

# Wairarapa Times Age

## Food poverty pantry challenge

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*Wairarapa chef Ant North is helping to inspire pantry creations on a budget.*

*PHOTO/FILE*

When chef Ant North's Greytown-based business, Ant North Catering, shuddered to a halt during the covid-19 pandemic, it was easy for him to transfer his time and energy to cooking for his family at home.

But the pandemic made him think.

"I was cooking for my family, but I could easily have cooked for the whole street! Lockdown Level 4 made me realise just how stressful food can be – when you don't have enough of it or when you are too stressed to know what to do with it when you have it".

In response, North developed The Pantry Challenge – a series of 14 cooking demonstration videos on YouTube and Facebook creating quick, easy, and nutritious meals using common food parcel ingredients, accompanied by recipe cards to go into Foodbank food parcels in Wairarapa.

Wairarapa-based research firm Planalytics NZ Ltd has supported the Pantry Challenge.

The company's director, Toni Kennerley, said backing the project was an easy decision.

“At Planalytics, we've been aware of the local impact of food insecurity for some time, having undertaken research on the topic for Connecting Communities Wairarapa back in 2019.

“It made total sense to the Planalytics' team to get behind Ant to help develop and launch The Pantry Challenge.”

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, food insecurity exists when people do not have adequate physical, social or economic access to food.

It can adversely affect health outcomes and undermine family and community networks. Planalytics' 2019 research indicated that even food-producing regions such as Wairarapa experience food insecurity.

Kore Hiakai Zero Hunger Collective, which is working to build collaborative solutions to food inequality in Aotearoa, considers the Covid-19 pandemic escalated the challenges related to food insecurity dramatically. This was the case in Wairarapa.

At the height of lockdown Level 4, Masterton Foodbank experienced a 10-fold increase in demand for food parcels.

But, like many foodbanks across Aotearoa, this demand had to be met with fewer volunteers as a result of government restrictions.

As well as Planalytics, support for The Pantry Challenge has been forthcoming from agencies such as Featherston Foodbank, community-led development partnerships Ka Pai Carterton and Fab Feathy, and printing firm Lamb-Peters.

With the filming of the video series now complete, North is now keen for the community to spread the word.

“We'd love the community to try the recipes, share the videos, and share their ideas for quick and nutritious meals on social media.”

The recipe cards will start to appear in foodbank parcels just before Christmas.

They include easy-to-follow instructions and a QR code, which enables people to click through to the video online.

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