



# What's Cooking at VLC today?

**ONCE** a month Thomas Mokomoko *Te Whakatōhea* dons his apron, hat and disposable gloves to whip up a double-sized chocolate cake for koro and kuia who attend the popular Tūranga Health Kaumātua Day programme at local Marae.

**Words:** Hayley Redpath. **Images:** Vanessa Lowndes Centre.

**Right:** Thomas Mokomoko



**WITH** a careful methodical style Thomas mixes the ingredients assuring those around him "you don't have to cream the butter for this recipe". He should know. He's been making the cake for five years using a recipe given to him by much loved former Vanessa Lowndes Centre Kaiāwhina Bernie Davies who passed away in 2009. "I know it off by heart," says Thomas, who is in his late forties, lives independently, and works two days a week as a cleaner.

Thomas is one of around 40 clients, or whānau as they are known at VLC, learning about cooking and meal preparation. Kaiāwhina Natasha Moke says there are some skills required in order to be independent throughout a person's life. "For this reason teaching cooking to our whānau allows them to be more self-sufficient and also gives them an opportunity to put other skills like shopping, basic maths and reading to use in a functional way that will benefit them."

Every Wednesday a group of whānau help prepare a basic lunch for everyone. Sometimes groups are tasked with preparing picnic food for an upcoming day trip. Another group of whānau help prepare sumptuous platters for mothers attending nearby antenatal classes.

VLC Manager Laura Biddle says having an onsite catering kitchen means whānau can learn new cooking skills in the context of real life situations. Food hygiene and safety complement each lesson. Whānau source fresh food from a community garden they help tend, and they are always learning about the importance of healthy food options. Thomas's chocolate cake is the yummy monthly exception!

"...whānau can learn new cooking skills in the context of real life situations." **Laura Biddle, VLC Manager.**



**Above:** Wiremu Haturini takes his turn cooking lunch for the whānau.

**Left:** VLC whānau Rita Cuthers, Charles Hislop, and Kaiāwhina Tracey Fogarty prepare a healthy platter in the VLC Catering Kitchen.



## Chocolate Cake

Recipe reproduced here by Thomas Mokomoko from a recipe given to him by Bernie Davies.

*Chocolate Cake*

125g Butter  
 2dsp Golden Syrup  
 2 Cups Flour  
 2 1/2 tsp Baking Powder  
 2 Eggs  
 1 cup Sugar  
 1 1/2 to 1 3/4 Cups Milk  
 2 tsp Baking Soda  
 3 Tbsp cocoa  
 1 tsp vanilla essence  
 Pre heat oven to 180°C (350°F)  
 Grease a tin 30 by 24 cm and 5cm deep or 23cm sq by about 4cm deep.

Line a tin with greased paper.  
 Gently melt butter and syrup and set aside.  
 Into bowl (use an electric cake mixer if possible)

Step 1 Sift flour, Baking powder, cocoa into bowl and make a well.  
 Step 2 Beat eggs add vanilla essence set aside in a bowl  
 Step 3 Put milk into bowl heat in microwave for about 3-4 minutes use a tea towel to take bowl out of the microwave. Stir in baking Soda  
 Step 4 Mix wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and stir in gently until mixed if a bit dry add a little more milk and stir.  
 Step 5 Place mixture into a dish and bake for about 45-50 minutes or when the cake springs back when touched or insert skewer in the middle of the cake and take out if skewer is clear.  
 Set aside to cool before turning out onto a tray before icing