

Café Kōrero

By Anissa Ljanta

From the smiling staff to the décor and general vibe, everything about Café Kōrero says community and sustainability.

The vision for an organic sustainably run café operating as a social enterprise came from Elizabeth (Lippy) Chalmers, who started East West Organics and currently runs Tonzu with her family. She is also a co-founder of Earthsong Eco Neighbourhood.

Café Kōrero opened in February 2016. Using organic products wherever possible, they are also proud to be a not-for-profit social enterprise with any income over costs going to run the Rānui Community Centre next door. The centre's services include workshops around sustainability and waste minimisation. Composting, upcycling, recycling and gardening are a few of the topics they cover in their education work.

"We believe that being organic is the way of the future and we implement sustainable and zero waste practices," says café manager Janine Hicks. "Auckland Council is aiming to invest initiatives into health and wellbeing and zero waste, and we are excited to be part of this positive change."

Café Kōrero is also connected to Rānui Community Gardens, and has a range of their harvested seeds for sale in paper bags tied with raffia – complete with handwritten companion planting information. The gardens also supply seasonal produce, fresh flowers and herbs for the café.



Above: from left to right: Janine Hick (café manager), Ellie Besant, Simon Frost (chef), Jolene Mareko

Recycled materials from the old Community Centre were used to renovate the café. The café's sustainability coordinator, Buffie Mawhinney, led volunteers in a deconstruction project, which saved 6.7 tonnes of building waste going to landfill, and provided a café fit-out that totalled \$30,000. "She upcycled the old 4x2 timber for wall coverings, old cabinets were turned into customised benches, building cladding and doors became tables," says Janine.

"Buffie also ran workshops on making useful household items from waste. Some good quality carpet we had cleaned and gave away to the local caravan park." The challenge of having a low budget meant

getting creative. The result is a clean, warm and friendly looking café.

"We are no different to many other new businesses in facing challenges. We are situated in a low-decile area in West Auckland trying to make a difference in our community by introducing healthy organic food options at an affordable price," says Janine.

Rānui is a suburb in West Auckland that has been in the news for all the wrong reasons in recent years. A few years ago, Rānui's average annual income was estimated at about \$22,000. What the media hasn't covered is how friendly the people on the street are. The suburb is also home to Earthsong Eco Neighbourhood, Rānui's fancy new library, and some great small businesses. Café Kōrero has a policy to hire local staff and is working toward attaining a living wage for all their staff.

"Our customer base is extremely varied, from users of the centre, Rānui residents, parents and children, workers in the area who use the café as a meeting place, and people from the wider Auckland area who appreciate organic wholesome food. Everyone is made to feel welcomed and connected to our place," says Janine.

There was certainly a great variety of people eating at the café on the Saturday I visited. It was lively but there was still space for more. There is plenty of seating inside and on the two covered decks at front and rear. Children's paintings were drying as I went out the back door and there's a playground in the back yard (the playground is open to café customers only when the local playgroup isn't in session).



Above: The front of the café

Café Kōrero buckwheat pancakes

(Makes approx. 4)

½ cup buckwheat flour
½ cup white flour
2 T sugar or coconut sugar
1¼ t baking powder
½ t cinnamon
1 cup buttermilk
1 large egg
1 t vanilla essence
1 T melted butter

1. Whisk together the dry ingredients in a bowl.
2. In another bowl whisk together the milk, egg, vanilla, and butter.
3. Pour the liquid over the dry ingredients.
4. Lightly whisk until everything is just combined (it will be lumpy, so don't overmix).
5. Heat your frying pan to a medium heat and lightly oil/butter your pan. The mix is quite gluey.
6. Pour ¼ cupful of mix per pancake into your pan. When the top bubbles, flip and cook the other side until nice and golden.
7. Fill your pancakes with seasonal stewed fruit (we use apple and raspberries, as pictured) and fold in half.
8. Dust with icing sugar and serve with lemon curd, berry coulis, organic maple syrup and whipped cream.

Lemon curd

Zest and juice of 2 large lemons
2 whole eggs
2 egg yolks
¾ cup (165 g) caster sugar
⅓ cup (80 g) chilled unsalted butter



1. Whisk whole eggs, yolks and sugar in a saucepan until smooth, then place pan over a low heat.
2. Add the butter, juice and zest and whisk continuously until thickened.
3. Strain through a sieve into a sterilised jar. Lemon curd keeps, covered, in the fridge for 2 weeks.

Raspberry coulis

2 cups fresh or frozen raspberries
½ cup sugar
about 1 T lemon juice

1. In a medium saucepan over medium-high heat, bring raspberries and ½ cup sugar to a boil.
2. Reduce heat and simmer, stirring occasionally, until mixture starts to thicken, about 15 minutes.
3. Press mixture through a fine-mesh strainer, using a spatula to extract as much liquid as possible. Discard seeds and skins.
4. Stir in lemon juice. Taste and add more sugar or lemon juice if you like.

It's truly a kid-friendly spot, and there's plenty of parking right in front of the café.

The menu ranged from \$10 granola with fresh fruit and coconut yoghurt to the full Kōrero breakfast at \$20, with plenty of choices in between. I ordered the balsamic mushrooms and coffee. Both were superb. I have the avocado smash earmarked to try on my next visit.

I know where I'll be having my work meetings out West from now on. Café Kōrero is a gem. 🍋

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Café Kōrero

Open 7 days, 8.30–3.30
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Above: Jolene behind the counter