

# GREAT Business People

## PONDEROSA

*The Ponderosa Takeaways is a true Wairoa institution.*

The famous in-Wairoa fish and chip shop has operated from North Clyde since at least the 1950s and is a go-to for locals and visitors alike.

In true whānau spirit, the Ponderosa has been owned by the Harker family for around 40 years. The local business has survived floods and COVID and is now positioning itself to come back stronger than ever.

Rawinia Harker's connection with the Ponderosa started as an after-school job while attending Wairoa College. Sometime later, her parents, Raiha and Brian Harker, moved home to Wairoa from Napier and bought the business.

Rawinia, who had been working in hospitality, was encouraged by her parents to move to Wairoa to help out with the takeaway, and eventually she bought the business.

She says that over the last three decades, she has certainly seen good and bad times.

"Closing because of COVID-19 was hard, and we were just recovering from that when we got hit by Cyclone Gabrielle with flooding and silt literally bench high through the building."

Rawinia said she received a lot of support from the Council, the Recovery Office, the Māori Wardens, builder Steve King and volunteers, which helped get the Ponderosa back on its feet. "We didn't have insurance as we were still recovering from COVID. If we hadn't received the level of assistance that we did, we wouldn't be here today."

It took a year to get the Ponderosa back up and running, and Rawinia also leased the business out for a short time. "When my sister Rewa – who is a great cook – came home, we decided it was time to give Pondies a new lease of life, and we have been running it together since February.

"Fish and chips are still the mainstay, and we offer fresh terakihi and gurnard when we can. The humble saveloy is also very popular, along with sausages and a range of burgers.

"Paua bombs – fry bread filled with cream paua, and paua dumplings are also crowd pleasers, along with mussel fritter burgers."

Rewa has been presenting a range of organic salads using local fresh produce, and these have been complementing the ever-popular raw fish and seafood salad range.

"We are always trying something new, and this summer will be influenced by my son Pire Robinson's take on fresh cuisine." Pire, a chef in Napier, was brought up in Wairoa and has lots of ideas to extend the menu over the summer.

"The Ponderosa is a Wairoa icon and it's great to be back and to have whānau involvement."

Rawinia is also grateful to the fantastic staff she has had over the decades. "In particular, Janetta Irwin, who has been one of the amazing people who has supported the Ponderosa. It is the team we have had behind the counter that has kept the Ponderosa solid over the decades. We have seen generations of customers and staff on our journey, and we look forward to continuing our same level of service."



# OPEN

### Ponderosa

Hours: Open 7 days a week, with summer hours from 11am to 9pm.

For phone orders, please call 06 838 7764.



If you have a great business or service to promote, please contact Wairoa District Council at: [ed@wairoadc.govt.nz](mailto:ed@wairoadc.govt.nz)