

# TIAKI IN KIRIKIROA

## Bare Refill

### Leading the way in sustainability

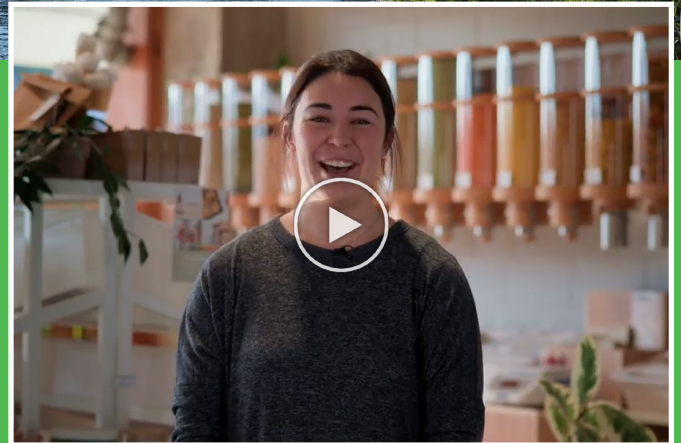
Bridie McNamara from Bare Refill in Hamilton East is a pioneer in promoting sustainability through her innovative business practices and 'free the food' philosophy.

Nestled in the new MADE food and shopping precinct in Hamilton East, Bare Refill is a bulk bin store dedicated to offering groceries and household items with minimal or no packaging.

Bridie and her team are on a mission to create a circular economy, where reducing waste and sourcing locally are at the forefront of every transaction.

**"The idea is to bring your own containers, you fill, and then you've got no packaging waste to take home," Bridie says.**

This simple yet effective practice not only reduces waste but also educates the community on sustainable living.



Bare Refill's commitment to New Zealand's Tiaki Promise is evident in every aspect of its operation, which Bridie says is all about "nourishing people, helping them reduce their waste, and protecting the land across Kirikiriroa Hamilton and Aotearoa".

One of the standout features of Bare Refill is its jar library. Customers can drop off their clean jars at the store, where they are weighed and made available for anyone to use. This initiative promotes a circular system, significantly reducing the need for single-use packaging.

"We clean them, weigh them, and then they're ready for anyone else to use, she says. It's also an easy and effective way to introduce new customers and visitors to using less packaging while providing them with a shopping solution if they haven't brought in their own containers.

"We do get some quirky jars and even people bringing in their own heritage jars – I had a customer bring in his own jar that he said was his grandma's jar from the 1900s. It shows if you look after these things, they last, and we aren't having to make new ones."

Bare Refill's commitment to supporting and sourcing produce from Waikato suppliers strengthens the community and helps to reduce emissions associated with transport too.

"We use Dreamview Creamery for yoghurt and cream as well as Kaipaki Milk with a circular bottle system. We also use Raglan Chocolate, delivered in lunchboxes that we then send back to be used again." These suppliers participate in a circular system, where items are delivered in reusable containers that are sent back for refilling again..



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"We like to work with other local businesses using the same suppliers to reduce everyone's travel miles, shipping costs, and packaging."

The care for people kaupapa of Tiaki is front of mind for customer service. Bare Refill also work closely with other businesses within the MADE complex to offer the same high level of customer service – we want people to feel welcome shopping here and by working collaboratively with the same goals it offers them a more seamless experience, even though we are all different purveyors.

Reducing food wastage is another important aspect of Bare Refill's mission – by allowing people to fill containers with the precise quantity of a product they need, less is thrown out.

"People often buy a whole jar of a spice for a recipe they make once, and then it sits in their pantry unused. At Bare Refill, you can buy as little as you need – even just a teaspoon – which helps reduce food waste and also ensures that the product you are buying and using is fresh."

This emphasis on providing exactly what customers need extends to all aspects of the store's inventory, putting sustainability first.

"We get asked quite a lot why we don't have organic oats. My whole thing is we grow oats in New Zealand in the South Island, they are spray-free. Organic oats have to come from Canada, and to me, from the South Island spray-free versus shipping from Canada is a lot better," Bridie says.

She says educating residents and visitors about sustainable practices is a core value at Bare Refill. The team engage in conversations with customers to share tips on reducing waste and sustainable living. The advice they share is always intended to be achievable within people's busy lives because, as Bridie says, "if it's not easy, you are not going to continue doing it".

They are also planning a 'Plastic-free evening sustainability talk' with o to further educate the community in an accessible and 'non-preachy' manner. This talk will focus on making sustainability easy and practical for everyone.

Since opening in November 2023, Bare Refill has seen a growing number of customers embracing its sustainable approach. In just one month, they had 2,500 purchases, with many customers returning to make small yet impactful changes in their shopping habits.

**"Since opening we have found more and more people are now making changes to their shopping habits. It's definitely noticeable, which is quite exciting because every little bit helps."**

More than just a business, Bare Refill is a shining example of how local enterprises can lead the way in sustainability, embodying the values of the Tiaki Promise. By reducing waste, supporting local suppliers, and educating and caring for their customers, Bare Refill is helping to position Hamilton as a sustainable and responsible destination, inspiring other businesses throughout Waikato to adopt similar practices.



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