

Kia ora, gday and welcome to the History of Aotearoa New Zealand. Episode 68: Feast for the Mouth. This podcast is supported by our amazing Patrons, such as Catherine, Elfy, the sentient NPC and Florida Man. If you want to support HANZ go to patreon.com/historyaotearoa. Last time, we talked about how Māori meals were constructed and proportioned prior to their arrival in Aotearoa and a little about how this changed after. Today we will continue talking about how Māori went about making their meals after the Great Migration, mainly focussing on feasting.

We should start, as is right, with the actual start of things. Right back when Rangī and Papatūānuku were separated by their son, Tānemahuta, Atua of the Forests. You might recall that although most of Tāne's brothers agreed to this course of action there was one that didn't, Tawhirimātea, Atua of Wind and Storms. He quite famously fought both Tāne and Tangaroa, Atua of the Sea, over this. In the version I recounted way back in episode 8 Tawhirimātea loses that fight to Tumatauenga, Atua of War and creator of humans. However, in some versions it is the storm god that wins, not his brothers and in those versions he uses nieces and nephews as food. Specifically the children of Tāne, Tangaroa, Rongomātāne and Haumiatikitiki, the last two being the Atuas of cultivated and uncultivated food respectively. This was in part to explain why certain things in the world are food and others are not, as the children of these gods are things like birds, fish, kūmara and aruhe. It is also to illustrate that food is noa rather than tapu and laid the foundations for the karakia used to make food abundant and easy to catch or find. In saying this, these karakia are often quite tapu due to their association with the various gods in question, along with many ritualised aspects of collecting and eating food.

We have talked about in the past about how food is noa and as such there is special conditions around how it is used in certain very tapu conditions, since you can't just stop feeding people because their a bit too holy right now. In such cases where a person has recently had some tā moko work done or they are a tohunga that is just immensely tapu due to their profession, they would have someone else feed them or use a stick so they didn't have to touch the food. We have also talked about how food was used to remove tapu as well by having certain people eat or eating in certain circumstances, which all kinda ties into the idea of having feasts when there has been a lot of tapu, such as a pōwhiri or after a marae has been built. As such, food wasn't allowed inside a marae as it was too tapu and instead food would be prepared and eaten either outside or in a separate nearby building, a practice that still continues today. In one instance, the Takatimu waka, the waka from the Great Fleet that ended up in in the lower South Island, was apparently so tapu that no food was to be brought on board at all. Which would have been pretty damn rough so one would suspect that if this is true that there was a lot of stops along the way to catch and find food at various islands.

Throughout the last episode and pretty much every other episode we've talked about food I have mentioned the hangī, or umu as it is known in most of the Pacific. If you haven't listened to some of the earlier episodes where we discussed the the first two phases of Māori society in Aotearoa you may not know what these actually are. Their a way to steam food using the natural resources provided by Papa. The way it worked is you would dig a hole in the ground, which could be bigger or smaller depending on what you were cooking and how many people you were expecting to feed. During this time you would have some rocks in a fire to allow them to heat up or the rocks would be placed into the pit after it was dug with wood piled on top of it. This wood would be set alight to burn down for an hour or two to heat the rocks up. Some sources don't specify any particular kind of rocks but the best are volcanic rocks as they retain the heat better. Specifically andesite and basalt. My source for that fact is the Māori TV show, Hāngī Pit Masters and they sound like they would know a lot about this sort of thing so I'm inclined to believe them. You would then place the hot

rocks into the pit and some water thrown on them to clean off the ashes. Next was to wrap whatever food you were wanting to cook in leaves of your choosing. If you remember from last time, this could have a significant effect on the flavour so it was important to use the right leaves! In the modern day this is usually replaced with cloth. A basket of harakeke, called a pae umu, would be placed on top of the rocks to separate them and the dirt walls of the pit from the food itself. The food parcels would then be placed in the basket and covered in some more leaves and then the pit filled in to trap in all the steam and cook everything. This process was similar in most regions in Aotearoa. One major difference would be if you lived in an area with a large amount of geothermal activity, basically if you lived somewhere between Taupō and Rotorua. If you were trying to make a hangi somewhere around there, you could cheat a bit and instead of using heated rocks, you could use the natural heat from the geothermal activity to do the steaming job for you, you just needed to be a bit more selective about where you started digging. Hangi were most often used to cook larger amounts of food, things like kūmara and moa, whereas smaller foods like fish were cooked on sticks over fire or wrapped in leaves and placed within the embers. Additionally, hangi were usually prepared by women so it was their job to dig the pits, heat the rocks and cook the food.

There was still the option to cook over or in a fire as well, which was mostly done for grilling and baking. Fish and birds were put on a stick and set over the embers or some hot stones or they could be set on a rack or just put straight into the embers to bake, though they would usually be wrapped in leaves if this was the case. Tuna, various vege and cakes made of aruhe could also be cooked via baking. Boiling was also an option by putting the kūmara, for example, into a gourd with water and chucking a hot stone in with it. This was in place of the fact that Māori had no pottery, or at least none that I've seen in my research and would be later replaced with using metal pots, as well as hangi being replaced with European style ovens, though it was noted that these methods, although faster, didn't give the food as much flavour. There were actually six methods of cooking food that Māori used prior to European arrival which were all variations of using hangi, fires, hot stones and boiling. Although Western styles of cooking prevail in modern New Zealand, hangi are still very popular for important events such as weddings, tangi, various hui and other large gatherings. Or in my case, a very nice lunch at the Sunday farmers market!

On the topic of large gatherings, naturally these would involve lots of food for all the people gathered in the form of a hākari, feast. Gatherings like tangi, marriages, peace negotiations or other events where guests from other hapū or iwi would be present was a time to show off your wealth and really increase your mana by being a great host in the form of excellent manaakitanga, hospitality. In fact, feasts could be held for all sorts of reasons, the birth of a high ranked child, the dedication of a child to a particular atua, a rangatahi getting their first moko and other important life events. Hākari could be held for the end of the major planting or when all the kūmara had been harvested, both of which were a pretty big deal as we have talked about in the past. Especially as this all revolved around Matariki, the beginning of another year in the Māori calendar. Whare wānanga would be opened with feasts along with any major construction project that required outside help, such as a whare nui. Summoning allies to war, hohou rongo, making peace, the arrival of important visitors, when a rūnanga was held or just feasts as utu, the possibilities for when a feast might be held was really endless. In terms of tangihanga, a feast would be held when guests arrived on the marae along with another when the burial party returned after burying the deceased. A third feast would also be held when the bones were exhumed as well.

In the 19th century we have accounts from Europeans of what they saw when attending various feasts. Such as when food was divided up, it would be put into various piles and each pile would be named for a particular hapū or iwi. One account from Richard Taylor, a missionary, goes "When the

guests arrive they are received with a loud welcome, and afterwards a person, who acts as the master of the ceremonies, having a rod in his hand, marches slowly along the line of food, which is generally placed in the marae, or chief court of the pa, and then names the tribe for which each division is intended, striking it with his rod. This being done, the chief of that party receiving the food, sub-divides it amongst his followers. The food is then carried off to their respective homes." From the mid-19th century onwards, food would be displayed on a large stage like structure which could be up to 30m high, with one allegedly being 3.2km long! Naturally feasts involved a huge amount of food and one person who was at a feast in Matamata in 1837 recorded "They have collected for the feast, six large albatrosses, nineteen calabashes of shark oil, several tons of fish, principally young sharks, which are esteemed by the natives as a great delicacy, upwards of twenty thousand dried eels, a great quantity of hogs, and baskets of potatoes almost without number." This may be slightly exaggerated, but you get the gist. We also see feasts that involve the exchange of food from different regions, presumably the idea being that these foods weren't available in the opposing region, so it was a way to trade items that the other didn't have. In the following quote we hear of people from Kaiapoi, a coastal area, meeting up with people from Rapaki, a more inland region to exchange foods, "The people from Kaiapoi might go to Rapaki carrying tuna (eel), kiore (rat), kauru (cabbage tree), kuri (dog), aruhe (fernroot), kumera [sic] (sweet potato) and so on, while the home people would prepare pipi or kuku (shellfish), shark, maraki (dried fish), and other sea products as a return gift. The food was not eaten at the time but was exchanged, and some of the Rapaki people would assist the Kaiapoians to carry the Kaiapoi share to that place to feast on. The stuff taken to Rapaki would be stored there until the carriers returned, and then would be enjoyed by all. In two or three years time Rapaki would carry food to a feast at Kaiapoi and bring back inland food in exchange".

In terms of what would actually happen at feasts, we have a few different stories of people trying to compete with or even undermine each other. The first is from the Waikato and involves a rangatira named Tūhourangi from Rotorua visiting one of his peers, Kapu-manawa-whiti. Typically guests would visit for feasts during the autumn after the harvest was completed as naturally food was plentiful at this time and it was a good chance to share in the fruits of everyone's labour. The guest would normally send a messenger ahead so everything could be prepared by the time they got there. In this case though, Tūhourangi arrived in summer, a time when food was typically scarce, which was already not great but it didn't exactly help that he hadn't sent a messenger ahead either. Mana whenua struggled to feed the manuhiri with Kapu-manawa-whiti feeling rather embarrassed that he and his people were not able to provide proper manaakitanga. Again, Tūhourangi wasn't exactly the most gracious of guests when he made a few comments on the fact that his favourite foods were preserved bird and seafood, items that weren't exactly things you could just pop down to the dairy for if you didn't have them. Kapu-manawa-whiti argued this point, saying water was much better but despite the disagreement he invited the rangatira back for another feast in early the next summer. Since this time he knew when Tūhourangi would be arriving, even if he didn't send someone ahead of him, the Waikato chief prepared by putting aside a huge swath of food, particularly of dried seafood and preserved birds. Additionally, he moved his pā all the way up a hill, which is where the hākari would be held. When Tūhourangi arrived he and his mates smashed the manu and kaimoana, loving every last bite. Eventually, one of the Rotorua chief's retinue was sent to find some water to quench their thirst, no doubt due to all the salty seafood. However, he struck a bit of a problem. Since the pā was on a hill, there wasn't a river nearby that he could go to, at least not one that he could reach in a timely manner and didn't involve lugging gourds back up to the pā. Once he realised that there was no water to be had, Tūhourangi begged his host to find some water urgently. Kapu-manawa-whiti said he was happy to oblige but only if his guest would admit that

water was indeed the best food. Presumably knowing he had been beaten, Tūhourangi conceded that yes, water was the best food, at which point Kapu-manawa-whiti uncovered a well that he had hidden and thus recovered his mana from the previous feast.

The next story also comes from the Waikato, this time involving two brothers of noble descent, Tūrongo and Whatihua. Tūrongo, who was the younger of the two brothers, began courting Ruapūtahanga, a highborn woman from Taranaki who was said to be quite beautiful. He wanted her to visit him and asked for his older brother's advice about how to prepare. Unfortunately for Tūrongo, Whatihua also coveted her hand and told his younger brother to shorten the whare he was building as it would be too long. Tūrongo, trusting his older brother's advice, did just that while he was gathering up enough food to feed Ruapūtahanga and her entourage. During this time, Whatihua built a house that was much larger and much more impressive, secretly hoarding a huge amount of food within its walls. Before Tūrongo could store enough food to feed them all, Whatihua sent a message to Taranaki, the message said that Tūrongo requested Ruapūtahanga to come as soon as she was able. Having no reason to doubt this she travelled to the brothers' pā, but when she arrived she found that Tūrongo didn't have enough food for her and her mates or even enough space to house them. That's when Whatihua slide into her DMs, with his abundance of food and much larger... house. In doing so, Ruapūtahanga was won over by the older of the brothers and married him instead.

It wasn't all skulduggary and rivalries though, there was also a lot of utu in the sense of reciprocation. One such instance of this was when a rangatira, Te Whatuiāpiti hosted a feast that was attended by another rangatira, Te Angiangi, who received two calabashes of preserved food as a gift over the course of the time he was visiting. In return he hosted his own feast but was somewhat embarrassed when Te Whatuiāpiti commented that it was a bit small. Whether his intention was to embarrass Te Angiangi we aren't sure but nonetheless, Te Whatuiāpiti hosted another large hākari for his chiefly friend and his people. This put Te Angiangi into great debt with Te Whatuiāpiti and as such he made plans to return the gift by hosting a much larger hākari than the last one, this time including food from Te Wai Pounamu. However, this food was lost at sea so instead Te Angiangi gifted land to Te Whatuiāpiti as an appropriate exchange for his previous feast.

Another shorter one this week but we will be back next time talking all about hunting birds, rats and how dogs were involved in our 69th episode. Nice.

If you want to send me feedback, ask a question, suggest a topic or just have a chinwag you can find my email and social media on historyaotearoa.com. You can also find helpful resources there like transcripts, sources and translations for some of the Te Reo Māori we have used. This podcast is a one man band, if you enjoy listening to me talk history, you can support us through Patreon, buy merch or give us a review, it means a lot and helps spread the story of Aotearoa New Zealand. As always, haere tū atu, hoki tū mai. See you next time!