



THE GOOD LIFE

*your guide to a greener,
cheaper and more fulfilling
life in new zealand*

FRANCESCA PRICE

PHOTOGRAPHY *karen abplanalp & rebecca swan*

We also expect our food to be much cheaper than it used to be. In the mid 1960s the average weekly household spend on food - adjusted to today's dollars - was \$203.80. And this was at a time that 60 per cent of New Zealanders had vegetable patches! Today the same household spends just \$125.70. The money we once spent on the weekly food shop now goes on mortgage payments for bigger houses, bigger cars, more clothes, more electrical gear and, of course, our increasing medical bills.

the cost of cheap food

Although we might feel we are doing well by paying less for our food, there are significant hidden costs in getting it so cheaply - both in terms of our health and the long-term damage to the environment.

For years, New Zealand's fruit and vegetables were routinely sprayed with chemicals that the rest of the world had banned. The pesticide DDT continued to be used on our crops until as late as 1989, whereas it had already been banned as a dangerous contaminant in Europe and the US in the 1970s. It took until 2008 for the New Zealand Government to end the use of the insecticide endosulfan, despite the fact it had already been banned in 55 other countries. Others such as the herbicides simazine and atrazine - banned in 2003 in Europe - are still used in New Zealand.

All these pesticides continue to have a long-term impact on New Zealand soil and on New Zealanders. There is also an increasing number of studies that suggest that environmental exposure to these pesticides may be linked to reproductive problems, brain tumours and breast cancer. A study published

in the *International Journal of Epidemiology* in 2008 showed that New Zealanders working in the agricultural and horticultural industries were at higher risk of contracting cancer than people working in other jobs.

Meanwhile, 95 per cent of this country's lowland rivers and streams are now considered unsuitable for swimming, due in part to toxic agricultural run-off from farms up and down the country. The sparkling waters of the Hauraki Gulf that appear in every New Zealand tourist film now serve as a waste disposal for the surrounding farms which, according to a report by Environment Waikato, pump 3784 tonnes of nitrogen fertiliser into the rivers that feed it every year. And many of our beaches are now closed at certain times of the year due to contamination.

Less visible but no less damaging is the environmental impact of the carbon emissions created by the transport needed to sustain the global food economy. Four-fifths of the oil used in food production is expended once the produce leaves the farm, to move, process, package and store the food before it gets to your plate. In New Zealand - according to a 2007 Lincoln University study - this can mean that a bowl of imported cherries emits 80 times more carbon dioxide emissions than a locally grown lettuce. There's a good argument to say there is little point sending your kids off on the walking school bus if you've packed them a lunchbox full of imported fruit!

When food is cheap we also buy more. It might seem trivial to worry about throwing out the odd apple or lettuce chop but the scale of food waste in the West has become, as writer Tristram Stuart puts it, 'one of the big unspoken environmental scandals of our time'. A UK government waste

ORGANIC BOX SCHEMES ARE A GREAT WAY TO SAMPLE DIFFERENT LOCAL PRODUCE INCLUDING SUCH FRUITS AS THE TERRACOTTA.





LAURIE FOON - STARFISH FOUNDER www.starfish.co.nz

In producing where sustainability is truly at the heart of the brand, designers Laurie Foon has shown that it is possible to offer customers beautiful, long-lasting, eco-friendly, and locally-made garments.

Three years ago, Laurie became the first business leader in New Zealand to establish a business that is 100% locally sourced and manufactured. She started after studying sustainability at the University of Waikato. Inspired to launch a genuinely sustainable business, Laurie started New Zealand fabric, where she produces a range of organic fabrics with her husband, a designer, and a team of local designers. Laurie's focus is on creating clothes that are not just beautiful but also designed to last. She has a passion for creating clothing that will last. She has a passion for creating clothing that will last.

Laurie and her team at Wellington-based manufacturing company with her sister, Rachel, have long made a name for themselves in the fashion industry. Laurie continued to offer a unique and locally produced, one-of-a-kind custom-made wardrobe. As well as the Starfish label, her past work includes Silver Place, where she has worked for the past 10 years. Laurie has worked for the past 10 years at Silver Place, where she has worked for the past 10 years.

Environmentally shopping

10 years ago for as little as £30 you can get the latest season's dress from almost any chain store. It may only last the summer, but who cares? Next summer the 'look' will have changed and you'll buy another one. Our old desire for quality in clothes has been replaced with a desire for quantity.

The problem with this sort of approach to dressing ourselves is manifold. First, there is the cost of the resources that go into making this huge amount of clothing. The growing of conventional cotton uses a great number of pesticides which can damage both the health of the workers who pick the cotton and surrounding ecosystems. Incredibly nearly a quarter of all the insecticides used in agriculture are used to grow cotton. The manufacturing of cotton also uses a phenomenal amount of water - often in parts of the world where water isn't that bountiful. To compound this problem, three-quarters of all the clothes New Zealanders buy come from the developing world where clothes are made cheaply by a labour force that is paid a bare minimum in factories that have little or no environmental controls.

In 2007 GAP was found to have a 10-year-old child working in one of its factories in India. The boy told a British newspaper that he had been sold by his family to the factory bosses. The average worker in one of these factories can expect to take home around NZ\$1500 a year, about the same amount as many New Zealand women might spend on their summer wardrobes.

Then there's the waste. Statistics gathered by a British climate change charity, Global Cool, indicate that half of all the clothes bought by women last year have never been worn. Meanwhile, 900,000 tonnes of clothing was thrown into UK landfills. While there are no statistics for New Zealand, our desire for fast fashion would suggest that similar levels of waste are going on here.



ROBYN HALLGREN - ACTIVIST

Robyn Hallgren is a mother to three, but being a parent and a greenie is not always an easy combination. For starters, so many of the top-tier brands, Charlie and Peter, were gone from China when she was pregnant. However, a woman of strong opinions - and an ambassador for Greenpeace and Green Party, a supporter - she's not afraid to make a fuss.

In the shops, even for a year of sessions, take all the packaging off and hand it back to her, she laughs.

Robyn also tries not to buy them - or herself - too much stuff. Through all the arguments about what to grow, the big message seems to be use less, she says wisely. 'I don't buy kids' toys, but by a subtle system which is not to be used for the environment they live in, not what they love or can't live without.'

She tries to integrate these values into everything she does with the boys. Simple things like turning out the lights or not using plastic bags teaches them good habits from an early age. 'The problem is they're now quick to tell her when she's getting it wrong.'

Robyn has also fully eco-proofed her house - bravely getting rid of her clothes dryer - and invested in a hybrid car which she drives the 60 kilometres to the set of Outrageous Fortune every day. On the days when at home, however, Robyn prefers to walk to the shops or spend time with the kids at home. Being outside with the kids is when she has the most fun - it's the peace and simplicity of those moments which make a great day.

As parents, Robyn believes we all have the opportunity to change the world. The responsibility of teaching our children about the world is constantly re-evaluating and assessing what's important.

like to eat. (Just make sure you're in the right aisle before letting them loose!) Encourage them to select a fruit or vegetable they haven't tried before. You can also give them a shopping list (with pictures for the younger ones) and let them do the running around for you. At home, allow them to help you prepare food, the hassle and mess of having a child cut up the carrots or bake his or her own muffins is worth it in the long run.

Keep it simple. When it comes to feeding kids, keep it simple. Make sure that what you buy and cook is real food. Follow your basic animal instincts and don't put something you don't recognise in your mouth - and certainly not your child's mouth. Read your labels and steer clear of additives, flavourings, artificial sweeteners and preservatives.

For details on what to avoid go to www.safefood.org.nz, for the list, or www.nzfsa.govt.nz, which has a comprehensive list of food additives and what to watch out for. You can also order their food additives booklet online. Also read *Helping Young Children Flourish*, by Aletha Solter.

Eat together. Meals are social occasions and a chance for a family to come together. They are also an opportunity for children to mimic your behaviour in terms of what you eat and your attitude to food. Even if it's just once a day, a home-cooked sit-down meal gives food a central role in your life. Children learn that good food comes from the kitchen, not from a takeaway bar or fast-food chain. Of course, your challenge is to also make these enjoyable occasions so the lasting memory is a positive one. What pressure!

For more healthy eating tips, see the government-sponsored website www.feedingourfutures.org.nz and online parenting magazine www.kiwifamilies.co.nz.



CHAPTER FIVE : celebrating community



JOHN SANGRETT - TRANSITION TOWN HERO

John Sangrett, 57, is a former investment banker who has spent the last few years as a 'Transition Town Hero' in his hometown of Lyttelton, New Zealand. He has been instrumental in setting up the Lyttelton Community Group, which is now the largest of its kind in the world. Sangrett has been instrumental in setting up the Lyttelton Community Group, which is now the largest of its kind in the world. He has been instrumental in setting up the Lyttelton Community Group, which is now the largest of its kind in the world.

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celebrating community

your community, you earn one Time Dollar. Then you have a Time Dollar to spend on something else, be that legal advice, landscaping, painting or a massage.

Project Lyttelton (www.lyttelton.net.nz)

Fifteen minutes from Christchurch, Project Lyttelton is a shining example of sustainability in action. Led by mother of five Margaret Jefferies, the group has managed to motivate its small population to lead the way in community living. As well as starting the country's first time bank, they have opened a farmers' market, started their own newspaper, organised transition deals for residents, collected and composted food waste from local restaurants and held numerous workshops on everything from Bokena to literacy.

The idea is to keep all activities - such as shopping, education and entertainment - as local as possible so there is no need to travel into the city. It reduces fuel consumption and keeps everybody connected. Margaret believes that in recent years our society has moved on to be individuals. Now the time has come to learn how a community works, she says.

GREEN GRANNIES

The idea of the Green Granny started in the UK as charities competed to have sprightly grannies deliver a series of environmental and money-saving tips via YouTube. Check out Oxford's Barbara, www.oxford.org.uk/goodideas. Now Green Granny classes are starting up in Auckland, with the older generation teaching the younger ones (and for once that means my age group) old skills such as needlework, preserving and how to use up leftovers. (Check out



CHAPTER ONE : sustainable eating



CHAPTER SIX : holidays, transport and travel



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