

New Zealand Waitangi Day Special

A celebration of national history and culture

On Feb. 6, New Zealanders celebrate their national day. Waitangi Day commemorates the signing of an important treaty in 1840 between dozens of Maori chiefs and the British crown.

Waitangi Day is celebrated in various capacities, including historical commemorations and re-enactments at Treaty House where the document was signed in New Zealand's Far North, citizenship ceremonies at Government House in Auckland, and, perhaps most popularly, with picnics on the beach.

The Treaty of Waitangi was intended to stipulate the relationship between and rights of the native Maori and incoming British settlers. Initially signed by about 45 chiefs on Feb. 6, 1840, the treaty was eventually signed by more than 500 Maori. Yet despite being a crucial part of the formation of modern New Zealand, the treaty's prominence in the national consciousness faded for a time. The first Waitangi Day is considered to have been nearly a century later in 1934, to dedicate making the Treaty House and grounds into a public reserve. The next event was not for another six years, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the treaty signing, with annual events held since 1947.

Somewhat in sync with this process, the treaty itself gained in importance in the latter half of the 20th century, primarily via protest movements in the 1960s and 1970s over violations of the treaty and other infringements on Maori rights. As a result, the treaty has gradually been incorporated into New Zealand law, such as with the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal to investigate treaty violations and the pact's acknowledgment in court cases.

The treaty having been made between two great seafaring peoples, naval craft have long played a role in the official celebrations. New Zealand Navy vessels and Maori *waka* watercraft re-enact the landing of William Hobson, the new British governor of New Zealand, just a week before the treaty was signed. Probably the most impressive of these is the 37.5-meter-long Ngatokimatawhaorua, an enormous waka named after the vessel sailed by Kupe, a quasi-legendary figure who is said to have discovered New Zealand. The canoe, a word that completely fails to do justice to the size and beauty of this watercraft, can carry 150 people and weighs 12 tons wet. While grand ceremonies are an expected part of any national

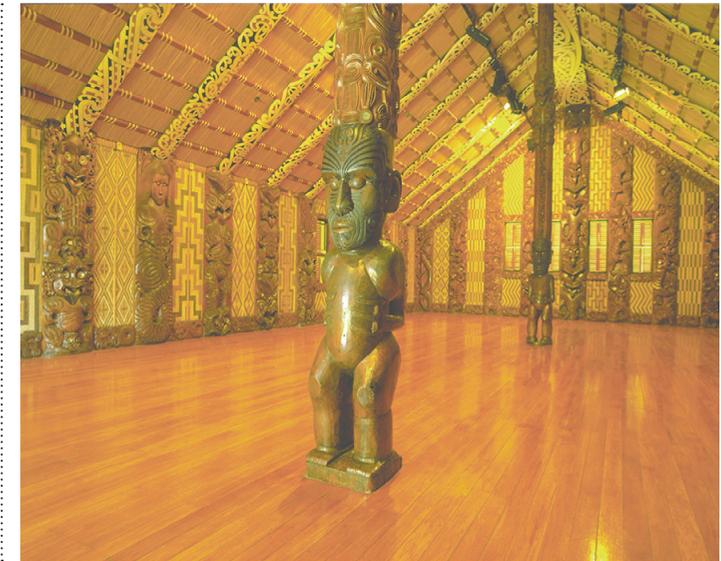
day celebration, family gatherings are how most people experience them, and food is one of the most important factors. Traditional Maori dishes are often part of Waitangi Day gatherings. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, Maori subsisted on a mix of farming, hunting and gathering. They cultivated plants such as kumara (a kind of sweet potato) and taro, which they brought with them from their homeland, while the animals they hunted were a mix of introduced and native species. A number of ingredients brought by the Europeans are also now an integral part of Maori cuisine including pork, potatoes, cabbage and corn.

Lacking pottery, the Maori could only cook food in water by putting a hot stone into a wooden bowl. This was enough to cook lighter ingredients like vegetables and small fish, but heavier foods such as taro needed to be baked. They also preserved food by drying and fermentation. When cast-iron kettles arrived from Europe they were quickly adopted, changing how Maori cooked. A popular dish that includes all of the above aspects of Maori cuisine is "boil up," a hearty stew made from a number of ingredients, but that almost always includes pork, a

European import; kumara; and puha, a native species of edible thistle. These are all boiled together in a big pot, which can be easily brought to a beach, park or friend's backyard for a Waitangi Day picnic.

The article references excerpts from official New Zealand government and the Waitangi Treaty Grounds websites.

For more information, visit <https://teara.govt.nz/en/maori-foods-kai-maori> and <https://www.waitangi.org.nz/discover-waitangi/ceremonial-war-canoe/>



The finely detailed carvings in this *whare runga* represent each of the major Maori tribes. This meeting house, at the Waitangi National Reserve, is where the Treaty of Waitangi, New Zealand's founding document, was signed in 1840.

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Congratulations on Waitangi Day



Congratulations on the Anniversary of Waitangi Day

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