

*For immediate release*

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## **Experience kai (food) the Rotorua way at TRENZ**

Elevating TRENZ cuisine with experiential elements and sharing the stories and history behind the flavours, will give TRENZ delegates a deeper understanding of Rotorua this week.

Destination Rotorua chief executive Michelle Templer says hosting travel professionals around the world is the perfect opportunity to showcase exceptional indigenous flavours, locally sourced ingredients, a blend of traditional Māori and contemporary techniques and storytelling interaction by chefs.

“Rotorua has an incredible story to share through food - we can communicate the importance of the elements around us and showcase produce from our fertile volcanic soils with indigenous ingredients adding flavour.”

“Kai (food) is all about sharing, enjoying and socialising, so what better way to engage our visitors than by showing what makes this place remarkably different to any other food destination in the world.”

Leading the kai (food) experience last night at the Energy Event Centre TRENZ bar was nationally recognised chef Natasha Whitewood who flew into the foodie scene in 2017, when she and on-screen partner Hera Te Kurapa showcased their culinary skills on *My Kitchen Rules (MKR)*.

Natasha served up hangi wontons with horopito sweet chilli sauce, as well as ngāwhā (thermal) corn fritters, with beet, watercress, karengo kawakawa mayo and nut dukkah, presented on a Farmers Market barrow to represent where the ingredients came from.

“The ngāwhā corn fritters are a fusion of Rotorua and my whakapapa (family/history). Rotorua is incorporated as the fritters are cooked at Whakarewarewa Māori Village in a ngāwhā (thermal pool) which is a traditional cooking technique for Māori – it tells of who we are cooking wise as a destination.

“The wider storytelling of my whakapapa (my roots) is the incorporation of my style as I like to cook with indigenous produce such as kawakawa, utilising world flavours and whānau (family) favourites. Corn fritters are a dish my dad cooked for breakfast when we were little.

“The whakapapa (roots) of the hangi wonton canapé relate to Rotorua being the cultural heart of Aotearoa and known in tourism for a hangi and concert experience.

“I have also travelled through Asia, so I have taken that personal experience to add a fusion twist to the wonton, bound by smoky hangi flavours representing Rotorua.

“For the accompanying sauce, I have taken the Asian sweet chilli sauce and its similar indigenous partner – the Māori horopito chilli plant, to reflect Rotorua – a melting pot of culture with tourists coming in and adding to our own flavours.”

Coming up tonight at a function for media and TRENZ sponsors at the Blue Baths, is an evening embracing Rotorua’s elements with interactive chef and cocktail stations reflecting wai (water), hau (air), whenua (earth) and ahi (fire).

The wai (water) element station will be an ice bar featuring a chef filleting fresh fish ceviche style with more surprises to come.

The whenua (earth) element station focuses on locally sourced, organic, sustainable, vegetables – both seasonal and fermented with clever twists.

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## Notes for media

### Ngāwhā corn fritter recipe (Corn cooked in ngāwhā)

#### Ingredients:

1/2t Salt

1/2t Pepper

Pinch chilli flakes

440g creamed corn

2T oil

1 beaten egg

2 beaten egg whites (stiff)

3/4C cooked corn kernels

3/4C standard flour

1t baking powder

Handful of chopped coriander

1. Add creamed corn, cooked corn, S&P, chilli flakes, beaten egg, coriander and oil to bowl
2. Sift flour and baking powder in, stir
3. Fold through egg whites
4. Fry spoonfuls in a pan until golden

To find out more about Natasha, please go to: [www.natashawhitewood.com](http://www.natashawhitewood.com)