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Future shines bright for new forest dining experience

The Bay of Islands can boast a new and exciting product with the launch of Adventure Puketi's forest dining experiences. The 'dining under the stars' product option is the result of 12 months of planning by Ian and Barbara Candy who have operated guided forest walks into the Puketi Forest for the last 4 years.

Owner Ian Candy says "the Puketi forest is one of Northland's special gems, allowing people to experience the diverse flora and fauna of this subtropical rainforest, and to view some of the last remaining stands of ancient kauri trees in the world. We wanted to develop an opportunity for the regions group, conference and cruise ship visitors to experience nature at its very best, and what better way to achieve this than to develop a range of forest dining options".

Forest dining under the stars (the evening option) has already caught the attention of buyers at a recent event in Auckland. Convene, which hosted corporate and conference buyers from Auckland, wider NZ and Australia, provided the opportunity to launch the product to the trade.

Candy says "the event was a huge success both for us and for Chef Colin Ashton of Food at Wharepuke, who has partnered with us in the forest dining venture. We already have bookings and are fielding a number of new enquiries.

Meanwhile a launch to some of Northland's key tourism industry and suppliers has woven its spell. "The whole experience was beyond words said Cheryl Jensen of Destination Northland. The performance by the Okaihau College kapa haka group was especially moving, and the lighting and ambience in the forest made for a magical evening".

She went on to say "Colin Ashton's skills as a chef are world class, it's no wonder he has cooked for the likes of Shania Twain".

Adventure Puketi Dining Experiences are offered in conjunction with guided tours of the forest. Each event is tailor made to suit available time and budget. Information will be available shortly on www.forestwalks.com .

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