



Ti Kouka Café

Two brothers are running a successful central Wellington café featuring a mouthwatering menu of organic, local and sustainable food, writes **Philippa Jamieson**

After working in hospitality for years, Shepherd Elliott and Jesse Simpson wanted to do their own thing, and opened Ti Kouka Café upstairs in Wellington's busy Willis St in November 2010. While living in Sydney, Shepherd became involved in the Slow Food movement. He began curing meats, making cheese and traditional breads, and fully supported the Slow Food philosophy of organic food, heritage varieties, making things from scratch and keeping food traditions alive.

"When we first opened, we went to the extreme of getting everything organic and local," says Shepherd. "Within six months we had almost lost the business, because we weren't running it sustainably. We had to rethink the structure and start again being more realistic." They realised it was difficult to be 100% organic, and it wasn't sustainable to source food from so many different small suppliers. However, once established on a sound financial footing, they went back to some of those smaller suppliers.

Organic and local products on the menu include: Flight coffee; Zorganic milk and other dairy products; free-range organic

eggs and Kipdale chicken; and organic juices, soft drinks, wines and beers. Organic vegetable suppliers include Wairarapa Eco Farms and Kapiti Organics.

Jesse looks after the front of house and makes the coffees, and Shepherd runs the kitchen and makes the delicious breakfast, brunch and lunch food. The brothers combine top quality service and food to make a memorable and enjoyable café experience.

Sustainability is important at Ti Kouka, and the café is part of Wellington City Council's 'Kai to Compost' scheme. All food scraps (except raw meat) are collected in bins and emptied twice a week. It's then mixed with green waste, made into compost and sold.

Being upstairs was hard initially as they had no shop front to attract walk-in customers. But the ambience is peaceful and relaxed, and a lot of customers are now coming through word of mouth.

Ti Kouka Café is now doing so well that Shepherd and Jesse are opening a boutique bakery and coffee house later this year, also in central Wellington, and will be supplying some other local cafés with a range of baking and sweets using organic flour.

Ti Kouka Café

First floor, 76 Willis St, Wellington
Open 7.30 am – 3.30 pm, Mon-Fri
9.30 am – 3.00 pm Saturday
www.tikouka-cafe.co.nz
Phone 04 472 7682

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Go in the draw for a \$50 meal voucher from Ti Kouka Café. To enter, see page 60, and with your entry, name one of Ti Kouka Café's organic vegetable suppliers.



Harissa

Ti Kouka Café is happy to share this recipe for harissa, a North African spice mix. It can go from very hot and spicy through to sweet, mild and herbaceous. This recipe is on the sweet side with no spice or heat. You can add chillies if you like heat. You can also use lime juice instead of lemon, or both. It's great with fries, roasted vegetables, as a salad dressing or in a sandwich.

- 5 g garlic cloves
- 25 g coriander (leaves, stalks and roots)
- 10 g mint leaves
- 10 g parsley leaves
- 30 g tomato paste
- 30 g brown sugar
- 50 ml lemon juice
- 60 ml olive oil
- 30 g tomato chutney or tomato sauce
- black pepper and sea salt to taste

1. Cut the coriander up very fine.
2. Place all ingredients in a blender and blend until it is a smooth saucy paste.
3. Season with a little sea salt and black pepper.