

Lower carbs and calories spuds

Lotatoes are expected to be on the supermarket shelves from late November.

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THREE YEARS ago fruit and vegetable trader T&G told Pukekohe growers about a potato with lower carbs and fewer calories, called Lotatoes.

Two family-owned businesses, Balle Brothers and Masters Produce, were chosen to trial the new variety.

This month, Lotatoes fended off four other food innovators to be crowned overall winner of the Ministry for Primary Industries Primary Sector Products Award at the 2017 New Zealand Food Awards.

The top-notch potato, with 40% less carbs and fewer calories than other potato varieties, was developed by cross-breeding different varieties of potato seeds. Those seeds have a shorter, more sustainable, growth cycle and use less water than other spuds, making them better for the environment.

Balle Brothers' production manager Eamon

Balle says his company has been excited to be involved in growing Lotatoes.

"It took three years to grow the variety and there's been a lot of learning along the way," he told *Rural News*.

Balle and other growers also travelled to Europe to meet growers growing a similar variety.

Balle Brothers is a family-owned business growing potatoes, carrots, onions, cabbages and cauliflower for local and overseas markets. The firm has farms in the Far North, Pukekohe, Mata-matā, Ohakune, Central Hawkes Bay and Mid-Canterbury.

Balle says Lotatoes were trialled on its farms at Ohakune, central North Island.

Judges at the NZ Food Awards were impressed with the process used to naturally breed and sustainably grow Lotatoes.

Andrew Keaney, executive general manager T&G, says Lotatoes are high quality and taste good.

"They are sustainably grown here in NZ by passionate farmers loved by kiwi consumers," he says.

"Having judges recognise Lotatoes confirms we're on the right track with innovation, which

in the produce industry takes a long time, so hats off to the dedicated teams from T&G and our growing partners

Balle Brother and Masters Produce for getting Lotatoes from the soil to the supermarket shelves."

New-season Lotatoes are expected in selected Countdown supermarkets nationwide from late November.



Need to cut your PKE use? Plant your maize now.