



New Zealand food provenance paddock to plate

NEW ZEALAND STARTS TO TELL ITS PROVENANCE STORY

Every year millions of people flock to the cultural meccas of France and Italy and an inevitable part of that visit includes sampling iconic dishes in the place they originated from.

Both those European food magnets have a couple of advantages over New Zealand when it comes to attracting tourists with their food – they have large domestic populations that put a discerning, relatively wealthy market within their own borders, and they have had 2,000 years of history to refine and define their respective dishes.

Despite being a recent arrival to the world's pantry, New Zealand food producers are beginning to define their own distinct style and story, to the point food and beverage exports now account for 60 percent of this country's overseas earnings, and are poised to grow further and faster as overseas consumers seek out the quality and taste that backs New Zealand's food provenance story.

Kiwi producers have had to work doubly hard to make their mark, pushing product from the bottom of the world to reach the larger markets that their European counterparts can take for granted in their own backyard.

And while European producers have had many generations to define their food

“stories”, New Zealand producers have only honed theirs in the past decade or so.

That has come as our primary sector recognises it only has to feed about 20 million high-income people well with quality branded products, rather than ten times that with lower-value bulk food products.

The New Zealand primary sector's ability to provide consumers with quality food backed by a compelling provenance story of sustainability, purity and quality is now playing out in ways that resonate more soundly than the country's original “100% Pure” campaign.

As well intentioned as it was, the “brand” faced threats to its integrity.

Back in 2011 then Prime Minister John Key was forced to reject criticism of the brand on BBC, acknowledging “100% Pure” was a relative comparison to other countries' environmental standards.

Fast forward almost a decade and New Zealand now has some defined national policies around fresh water standards, and a world-leading zero-carbon policy. Both do much to ensure the country can “walk the walk” behind any provenance claims of purity, sustainability and health.

Leading the charge for telling this story to valuable overseas markets is Beef + Lamb New Zealand's “Taste Pure Nature” campaign.

Launched a year ago in California, the branding mission set out to educate and engage with a market niche, the “Conscious Foodie”.

Conscious Foodies are recognised for their preference for quality, grass-fed product grown in a sustainable, animal-friendly manner.

The campaign has garnered over a quarter of a million website visits, 6.4 million brand video views and a third of a million people clicking to find out where to buy New Zealand grass-fed meat.

The campaign has the backing of five prominent New Zealand meat companies, Atkins Ranch, First Light, Silver Fern Farms, New Zealand Spring Lamb, and Te Mana Lamb.

Beef + Lamb New Zealand general manager of market development Nick Beeby said partnering with the companies has proven highly successful.

For example, engaging a social media influencer connected to First Light has grown the campaign's reach.

Adding some TV segments onto a show hosted by a well-known chef helped Taste Pure Nature get over 1,000 placements and half a million potential impressions.

“While we are taking a long-term view of building the profile of the Taste Pure Nature brand, and understanding New Zealand farming systems in California and the United States, it is clear to see there is a real want



welcomed a \$6 million injection from the Provincial Growth Fund to help maintain the honey's New Zealand provenance claims, already under threat in China from assorted imported "Manuka" honey.

So far Manuka has gained a guarantee it cannot be copied in the United Kingdom, thanks to the UK Trade Registry accepting it as a certification mark.

John Rawcliffe of the Manuka Appellation Society said the retail value of Manuka honey in UK supermarkets is about \$500 million, and well worth protecting.

"We have already spent the better part of \$2 million to get to where we are now. But the return from this investment will be in protection in multiple markets."

Rawcliffe is also hoping to see greater protection for other mono-floral brands of uniquely New Zealand honey including rewarewa and pohutukawa which each with their own distinct flavour, consumer appeal and provenance story to tell.

Even the dairy sector where commodity milk powder has long been the mainstay, is moving to higher value consumer products drawing off New Zealand's grass-fed free-range dairy method.

International cheese judge Russell Smith gives New Zealand "blues" like Kikorangi the big tick, something he

believes comes from having the same experienced cheese makers working on them year in, year out.

He also believes the burgeoning artisan cheese sector provides a valuable link between tourism and food, drawing people to districts seeking out their favourite brands at the source.

A 2018 ANZ report indicated over half of visitors to New Zealand came with a neutral view of this country's food offerings, compared to only 15 percent in France and Italy arriving feeling "neutral".

The potential for food tourism was highlighted in the report, with over 50 percent of visitors coming to a farm or orchard, and 60 percent buying a product at home that they had seen or sampled on their visit here.

The wine industry is well down the track in linking tourists, wineries and food together, with regions like Hawke's Bay and Marlborough enjoying significant influxes of tourists wanting the true Gimblett Gravels or Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc winery experience.

New Zealand food champion, chef and author Lauraine Jacobs says the report has been the closest yet to identifying where New Zealand needs to up its game.

"It is a positive thing after the likes of myself shouting and screaming about this for a number of years," she says.

"WHILE WE ARE TAKING A LONG-TERM VIEW OF BUILDING THE PROFILE OF THE TASTE PURE NATURE BRAND, AND UNDERSTANDING NEW ZEALAND FARMING SYSTEMS IN CALIFORNIA AND THE UNITED STATES, IT IS CLEAR TO SEE THERE IS A REAL WANT FOR OUR PRODUCT BY THE 'CONSCIOUS FOODIE' CONSUMER."

NICK BEEBY - BEEF + LAMB NZ.

for our product by the 'conscious foodie' consumer. We are excited to take this to the Chinese market."

Here at home the campaign is supported by the visit of six key foodie influencers from the United States.

While Manuka honey's earnings of \$300 million a year pale against the \$8.5 billion red meat export sector, it too has a strong campaign running to protect its brand and reinforce the provenance story that sits behind a uniquely New Zealand product.

The Manuka honey sector last year

