

This paper provides a recipe for Kai-dness, as designed by staff and students from Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington's Faculty of Architecture and Design Innovation. It sets out both the ingredients and the method for Kai-dness. It celebrates the associated lessons learned and the agents of change who combined as 'the Kai-dness Crew' to facilitate conversation and collaboration through commensality, the sharing of kai. The plate this was served upon was the fifth Social Movements, Resistance, and Social Change Conference in November 2020. This paper suggests that there is power in the sharing of kai to aid the social transitions required in moving towards more positive futures.

A Recipe for Kai-dness

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Responding to a call from the Social Movements, Resistance, and Social Change conference for proposals that imbued manaakitanga and whanaungatanga, the Kai-dness Crew was born. The conference organisers proposed a style of conference that belied its university context and venue, laying out the blueprint for a pā with the name ‘Aroha and Power’. This pā offered opportunities for contributions other than the traditional didactic conference-paper presentations, such as creative kōrero and designed provocations. Our cross-disciplinary rōpū responded to this call with a proposal centred around kai provision and a series of co-design interventions to support the kaupapa at the core of the conference.

For the conference, both schools from Wellington’s Faculty of Architecture and Design Innovation collaborated for the first time in the history of the faculty as a single entity. Guided by a shared kaupapa, the Kai-dness Crew sought to demonstrate the power of whanaungatanga through creative collaboration, using co-design as a tool for flax-roots empowerment and building mana motuhake. By combining understandings of commensality (social and shared eating)

and hākari as a means of offering manaakitanga and whakamana to conference attendees, we designed an interactive dining installation and provided the kai to facilitate the experience. The sharing of food was used as a prompt for discussions, and to enable a visualisation of the conference's kaupapa of Activating Collectivity: Aroha and Power.

Promoted as Kai-dness, and demonstrated through manaaki and whanaungatanga, the outcome of our provocation was not only a heart-warming collaboration between two distinct schools, but also a series of inclusive co-design sessions for those attending the conference. The event demonstrated the power of kai, creativity, and co-design as tools that loosen boundaries and facilitate conversations and connections for the pursuit of social, cultural, and environmental justice.

The Kai-dness Crew built on 'Te Rautaki Maruako', Te Herenga Waka's Teaching and Learning Strategy (TLS) which sets out a pedagogical approach that is rooted in manaaki. The aim of our conference contribution was to establish and build a Kai-dness community that exemplified the TLS, enabled collaboration between staff and students, and highlighted opportunities for socially connected learning through commensality and co-design. To demonstrate the manaaki and whanaungatanga held at its core, the Kai-dness Crew took up the challenge of providing kai for the approximately 300 attendees per day. This involved either producing or procuring kai that was ethically made, supported local producers, and enabled all delegates (of diverse culinary requirements) to experience commensality and appreciate the value of kai as something more than a kōrero-enabling tool. The recipe the Kai-dness Crew sought to develop and deliver tested ideas around how design can be a tool for stimulating social change. In the remainder of this paper, we set out the ingredients and methods for Kai-dness.



Figure 1. Kai-dness apron after fry bread preparation.

Kai-dness ingredients

To support building a space of manaaki and whanaungatanga, a team of Māori, Pākehā, and Taiwi formed around a commitment to honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi and to growing bi-cultural understandings, celebrating both commonalities and differences within our everyday lives. Margaret Mutu, a keynote speaker at the conference, has written that Te Tiriti o Waitangi was a treaty of peace and friendship that promised continued rangatiratanga to the iwi of the rangatira who signed it.¹ The Kai-dness Crew sought to amplify, through whanaungatanga, the aspirations set out in Te Tiriti—that upholding Te Tiriti is the work of everyone, not just Māori, as is often presumed. As well as seeking to live a Tiriti relationship, we brought together our interdisciplinary and shared hopes for contributing to positive social change and social justice in Aotearoa New Zealand. To do this, we combined the diversified knowledges and disciplinary strengths of architecture, interior architecture, landscape architecture, and design for social innovation to ignite and facilitate a convivial and shared space for change-focused conversations to occur between conference attendees.

Tikanga, mahi tahi, activations of manaaki

Finding balance, stability, harmony, and peace are at the core of the Kai-dness Crew's kaupapa. The activations we developed were guided by manaakitanga. It is in the unwrapping of this kupu that we discover its true meaning. The 'mana' in manaaki is best understood as representing a person's 'being'. Mana, our being, is sacred, and therefore needs to be sustained. This need is realised in 'aki', which stems from the word kaiti-'aki'-tanga (kaitiakitanga), which is to protect as a part of guardianship. Lastly, 'tanga' means people. So, for us, manaakitanga is the action of sustaining, nourishing, and protecting a person's being.

With value and meaning comes the desire to protect for future

1 Margaret Mutu, "To Honour the Treaty, We Must First Settle Colonisation" (Moana Jackson 2015): *The Long Road from Colonial Devastation to Balance, Peace and Harmony*, *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand* 49, no. 1 (2019): 4–18; see also 'Dreaming of Constitutional Transformation' in this issue of *Counterfutures*.

generations.² Garth Harmsworth and Shaun Awatere discuss concepts of tapu, rāhui, and noa, holding them to be practical rules that sustain the well-being of people, communities, and natural resources, and include customs, protocols, and laws that regulate actions and behaviour related to the physical environment and people.³ This includes such things as karakia, the blessing of food, through which Kai becomes sacred—like people, kai has a whakapapa and life force. The Pūtaiora Writing Group discuss manaakitanga as a framework, stipulating three main phases: whakapono, tūmanako, and aroha.⁴ These kaupapa underpinned the intent of the Kai-dness offering to the conference. For us, it was much more than the provision of kai.

Laying out a space of manaaki: placemaking

To support these kaupapa, one of the key focuses of the group was to enable turangawaewae by awakening the conference's 'in-between' sessions. Being catered for is one of life's simpler pleasures. Enabling the sharing of this pleasure with others offered opportunities for connections between those who were both familiar and unfamiliar with each other, and united in endeavour. Far less noticeable, but also important in shaping attendees' experiences, was the design and layout of the space. Food and space, when working together, can heighten everyone's sense of connection and shared purpose, while physically fuelling and nurturing both body and mind. It's an ecosystem that needs careful planning to flourish. The space and the operational functions must be able to cope with the unexpected. Every person is a moving object to be accounted for when undertaking a social-

2 Māori Marsden and T.A. Henare, *Kaitiakitanga: A Definitive Introduction to the Holistic World View of the Māori* (Wellington: Ministry for the Environment, 1992); Mere Roberts et al., 'Kaitiakitanga: Maori Perspectives on Conservation,' *Pacific Conservation Biology* 2 (1995): 7–20.

3 Garth Harmsworth and Shaun Awatere, 'Indigenous Māori Knowledge and Perspectives of Ecosystems,' in *Ecosystem Services in New Zealand—Conditions and Trends*, ed. J.R. Dymond (Lincoln: Manaaki Whenua Press, 2013), 274–286.

4 Maui Hudson et al., *Tē Ara Tika Guidelines for Māori Research Ethics: A Framework for Researchers and Ethics Committee Members* (Wellington: Health Research Council of New Zealand, 2010).

design intervention, every decision affects the functionality of the whole. Planning around the flow of both the delivery and consumption of the food needed careful consideration if it was to enable conversation as well as contemplation. When undertaken thoughtfully, the unity and camaraderie that design can facilitate through its arrangement of time and space can be truly joyful, and as a result enable interaction, conversation, and the making of new friends.

Design enables the framing of space, which is to say that designers need to integrate the limitations and opportunities of existing space with the potential for new spaces. The Kai-dness Crew remained ever-mindful of manaaki as our motivation for the layout of the conference space—which, we should note, was a space that was inherently colonial, and was originally designed for very different uses from those that the Kai-dness Crew sought to facilitate. Nestled somewhere in such spatial negotiations lies a myriad of opportunities for interaction and participation at both an individual level or as a part of a collective. Arguably, the best layouts are intuitive, not instructive and full of signage. Users of the space should be able to ask questions subconsciously and move around naturally: ‘Where might I find it easy to meet people? Where will I feel at ease, noticed, or unobserved? How can I participate but also hold my own space? Where can I best recharge or nurture my power? How do I grow my mauri?’

Kanohi ki te kanohi: the transferal of tacit knowledge

While most conferences provide food, this is usually a pragmatic response to the need for participants to be fed and watered between sessions, and to ensure profit for the venue. We wanted the kai provision to be a thoughtful response to the vision of the conference organisers, and to make space for substantial kōrero and participatory interactions. Having put together the team and created the physical space to support Kai-dness, working out how the nuts and bolts might work was a critical next step. The planning and logistics of food preparation, delivery, cleaning, and disposal of leftovers were all critical to the kaupapa of the Kai-dness Crew and our designed intervention. Tacit knowledge was drawn on in the operational work that

went into the background to support the experience of commensality being offered.

As Goffin and Koners note, the ‘effective transfer of tacit knowledge, generally requires extensive personal contact, regular interaction, and trust’.⁵ In each hui to plan and discuss what we would do, we sought to build our own whanaungatanga, building the trust between us needed to carry out the Kai-dness project. The planning, sorting of logistics, and carrying out of the project highlighted the importance of practice—of doing what one talks about—for illuminating and solidifying this tacit knowledge. This learning-through-practice, fundamental to design and architecture(s), allowed tuakana-teina relationships to form, with the more experienced members of our crew able to pass knowledge on to less-experienced members by way of mini apprenticeships, which we considered an expression of teatowel-tanga.⁶ Lave and Wenger write about the importance of situated learning through apprenticeships as part of communities of practice (a group of people who share a common concern). These situated-learning experiences offer opportunities to share tacit knowledge from those at the centre of such communities to those at the periphery.⁷ As Schmidt and Hunter note, ‘this kind of knowledge can only be revealed through practice in a particular context and transmitted through social networks’.⁸ This learning process became central to the tikanga held by the Kai-dness Crew. Teatowel-tanga demonstrates a kaupapa which encourages working behind the scenes, of getting one’s hands dirty in the kitchen to support a broader kaupapa. The Kai-dness Crew and a number of supporting staff and students were

5 Keith Goffin and Ursula Koners, ‘Tacit Knowledge, Lessons Learnt, and New Product Development,’ *Journal of Product Innovation Management* 28, no. 2 (2011): 300–318.

6 Rebecca Kiddle ‘Engaging Communities in the Design of Homes and Neighbourhoods in Aotearoa New Zealand,’ *Counterfutures* 9 (2020): 77–94.

7 Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

8 Frank Schmidt and John Hunter, ‘Tacit Knowledge, Practical Intelligence, General Mental Ability, and Job Knowledge,’ *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 2, no. 1 (1993): 8–9.

rostered responsibilities for each day. Some even came in to help when they weren't rostered on because it was so much fun.



Figure 2. Members of the Kai-dness Crew practicing teatowel-tanga.

The Kai-dness Crew sought to counter traditional conference spatial planning and food delivery by creating a shared eating space located in the centre of the conference pā. This layout was created in both tangible and intangible ways. To set the mauri for the day, a karakia was said over the kai before eating. We centred the physical space around the one long dining table. As is often done in marae dining rooms, the Kai-dness Crew created tablecloths from a roll of craft paper. These tablecloths became the site for several co-design interventions that acted as prompts for individual thought and shared conversations throughout the conference. An extended serving table was set up with a dishes station in close proximity. The kitchen prep area, a small semi-commercial kitchen, was located down a short hallway. The kitchen's position meant some thought had to go into the logistics of how the food, dishes, and the crew rotated through the space, especially when the participants filled the eating zone.

We aimed to cater to all dietary requirements by serving vegan and vegetarian options, as they accommodated and satisfied most delegates. Those with food intolerances were catered for by separating their food on an isolated table to avoid contamination. We aspired to a zero-waste kaupapa, so the planning included recycling food scraps through a green-waste company and moving left-over food to a city mission to provide evening meals for their clients. This zero-waste kaupapa guided our actions as far as was possible. To support the logistics, a member of the Kai-dness Crew, Natasha Perkins, designed a Kai-dness cart for the delivery and removal of kai and dishes for each hākari. The design supported the zero-waste kaupapa using donated, up-cycled materials that would normally have gone to landfill.

Kai as a value base and political tool

Through the kai provided, the Kai-dness Crew sought to embody the values of some of our rangatira who had used cookbooks and recipes to enact political change. Political movements are often made up of people without traditional forms of political power, who, through necessity, intuition, and creativity, resort to the forms of power and unique expressions that they do

have. Kai is sometimes the first power available to us. Kai is nourishment, care, love—the power to alleviate hunger, to sustain life. Kai is our first understanding of the collective, of shared memory, identity, and belief. Kai holds the power of connection, of giving and receiving, of belonging.

Morning and afternoon teas for the conference were made in our home kitchens with recipes from political cookbooks, some of which were over a century old (finding the modern equivalent of lard was quite the challenge!). Each recipe represented a different political movement or perspective that aligned with the values of volunteer bakers—because the way to a conference-goer’s heart (and mind) is through their puku. Preparing each recipe was a window into a world where the food itself gave us an opportunity to think. We drew upon cookbooks from the women’s-suffrage movement, the Māori-sovereignty movement, the sustainability movement, and the Black-rights movement. Each recipe was reproduced on recipe cards, along with the recipe’s back story, so conference attendees could recreate the taste of the conference at home.

In the 1970s, Māori women published their own recipes in cookbooks specifically for Māori readers.⁹ These were more than mere dinner suggestions; they asserted Māori identity, belonging, and mana.¹⁰ They shared the stories of our lives. They told us, ‘There is a place for you at this table. You belong’. This was the inspiration for our fry-bread morning tea. Nearly a century earlier, in the 1880s, Abby Fisher was one of many women who faced the responsibility of providing for her family in a United States divided in the wake of the abolitionist movement. Through sales of her cookbook, *What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking*, Fisher made a living while affirming that African-American women ‘had valuable knowledge to share’.¹¹

9 Carolyn Morris, ‘Kai or Kiwi? Māori and “Kiwi” Cookbooks and the Struggle for the Field of New Zealand Cuisine,’ *Journal of Sociology* 49, nos. 2–3 (2013): 210–223.

10 Morris, ‘Kai or Kiwi.’

11 Alicia Kennedy, ‘7 Cookbooks that Put Politics in the Kitchen,’ *Edible Manhattan*, 10 July 2017.

The subtle calls for justice found in political cookbooks like Fisher's have spread far and wide—within movements' memberships and beyond—shaping minds while filling bellies. In 1886 *The Woman Suffrage Cookbook* by Hattie Burr raised funds for the movement but was also a means of organising, of networking, of bringing people together across class and racial divides. Some eight decades later, Frances Moore's *Diet for a Small Planet* emerged from the environmental movement, influencing people's understandings of the relationships between the environment, health, and politics.¹² Recipes in Moore's cookbook showcased how one might cook with more consideration for the kai resources being used and the impact of using certain types of kai on the wider planet.

Cookbooks have long been an integral part of claiming our social, cultural, and political worth—of asserting our identities. The recipes from political cookbooks demonstrate the power of kai, not only to sustain life but to tell stories, make connections, and build communities, which are all necessary ingredients for building political power.

Kai and provocations

In addition to providing kai, and to stimulate connection and kōrero around the kaupapa of care and aroha, a series of design provocations were created. The conference brought people together from different social movements to share information and support each other along their journey to enact change, a journey which may contain many challenges and require unity and resilience. While the lecture theatres and seminar rooms provided a formal platform for speakers to share their experience and lessons, meeting over kai provided an informal platform for sharing care and support. The long table to accommodate people while they ate side-by-side helped establish a fruitful environment for new connections. The provocations placed on the tablecloth aimed to prompt interactions and intentional conversations, providing a way into a wider group for those

12 Kennedy, '7 Cookbooks.'

who felt they needed it. Three lunchtime provocations were offered, one each day: the first focused on mapping research connections; the second, ‘Tell us your story’, encouraged attendees to contribute to a storyboard through drawing or writing; the final provocation encouraged attendees to offer a recipe of aroha to someone else.

Research connections

For the research-connections provocation, we sought to identify and visually connect allies across social and political movements as creative expressions of whakawhanaungatanga, aroha, and power. Consistent with the ethos of flax-roots empowerment to create change, we worked from a place of ‘strengths’ rather than problems, navigating a pathway away from Eurocentric design practice.¹³ Colourful prompts in the shape of flowers were designed to allow attendees to reflect and bring thoughts and feelings to the top of their minds, and to then make these visible for others to see and respond to.¹⁴ The process was guided by design principles that reposition the role of researcher/designer from ‘expert’ to ‘enabler’.¹⁵ The flower templates were individually cut out and placed along the table to be completed in people’s own space and time. Participants commented on the novelty and cheerful nature of the flower prompts. We observed reflection, drawing, and discussion. The comments and thoughts illustrated on the tablecloth were added to a digital map over the duration of the conference. Here, we located relationships between people and place: where people came from, their current location, and, through virtual ‘tags’, their connections to each

13 Ezio Manzini and Rachel Coad, *Design, When Everybody Designs: An Introduction to Design for Social Innovation* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015); Yoko Akama, Penny Hagen, and Desna Whaanga-Schollum, ‘Problematizing Replicable Design to Practice Respectful, Reciprocal, and Relational Co-designing with Indigenous People,’ *Design and Culture* 11, no. 1 (2019): 59–84.

14 Hongxing Du, *The Employment of Knowledge Visualisation to Facilitate Tacit Knowledge Sharing* (PhD thesis, University of Waikato, 2018).

15 Alex Ryan and Mark Leung, ‘Systemic Design: Two Canadian Case Studies,’ *FormAkademisk* 7, no. 3 (2014): 1–14.

other on an actual map of Aotearoa New Zealand.¹⁶

As a result of such inputs, the map developed in real time. The results from the collaborative research were fed directly back into the conference community, providing an artefact with mutual benefits for both the researcher/designer and allies alike. This dynamic and iterative response to the information captured on the flower templates enabled us to pivot from connecting people through their similar projects or affiliations, to connecting them by the ‘keywords’ associated with the movements they supported, which highlighted more clearly the connections. Searching for keywords such as ‘decolonisation’ or ‘climate justice’, for example, brings up all allies and organisations sharing aligned kaupapa in these areas, allowing people to better see and support each other’s work across different spheres.

To ensure all voices had equal volume, templates were also held in the virtual māra for people joining the conference online. However, time and technical limitations meant that people filled out a spreadsheet, rather than the colourful flowers. Given our observation that verbal provocations, sharing food, and the novelty of the tablecloth encouraged social learning, it is possible that an online environment promoting individual reflection, with less visually engaging materials, may have accounted for online submissions being a small fraction of the total outputs collected.

Our key learning for future work is the importance of considering how we might popularise the idea of social-network mapping with people earlier in the process. Locating relationships between people and places on a geographical map of Aotearoa New Zealand offered participants an immediate opportunity to see and strengthen connections throughout their time together. Our hope is that the future-driven approach of the repository will continue to connect people and organisations, amplifying their aroha and power beyond the life of the conference and creating an enabling ecosystem that supports alternative worlds to be brought forth.

Tell us your story

For the ‘Tell us your story’ provocation, we wrote questions that asked

16 See: <https://embed.kumu.io/10fb33b736a5079234ac0d17d32ee254#networks>

attendees to note moments of aroha and connection, inviting people to draw and express their own experiences as a means of stimulating an intentional conversation about the subject with the person next to them. As the first people arrived and sat at the table, sometimes by themselves, waiting for a neighbour to arrive, they started to interact with the provocations on the tablecloth, which gave them something to do while waiting. This also helped them to start conversations around the theme of aroha and power with their new neighbours. As a part of this provocation, on the last day of the conference we prompted participants to expand their narrative to include celebrations, asking them to note down their favourite celebration recipe and to pass this on to someone else at the conference. By the end of the conference the tablecloth had become a collective art piece, created and imbued by people's conversations around the table, snippets of inspiration and insight from the conference, and a diverse range of perspectives that build our collective understanding of aroha and power.

Conclusion

Kai-dness was our attempt to support the powerful themes of aroha and power as set out by the conference organisers. We started off as a group of disparate staff and students, many of whom didn't know each other, and through the power of kai and the shared desire to centre manaaki we ended up as a group of friends who continue to support whanaungatanga in our faculty through kai and a perfected fry-bread recipe.

We learned that the key ingredients of Kai-dness are the following: honouring te Tiriti (through building a Tiriti-based team); ensuring tikanga is set out to enable mahi tahi; and that manaaki is to be privileged over all else. We also learned that physical space can be laid out in such a way as to encourage meaningful social interactions and a sense of place. Importantly, we acknowledge the value of tacit, often non-academic, knowledge in the creation of these spaces, and that informal wānanga spaces benefit from activation. The Kai-dness Crew brought kai to the table as a powerful force, a political tool to empower, engage, and enable conversations about social

change and transformation. We are proud of our efforts and grateful to the conference organisers for allowing us to be part of this powerful space, ngā mihi.