



COUSCOUS CHEF: Ahmed Zaoui offers meals of hope.

Zaoui cooks up a storm in the kitchen with his book

by Sarah Kaci

Supporters of Ahmed Zaoui, the Algerian detained by New Zealand authorities without charge for almost two years, have published a new cookbook featuring his recipes.

The book, *Conversations Over Couscous*, brings Algerian food into our kitchens.

"Food makes sense of differences, it starts dialogue, brings people together and makes them happy," Zaoui says.

"I did not plan this book. The idea came from the people around me when they found that cooking brought them together."

The book contains eight typical Algerian dishes, including recipes such as chicken tagine, Algerian couscous and cigar pastries.

As Zaoui is not entitled to work in New Zealand or receive any kind of public financial assistance, this book, created with the help of the Zaoui

Support Association, is raising funds for him and his family.

Sarah Lee, postgraduate and research administrator at Auckland University of Technology, contributed to the book by compiling and transcribing recipes.

"We had a lot of fun. Ahmed is a very creative cook," she says.

"While cooking there was a lot of laughs, and a lot of talking; we talked about what is going on in the world, we talked about Ahmed's family."

Journalist Edward Gay, a former *Te Waha Nui* subeditor who took the pictures for the book, says: "It isn't only about raising funds, we are trying to let people know that behind Zaoui's case there is a human being."

Sarah Lee adds: "The book is about Ahmed sharing his culture and his food with people who helped him. It is a way of thanking his supporters."

Separated from his wife, Leila, and his four sons — Yousef, 7, Abdel, 14, Soheib, 17,

and Hicham, 19 — Zaoui is now living at St Benedicts Priory while waiting for the resolution of his case.

Zaoui has had refugee status for two years and is now waiting for the Inspector General of the SIS to decide whether his security risk certificate will be upheld. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees recommended that New Zealand welcome Zaoui's family, who have been hiding in Southeast Asia for two-and-a-half years.

Zaoui regularly cooks for his friends and supporters at the priory.

"It is a wonderful thing that when you share your food with people they accept your differences and understand your culture.

"I hope that this book not only gives people hope, but also helps them understand each other."

Conversations Over Couscous can be ordered by email: books@freezaoui.org.nz.

Stokes: telling it how it is

by Todd Hewitt

For a journalist who has three years experience, Maori affairs writer Jon Stokes is becoming something of a revered figure in the media industry and Maori community.

He was hired by the *New Zealand Herald* as specialist Maori affairs reporter in May 2004, which he says was a breakthrough for Maori mainstream media coverage.

Stokes says he was extremely lucky to step into the profession at this point.

"Organisations like the *Herald* understand that the Maori population is a growing population that has new requirements."

He says National leader Don Brash's Orewa speech last year stunned people, in particular media people, who felt they were possibly the cause of this misinformed Maori prejudice.

Brash's controversial speech called for the acceleration of Treaty settlement and for both Maori and Pakeha to receive equal treatment under the law.

"Orewa shocked a number of organisations because of the willingness of the public to jump onto what Don Brash had to say. There was a general unease about what happened.

"Perhaps there was some reflection within the media as to how they portray a message and what part they had in creating this perception that drove this negative response from the middle ground."

For this reason, Stokes says his job has become increasingly important.

He says he is quickly learning to strike the balance that Maori

affairs reporting requires.

"I'm pretty fair minded. I understand what is news.

"I understand that sometimes it is about what sells papers."

Born of Maori and Czechoslovakian descent, Stokes began his career at *The Waikato Times* after completing a course in journalism at the Western Institute of Technology in Taranaki.

The *Times* gave Stokes a start and was influential in leading him towards Maori affairs reporting.

He was able to flourish in a department which had led the way in Maori affairs reporting since the 1970s with Michael King's reign.

Stokes says becoming a good journalist is a tedious process, alluding to senior journalists at the *Herald* and their ability to turn stories over "miraculously".

"It takes time to refine your art. "When I first started at *The Waikato Times*, I was sent to cover a political meeting for the 2002 election and I was just so overwhelmed by all the information."

Stokes says being a journalist is one of the most rewarding professions in the world.

"Being able to see the diversity of ideas, being able to meet the people at the flax roots right up to the leaders and talk to them and form an opinion, that's incredible.

"It gives you a fairer understanding of issues; it stops you being too quick about making superficial judgements about things."

He says there is "nothing more gratifying than nailing a good news story".

Writing the story is the most



MINORITY REPORT: Jon Stokes strikes a balance in Maori affairs reporting.

exciting element of journalism, says Stokes.

"Seeing something develop, getting back and writing the story, reading it in the paper and knowing that I got it exactly right.

"I nailed it, all the good points were in there — I told that person's story well.

"I allowed people to get an understanding of an issue as best it could be done.

"That is such a buzz; that will set me off for the rest of the day. It's an amazing career — I don't know why I mucked around so long in coming into it!"

Stokes says his rapid success has come from being honest with himself.

"I am passionate about the

whole thing, that helps. And I've always been fair and that's what people love."

He says he covers Maori issues that no one else wants to cover.

"Orewa shocked a number of organisations because of the willingness of the public to jump onto what Don Brash had to say."

"There has been a shortage of good Maori journos," says Stokes.

"There haven't been too many that have been prepared to say 'this is how it is.' It's having a balance without being patronising or ramming it down people's throats."

When asked what advice he would give to aspiring journalist, Stokes answers humbly: "I'm lucky, but if you're good at your trade, any employer is going to look after you."

Artists plan to bury time capsules in Grey Lynn

by Caitlin McGee

Recording history as it happens has been the aim for four artists who have created time capsules to be buried in a Grey Lynn park or reserve.

The Western Bays Community Board recently granted Fiona Connor, Finn McCahon-Jones, Ben Tankard and Chris Fitzgerald permission to bury their four time capsules in a public place.

The time capsules that record their everyday lives and routines will be dug up in 30 years.

McCahon-Jones said the artists went off on their own tangents.

"Fiona catalogued our record collections and books we were reading. I gathered supermarket receipts, and bits and pieces of popular culture," says McCahon-Jones.

He says that although the objects they documented were from their generation, he also focused on collecting items that would benefit later generations.

"I also collected some SpongeBob SquarePants and Harry Potter items so, when we open the capsules, the kids just a bit younger than us have something they can associate with their childhood," he says.

The artists decided it was better to bury the capsules in a public place, rather than their own backyards, so the site could be accurately recorded.

The artists are working with the Western Bays Community Board, to decide on a burial site for the capsules.