



The Community Feast Evaluation Report



Share kai, ideas and resources with UC and food sustainability organisations across Ōtautahi



Aldersgate Centre
Friday 28 April, 6pm–9pm

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UC
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CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND
1873–2023



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Executive Summary

The Community Feast was an initiative led by and co-designed by a Stakeholder Group of community partners. It was held on April 28 2023 as part of a programme of events marking the University’s 150th anniversary.

The event brought together approximately 300 people from a wide range of communities. Most of the participants enjoyed the event and found it useful. Importantly, most reported



they would attend the event if it were to be run again. Suggestions provided by participants for improving the event can be grouped around the following themes:

- More context of food-related issues provided
- Less ‘head talk’ and perhaps fewer speeches
- Improved sound quality
- More structured opportunities for networking/mingling
- Coordinating food service better, and better attention to dietary requirements
- Calls to action and opportunities for participants to volunteer/contribute.

Commentary on these themes is provided in the recommendations section.

Introduction

In 2023, the University of Canterbury (UC) hosted an inaugural “Community Feast”. This event sought to reflect the values of the Edible Canterbury Charter, namely:

Accessibility: access to food is a basic human right;

Mahinga kai: growing and gathering food that reflect the values of local iwi;

Cultural appropriateness: all different cultural groups have access to culturally appropriate food within the boundaries of our climate;

Ecological sustainability: growing food in ways that regenerates the natural environment;

Social enterprise and local economic development: supporting the establishment of locally operating businesses that develop a local food economy;

Food education: education about nourishing food that is accessible to all;

Community empowerment: everyone has a valued role to play in creating a food resilient region;

Collaboration: creating partnerships between many agencies and is not owned by any single group.¹

It also explicitly referenced the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in its planning. Of the 17 SDGs, the event specifically focused on those pertaining to No Poverty (SDG1), Zero Hunger (SDG2), Good Health and Wellbeing (SDG3), and Partnerships (SDG17).

As such, a stakeholder group of organisations working in the food resilience space was convened to help guide the event. Those organisations included community gardens and farms, chefs, academics from UC and Lincoln University and the Food Resilience Network (FRN). It also included those working with the most vulnerable in our communities, such as Housing First and the Christchurch City Mission: the guiding vision was of a feast that was

¹ [Food Resilience | Community Led Food Initiatives - Edible Canterbury](#)

open to all and where those most impacted by food security issues could feel comfortable. Organisers also wanted reflect the spirit of Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi (New Zealand’s founding document), and worked with mana whenua to provide a hāngi (earth oven) meal as part of the overall feast.

Registrations for the event included people from over 60 organisations, with around 300 people attending.

Of particular note was the attendance of approximately 40 people from the kaewa community. Kaewa is a Māori word that literally means to wander or roam, but in this context refers to people who are on a journey, and specifically to the homeless. The Feast was designed to stimulate conversation and connections related to food resilience, and it was considered essential to include this demographic if possible. Feedback from kaewa was mostly positive. To be treated as equal and honoured guests, and to be heard, was described as an unexpected experience, and one that inspired not only the desire to help in a practical way with the event (such as serving and clearing tables), but to get involved in the wider community food resilience work going on in the community.

This evaluation provides

- the methodology followed to develop the event
- outlines expectations set by the Stakeholder Group
- outlines feedback from the Stakeholder Group post event
- reports on findings from the post-event participant survey, as well as describing the methodology for developing this survey
- reports on feedback from some members of the kaewa community post-event
- provides a set of recommendations should this event be held again.



Lifting the hāngi



Catherine from New Brighton Community Gardens at the welcome table

Event Development

The food resilience space may seem crowded in Christchurch. Many organisations are working on addressing parts of a food system that seems increasingly vulnerable. As a first step in planning, therefore, informal contact was made with a number of these organisations to test whether they felt there was merit in holding ‘a community feast’ which would create a space to discuss food resilience matters. The following organisations were approached for this initial feedback:



Selection of vegetables at the Canterbury Community Gardens Association display

Aotearoa Food Rescue Alliance
Biological Husbandry Unit (Lincoln University)
Buy Pure NZ
Canterbury Community Gardens Association
Christchurch City Mission
Eat New Zealand
Food Resilience Network
Housing First
Inner City Chaplain
Kairos Food Rescue
Kore Hiakai Zero Hunger Collective
Smith Street Community Farm
Te Mana Ora.

All those consulted were enthusiastic about the event being held, and most of them formed the nucleus of a Stakeholder Group. This Stakeholder Group outlined a wide range of issues that they felt should be embedded in the logic of the event, which included:

- Desire for culturally diverse food
- Focus on disadvantaged people
- Politics and market
- The food system
- The need eat equitably
- Not so much the quantity of food, but quality of production that needs attention
- Providing food that is mana enhancing
- Carbon zero meat
- Addressing food waste issues
- Opportunity for this event to be of national significance!

These ideas were built into the event brief which was signed off both internally and with the Stakeholder Group.



The Stakeholder Group were asked to confirm what their expectations were for the event. These were:

- A wonderful event. Getting people together and sharing food.
- A beautiful experience. People knowing what's happening and where they can make the most impact, and who they can work with.
- Kai and relationships, this can build momentum. Raising awareness and shining a spotlight in the food scene in Ōtautahi Christchurch.
- Will be grand to come together.
- Want opportunity to network, to hear things happening that I don't already know about. Becoming aware of other organisations, connecting, bringing into community and food is a great way to do this.
- Networking.
- Celebrating collaboratively. Hands on tangible ways of addressing food. People growing food locally. There is a growing number of people needing locally grown food (Smith St putting in another acre of veggies). Getting more ideas about how to do this in tangible ways.
- There is an economic crisis and an environmental crisis. Food shortages, costs of living. Community gardens are part of the solution. Looking forward to meeting others, establishing contacts.
- How we create, invite change. How do we track the impact of ideas/actions coming out of this event. Kai and connections. Starting to initiate conversations. Connect and facilitate. Grassroots communities need to be part of designing research questions.
- Feasting to bring connection.

They then helped to construct an invitation list, which resulted in approximately 80 names. Once it was clear how the event would be shaped, this broader group was then invited to attend the weekly Stakeholder Group meetings.

These meetings gradually took the form of brief updates from the participating groups related to the event, followed by the stuff most of these people were really interested in: the practical projects being undertaken in our communities and the needs faced by different interest groups – all information organisations need to know when thinking about how they could better work together. Minutes from these meetings were kept and sent to the full list of interested persons each week. The Stakeholder Group therefore evolved over the course of its life from a small core group to a revolving door of interested persons. In itself it became a networking space which helped build momentum towards the event and its underlying kaupapa.

Delivery

An external event curator, Erica Austin (E.A. Curation) was contracted to handle much of the logistics for what was a very complicated event. The complexity included:

- The wide mix of people from very different backgrounds
- Balancing the University's need to focus on its 150th celebration as well as the strong desire for a networking event that showcased many organisations
- A networking event that was also a complicated meal for a large number of people, potentially making networking difficult
- Balancing the desire for a simple shared meal with those who wanted a workshop

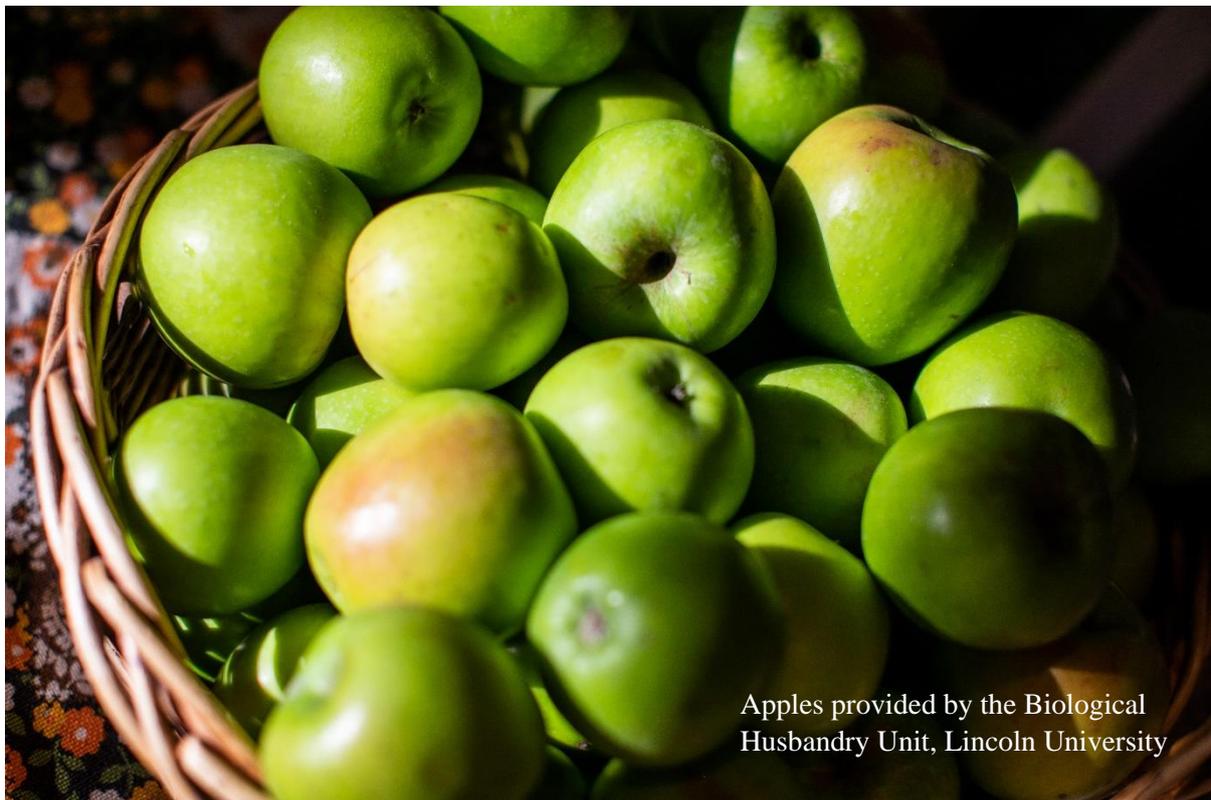
- Ensuring bi-cultural elements to the food preparation and the food itself, while also making space for a wide variety of dietary preferences
- Ensuring the food was ethically and sustainably sourced, integrating core beliefs of the Stakeholder Group
- A strong desire to make the event as accessible as possible to the most vulnerable people in our community, ensuring they could maintain their dignity while doing so.

It was decided early on that the feast should, if possible, feature a hāngi, and that this should be prepared by mana whenua, Ngāi Tūāhuriri. This was arranged and Grenville Pitama and his team did a great job bringing the hāngi together, a challenge given the delivery team's procurement requirements.

At the same time, there was a strong desire to feature other menu items, especially salads and a dessert – showcasing the harvest available at this time of the year. Salad greens were made available by Smith Street Community Farm and apples provided by the Biological Husbandry Unit. Chefs specialising in provision of seasonal, local and organic foods (Green Dinner Table) were contracted to arrange this part of the feast.

An important part of the engagement work was undertaken by the Canterbury Community Gardens Association. They developed the idea of 'Get Pickled with the CCGA' – provision of pickles and preserves from the different community gardens in the region. This was highly successful as it utilised something that many community gardens already have on hand and which it is not too burdensome to donate. It also added interest and colour to the tables, and provided something for people to eat (with bread) while waiting for the main course to arrive.

Similarly, the Food Resilience Network provided drinks – teas and cordials made from foraged fruit and herbs. This was much appreciated by attendees, especially as it was convenient to get a drink on arrival.



Apples provided by the Biological Husbandry Unit, Lincoln University

The venue selected was Aldersgate Centre in the central city. This venue could hold 200 people seated in the main room, with an additional 150 seated and standing in the rest of the venue. It also had a well-equipped commercial kitchen. Diagonally across the road were the hāngi pits. Logistical issues of bringing the hāngi up, carrying it across the road and serving it out quickly so that it remained hot were particularly difficult to manage.

Social media

Peanut Productions were contracted to provide three short videos prior to the event which highlighted what some community partners were doing for food resilience, as well relevant research being undertaken at the University of Canterbury. These three videos focused on the topics of [food waste](#), [food security](#) and [nutrition](#) (links are to LinkedIn). A [fourth video about the Feast](#) itself was shot on the day and evening of the event by UC’s own videographer (link is to Facebook). These videos were meant to spark greater community interest in the topic of food resilience, rather than to boost registrations. Almost all the available tickets were claimed before the videos went live.

Kaewa community

One of the most interesting elements of the event was the desire to connect meaningfully with those who were possibly most in need of a good meal. It was felt that a fancy exclusive meal centred around food resilience issues would be nonsensical and disappointing. However, it was also recognised that there might be challenges involving people who may not feel comfortable coming inside to sit with strangers, who may be facing difficult mental health and addiction problems, and who may feel ‘in the spotlight’ or ‘on show’ at such an event.

To manage this, organisers connected directly with three organisations who work with people who are homeless or in emergency accommodation. Suggestions from these groups included ensuring there were familiar faces at the event, ensuring adequate security provision in place, ensuring it would be possible for these people to take their meal outside or offsite if they didn’t feel comfortable inside, talking directly with people from this community before the event to make a personal invitation, and making sure the food would be appealing; the hāngi appeared to be a particularly appealing element. Perhaps most importantly, advice was given to treat this as an opportunity to learn new things from this community and for these views to be regarded as an essential element of the event: they would have something to contribute and would not just want a free meal. The table below outlines the steps taken by the organisers to meet the suggestions provided.

Suggestion	Measures taken
Ensuring there were familiar faces at the event	Key people from relevant organisations were identified and personally invited. The MC for the event (John Sellwood) was well known to the kaewa community, having undertaken his own project with them the previous year and remained in touch with them since.
Ensuring adequate security provision in place	UC Security provided four security guards for the event, who assisted people at the doors and also helped with the pack down.
Ensuring it would be possible for these people to take their meal outside or offsite if	The idea of providing disposable packaging for meals clashed with the sustainability

they didn't feel comfortable inside	values of the event. However, kaewa were happy to be seated and remained for the whole event. Ziplock bags were also provided by a partner organisation so people could take away leftover food at the end.
Talking directly with people from this community before the event to make a personal invitation	Two members of the Sustainability Office began attending a regular lunch for the kaewa and making connections three weeks before the event. This included handing out flyers and talking about what would be happening and pointing to the building where it would be held. One kaewa took on the task of handing out our flyers around the city, which undoubtedly brought more people in.
Making sure the food would be appealing	We had been told that kaewa would enjoy the hāngi especially, and feedback indicated that was the case.
Treat this as an opportunity to learn new things from this community	All participants at the event were invited to share their views through a 'Food for Thought' wall. However, as this event was framed as a dinner more than a workshop, this particular element remains an opportunity for ongoing development.

300 tickets were made available in total, with 50 spaces reserved for those people who might not be able to register beforehand for whatever reason (including lack of digital access). On the night, approximately 300 people attended in total. Email addresses from casual walk-ins were collected at the door, however most of these were incomplete and could not be used for the follow up survey.

Feedback from kaewa community about the event is included below.

One important factor was the advice to treat this event as the beginning of a relationship and not a one-off event. There is therefore a moral obligation to continue developing relationships with the kaewa community, even when the outcome of that engagement is not clear at this point.

Stakeholder Group Feedback

After the event, the Stakeholder Group was reconvened and were invited to share their immediate impressions in writing.

- “I’ll admit at the start of the night I was a little nervous about how it would go with the diverse groups of people in one place. But once the kai came out I felt the energy was really positive, and you could see people starting to relax and enjoy the company. I thought it was awesome to see how people wanted to contribute and help out with the clean up - that was very cool!”
- “I got the sense that people enjoyed gathering together to 1. enjoy good food!! and 2. share knowledge 3. make connections 4. feel inspired 5. celebrate the work that is already happening. Was very special. For me, I had a very logistical event running hat

on!! So didn't really get to spend a lot of time with the people. Food prep was a bit chaotic. But The volunteers were amazing... so amazing.”

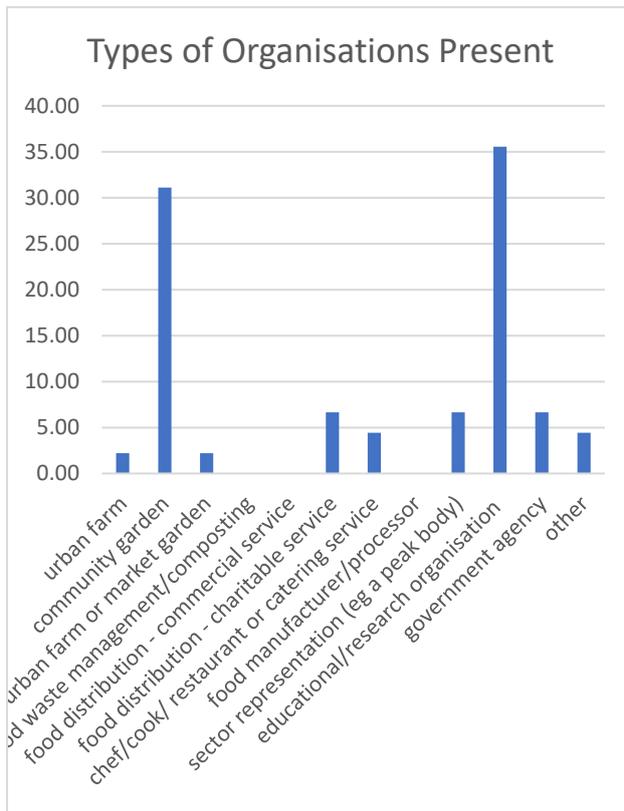
- “It was wonderful to see so many different types of people in the room together, sharing food and conversation. Particularly some of us don't mix with the socially vulnerable community much so it was really good (and humbling) to serve them and interact. I was a bit stressed by the food service as different food was coming out at different times, but no one seemed to care at all. The food was delicious and there was plenty to go around and quite a bit left over for people to take away with them to guarantee a good meal the next day.”
- “A motivation for me is that we now have the Organic Act. I'm leading a project to develop the new group scheme Govt are proposing that is based of the current Organic Farm NZ model. So, there are some ingredients in the event you laid on that could be very powerful in progressing our thinking from home > community > micro business to local regional food MSM models (Micro Small Medium) business.”
- “Loved the range of people from different communities at the feast. Great to showcase food from canterbury growers. Bit hectic at times but a great event”
- “Volunteers and organisers were amazing!”
- “My observation is that there was a Uni, local Govt, private, community, voluntary mix that was intentional AND emergent.”
- “An outcome is that it gave Food for thought”

Participant Post-Event Survey

Feedback from the Stakeholder Group also helped to shape the post event survey. Organisers asked members of the Stakeholder Group what they would like to hear from participants, so that the results could be of value to all. In addition, several academic staff members from Lincoln University with good knowledge of survey techniques helped to shape the online



survey. This was launched on 15 May and was open until 21 May.



The survey was sent to 328 email addresses, 9 of which bounced back. It was sent to everyone who registered for the event, including those who registered but did not attend. 98 responses were received, a 31% response rate, which is considered fair.

94% of respondents to the survey attended the event. Those who didn't were directed to questions later in the survey. Of those who did attend, 50% attended as part of an interested organisation, while 48% attended as individuals (and the remainder were not sure). Those who selected 'organisation' were asked to provide more detail. 36% were from educational organisations, including schools, universities and research institutes. 31% were from community gardens, and 7% from food distribution services offering a

charitable service. 7% were from government agencies.

We asked people to choose why they wanted to attend The Community Feast from a pre-determined list. 29% wanted to connect with like-minded individuals, while 22% wanted to network with related organisations. 21% wanted to enjoy the food, 12% to celebrate UC's



Prof. Julia Rucklidge, UC

150th anniversary, and 10% to hear inspirational speakers. When asked to select from the same list those aspects they felt worked the best, the responses were somewhat different, which gives a clue as to what could be done differently next time. 28% reported that enjoying the food was the best element, while 27% said that connecting with like-minded individuals worked best. 17% felt that networking with related organisations worked best. 13% enjoyed celebrating UC's anniversary, while 11% enjoyed the speakers best.

Overall, 71% of attendees said they enjoyed the event 'very much', while 24% 'somewhat' enjoyed it. No one reported that they disliked the event, and 92% said they would attend the event if it were to be run again. Most of the remainder said they might attend (1 said they would not). Given that most people attended to connect with others, we asked attendees whether the Feast 'led to valuable connections for you or your organisation'. 57% said 'yes', 31% said 'maybe', while 11% said 'no'. We asked those who replied 'yes' to that question to provide more detail, and their responses are summarised below.

What sort of connection/s did you make, and in what way/s do you think this will be valuable?

Fantastic to meet growers and local producers, fantastic to learn more about the ways Canterbury can increase its food resilience

Talked with others from community gardens so very useful sharing ideas with other organisations

Connected with other volunteers involved with community gardens, composting, etc. which will be helpful for learning more about those topics in the future by becoming aware of and attending events

Friendships, community connection

Re connecting with Ōtautahi networks and hearing of new initiatives

I'm new to the food rescue sector. This event showed me many more organisations that can help us and we can help to provide a fuller service to our clients.



Personal

Deepening connections within the community to further participate in the Edible Canterbury initiative.

Everyone

Talked to other community gardeners and arranged visits. We can be inspired and work together

People from all networks & learning about the way people work at this.

community food foraging, teaching and learning

Was able to introduce my governance team to various other organisations.

By connecting with other gardens we were able to learn different ways of planting and sustainability. How we can access the tree plantings from Lincoln university ie Apple tree plants

new to my role and the canterbury region, very good to build relationships but know of other organisations in the area

learnt about the range of local initiatives in an informal, conversational environment; have identified a few organisations to follow-up with in the weeks ahead

It was good to connect with other community gardeners and kairos.

Made great connections with 3 people, all of whom I have followed up with

Potential research connections

Most of the connections were made through the organisational work leading up to the event, including with those working on the coal face of food security issues (such as with the kaewa/homeless community)

Other regional and national networks and cool individuals

There were connected reasons as to why 42% did not feel they made valuable connections on the night. Chiefly, these were:

- People sat with those they already knew – it was a chance to catch up with colleagues and friends.
- The event was primarily a dinner and not a workshop. There was no structured approach to ensuring people would make new connections.
- The seating arrangement made it difficult for some people to feel they could move about.
- Coloured dots, meant to represent a person's main area of interest for the night, were not enough of a signal for people to seek out new connections.

Other feedback, however, noted that this was the first event of its kind, and perhaps it was good to keep things loose and self-directed, rather than overly structured, especially given the very wide mix of guests present.

We also asked attendees what they thought could be done to improve the event if it were to be run again. These are listed here in their entirety and grouped in themes to help with thinking for future organisers:

What did you think could be improved or done differently if this event was to be run again?

Context/speeches

- There could be more information about food sustainability and UC at the venue.

- Not much - it was awesome. Maybe more speeches and photos about food and growing in the city, and less about UC.
- Maybe a podium in the middle of the room for the speakers to get closer to the people.
- The speeches could be shorter.
- I would suggest conversation leaders at each table to engage solutions lead discussions.
- Information update.
- Less head talk, more stories, bring humour in the presentation intentionally with everybody on board with stories. Ask people that are challenged by that to speak less.
- More intentional knowledge sharing Ie the stickers didn't mean anything as the tables were totally random, and there were not enough tables to be together in one room, and speakers were difficult to hear at times due to room/preparation noise.
- Public debate about some crucial issues.

Sound quality

- Sound and speeches.
- The sound. It was hard to follow the speaker because many people were in the place.
- The sound system was a bit tricky at times, missed a lot of the speakers' content.
- Improved audio at event.
- No fault of the organizers, but sound system at venue wasn't great.
- If run again, the microphone and technology should try to work better and not too many speakers so that we can take the time to talk to others.
- Venue sound was tricky so difficult to hear speakers (hence I didn't rate this highly) and to have conversations...

Food service

- Feed the homeless faster.
- To have a better ability to give or store the left over food for the homeless.
- Getting the food out a bit better timing.
- As a volunteer that works full time in a high pressure job. 1. I did not appreciate the vocal outcry and disrespect when speakers were addressing everyone at the opening and in-between the courses that we were serving. 2. I would like to see the kitchen front house closed to guests as we had people asking to take the platters, while we were prepping and it just make things more hectic while using discretion.
- Gluten free options prioritised for those with allergies so they didn't miss out. EG being able to identify yourself as a dietary requirement person when you arrive, and having plates of the gluten free and Plant based options prioritised for the same reason. So that those people don't feel like they have to be whakamā to say to their table of strangers that they identify as such and therefore feel awkward about having first crack at those options. Which I didn't...and the ladies at my table were like gannets when our food arrived and had kids - they cut loose lol. I had fomo about that beautiful pudding btw but became really embarrassed at 'hanging around' like the last person desperate to try it...
- Perhaps a better flow to the serving and more hands cleaning up after.

- Getting all of the meal out to tables at the same time, rather than dishes randomly appearing

Seating/format/networking

- Have a standing event so people don't become glued to their seats and only sit with who they know!! It was hard to talk to people when there are speakers - Keep them short and sweet. If sit down get people to move seats between courses - musical chairs. Use long trestle tables as it was hard to talk to people across the large round tables.
- Have it more informal. I had expected a buffet style situation, where we could move around and talk to people. Sitting at the formal table limited the amount of interactions that could happen.
- Just keep turning your minds to ideas for getting everyone to intermingled and stay on topic. Like what you did with the stickers , just keep evolving that idea intermingled.
- A way for individuals and organisations to connect over shared interests.
- It was actually really nice to just be able to enjoy the food. No pressure to network but perhaps there could have been one networking activity.
- Networking was somehow difficult due to being seated. It was somehow difficult to change tables (even if encouraged), so I ended up speaking mainly to people that I already knew. There's an emotional barrier to change tables when people are seated. Maybe a "standing" event with finger food would encourage more intermingling.
- Have a clear itinerary of how the event is going to be run. Other participants said they didn't attend as had expected to be standing for the entirety of the event based on the description whereas I was able to sit down and enjoy a meal at a table.
- I would have liked more time to actually talk to the other people there. A lot of time was spent listening to other people speak. Perhaps encouraging us to change tables every course would be a nice idea?
- 1. make tables for vegetarians/vegans only. 2. make tables for certain topic/tag to identify their interests. 3. have more digital information instead of papers. 4. limit the space so everyone has a seat
- I think there needs to be a way to get people up and moving around - maybe this happens at the beginning? I was saddened I didn't get up and walk and talk more.
- It was quite crowded, with not enough seats for everyone. That's fine for the informal networking part, but it's hard to eat! It's a long event and so everyone wanted a seat at some point, especially for speakers and eating.
- If the aim is to create connections, then less speeches, and a buffet type rather than served food forcing people to move around to access food and drinks.
- Provide more table for people was miss out have to standing while speaker talking awhile.
- More opportunity to mingle.
- The sticky dots was a nice idea but not sure they worked to encourage conversations.
- Perhaps more mingling, for example, some food or drink whilst standing.
- Build greater processes for mixing. I didn't mix much because I was tired and I didn't really need to. I would have liked an easier and facilitated process to make that happen. It was left up to me and I didn't do it.

- One thing that can be done differently would be perhaps instructing guests to move tables after each course in the interest of networking.
- We didn't move from our table so networking was limited. Could have had 'get up and move' times between courses.
- Larger breakout space.
- Provide a more structured approach to discussions - e.g breakout times, directed areas for discussion.

Volunteering

- Maybe give a chance for people attending to volunteer as well.
- Providing opportunities/calls to action for people to get involved.
- More volunteers and better communication.

General

- It was perfect.
- can't think of anything!
- Probably best as a once off kind of event. Other similar events might spontaneously be organised by those interested in the food resilience sector in the future to mark other specific celebratory occasions.
- Nothing it was awesome.
- I personally enjoyed all aspects of the event and would love to go again.
- Not have it on a Friday night, very tired from working all week. That's all.
- Nothing, it was a really great event. Make it a regular thing! It would work really well as a Matariki celebration for example.
- Make it bigger!
- All good. Maybe in summer.
- I needed more time!!
- Music from local musicians maybe somewhat related to gardening

82% of those surveyed found out about the event through personal invitation/ private networks and word of mouth. 11% learned about it through social media. Only 1% heard about it through formal news media. Just under 7% found out about it through other channels – primarily internal UC channels.

Finally, we asked people three ‘further action’ questions. 32% of respondents said that their organisation could be interested in co-hosting The Community Feast next time. 61% said they would be interested in volunteering at this event if it were to be held again. 69% were



Deputy Mayor of Christchurch,
Cr. Pauline Cotter

interested in taking part in a focus group about food resilience.

Kaewa Feedback

Members of the Sustainability Office visited kaewa at The Commons and, with their permission, sought direct feedback regarding the event.

Jimi commented that it was “an honour to be invited” and he “was really impressed to see a broad spectrum of the community there, and the diversity, with the uni students and the work they have done.” He felt that the korero around food issues was like “bringing back old values from our grandparents’ time.” He liked that the food was free, but also that there was some education about what is happening in this space, including from the Christchurch City Council Deputy Mayor Pauline Cotter. It was good to be building connections so that people were no longer strangers. He liked seeing that organisations were working together and believed that the event would have an impact. “It’s a great beginning of something. A very good, solid foundation.” Jimi also felt that kaewa could be part of the preparation of the event in the future: “There would be a whole bunch of us who would like to help,” and he noted that cleaning up afterwards is just expected in most cultures.

Connor emphasised how the Feast was one way that people could care for each other. Events like this, which can “accommodate all walks of life,” meant “there were more caring eyes that know that person they see walking down the road,” and that people were no longer strangers. He mentioned that he had a “really nice time with more well-off people.” He noted that often those people might only see “the ugly side of our lives”, but not a “capacity for

decency” that kaewa have. Connor was happy to hear John Sellwood use a shared language – “he has a way of beauty and compassion.” He felt the whole event was “a testament to our humanity and civility.” Finally, he hoped that the event could become a nationwide experience, where people in communities around the country could all be feasting at the same time.

Wiremu really liked the event and the kai but would have liked to have known a bit more about what happened to the food scraps afterwards, noting that it seemed a waste for it to be sent off-site to be composted. He thought it would have been cool if the scraps could have been fed to pigs or chickens, which in turn could provide food back to the community. He shared our surprise that there was quite a bit of food left over at the end of the event, despite careful planning.

Heather said the event was “awesome” and would definitely attend if there was something like this again. She was however quite distressed that there were no bowls or takeaway containers intentionally provided for people to take food away with them and that it “wasn’t good enough”. Plastic bags were provided for this purpose but it was mentioned by one member of the community on the night that this was not an appropriate way for people to take food away.

Another member of this community was pleased to see that the older people in the room were happy with the way the hāngi was distributed, something of particular interest to him. He noted that the security guards did a good job, and took care of people when they arrived. Likewise, the drinks provided by the Food Resilience Network (cordials made from locally sourced fruit and herbs) were nice, and it was pleasing to be offered a drink. Really, he came to see his friends, and chose not to eat. But he enjoyed comments from University of Canterbury’s Vice Chancellor, Professor Cheryl de la Rey.

Recommendations and Next Steps

This evaluation has highlighted a number of areas for further consideration:

Development and promotion

Building a community of interest prior to the event, to set shared expectations and goals, is essential.

- Most people heard of the event through their own networks or through personal invitation. Sharing information out through a stakeholder group or similar is therefore essential to the success of the event.
- Paid marketing and media attention is not needed to bring together a large crowd on this Kaupapa, although it can help to spark more conversations about food resilience in the wider community.
- Next time, earlier connection with kaewa should be considered, along with a more deliberate engagement with the community as part of the planning team.

Food and other logistics

- The hāngi was greatly enjoyed and certainly contributed to a wide cross-section of society attending the event.
- The logistics of cooking the hāngi off-site were extremely difficult to manage and contributed to a haphazard serving situation. Future events could be held on-site beside the hāngi pits. Or, perhaps a ‘progressive’ dinner approach could be designed, with different courses at different nearby locations (for example Aldersgate, The Commons, and Ōtakaro Orchard).
- Contributions of food and drinks from allied organisations were much appreciated and added interest to the event.
- Many people remarked that they didn’t like the seating arrangements: some didn’t like to be seated at a large round table where it was hard to hear people across the table, some wanted a structured opportunity to stand and move during the event to aid networking, some wanted a smorgasbord style of serving, some did not want to be standing, and some didn’t like being seated in a different room away from the main action.
- There are logistical issues with serving on crockery, which was a bottom line for the organisers. Serving on disposable plates (even so-called ‘compostable’ plates) was felt to be inappropriate, but hired crockery limited opportunities for an event where people could move around easily. Consideration could be given to sourcing crockery from second-hand stores where risk of breakage or disappearance is not such a concern.
- Members of the kaewa community came with an expectation of taking away left-over food. This had not been factored in to planning, as excess food had been promised to either Aldersgate or Kairos Food Rescue for their own community meals. However, there was considerable demand for the leftover food to be distributed on the night. Takeaway containers may need to be provided for future events.

Speakers and activities

- Many people wanted to hear either less from speakers, or for speakers to be scattered throughout the evening, rather than mostly at the beginning. One of the reasons for longer talks at the start was to help manage the logistical challenge of bringing the hāngi across the road – providing an activity while the food was being served up.
- Some people wanted to hear more from people working directly on this kaupapa of food sovereignty.
- There were quite a few ideas placed on the ‘food for thought wall’, but overall this did not result in many new ideas. To be effective, an activity would need to be specifically designed around this.
- The coloured dots, used to help identify the areas of interest for attendees, were of limited value for people who sat at tables. Overall, a lot of feedback was received that while people came to network, they felt that the event was too unstructured to provide much of this. Next time, tables could be themed by topic, or people could be encouraged to meet someone who they didn’t already know to discuss an area of shared interest.

It seems clear that there was a great deal of interest in this event and that most people would like it to be run again. If it is, most would like it to have more structure that prioritises networking.

The organisers will contact all those who said their organisations might be interested in co-hosting this event in the future, to see if they are happy for their contact details be shared to one another.

A focus group about food resilience may be led by staff from Lincoln University, and those who opted in to this will be contacted in due course.

Stakeholder Group members have reviewed this evaluation, which will be sent to all participants. This email list will not be shared and will not be used for future communications.

The organisers wish to thank all those organisations who partnered to make the inaugural Community Feast a success.

All Photography by Jonny Knopp, Peanut Productions.

Cheryl de la Rey
Vice-Chancellor | University of Canterbury

Share kai, ideas and resources
with UC and food sustainability
organisations across Ōtautahi



Aldersgate Centre
Friday 26 April, 6pm-9pm



Prof. Cheryl de la Rey,
Vice-Chancellor,
University of Canterbury