



## **President's Report**

### **Food Writers New Zealand AGM 2020**

Last year when we talked about the importance of Food Writers New Zealand embracing change and being resilient, never could we have predicted the colossal curve ball 2020 would throw at us.

This financial year has been one of two very distinct halves. We hit the ground running, announcing the winners of The Foodies – NZ Food Media Awards in late August. Conference 2019, a highlight in our annual calendar, was held mid-October in the Waikato region with Pat Nourse, Creative Director for the Melbourne Food & Wine Festival our keynote speaker. In November, a group of members were invited to join the Horowhenua Taste Trail, before we wrapped up 2019 with a fabulous Christmas Party at Barulho. Regular roundtable events were also held in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch thanks to local event champions.

As we headed off on our summer holidays no one could have imagined that the world would be so different, come March 2020. The impact of COVID brought new challenges; social, physical, mental and economic. Work and income streams disappeared. We changed the way we interacted with people. We found ways to shop differently and support local producers who were struggling to get their products to customers or find new revenue streams, as the hospitality sector came to a grinding halt. We mastered the art of Zoom, Slack, Skype, What's App and other platforms. We had no choice, but to adapt.

With face-to-face events off limits, virtual drinks and Zoom calls did something Food Writers had talked about, but never achieved, we connected members nationwide. After a few technical hitches and getting everyone to adhere to online etiquette – you're on mute we can't hear you or please put your mic on mute – Zoom provided a platform for networking opportunities and discussion forums with members volunteering to host these events or pull together panels to discuss hot topics. We ran our first virtual May Market Day, before launching our first ever ecookbook. Digest became a monthly publication, thanks to the efforts of Alexia Santamaria and Lucy Corry.

To reiterate, Food Writers New Zealand would simply not exist without hours and hours of volunteer time and expertise. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Pip Duncan and Kathy Paterson for all their hard work in delivering many May Market Days and Conferences over the past few years; your drive, tenacity and commitment will be missed. Special mention also goes to Kathy for turning her idea for a cookbook into a reality; Cosy raised almost \$7000 for Meat the Need.

With Niki Bezzant and Vanessa Baxter standing down at this year's AGM, I would like to firstly thank them for their participation and contribution, and take the opportunity to reiterate the importance of encouraging members to join the Executive Committee and to be actively involved in our future. Under the constitution, Niki and Vanessa can be replaced with two professional members as sanctioned by the current Executive Committee and then officially voted in, at our 2021 AGM.

Thanks also to Rachel Nui for keeping us on track by managing the accounts, meetings and admin for events and so much more.

We need your support, input and ongoing engagement to enable Food Writers New Zealand to continue to be relevant and viable in the ever-evolving food communication world. If you would like to be more involved, then please get in touch with your incoming President and Vice President who would welcome your support with open arms.

Michelle Jones

President Food Writers New Zealand (NZGFW)