

# ROUND THE FARM TABLE

Chef and good keen man Al Brown chats to BFEA entrants from around the country and finds they're committed to sustainable farming – and growing delicious food.

Strath Taieri farmer Lynnore Templeton doesn't mince words, especially when talking about the 5200ha block she and husband Andrew run sheep and beef on. "Tough, low-rainfall, huge variants in weather and wind-blasted schist rocks everywhere", she says matter-of-factly, before adding with a twinkle in her eye, "and we absolutely love it!"

This challenging landscape has also forged the Templeton's farming ethos - one recognised with the 2019 Otago Ballance Farm Environment Awards Regional Supreme Award.

"Early on we realised that rather than fight the environment, let's work with it," says Andrew, starting a sustainable journey that now informs every single decision made on the farm.

While both hail from farming families - Lynnore just down the road in Middlemarch and Andrew in Tarras a few hours away, they didn't farm straight away after completing degrees at Lincoln University. "My older brother got the farm," says Andrew, "so we went into the corporate world to save money for one instead."

After 12 years in banking and the wool industry for Andrew and a career in sales and marketing in animal health for Lynnore, they finally bought their dream spot.

"Actually it was all we could afford," laughs Lynnore, "but the time was right". "We had to give it a crack. If it worked, it worked," says Andrew.

Today their vision is as clear as the river that runs through their property: to produce world-class fibre and protein via an environmentally sustainable system, innovative thinking and never being afraid to "challenge the square" – something that obviously comes quite naturally, as Al Brown found out after chatting to them both.

**Al: You are obviously not afraid to do things differently?**

**Lynnore:** We were once given a great piece of advice: If nothing changes, nothing changes. To find the best ways to do things often means thinking differently. It's a work-in-progress but we have a continued desire to do better than we did the season before in every way.

**Andrew:** Our challenging landscape forces different approaches, like crossbreeding for both cattle and sheep to maximise hybrid vigour. For our cattle

alone, these genetics help us yield 22% more and our footprint is a lot less because we are getting them away sooner. It also means a better price. To be sustainable you have to be sustainable as a business first.

**Al: How else have you increased sustainability and biodiversity around the farm?**

**Lynnore:** Over 15 years we've completed 150ha of irrigation, 1000ha of reseeded and 40kms of fencing along the Taieri River. Water here is a precious commodity, but when it rains it rains. So Andrew had an idea to use the historic stonework mining races on the property to help collect run-off rain water and channel it into seepage dams.

**Andrew:** Often it's the simple things that make a difference, like using the right pasture species for the climate and area. Recently we've been working with aquaculture expert Johnny Hollows to introduce kōura into our dams. Not only are they a potential future income stream, they're also a great barometer of water quality, as they don't tolerate chemical use or sediment.

**Al: You've been busy! So the Ballance Farm Environmental Awards were clearly a natural fit?**

**Andrew:** We actually thought the awards would be a great way to mine people for information to formulate a lasting sustainability plan for the farm. And my Scottish roots thought it was not a bad way to get this information for free!

**Lynnore:** But we got so much out of them. The inspiration and motivation that comes from seeing what is happening on farms across NZ was just mind-blowing.

**Al: Have you made any changes since your win?**

**Lynnore:** The big one is that for every planned project or development we now consider the impact it will have on the environmental sustainability of our business, just as much as we consider the financial implications.

**Andrew:** The Awards also exposed us to flow-on opportunities with other businesses. We have one of the largest ephemeral wetlands in the region and have been working with mining company OceanaGold - as part of their biodiversity offset - and ecologists to look at different management scenarios to protect and increase the amount of native plants down there.

**Nº7**  
Andrew and Lynnore Templeton.  
Half-bred and merino fine-woolled sheep, Angus based crossbred cattle; The Rocks Station, Strath Taieri, Otago.

WITH *Al Brown*

**Al: Looking at the next 20 years what do you see as the future for NZ Agriculture?**

**Andrew:** To keep producing an in-demand quality product, more efficiently and sustainably than any producer in the world. This takes innovation and forward thinking. We feel a responsibility to realise this and not do anything to affect the ability of following generations to achieve this too.

**Lynnore:** Sheep and beef farmers have reduced their greenhouse gas emissions by more powers-that-be. These often see farmers spending money to meet requirements that in many cases will have no positive effect on the environmental footprint.

**Al: I love your passion for farming. But outside of this what else keeps you busy?**

**Lynnore:** Our daughter is a keen showjumper, so I'm often at events around the district. However Andrew spent 40 years trying to get his own farm so good luck getting him off it!

**Andrew:** We even spend our summer holidays camping down by the river on the property with lots of visitors who swim, fish, kayak, eat and drink from it. The farm provides, so there's a pretty good incentive to look after it.

**Al: Too right! Kōura, beef and lamb, you're spoiled for choice here. What's your favourite?**

**Andrew:** Can't beat a half-bred hogget leg roast with gravy, roast veggies and steamed broccoli from the garden.

**Lynnore:** With kōura as an entrée! Just pop them in a pot of boiling water 'til they change colour. But I'll definitely try your recipe too Al.

**Al: I'll cook it for you! And who else would you have over to share this amazing food?**

**Andrew:** Johnny Hollows. Top man and he'd definitely bring a few crayfish over.

**Lynnore:** Environment Minister David Parker. I'd love to get him one-on-one for a good chinwag!

**Andrew:** Then we should also have Bruce Springsteen to entertain us if things get a bit heated...



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