

Ngā hua o te whenua, ngā hua o te rākau

**Whakapapa Research
Project series: Kai**



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Whakapapa Research Project series

This is part of a series of writings from eight whānau researchers on nine kaupapa. This kaupapa is about kai.

Whānau researchers

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Research kaupapa

Aspirational letter to future generations

Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) and whakapapa

Kai

Matriarch

Research methodology and methods

Whānau event

Whāngai

Whenua

Taonga



Childhood memories

I grew up in a railway settlement in Marton. My father was a foreman working with railroad men replacing or repairing train tracks. It was hard work in those days but our railway community looked after each other; most of them were related.

As a child I remember my father had a huge garden full of seasonal vegetables. He was totally in his element preparing his garden to grow vegetables. Our chores in those days seemed like a lot but he taught us how to maintain a vegetable garden, what seasons of the year were good for planting and growing vegetables, and how to tend to the garden.

Our responsibility as kids was to weed our big garden every weekend. We found that chore time-consuming as it cut into our time to hang out with our cousins or the Pākehā boys from across the street. We were the only girls on the street—I had two younger sisters (and a baby brother) at the time.

Dad came home one day with this big flash red-looking gadget for the garden. It was called a 'rotary hoe' used to turn the dirt over so he could plant new vegetables. We still had to weed the bloody garden, despite that big flash red gadget. And the garden got bigger, which meant more bloody weeding!

He taught us many things like how to sustain the garden, and what time and when to water the garden. We would spend an hour or so soaking his vegetables, which was in the evenings as this was the best time to water the garden. If you watered the garden during the day, your vegetables would burn because of the heat. I remember the wenoweno flower; a yellow-coloured flower that grew off the pumpkin or kamokamo plant, which was edible—yuck! When Dad cooked a boil-up, he would drop that wenoweno plant into the pot with the prickly pūhā that he made us eat. There was no kai wasted in our whare. I didn't like the wenoweno flower or the prickly pūhā as a child. Today, I have different taste buds and it's yummy—how times certainly have changed. Today, the wenoweno flower is like a delicacy;

you can dip it in batter and fry with other vegetables, and it can be served as an entrée.

I remember a time when Dad picked some corn from his garden; he peeled and cooked them. We were playing tag with the neighbourhood kids outside, chasing each other, laughing, screaming, and arguing. Dad called out to us kids; he had set us up to have relay races in the back yard. If you won your race, you got a hot corn-on-a-cob with lots of butter and salt. Those were the good ole days. I can still hear the sound of laughter. Nothing seemed to faze us back then. We enjoyed our childhood days.

Our father also shared the bounty from his garden with our neighbours. Most of them were related. If they needed vegetables, the garden was always plentiful. We also had fruit trees: apples, pears, oranges, plums, peaches, and lemons. Our aunty next door would preserve jam from our plums, apples, peaches, and pears. We also had laying chooks that supplied us with eggs. Kai was always plentiful in those days for ourselves, our neighbours, and our railway community.

Childhood memories came flooding back to me; a time where we were taught values, morals, and respect. We were also taught a variation of skills, such as prepping, gardening, cooking, cleaning, and manual outdoor skills, like how to set up a fire, stack wood, dig a hāngi hole, or mow the lawns. We were taught how to catch eels and how to pāwhara. We cooked the tuna in a smoke house we helped build with our father—those were indeed good days. My siblings and I had a privileged upbringing; we never wanted for anything, and kai was plentiful. I'm eternally grateful to my parents for sharing with us and teaching us those life skills. It was so simple back then.

Unfortunately, the skills I was taught as a child are lacking amongst today's generation. A shift has happened with the new age of technology, where our tamariki and mokopuna have become materially and technologically dependent and precious; their coping mechanisms are failing them, thus causing many issues with day-to-day living.





Photographs courtesy of the Kara whānau.

Kuputaka: Glossary

Use of tuhutō (macrons): the introduction of macrons over some Māori vowels, have (1) clarified definitions and (2) made it easier to pronounce Māori words (i.e., knowing where to place the emphasis as you are saying the words). When we quote sources from earlier periods where macrons have not been used, we have not included the macron to remain true to the original text. In the glossary, we have included both versions of the word (with and without macrons).

hāngi	earth oven to cook food with steam and heat from heated stones
kai	food
kamokamo	<i>Cucurbita spp</i> ; stubby green vegetable marrow (or gourd)
mokopuna	grandchild; grandchildren
Ngā hua o te whenua, ngā hua o te rākau	Fruits of the land, and forest
Pākehā	European settlers of Aotearoa New Zealand
pāwhara	preparation of eels
pūhā	<i>Sonchus arvensis</i> , prickly sowthistle
tamariki	children
tuna	eel
wenoweno	yellow flower that grows off the pumpkin and kamokamo
whare	house

