

INSIGHTS RELATED TO THE FOOD ENVIRONMENT IN WAINUIOMATA

These statements are a collation of what we heard and learnt from in depth interviews with community members of Wainuiomata about what living their best life means to them. Participants were recruited through connection with community leaders and interviewed throughout December 2019 and January 2020.



DAILY WHĀNAU ROUTINES

The people in Wainuiomata are whānau orientated and often multiple generations live in one household. This means that grandparents are sometimes the main caregivers for children which can be exhausting for them. To afford to live most households need to have at least two people earning, which leads to busy day-to-day routines. This leaves little time and energy for hunting, gathering, fishing and growing kai, let alone home cooking every night.



CHILDHOOD EATING

The way some ate as children is remembered fondly and often includes an abundance of home grown produce, as well as kai that was hunted, gathered or caught from the rural surroundings. Home cooking was prioritised as there weren't many other options. In the urban environment that people live in today there are many options, but not all are equal in price, quality or nutritional value.



WHĀNAU INFLUENCE

Knowledge passed down through generations about cooking and growing kai keeps the traditions of some whānau going. This knowledge is sometimes lost, and some feel guilty for the habits they pass onto their children. Children take in a lot of information and bring ideas to their caregivers that challenge perceptions in terms of the kind of kai being consumed by their whānau.



FOOD SHARING AND TRADITIONS

Whānau spend quality time together around meals such as Sunday dinners. When everyone prepares their favourite dishes to share it brings people together. Some classic weekly favourites such as roast lamb are now outside the budget and kept for special occasions.



HOME GARDENING

Growing food is a way of connecting to the whenua, de-stressing and relaxing. People have fond memories of big home gardens where they grew up and some enjoy passing on the skills they have to their moko. For some people, keeping a garden isn't prioritised due to housing situations, busy daily routines or not having the knowledge to do so.



CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE FOOD

In Māori and Pasifika cultures, sharing an abundance of food is a way of looking after others and showing manaaki. Sharing traditional kai such as hāngī brings feelings of happiness and good memories. This manaaki is still present, but the kai is often replaced by fast, convenient food, which is in part due to the kinds of foods readily available.



FOOD BEHAVIOURS AND FEELINGS

A change in lifestyle resulting in weight loss or feeling healthier is motivation to continue. These results are hard to achieve or maintain when someone is experiencing low mood or energy, so they crave and consume comfort food. This can transform into guilt, feeling lazy and having low self-confidence, as well as a realisation that eating good food has a big effect on the way the body feels.

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KNOWLEDGE RELATED TO LIFESTYLE

People are more likely to connect their health to what they eat when there is an outcome such as being diagnosed with a chronic illness. This is partly due to not having enough information about the wider causes and effects of not living a balanced lifestyle. Information is gathered from a large range of sources such as social media, Netflix, TV advertisements as well as cooking classes, school, markets and community events. This can make it hard for people to know what to eat.



CHRONIC ILLNESS

Pressure to make lifestyle changes comes from health professionals, family members being diagnosed with chronic illness and general awareness of whānau who have diabetes. Over time people's experiences allow them to reflect on the way they live and make the connection between their lifestyle and wellbeing.



CHANGING FOOD HABITS

Change in lifestyle usually occurs after a life event such as being diagnosed as pre-diabetic or with heart problems. People find it easier to change when the whole whānau is involved as everyone can experience the benefits. There is a lot of mixed messaging about how to lead a balanced lifestyle, and it can be confusing, making it harder to make changes.



FOOD HABITS

People are aware that they have an individual responsibility to carry out a balanced lifestyle. However, some people lead such busy lives that it makes it hard to prioritise preparing and cooking good food. This means people gravitate towards convenient foods that are usually a form of reward. High fat and high sugar foods can be addictive meaning they easily become the food chosen first.



FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

People in Wainuiomata work hard, some in multiple jobs, to provide the best life possible for their whānau. On the weeks that bills are paid are the most difficult because little is left to buy food and other necessities. It is tiring and stressful to always be thinking about living within the means of the household's income, and live a balanced lifestyle. This means some are working to survive and things such as weekend activities, sports and meals out are extras.



HARDSHIP

The Wainuiomata community is very generous and caring towards those who need any form of help. Caregivers always prioritise feeding their children, even if it means they themselves go without. Worrying about how to get enough food for the week is stressful, and if there isn't enough it causes guilt, embarrassment and frustration. While some whānau struggle, they are grateful for what they have because they know others have even less.



ACCESSIBILITY TO FOOD

Fast, convenient food is readily available in the Wainuiomata town centre. Affordable food in Wainuiomata is often the more processed options and therefore higher in fat, salt and sugar. There is a desire to shop locally, however, many travel over the hill to other supermarkets for competitive prices and quality of food, even when it costs more in fuel or they have to take the bus.

If you would like to know more about these statements or have any questions about this work please contact:
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