



eatingout

# THE RISE OF THE SUPERDELI



Chef Lee Huggins at Dida's.

IN THE WORLD OF FAST-FOOD THERE'S A QUIET REVOLUTION TAKING PLACE. JO BRIDGFORD TALKS TO THOSE AT THE FOREFRONT OF CHANGING THE WAY WE EAT.

Over the last decade, the lifestyles and eating habits of the average Aucklanders have changed considerably. As a result of increased working hours and the fast-paced speed at which we now live, takeaway meals are no longer just a special treat on Friday night, they are the norm. Combine this with an increased awareness of special dietary requirements and food allergies, what we expect from fast food is greater. As a result, a new class of delicatessen is gaining popularity in Auckland; one that has taken note of Auckland's changing eating patterns and stepped out of the traditional deli role to provide authentic home-cooked meals for a new, more informed, fast food generation. This is a generation that has also grown accustomed to dining out in good quality restaurants, but who now in many cases have young children or other responsibilities that preclude them from dining out as often as they might like.

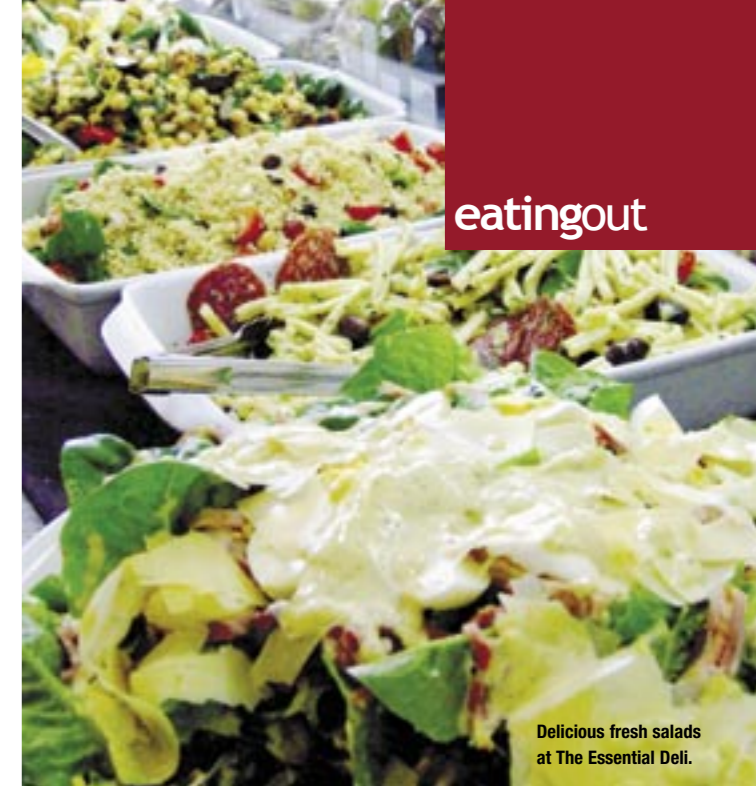
The modern deli has moved away from coleslaw salads and Vogel's sandwiches, catering instead for a palate that has broadened along with the ethnic make-up and dietary requirements of the population. There is a strong Mediterranean influence in both the ingredients and meals offered, and the number of local producers that supply the delis of Auckland is a reassuring sign that New Zealand is embracing some of the healthier eating patterns that have been a way of life in other parts of the world for many years.

The grande dame of delicatessens in Auckland is **Zarbo** (24 Morrow St, Newmarket. Ph: 520 2721). Mark McDonough started his deli-café 11 years ago and business has grown steadily each year. "Aucklanders still like to cook," he explains, "but for one reason or another, simply

SARAH KACI



A chance to taste the treats at Zarbo.



eatingout

Delicious fresh salads at The Essential Deli.

can't during certain times of the week. At Zarbo we aim to meet the growing demand for takeaway food that can be incorporated into an otherwise standard family meal or that can augment a dinner party."

Indeed, Zarbo has a huge range of fresh salads, meats, cheeses, breads and small meals, as well as handmade cakes and imported and local condiments. There is now even a dedicated fan-base who religiously buy the Zarbo cookbooks and calendars to try and replicate the salads, meals and other deli fare that are on offer.

In Grey Lynn, Angela Redfern has recently opened a bigger and brighter version of her deli, **Ripe** (Richmond Rd. Ph: 360 6159). She has also extended her range of dry goods substantially, stocking beautiful European and New Zealand deli items, but more importantly, the new premises has a bigger kitchen, which means more scope for her out-catering and more freshly made meals.

"I saw a need for a healthier alternative to the classic Kiwi takeaway and created a range of 'TV dinners', which change daily and include pork and prunes, beef bourgignon, homemade curries, and roast meals. There is also a range of freshly made salads and vegetable dishes that are great served with the meals or as a meal in their own right." Ripe also caters for those with restricted diets.

**Madame Jojo's Foodstore** (581 Remuera Rd, Remuera. Ph: 523 5545) caters for a similar clientele of busy parents and working types. Jo Williams opened her deli at the tail-end of summer 2006, with the aim of providing good hearty homemade food made from fresh ingredients. Her takeaway dinners change daily, with the exception of her now famous Thursday Pork Belly Roast with all the trimmings. During the rest of the week, the meals are predominantly Mediterranean-inspired, however, there are always options such as family-sized pies with guaranteed top-quality fillings for the kids. Jo and her kitchen team also make a range of pates, pickles and chutneys (including a pea relish – sounds funny but is divine!) which are available for sale.

Similarly in Mt Eden, there is **The Essential Deli** (455b Mt Eden Rd, Mt Edge Village. Ph: 630 6793) owned by Adrienne Moors. Adrienne has been turning out mouth-watering healthy food options for the past five years, however there has been a food store on that site for

around 30 years. The deli is crammed with boutique products such as oils, nuts and chocolates, many of which are from local producers. There is a huge selection of cabinet food such as hearty individual pies, salads, foreign cheeses and cooked meats (the ham off the bone comes from New Zealand "happy pigs", not unhappy foreign ones!). Like all the delis in this story, her customers are prepared to pay that little bit extra safe in the knowledge that only the best ingredients have been used.

In Herne Bay, **Dida's Food Store** (54 Jervois Rd. Ph: 361 6157) has just celebrated its first birthday. The store is attached to Glengarry's wine shop and Dida's Tapas Lounge on Jervois Road, and the three mutually support one another by offering customers first the experience, then the means to recreate that experience at home. Its main theme is Spanish-inspired; the café menu is a mix of Spanish and more traditional breakfast items. Meanwhile, the surroundings are essentially European. Garlic hangs from the ceilings, the walls are lined with exotic ingredients and Spanish earthenware dishes. The deli cabinet is full of beautiful cheeses, antipasto ingredients, salads and fresh tapas style morsels. And of course, Dida's has its own range of – you guessed it – takeaway meals.

With an increasing number of delicatessens like these popping up on suburban corners around Auckland, it would appear that the consumer is heading back to the "go local" mentality. Of course, the supermarket has the monopoly when it comes to toothpaste and toilet paper, but the local delis, butchers and boutique wine shops are enjoying a renaissance that reflects the changing expectations of the Auckland punter.

All of the deli owners and employees interviewed in this article spoke of a love of good food that translates to a passion for their work. It is always obvious when you go into a food store that cares about what they are doing. The staff in these delis sell their food with a clear conscience, because it is made using good quality ingredients and recipes that your mum would be proud of. This means that the Auckland public are increasingly spoiled for choice when it comes to eating interesting and healthy takeaway meals. So, it looks like eating in could be the new eating out!



Angela Redfern at Ripe.