

# NEW ZEALAND

food | culture | nutrition

## Religion

Traditional Maori religion dictated that food is *noa* or “non-sacred”. This meant that care must be taken to not bring it in contact with sacred objects and places<sup>6</sup>.

## Health Beliefs

The family structure is very important to the culture of New Zealand. The strong social and familial bonds drive a lot of decisions about health, lifestyle, and food. From traditional Maori to modern-day practices, family and social gatherings are an integral part of New Zealand’s belief system<sup>7</sup>.

## New Zealand Food in the U.S.

Traditional New Zealand food hasn’t completely made it to the mainland of the United States. Because New Zealand shares common culture with other Pacific Island nations like Polynesia, foods like taro root and underground meat roasts are common in Hawaii.



## Food in New Zealand

Traditionally, the indigenous Maori people of New Zealand, consume a variety of staple dishes. These foods include ‘boil up’, which is a dish comprised of meat and bones like pork, boiled with greens and potatoes<sup>1</sup>. In more recent years, this dish has been shifting towards a higher percentage of meat and fat. Other traditional foods include the cultural gathering *hangi* [pork, mutton, lamb, or chicken and vegetables in an earth oven], watercress, cabbage, and *kumara* [potatoes]<sup>2</sup>. Two of the most common sources of starch in the Maori diet are *kumara* [Maori potato] and taro root<sup>3</sup>. Today, meat (specifically beef and lamb), seafood, dairy, and apples are very typical foods for the general





## References

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population. Much of New Zealand's economy is driven by the export of these foods<sup>4</sup>. However, the Maori people have a higher burden of disease as compared to non-Maori due to their higher intake of saturated fat and animal-based proteins<sup>5</sup>.

## Eating Patterns

Most New Zealanders eat their main meal in the evening, known as dinner or “tea”. This is a social and familial gathering that is very important to the culture of the country. This is similar to the food culture of the U.S., with barbecues being a standard gathering in summertime (and the more traditional *hangi* in the Maori culture). *Hangi* is a common holiday meal, where families gather for special events. English is the native language in the country, while the language of the Maori, *Te Reo* [“the language”] is still used frequently. Westernization and American influence of New Zealand has affected the country as well, bringing in fast food culture. Pies are the most popular fast food take-out lunch. Cutlery, meal frequency, dishes, and cooking practices are similar to that of the United States, as contemporary New Zealand culture is influenced by the colonization of Britain.

