same month!”

Yvonne was raised in a hotel in Germany and claims she was put to work from the time she could reach a sink. David is an avid organic gardener. The two combine their dreams and skills, and say it's a great business model.

“We must have over a hundred different organic ingredients flowing through our kitchen. But what inspires me most is the delightful seasonal beauties that come out of our own garden,” says David. He plants more different kinds of heirloom vegetables every year, using vermicast and compost made from the café's food scraps.

The couple aim to have the freshest, most varied produce possible, with a focus on nutrient density and novelty. They grow more than twenty varieties of heirloom tomato, and each tomato is allowed to ripen fully on the vine before it comes to the café.

“I still meet people who didn't know that stripey, weird-shaped and differently coloured tomatoes existed, let alone that they are old varieties!” says David.

They source vegetables and fruit from about ten growers in Golden Bay. “Much of our fresh produce is at the top of its



**Above:** Local art graces the café walls, with a new exhibition every two months.

**Below:** Yvonne Dörner, co-owner of The Dangerous Kitchen, in the café garden.

class. With arguably the best water in the world and a very fertile microclimate, the potential is extraordinary.”

“We are only beginning to tell people how organic we are, because not all of our customers care, so we have been investing in their intelligence, allowing their bodies to make a distinction





## Grilled zucchini and haloumi with summer stack

Serves 3

### Raw salad stack

600 g fresh vine-ripened tomatoes  
700 g cucumber  
12 large leaves of basil  
1–2 fresh red chillies  
5 olives

### Dressing

1 T lemon juice  
1 clove garlic  
2 T olive oil  
½ t finely chopped dill (1–2 sprigs)  
pinch sea salt  
pinch cracked black pepper

### Grilled zucchini

800 g zucchini  
2 T fresh rosemary, roughly chopped  
2 T olive oil  
½ t sea salt  
4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced  
½ t cracked black pepper  
120 g haloumi

- Mix the dressing ingredients together.
- Cut the cucumber in 4 mm thick slabs about the length your tomatoes are wide, and toss the cucumbers in the dressing. Cut tomatoes in horizontal rounds about 4 mm thick. Slice the chillies long and thin.
- Make your stacks in this order: tomato, cucumber, basil leaf and chilli sliver, finishing with your fifth tomato slice, a leaf of basil and one olive.
- Heat a large frying pan to medium high, adding just enough oil to coat the bottom.
- Cut the zucchinis in 5 mm slabs. Fry them golden brown quickly on one side, then add the garlic, salt and rosemary to the pan and flip them over.
- Cut the haloumi in 5 mm thick lengths. Fry until golden on both sides, place on the zucchini and serve immediately.

between our food and that of our competitors,” says David. “Rather than telling them how good it is, we want them to come to that conclusion themselves.”

In addition to fresh produce, other organic ingredients include cold drinks, milk, cocoa and cacao, sugar, buckwheat, rice, tapioca, noodles, bread, lentils, beans, chickpeas, bouillon, vinegar, muesli, oats, and gluten-free flours. All eggs are free range; all eggs used for breakfasts are local, organically fed and free range, and David and Yvonne are investing in the expansion of local supply.

They serve organic wine and beer from the Nelson region including Richmond Plains, Kaimira, Harrington’s Rogue Hop, and Stoke Amber which uses local organic hops. The Dangerous Kitchen’s live green smoothie is entirely organic, consisting of fresh seasonal greens such as kale, lettuce, mint, lemon balm, parsley and wheatgrass juice, blended with fresh lemon juice, apples and bananas. Gluten-free, vegan and vegetarian dishes are presented as ‘anyone dishes’ that are simply delicious and satisfying in their own right.

David describes their recycling efforts as ‘major’ and rubbish as ‘minimal’. “Coffee is used to grow edible mushrooms or composted. Other food wastes are made into compost or vermicast and/or fed to chickens who provide eggs, and sometimes to lucky pigs.”

They use eco-friendly cleaning products, and keep sustainability and a low footprint on the earth top of mind when carrying out maintenance jobs. The floor is treated with java oil from the Natural House Co.

Challenges for the couple include managing a large team of staff and having the enthusiastic culture they want in their business, and developing and improving systems to handle the increasing demand while maintaining consistent quality and speed of service. “Balancing life and work is a constant challenge. Fortunately the best innovations tend to come out of a good day’s rest,” David observes.

Future plans include making all pizza bases with part or all organic flour, and growing enough tomatoes to bottle and dry themselves. Other ideas include passive solar water heating to reduce gas consumption, installing a biodigester in the sewage system, and solar-powered lighting and a solar-powered water feature in the café garden. ☺

### The Dangerous Kitchen

46A Commercial Street, Takaka, Golden Bay  
03 525 8686

Open 7 days a week from 9 am till late in summer

Open Mon–Sat from 9 am till 8.30 pm autumn to spring  
thedangerouskitchen.co.nz

# Organic NZ

The only magazine in New Zealand  
just about organics!

Subscribe and save!

\$45 a year\* – save over  
15% off the retail price!  
\*within NZ

\$30 a year – digital  
– save over 40%!



Great  
gift idea

www.organicnz.org.nz info@organicnz.org.nz | 09 419 4536