

Community Fruit Harvesting



Summer Newsletter

December 2016

Thanks

A huge THANKS to all our volunteers and supporters for the many hours of effort in picking, preserving and promoting our work. The effort was rewarded by Community Fruit Harvesting winning the Mitre 10 New Zealand Community of the Year award earlier this year. This has contributed to a massive increase of 60% in the number of picks we have done this year - over 400 so far. We have donated over 32,500kg of fruit, nearly 9000 pumpkins and more than 6500 jars/bottles of preserves to over 220 organisations in Auckland. These include food banks, refuges, refugee centres, schools, charities, elderly and people with disabilities via their supporting organisations.

This is only possible, because so many people all chip in to help in any way they can, including supplying their fruit; volunteering to pick and/or preserve; saving their jars; supplying sugar or writing media articles to promote us and businesses that support us by supplying or donating equipment to help. Thanks also to the Whau local board and Auckland Council for funds to help us.

As the year draws to an end, we take this opportunity to wish you and your families a blessed and peaceful Christmas. Take time to reflect on the good you have done and keep encouraging others to Share their fruit and Use their fruit!

Autumn Harvest 2016

Usually we have a break from harvesting from late May until mid July, however, this year, we were offered a mountain of pumpkins to rescue off a farm; the remains of an apple orchard to harvest; a persimmon orchard of 25,000 kg; a fig and feijoa orchard and rejected export kiwifruit by the ton!

In a huge collaborative approach, organised by Community Fruit Hamilton, together with help from us, [LoveFoodHateWaste](#), local councils and Countdown transport, we picked and packed over 13,000kg of persimmons in one day. They were transported from the orchard near Hamilton, to foodbanks in Hamilton, Auckland, Wellington and Palmerston North.

The rescue of the pumpkin mountain, involved many people and many trips to the farm from Auckland, Hamilton and places in between. This resulted in pumpkins for dinner in thousands of homes around Auckland!



Winter Harvest 2016

Our busiest time of year, is winter with the abundant citrus harvest. Auckland is a citrus haven and with nearly every second home having a lemon or grapefruit tree, we were kept busy, picking at over 200 venues over 4 months. This included kiwifruit, lime, lemon, grapefruit, oranges and tangelos from homes and orchards. We were also invited to glean beetroot from a field for the first time.



The Big Squeeze 2016

Once again we partnered with BNZ on their 'Closed for Good' day and spent the day squeezing and making cordial and lemon curd. With the help of many wonderful volunteers, we outdid ourselves this year by making and distributing 444 bottles of cordial; 20 jars of lemon curd and over 100 litres of grapefruit juice squeezed for later use.



Spring events

We have held stalls at a number of markets around Auckland, as fundraisers and to promote our work. Some of these have been done with funding from the Auckland Council and through [LoveFoodHateWaste](http://LoveFoodHateWaste.com). In order to promote the reduction of food wastage, we have also held some preserving workshops to demonstrate how easy it is to make tomato pasta sauce and strawberry jam with the excess that will be available to harvest during the summer.



Recipes

Nicola has kindly supplied the recipes that she demonstrated at the two recent workshops. We encourage you to give these a try and share your photos with us on our Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/pickfruit>.

Tomato Pasta Sauce

4 kg ripe tomatoes
Handful of basil leaves
6 tsp minced garlic or 8 cloves garlic
1 cup extra virgin olive oil
½ c tomato paste
2 tsp sugar
2 tsp salt
Freshly ground black pepper



Chop the tomatoes roughly. Place everything in a large pot and simmer for about an hour until it's thick. Stir occasionally. Blend with stick blender or pass through a mouli. Reheat to simmer then pour into hot sterilised jars. Fill to top and then top up with a minimum of boiling water. Put on seal, centre and screw down hard. Leave to stand 24 hours and check for vacuum seal. Remove rings and wash jars. If any haven't sealed, refrigerate and use within a week. Others will keep months in a cupboard.



Strawberry Jam (Halve recipe if needed but still use one pack of pectin)

2 kg Strawberries (under ripe is better)
1600 g sugar (or jam setting sugar)
Juice of 2 lemons
1 packet pectin (not needed if using jam setting sugar)



Remove stems and chop strawberries. Place in preserving pan with minimum of water (none if they have been frozen – about ½ cup if fresh). Bring to a simmer and cook for about 30 minutes until the fruit is soft. Mash with masher to desired size. Add sugar, lemon juice and pectin if using. Increase heat and boil jam. Test after 10 minutes and continue to test until desired set is reached. Bottle into hot, sterile jars.

To sterilise jars and metal lids, place in oven at 100°C for a minimum of 10 minutes.



Preserving

Our preservers have been extremely busy this year, making an even bigger variety and number of preserves than before. Many of us will have a pan of jam on the go, while preparing dinner and others get together in groups, like the Jolly Jammers and make hundreds of jars of produce in one sitting. We have about 90 volunteer preservers on our books, who help out as and when they can.



Summer Harvest 2016/2017

Our summer harvesting starts in late December with tomatoes and early plums and continues throughout January with these and strawberries. We hope to be invited to pick at a commercial strawberry field, in mid January, at the end of the commercial harvest. If we are, then we will need more hands to help pick and to top and tail the strawberries for later use and to make jam. Please let me know if you will be available to help with picking, processing or preserving during January, as it is a tricky time of year for us, with many of our volunteers away.

In February we harvest Damson plums and peaches. Damson plums make the best jams and sauces. We have an orchard in Waiuku, that the owners share with us. This is another time when we need a large group, usually around mid February, to come on a day trip with us to fill their cars with Damson plums.

Peaches are the most delicate fruit we pick, needing a same/one day turnaround in picking and distributing. Bottled peaches, peach jam and chutney or dried peaches are all delicious.

The challenge with the summer harvest, is to respond quickly to pick and also to preserve or distribute the fruit, as it does not last long in the conditions. So, we need preservers to be on stand by to respond fast and help us to prevent them wasting.

Merchandise - Christmas presents

We have a limited number of spectacular, colourful aprons and bags and mugs available - Great Christmas Presents! Let me know if you are keen to support us in a small fundraiser by purchasing any of these.



Plans for 2017

Our goal for next year is to encourage, support, train and recruit more area coordinators and preservers. Our ideal model, which has proven successful, is to have an area coordinator working with local volunteer pickers and preservers in collaboration with other local community groups and business sponsors, to pick, preserve and distribute fruit and preserves in the local area, in order to prevent wastage and share with those in need.

We will be holding workshops all around Auckland to teach preserving skills. If you are keen to have a workshop in your area or would like to attend one, then please let us know.

We are seeking out business partners to help us to provide the tools needed for both picking and preserving, to be more efficient and effective.

We need volunteers to help in many ways, from coordinators in suburbs, to helping chop up fruit, marketing and administration. We are working with Volunteer Auckland, to advertise these positions and will also post them on our website and [Facebook](#) page. So please keep watching our [Facebook](#) page and email us at pickfruit@xtra.co.nz if you would like to help us in any way.

Keep sharing your fruit and using your fruit!

Di Celliers

Founder Community Fruit Harvesting