

Matariki during School Holidays



Kia ora koutou,

Matariki is the Māori name for the cluster of stars that rises in mid-winter and it signifies Māori New Year. It was first marked officially as a public holiday in New Zealand last year and this year, the holiday falls on the 14th of July.

Traditionally coming at the end of the harvest, Matariki was a time of abundant food and feasting, using kai harvested from past seasons. Today, people across the motu (country) gather to celebrate Matariki. These gatherings are a time to reflect on the loved ones who are no longer with us, celebrate the present and give thanks for what we have, and to plan and look to the future.

Over the school holidays, how about making the most of long weekend by celebrating Matariki with your whānau? Not only would it be a good time for whānau to gather and enjoy each other's company, but also to pass along the beautiful traditions and stories of Matariki to our tamariki (children).

Here's some ways you can celebrate Matariki at home:



1. Take time to reflect

Take some time to remember loved ones who have passed away. You can do this by sharing stories and memories with your whānau, lighting a candle, talking with friends and whānau. Take time to talk about, write down, or even draw your hopes and aspirations for the year ahead too.



2. Get cooking

As with many other festive occasions, part of celebrating Matariki is to get together and share kai. Cook a mid-winter feast for friends and whānau using traditional Māori vegetables such as kūmara, kamo kamo, taro, puha and uwhi.



3. Do some stargazing

Matariki's rising is only observable on the East coast before dawn. Therefore, some iwi celebrate the rise of Puanga. It is the next important star near Matariki and is often seen first in the West.

Here on the West Coast, we are lucky not to have to travel far to get away from light pollution as most places are dark enough to see a beautiful starry night. Stargazing can be a great family activity and help us connect with Papatūānuku, the Earth mother, Ranginui, the Sky father, and our surroundings. Here's one [video](#) explaining how to find Matariki in the night sky.



4. Get crafty and play games

Get the children together and make Matariki star bunting, make some poi with sand and some old clothing or socks, and learn to use them in song and dance. You can also find some Māori games [here](https://www.allright.org.nz/articles/ideas-for-matariki). There's link to other crafty activities at <https://www.allright.org.nz/articles/ideas-for-matariki>



5. Find out more about Matariki

Research and learn about Matariki as a family. What are the names of the stars of Matariki? When is Matariki marked on the maramataka (Māori lunar calendar)? Why is it important? Here is a good place to start <https://www.matariki.com/>

Watercress and kūmara soup

Recipe by Anne Thorpe

- 1kg pork bones
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 bacon rashers, chopped into small pieces
- 1 leek, chopped into small pieces
- 1kg kumara, peeled and chopped into small pieces
- 1kg watercress
- 1 cup parsley, finely chopped

1. Cover pork bones in cold water in a pot, add bay leaves and bring to boil. Turn down and simmer very gently for 2 hours. Add a little boiling water if necessary to keep bones just covered.
2. In a large saucepan over a medium heat, add bacon and cook for one minute. Add leek and sauté gently until soft. Add kumara and cover with 1 litre of pork stock from the pot the bones are cooking in. Bring to the boil then simmer until kumara is almost done.
3. Add watercress to the soup.
4. Keep simmering very slowly until ready to serve, any time after watercress has blended well into the soup and wilted. Add extra stock if necessary.
5. Take pork bones from the stock, strip any meat from them and add to the soup for extra flavour if you wish.
6. Season to taste with salt and pepper and sprinkle with parsley. Serve in warm bowls with crusty bread.

Ngā mihi o Matariki, te tau hou Māori ✨